

How the Opposition's two-year exploration cap stalled the mining reform bill



Grain Producers SA chief executive officer Brad Perry said the changes to the Mining Bill introduced sensible limits on exploration tenure. File picture

The Opposition has successfully moved significant amendments to the state government's *Statutes Amendment (Energy and Mining Reforms) Bill*

2025, which has drawn a scathing response from Energy and Mining Minister Tom Koutsantonis.

One of the major changes to the bill is capping extensions on the existing 18-year exploration license to two years, where previously five-year extensions would be repeated indefinitely.

Amendments also include the requirement for the Energy and Mining Minister to get an independent agricultural impact assessment done before awarding an extension, and another requirement for the minister to [consult with a landowner](#) if an extension is to be granted.

Mr Koutsantonis said the government had no choice but to reject the legislation when it returned to the House of Assembly.

"The dysfunctional SA Liberals have yet again thumbed their noses at the state's mining sector, gutting important legislation with a raft of amendments that make the bill unworkable," he said.

"This legislation supported continued exploration and investment in SA, while maintaining the integrity and transparency of the regulatory framework.

"The Opposition has instead guaranteed the passage of the Bill would add more red tape, rather than less - introducing vaguely-articulated requirements that both SA Chamber of Mines and Energy and the Association of Mining and Exploration Companies have told us are unworkable.

"Given these mining industry associations say that having no bill is better than having the Liberals' amended legislation, the state government now has no choice but to reject this legislation when it returns to the House of Assembly.

"All the Liberals have done is seek to create a divide between miners and farmers that did not exist before."

But, Grain Producers SA chief executive officer Brad Perry said the changes introduced sensible limits on [exploration tenure](#).

"One of our key concerns with the state government's original proposal was the prospect of ongoing, open-ended extensions leaving farming families in limbo for decades," he said.

"A capped two-year extension, rather than an open-ended five years plus, is a step towards restoring balance.

"GPSA's preferred position has been clear for some time: the maximum exploration period should remain at 18 years, as we believe that is more than sufficient for any exploration tenure.

"Farmers deserve certainty, not rolling extensions that leave them unsure when, or if, a project will ever progress to mining or conclude."

Mr Perry also welcomed the proposed introduction of an independent agricultural impact assessment before any extension was granted, saying it was an important safeguard.

"Grain producers, and farmers more broadly, carry the production and business risks when their land is under exploration, so it is only fair that any potential impacts are properly assessed by an independent expert," he said.

"Just as importantly, we strongly support the requirement to consult with the landowner before any extension is granted. It is the farmer's business, their land, and their long-term planning that's directly affected. Genuine consultation cannot be optional.

"While GPSA would prefer no extensions beyond the existing 18-year limit, the amendments put forward help rein in what was an unreasonable proposal.

"This debate has highlighted a much bigger issue, South Australian grain producers urgently need clarity and a definite end date when their land is tied up in exploration.

"Without that certainty, it becomes incredibly difficult for farming families to make long-term business decisions."

Opposition Primary Industries spokesperson Nicola Centofanti said regional landowners, farmers and stakeholders made it clear that the original bill created unacceptable uncertainty across farming communities.

"Our amendments are practical, reasonable and essential, and ensure primary producers are not sidelined or steamrolled in the process," she said.

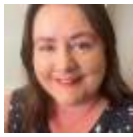
"The ability to extend exploration licences indefinitely is simply untenable. Our regions and our farmers deserve respect, proper consultation and genuine consideration of agricultural impacts.

"If the government will not accept these essential amendments in the House of Assembly, then we cannot in good conscience support the bill."

The SA Dairyfarmers' Association also welcomed the amendments, but said the happenings in Parliament highlighted the need to move on from a 'make it up as you go along' approach relating to SA farmland.

SADA chief executive officer Andrew Curtis said the improvements to the bill were a necessary step in protecting high-value agricultural land, but the situation highlighted a deeper, ongoing problem.

"The fact that Parliament has had to fix this at the eleventh hour tells the real story - agriculture is still an afterthought in policy development. Farming shouldn't come last."



By [Paula Thompson](#) | November 26 2025