

Treasurer Tom Koutsantonis

Minister for Finance
Minister for State Development
Minister for Mineral Resources and Energy
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Remote sensor technology drives major cost savings for resources sector

Resource companies will be able to shave millions of dollars from their costs by using remote sensor technology showcased at the new Remote Operation Centre in Adelaide's north.

Speaking last Friday at the official opening at Mawson Lakes, Minerals and Energy Resources Minister Tom Koutsantonis congratulated local company IPACS Australia on developing the technology underpinning the new centre.

Mr Koutsantonis said the new remote operation centre is a further example of the State Government's commitment to realising the full potential of South Australia's mineral resources and energy assets.

"In an economic environment of sharply lower commodity prices, it is vital that South Australian businesses embrace technological innovations that can deliver more cost-efficient operations," he said.

"Companies using the Remote Operations Centre will be able to more accurately detect faults before they occur, which reduces maintenance costs and increases reliability, productivity and efficiency.

"That will drive increased competitiveness for mid-tier mining service companies, which are the backbone of our resources and energy operations in South Australia."

The Remote Operation Centre is one of the foundation projects under the Mining and Petroleum Services Centre of Excellence.

The State Government has contributed \$660,000 towards the \$2.074 million centre, which IPACS Australia has established with contributions from the University of South Australia, HP, OSIsoft and their pilot customers, Lucas TCS/Arrium and Thiess/OZ Minerals.

Remote sensor data analytics – or keeping tabs on plant equipment from a central office location – can save millions of dollars by avoiding equipment failure, which in a remote mine can cost many days of lost production.

Managing Director of IPACS Australia Pty Ltd Kailash Nath Sriram said people were familiar with the benefits of remote monitoring centres in sectors like traffic flow management, through to the centralised monitoring of water levels and water quality.

"Now, we are monitoring the real-time asset performance of mining vehicles, boilers, smelters, SCADA systems and mining fixed-plant infrastructure for some of the world's largest miners and contract miners," he said.

“Mining service operators can deploy sensors across essential operational equipment in their mines and oil fields thousands of kilometres away, stream that data back to this operations centre, where it is plugged into diagnostic models that use smart mathematics (algorithms and predictive analytics).

“Remote operators can then readily assess equipment performance and schedule repairs or maintenance only when required, reducing operating costs, maintaining or increasing production, and, vitally, averting costly production shut-downs.”

Mr Sriram said during a recent pilot, service providers had trialled the use of sensors collecting data on the wheels of mining trucks, where the type of vibrations had indicated wear on the gear box and the components of ore crushers, with the streamed live data alerting engineers to potential problems in the crusher screen and identifying the need for urgent maintenance.

“By taking vehicles in need of maintenance off-line for repairs, the remainder fleet can operate unimpeded; in addition, trucks can safely operate for longer periods between servicing.”

Mr Koutsantonis said the milestone opening showed South Australia can deliver world-renowned innovative and targeted ICT applications.

“This is centre is a further example of a smart State in action,” he said.

“By bringing together our research capability and the know-how of our local suppliers we are able to deliver globally competitive solutions to address challenges faced by industry.

“This technology can undoubtedly be a platform for future job and export growth of remote operations services to resource companies globally.”