

Royal Commission to investigate potential nuclear energy industry in South Australia

February 2015

On Sunday 8 February 2015, South Australia Premier Hon. Jay Weatherill MP announced a Royal Commission to investigate the future of South Australia's storage and use of nuclear energy.

The Royal Commission will be the first of its kind in Australia and seeks to explore the opportunities and risks associated with the nuclear sector including mining, enrichment, energy and storage phases and the potential to develop a nuclear waste deposit in the remote parts of South Australia.

The Royal Commission will also explore the future energy needs for South Australia and potential economic benefits the sector could bring as South Australia has experienced a downturn in manufacturing in recent years.

Premier Weatherill has cited climate change as an influence on his decision to call a Royal Commission and this follows recent comments made by Foreign Minister Julie Bishop for a fresh discussion to be opened in regards to nuclear energy and a country's ability to cut greenhouse gas emissions.

Federal Minister for Industry Ian McFarlane has said the Royal Commission would complement the Federal Government's Energy White Paper, which considers all future energy options for Australia.

Former South Australian Governor Kevin Scarce has been appointed to lead the Royal Commission.

Mr Scarce has said he does not have pre-conceived views on the potential for South Australia to be involved in the nuclear sector.

Premier Weatherill will consult with Mr Scarce, independent experts and the South Australian community to develop the Terms of Reference.

South Australia has one of the world's largest uranium deposits however nuclear power is not produced nor sold domestically or internationally.

Nuclear energy has been viewed as uneconomical to date, due to Australia's coal and gas supplies.