

# SA mining minister Tom Koutsantonis defends role in 'spruiking' mining projects on sidelines of uranium conference in Adelaide

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**MINERAL Resources and Energy Minister Tom Koutsantonis has defended his style of support for mining projects and the industry saying it's his job to do so.**

Mr Koutsantonis was portfolio minister and a key member of Cabinet as part of the government led by Premier Mike Rann and Kevin Foley, which was last week accused of "over-spruiking" projects that didn't eventuate by Premier Jay Weatherill and other ministers.

Minister for Mineral Resources and Energy, Tom Koutsantonis at Iron Baron mine near Whyalla

This includes the scrapped \$1 billion Arafura Resources processing plant at Whyalla, the delayed and scaled-down multi-billion dollar expansion of Olympic Dam and the scrapping of Deepak Fertiliser's ammonium nitrate plant at Whyalla.

**Speaking to reporters after his address to the Paydirt Uranium Conference in Adelaide this morning, Mr Koutsantonis said he supported everything Premier Jay Weatherill said last week in relation to the previous government's over-spruiking of projects.**

"The reality is the Premier's comments were about one project. I have always been a positive supporter of the mining industry, that's my job.

"I agree with the Premier that we have to be fierce advocates of South Australia".

When pressed if he supported comments about former Treasurer Kevin Foley's role in overselling the projects, Mr Koutsantonis said, "I support everything the Premier said."

The number of delegates registered for South Australia's "major uranium conference" this year has halved from last year.

Mr Koutsantonis blamed the Fukushima disaster in Japan - and the global review of the industry - for the lack of attendance.

The organisers said the forum was smaller because it was a lead up to the South Australian Mining and Energy Conference, which starts tomorrow.

He ruled out the possibility of a nuclear energy future for South Australia, saying our most promising resource was shale gas, and also said a nuclear enrichment industry was unviable in contrast to his message in 2011.

"The old adage of digging something out the ground and sending it offshore has to change," he said at the time.

"We've got to value-add here in SA. South Australians expect us to exploit our natural resources to the maximum potential. Down the track, I would like to see some form of enrichment, some sort of value-add. We have to go out and passionately support the uranium industry."

South Australia hosts 81 per cent of Australia's total low cost uranium resource and just under half of the 977 mineral exploration licences in the state list uranium as a target commodity.

The state hosts three of Australia's four active uranium mines - Olympic Dam, Beverley and Honeymoon. The Ranger mine in Northern Territory is the fourth one.

Uranium oxide concentrate from South Australia is being utilised around the world with long term contracts in place with the United Kingdom, France, Sweden, Finland, Belgium, Canada and the United States.

The current focus of the government continues to be on Commonwealth-led bilateral negotiations to sell uranium to India, which is not a signatory to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, and ongoing research partnership with China on uranium.