



## *State minister lashes Canberra*

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### **Body**

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The Western Australian government has taken aim at "nerdy little bureaucrats in Canberra" after federal Environment Minister Tanya Plibersek again delayed her decision on an extension of the North West Shelf LNG project.

Ms Plibersek has requested another 30 days to make her call on the Woodside Energy-led project, which has become a target for climate activists as well as some in her own party over its emissions footprint.

That means she is now not required to make a decision until late March, giving rise to concerns a decision may be delayed until after the next federal election. With polls pointing to a likely hung parliament, there is growing speculation the North West Shelf extension could be used as a bargaining chip by the Greens or teals in any future deal with Labor.

The WA Labor government has been a strong advocate for the state's gas industry and has already approved the extension.

Responding to claims that a lack of documentation from WA had forced the deferral of Ms Plibersek's decision, state Energy Minister Reece Whitby on Thursday said WA had responded swiftly to a request for more detail from the federal department.

"There was a request on the 29th of January for additional more information. On the fifth of February, which is five days later excluding the weekend, we had sought that information, gathered it up, made sure it was accurate, and passed it back to Canberra. Five days. I mean, seriously. That is an efficient, acceptable turnaround," he said.

"I suspect that there's a nerdy little bureaucrat in an agency in Canberra somewhere who's trying to cover his butt. That's my suspicion." The WA government was also a thorn in the side of Ms Plibersek's proposed Nature Positive laws, which were killed off not once but twice after strong pushback from WA Premier Roger Cook.

Mr Cook on Thursday said he believed his government had given all the relevant details to Ms Plibersek's department.

## State minister lashes Canberra

"This is the same department, don't forget, that said that we should have 40km/h zones on Pilbara highways," he said.

"So lord knows what's going on there, but I'm very confident that we provided all the information when it was requested." The North West Shelf decision is the latest point of tension between the Albanese and Cook governments, following Nature Positive, industrial relations laws, the federal government's ban on live sheep exports, and its efforts to ensure adequate numbers of GPs in the west.

Mr Cook said he would always stand up for WA.

"I always do what is right for WA and make sure that Western Australians' interests are always represented in Canberra, making sure they understand we are the engine room of the nation's economy," he said.

"You hurt Western Australian industry, you hurt the national economy. And so we'll continue to stand up whenever it's required to make sure that we continue to advocate for WA." Mr Cook confirmed that Mr Albanese would not be in Perth for Labor's official campaign launch this weekend, but said he expected to see the Prime Minister visit the state before the March 8 election.

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