Opening the Annual Geoscience Exploration Seminar (AGES) at Alice Springs’ Crowne Plaza Resort this morning, Mines and Energy Minister, Kon Vatskalis, said the annual gathering of exploration industry practitioners and investors attracts experts from all over the country.

“AGES provides the NT Geological Survey Group (NTGS) with the opportunity to tell people in the business what’s new in the Territory, and to hear first hand from others what they are doing in the industry to help keep the Territory moving ahead,” said Mr Vatskalis.

“Over the next two days about 30 specialist papers will be presented. That’s a lot of very valuable information about the industry. It’s also why AGES is the flagship event for the Northern Territory Geological Survey Group.

“The Australian Bureau of Statistics figures released last week show that there has been a 44.7% increase in mineral exploration expenditure in the Territory in the last quarter compared with the same quarter in 2003, and a 15.3% increase in petroleum exploration expenditure over the same period. This reflects the national and international interest in the prospectivity of the Territory, and means that interest in AGES should be at an all time high,” he said.

Mr Vatskalis said AGES will also include a session focussed on Indigenous employment opportunities within the exploration and mining industries, and will feature a range of guest speakers talking about their experiences in forming partnerships with Aboriginal people.

The Minister said this year’s AGES builds upon the “mission” he and his department embarked on recently, selling the Northern Territory’s prospectivity to possible investors in Sydney and Brisbane through the very successful “Top End Secret” Road Show. Over 200 mining industry executives have participated in the program to date with Perth the next target.

“Since the Martin Government came to office, more than 830 exploration licences have been granted – the highest level since 1988/89 – compared to 235 exploration licences granted over the last four years of the previous CLP Government,” he said.

“This Government is moving the Territory ahead and creating jobs for Territorians.”

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