

To: Minister Swinbourn. Minister for the Environment; Community Services; Homelessness
Rob Cossart. Fuel Security State Controller
Mike Rowe. Director General, Department of Communities

From: Tina Williams. CEO Volunteering WA

Re: **IMPACT OF FUEL SUPPLY AND PRICE ON VOLUNTEERING**

Date: Thursday 2 April 2026 following the Community Services Leaders Fuel Supply Meeting.

Volunteering WA

Established in 1988, Volunteering WA is the peak body for volunteering in Western Australia.

We support more than 1.5 million volunteers including an estimated 742,000 people aged over 15 who volunteer formally with an organisation or group.

Volunteers play a critical role in delivering essential community and emergency services throughout Western Australia.

Feedback from our members describes the current disruption to essential services, and how the disruption is anticipated to worsen.

Volunteer involving organisations report current volunteer shortages

Volunteers have cancelled placements across our reserves. They are concerned about availability of fuel in regional and remote areas where we operate.

Volunteers cannot afford to come to do their shifts, as many of them come from great distances (more than 50Kms). We also will have difficulty picking up stray dogs and cats due to the high cost of fuel.

Due to fuel cost/shortages we have seen a reduction in available volunteers.

Less volunteers coming in on their regular shifts.

Particularly for pensioners [who want to volunteer] it is having an impact.

A lot of volunteers (who make up 93% of the resources that respond to 000/emergency calls in our state) have ... hard calls to make. Are they going to have enough fuel to keep their firefighting appliances topped up or have to drain them to fill their machines so they can seed their crops. Are they going to go to training or community engagement or turn out to the brigade for calls ... or keep their car idle as much as possible so they have just enough fuel to get to work, get the kids to school, get to the shops for what food and supplies may be available .. or so they can make it to the nearest emergency department if they need to etc.

Volunteer involving organisations report significant current and anticipated increases to costs of business

\$10k per week additional fuel cost as we have 20+ vehicles on the road daily.

*We are going to have to review **how we provide food to our clients if this crisis worsens or is prolonged**. Our clients do not receive any support from the Government (Centrelink) and rely on [our organisation] for all essentials. We have increased the amount of the fuel voucher that we issue (to clients) in the first instance, but that won't go far or be useable if there are fuel shortages. It is critical that our clients have access to food and hygiene products.*

*OVERALL we expect supply to drop, demand to grow, branch presentations to drop, mobile presentations to grow, **cost of business overall to grow, volunteering to drop, staff WFH to grow.***

Volunteer involving organisations report having to institute and/or increase the reimbursements offered to prevent anticipated volunteer drop-out which is having an impact on their bottom line

We are doing a one-off support payment, (taking the % from the ATO for fuel) around 25% of the 89c [per kilometre] to and from the site of reimbursement and increasing this. Working to get ahead of this Don't want to make it difficult for them to continue to serve.

[In lieu of reimbursement] We currently provide a weekly food allowance [to volunteers] of up to 10kg of general groceries and up to 10kg of fruit and veg. Not all volunteers take this. We are planning to increase the allowance in some way.

Volunteer involving organisations who offer fuel reimbursement are experiencing an increase in demand for reimbursement which they are struggling to cover

Generally, when we have offered reimbursement, [for delivering food to clients who cannot make it to the pantry due to health or transport issues] volunteers don't usually take it, but I am now starting to receive claims for reimbursement. As [our Organisation] has a very tight/minimal budget, we will have to review how we can continue to offer this.

Volunteering WA's Recommendations to Government:

1. Volunteer Involving Organisations need temporary, targeted support to subsidise volunteer transport/fuel costs in order to keep their volunteers. (This could come via an immediate, targeted, uplift to the Federal Volunteer Grants Program or a targeted Lotterywest or State Government funded program).
2. A mechanism is needed to ensure fuel rationing measures recognise essential volunteers as a priority group.
3. Essential volunteer involving services who are severely impacted by transport and food costs require additional targeted support to deliver their services.
4. We would welcome the opportunity to work with you to explore further measures to build the sector's resilience to fuel shocks.