

Gillman land deal inquiry could lose star witness as sacked Renewal SA chief leaves state

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Premier sacks infrastructure chiefs





Sacked Renewal SA chief executive Fred Hansen in a community park that goes with stage one of the Bowden Urban Village development.

AN inquiry into the State Government's Gillman land deal could lose its star witness, as sacked Renewal SA boss Fred Hansen prepares to return to the USA.

The Opposition has written to Mr Hansen asking that he detail when he plans to leave the state and is calling on the Government to pay for him to return here and front the inquiry if needed.

Mr Hansen's tenure included the controversy last year as the Government [approved sale of land at Gillman to a private consortium without going to tender](#). Four board members later quit.

Premier Jay Weatherill [announced Mr Hansen's axing on Friday](#), which is effective June 30.

Mr Hansen is on leave until then, but it is unclear how long he will remain in Adelaide.

In a statement on Friday, Mr Hansen said he and wife Heather were "looking forward to the next chapter in our lives" and "now is the time for us to reconnect with family in the States".

State Parliament's Upper House is next week expected to formally approve a motion from independent MP John Darley to set up the inquiry, with Opposition and Family First support.

If Mr Hansen leaves the state before hearings begin, it will lose the power to compel him to appear.

Mr Hansen declined a request for interview yesterday. In a statement, a Renewal SA spokeswoman

said: “The appearance of any Renewal SA employees before the Select Committee enquiring into the sale of the Gillman land is dependent on the content and success of the Hon Mr Darley’s motion, neither of which has been established”.

Mr Darley said Mr Hansen was his “number one” target for interrogation at the inquiry.

Opposition development spokesman Vickie Chapman said Mr Hansen would have the most “complete information and knowledge” of meetings and events surrounding the deal.

Ms Chapman also cast doubt on Mr Weatherill’s explanation that Mr Hansen was dismissed because he was unable to guarantee service for the full four years of the minority government.

It was “peculiar” for Mr Weatherill to dismiss a senior public servant that he had personally appointed just two years ago to a new government agency, she said.

“It has all the elements of disposing of the most significant pieces of evidence before an inquiry,” Ms Chapman said.

A Government spokesman dismissed calls for taxpayers to fund Mr Hansen’s return to Adelaide, saying there was “no point in considering” a “hypothetical situation”.

Mr Weatherill last week told Parliament the land was sold without tender “because it was in the interests of the state” and Renewal SA confirmed taxpayers received “a premium price”.

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