

Engineering consultancy downplays links with Rosatom

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5 Jul 2016

Australian engineering and technical consultancy WorleyParsons, which has been appointed to advise the Department of Energy on the procurement process for nuclear energy, says it does not enjoy a particularly close relationship with Russian nuclear vendor Rosatom.



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The appointment of WorleyParsons in June raised eyebrows in industry circles, as the firm has provided preprocurement services on six different projects in the past few years that were then awarded to Rosatom.

On Monday, 4 July,, WorleyParsons said it was also working alongside Westinghouse and GE from the US, French company Areva, Canada's Candu, and CGN from China. While the company first won nuclear consultancy contracts in Bulgaria, where Russian VVR technology is used, its technology was "agnostic", it said.

"As leading consultants in the nuclear field, we are actively involved in many nuclear programmes around the world... This has allowed WorleyParsons to develop unique and unrivalled expertise and experience for the benefit of its clients," the firm said.

A joint venture that the company had established with a Russian state-owned energy firm was dismantled in 2015.

The firm is involved in nuclear power plant construction with Rosatom in Turkey, Jordan, Armenia, and Egypt. It also worked with Rosatom recently in Bulgaria and Russia, two projects that have been suspended.

In several of these projects, WorleyParsons provided pre-construction consulting services. In each of the six examples, Rosatom was later announced to be the preferred bidder for the construction of the project. WorleyParsons has also provided predelivery consulting services for new projects in Poland and Saudi Arabia, where Rosatom has expressed interest in bidding for the final project.

As a preprocurement adviser, WorleyParsons will be required to provide independent advice to the Department of Energy that will contribute towards the design of the procurement documents.

In its response to the concerns over its appointment, the company said that it "eschews all forms of improper business practice and ... conducts its business in an open, honest, and ethical manner, in accordance with applicable regulatory and legal requirements and relevant codes of practice".

The Department of Energy has appointed financial and legal advisers on the procurement, but it has not disclosed which companies were selected.

While Energy Minister Tina Joemat-Pettersson has promised to issue a request for proposals by March, department officials said last week that this had been delayed to ensure that a thorough job was done on preparing the tender documents.

Source: Business Day

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