



Senate to call Premier, Logan to front gas probe

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Alan Carpenter and Energy Minister Fran Logan will be asked to front a special Senate inquiry to be grilled over the Varanus Island gas explosion in a move by the Federal Liberal Party to embarrass the State Government ahead of next week's election.

Coalition senators pushing for the inquiry are likely to be supported by cross-bench parties and independents. The inquiry would demand documents the Liberals believe the State Government has sat on to avoid pre-election scrutiny.

While the Premier and Mr Logan cannot be forced to appear, Federal and State bureaucrats can be compelled and are likely to be targeted by the investigation.

The inquiry would be in addition to the current National Offshore Petroleum Safety Authority investigation. WA Liberal Senator Mathias Cormann said the inquiry was the only way to find out what the State Government knew about the Varanus Island explosion that slashed gas supplies to WA industry and consumers.

"The Carpenter Government is in hiding about their role in this mess,"

he said.

"We need to get to the bottom of what happened, and this Senate inquiry will be able to do that."

But the Premier dismissed the inquiry. "It is quite transparently a politically motivated stunt," he told *The West Australian*.

A draft terms of reference for the inquiry seen by *The West Australian* suggests the investigation will seek to uncover as many potentially damaging documents held by the Government as quickly as possible.

They would include "all relevant correspondence, advice and reports".

The inquiry would look at the causes and responsibilities for the explosion on June 3, the role of State and Federal agencies, the role and responsibilities of NOPSA and the economic impact on WA. Contractual arrangements forced on businesses during the crisis would be investigated.

WA Liberal Senator Chris Ellison believes the inquiry could start before West Australians head to the polls.

"We believe there should be a full investigation, the Government in WA is covering this up, it's refusing to reveal documents, and it falls to the

Senate to carry out an investigation which should be done properly in WA by a royal commission," he said. "We can start the inquiry before the election and put in place the production of vital documents that we need to see and the people of WA are entitled to see."



Fran Logan