# SA MINISTER DEFENDS MINING HOPES

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Mineral Resources Minister Tom Koutsantonis has agreed with Premier Jay Weatherill the South Australian Government may have oversold the benefits of a proposed minerals processing plant for Whyalla.

Arafura Resources has now scrapped a plan to build the plant and will do processing close to its Northern Territory mine site instead.

Addressing a uranium industry conference in Adelaide, Mr Koutsantonis said the Government had relied on Arafura's public statements.

"I support what the Premier said about Arafura but you've got to remember that if you read the releases that Arafura put out they mirror exactly what the Government was saying," he said.

"Arafura are the ones who were talking about the investment and the Government was simply taking what they were saying for granted.

"I mean they were an ASX-listed company, what they said was made publicly available, we relied on them and they changed their minds."

Mr Koutsantonis was unapologetic for being fierce in his support of mining ventures.

"I haven't changed anything about the way I've behaved. I've always been a very positive supporter of the mining industry, that's my job," he said.

"My job's to go out and make sure that the mining industry have an ally and a voice in the State Cabinet. I agree with the Premier, it's our job to be fierce advocates for South Australia."

Missing out

A former diplomat says Australia's chances of catering for India's demand for nuclear power could be hampered by delays in signing a safeguards agreement on uranium sales.

The former Australian deputy high commissioner to India, Rakesh Ahuja, told the conference Australia had double the uranium reserves of Canada, but the Canadians were the largest uranium exporter.

Mr Rakesh said Canada had left Australia behind by scaling the final hurdle on selling uranium to India.

"Last week Canada and India signed the appropriate agreement which now means, any day, Canada can sell and ship uranium to India," he said.