

## The tax is black and white for Gray

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It's great to see a government politician standing up for his constituency and his beliefs. Labor MP Gary Gray is a Whyalla boy and found his first job at the Whyalla steelworks. And now Rudd and Swan have devised a mining tax that will effectively wipe Whyalla's industry out.

Gray's mother still lives in the town and the townspeople are looking to her to convince her son that the town, and its industry, be counted. ([Steeled for battle](#), June 7)

And so Gray, on radio and TV this week, set a deadline of "a few weeks" by which the impasse with the mining industry and the government over the tax must be solved. He clearly understands the impact the proposed resources super profits tax will have on mining.

Gray of course was national secretary of the ALP between 1993 and 2000 and a key force in the ALP election campaigns in the 1990s. He stepped down in 2000 to join Woodside in Western Australia. He then left Woodside to stand for Brand in WA because he believed that Kevin Rudd could lead the ALP out of the wilderness.

Gray is Parliamentary Secretary for Western and Northern Australia and knows that WA will be devastated by the project suspensions and closures if the RSPT goes ahead in its present form. Indeed, under the tax, Gray stands to lose his seat.

In the talk-back game it was ironic that Gray found himself at odds with Finance Minister Lindsay Tanner who said that "the crucial thing here is getting it right" and the government could not accept a deadline.

If the press reports are correct ([Australia's own-goal](#), June 15), by the time Tanner found out about the Rudd-Swan mining tax it was already locked in. Therefore, Tanner is defending a decision that he did not make. The time to get

the tax “right” was before it was announced so that all that was required was fine tuning instead of massive change.

I feel for anyone like Gary Gray who really backed a leader who has let him down and let down the people in his home town.

**Footnote:** My guess is that the Gray factor will enable OneSteel's operations at Whyalla to be saved along with the coal gas plants in Queensland. But they will be ad hoc decisions. The only way to get the tax “right” is to start again.