

Federal police hunt for Laurie Oakes fuel leak source

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AUSTRALIAN Federal Police are sifting through the telephone records of Daily Telegraph columnist Laurie Oakes to find who leaked Cabinet documents which embarrassed the Federal Government.

They are cross-checking the incoming and outgoing calls of Oakes, who is also political editor of the Nine Network.

On May 28, Oakes revealed Cabinet documents which showed four frontline economic departments had warned the Government its FuelWatch program could increase petrol prices.

The next day the head of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Terry Moran, called in the AFP to find the source.

The use of telephone records was exposed when a friend of Oakes of more than 30 years was visited by AFP officers to discuss a call between the two on the day the leak was revealed.

It had been only a social call. However, the police interview revealed Oakes' telephone records were being examined.

Oakes, currently in the US, said it was part of a big brother attempt to restrict information.

"If this is happening, it's not the fault of the federal police," Oakes said. "They're professionals, just doing the job they've been given. Politicians are to blame for big brother laws and attempts to restrict the information voters receive.

"For the record, my phone records would reveal nothing of relevance to this investigation."

A spokeswoman for the AFP confirmed an investigation was under way and until it was completed "it is not appropriate to comment".

Channel Nine's head of news John Westacott told *The Daily Telegraph* he was unaware of any investigation of telephone records.

On May 30, Oakes was interviewed by AFP Deputy Commissioner Tony Negus by telephone, in an exchange Oakes later described as "very civilised".

Police checks on telephone calls were used in 2004 to find the alleged leaker of Department of Veterans' Affairs material to *Herald-Sun* reporters Michael Harvey and Gerard McManus. Harvey and McManus refused to name their source and in June last year were convicted of contempt of court and fined \$7000.