



Libs back gas giant in row with Premier

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State and Federal Liberals rushed to defend Woodside Petroleum yesterday after Alan Carpenter attacked the energy giant for threatening to raise gas prices to cover the cost of the new \$2.5 billion tax slug on condensate from its North-West Shelf project.

Federal deputy leader Julie Bishop accused the Premier of putting the Rudd Government ahead of the best interests of WA.

Ms Bishop, the member for Curtin, said he should be angry at Kevin Rudd instead of Woodside, which she described as "one of Western Australia's great companies and a major employer". "Kevin Rudd did not reveal his plans for this new tax on the North-West Shelf prior to the Federal election and gave no warning to the Shelf partners that Labor's first Budget would have major financial implications for WA consumers," Ms Bishop said.

"Alan Carpenter has not once criticised this new Federal tax grab. Woodside should not be targeted simply for stating that domestic gas prices could rise as a result of Federal Labor's new tax. Western Australians need a Premier who is prepared to stand up for their interests rather than have Labor mates looking after each other."

Shadow State treasurer Troy Buswell said yesterday the Premier was guilty of hypocrisy. "Alan Carpenter will be first one up there to cut the ribbon on the Pluto gas line when it is open if he is still Premier, but he is quick to criticise Woodside for raising gas prices because of an unplanned tax hike."

WA Senator Alan Eggleston said he feared any higher costs on gas through taxes and the Rudd Government's emissions trading scheme could harm the State's booming export markets.

Woodside came under attack from the Premier on Wednesday after chief financial officer Mark Chatterji hinted it would pass on to consumers the impact of the new \$2.5 billion tax on condensate from its North-West Shelf project.

But Mr Carpenter said there was no justification for Woodside's complaints about the removal of the tax concession for condensate, a light crude oil produced as a by-product of gas, and the profitable company could easily afford it instead of hitting consumers, including WA gas customers. Federal Resources Minister Martin Ferguson has also threatened to refer Woodside to the competition watchdog over its threat.

Mr Carpenter's office did not respond to requests for comment on the Liberals' criticism, while Woodside yesterday again declined to respond publicly to the Premier's original attack.



Sting: Woodside is expected to make consumers pay the new \$2.5 billion Federal tax.