

Fuel Security Key Messages

23 April 2026

1. Key Messages

1.1 Overall

- Volatile fuel costs and supply chain disruptions are hitting the most vulnerable people in society hardest, especially those in regional, rural and remote communities.
- The higher fuel prices are pushing people to the brink, triggering a wave of heightened mental health struggles, food insecurity, social isolation and housing instability.
- The fuel security uncertainty is also exposing chronic underfunding of community services
- This fragility risks a domino effect, where the collapse of one service triggers failures across other connected social services and every other pillar of a stable life.
- Community Service Organisations are already cutting back critical services, or are preparing to do so within weeks:
 - 40% of members surveyed are already cutting back; and
 - 20% of members surveyed forecast to cut back within 2 weeks.
- Community Service Organisations are regularly reporting:
 - worsening mental health due to the financial hardship and stress;
 - rationing of food; and
 - cancelling medical appointments.

1.2 Sector Specific Messages and Data

The information below was formed through the NCOSS survey, Peaks CEOs 16 April Forum or direct information to NCOSS. If there is more up-to-date information, please email fuelsecurity@ncoss.org.au

- **Emergency Relief and Food Security:** Surge in demand but food pantries are shutting down. One food pantry in Moree and another in Mid North Coast will close as soon as volunteers can't afford the fuel.
- **Community Transport:** Community Transport peak body survey:
 - Providers are at risk of shutting down completely:
 - 28% of members report they'll be unviable if diesel reaches \$3 a litre
 - 22% will be unviable at \$3.25
 - 28% will be unviable at \$3.50
 - 71% of providers are reducing or actively considering reductions in service delivery.
- **Disability Services:** Viability concerns in a price-capped market (NDIS).
- **Domestic and Family Violence:** DVNSW survey outlined:

- Escalating financial distress is driving increased demand, though the full impact on frontline services is expected to have a "long tail."
- Shift toward online requests and disengagement from in-person recovery.
- Rising pressure on brokerage funds and food hamper waitlists.
- Reduced transport support as staff can no longer afford to use personal vehicles.
- Staff wellbeing concerns compounded by increased financial pressure on employees in low-paid roles.
- **Homelessness and Housing:** Escalating pressures are leading to spiralling tenancy issues, debt, and financial legal challenges.
- **Mental Health and Suicide Prevention:** Increased demand for services due to financial distress and barriers to accessing specialist care.
- **Aged Care:** Carers unable to transport care recipients to treatment. Subcontracted in-home care providers are refusing shifts due to the high cost of fuel.
- **Youth and Child Services:** Foster carers are under financial pressure and unable to travel for medical appointments or family contact, while broader child protection issues are expected to increase.
- **Education:** Concern that there will be an increase in vulnerable school kids not attending.
- **Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD):** Difficulty accessing illicit substances due to transport disruptions may lead to withdrawal symptoms and increased mental health stress.
- **Community Legal and Advocacy:** Increased demand for assistance with debt and financial legal issues
- **First Nations Advocacy:** Acute risk of total service collapse in remote areas due to 100% diesel dependence, affecting access to food, power, clean water, education, and life-saving medical treatments like dialysis.

2. Current data sources

- Sector Forum 1st April
- Peaks CEOs 16 April Forum
- Fuel security surveys
 - NCOSS
 - Community Transport Organisation
 - DVNSW

If you have conducted your own survey, please share your data by emailing it to fuelsecurity@ncoss.org.au