



# Uranium door slammed 'No' to enrichment

**VALERINA CHANGARATHIL**

THERE is no business case for nuclear enrichment facilities in South Australia, Mineral Resources and Energy Minister Tom Koutsantonis said at a conference on uranium in Adelaide yesterday.

"I don't see a case for it any time in the near future. The reality is it's not commercially viable," he said.

It's a turnaround from his position in 2011 when he was publicly backed by then treasurer Kevin Foley for his call to change the traditional approach of simply mining uranium and sending it offshore.

"We've got to value-add here in SA. 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," he said at the time.

Back then, the multi-billion-dollar expansion of BHP Billiton's Olympic Dam mine was still on the cards. Yesterday, the minister who famously won brickbats and bouquets for his "enthusiastic" comments in 2011, reiterated the government rhetoric on exporting uranium to

energy-starved growing economies like India and China.

He ruled out a role for nuclear energy in addressing the state's growing power challenges, focusing instead on the potential of shale gas locked in the Cooper Basin.

South Australia hosts some 81 per cent of Australia's total low-cost uranium resource.

Just under half of the 977 mineral exploration licences in SA list uranium as a target commodity.

The state hosts three of Australia's four active uranium mines - Olympic Dam, Beverley and Honey-moon. The Ranger mine in Northern Territory is the fourth one. Uranium oxide concentrate from South Australia is being used around the world with long-term contracts in place with the UK, France, Sweden, Finland, Belgium, Canada and the US.

Mr Koutsantonis yesterday also defended his role in what Premier Jay Weatherill described as the previous government's "over-spruiking" of mining projects that didn't eventuate. Mr Koutsantonis was portfolio minister and a key member of Cabinet

as part of the government led by premier Mike Rann and Kevin Foley.

The list of projects includes the scrapped \$1 billion Arafura Resources processing plant at Whyalla, the Olympic Dam ex-

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pansion deferral and the canned Deepak Fertilisers' ammonium nitrate plant at Whyalla.

"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 support everything the Premier said."

Mr Koutsantonis said the Fukushima disaster in Japan had been a body-blow for the uranium industry and led to a global review of the industry.