

**To:** Minister Swinbourn - Minister for the Environment; Community Services; Homelessness

**CC:** Minister Beazley- Minister for Local Government; Disability Services; Volunteering; Youth; Gascoyne; Minister Papalia, Minister for Emergency Services; Corrective Services; Defence Industries; Veterans; Racing and Gaming; Mike Rowe - Director General, Department of Communities; Rob Cossart - Fuel Security State Controller

**From:** Tina Williams. CEO Volunteering WA

**Re:** **BRIEFING NOTE - UPDATE ON IMPACT OF FUEL SUPPLY ON VOLUNTEERING**

**Date:** Tuesday 21 April 2026

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### Context for this update

Feedback provided at the April WACOSS discussion forums and noted in WACOSS Briefing Paper (20 April), re-enforced the key issues facing volunteering involving organisations at a time of increased demands on the sector:

- Reduced volunteer participation due to fuel costs
- Increasing difficulty recruiting and retaining volunteers
- Volunteers themselves reporting they are under financial pressure and struggling

This Briefing note provides a further update, informed by Volunteering WA Member feedback provided up to 21<sup>st</sup> April 2026, please read in conjunction with our earlier Brief of 2 April 2026.

### Organisations that rely on volunteers using their own vehicles to deliver services are even more severely affected by fuel costs. For example:

A NFP community services provider who delivers services across the Perth metropolitan area and in the Wheatbelt and Peel regions, explained their client transport volunteers are dropping out- especially in aged care. Previously volunteers were driving clients to appointments and volunteers were donating their time and fuel and using their own vehicles, but now they can't afford to. So paid staff now must drive clients to and from appointments which the volunteers used to do. This reduces the operational capacity of vital community services at a time when some paid staff report they can't afford the fuel to get to work to take up their shifts.

A Metropolitan Local Government Volunteer Coordinator reported:

*"The primary service delivery challenges we are currently experiencing due to the fuel crisis are within our Community Transport and Meals on Wheels programs. Both programs rely heavily on volunteers using their own vehicles to transport clients to medical appointments across the metropolitan area and to deliver meals throughout the [Local Government Area]. With fuel costs increasing significantly, volunteers have advised that the current ATO reimbursement rate of \$0.88 per kilometre is no longer sufficient to cover their out-of-pocket expenses. In addition, we reimburse volunteers for travel from home to their volunteering site and return, capped at \$20 per day. For volunteers who travel longer distances, this cap is proving inadequate. For example, one volunteer who travels from [outside of Perth metropolitan region] exceeded the daily reimbursement limit and has since placed their volunteering on hold due to the financial burden. These cost pressures are impacting volunteer participation and availability, which in turn affects our capacity to deliver services consistently.*

A charity who relies on over 300 volunteers for an annual fundraising event described the problems she faced for this year's event:

*"We are seeing the fuel crisis impact participation and retention. Many of our volunteers come from extended families and regular supporters who cannot absorb extra fuel costs. Some community members*

*have regrettably declined to volunteer this year citing fuel costs and we are concerned this will impact others. We are looking at some form of contribution to make it less challenging for delivery drivers, but the residual impact is to funds raised.”*

## **In regional and remote areas, volunteers report that fuel scarcity is a bigger problem than fuel cost.**

St John’s Ambulance reported to Volunteering WA that they are increasing their fuel reimbursement for their volunteers as the ATO standard is insufficient to meet current costs. They plan to review it again soon. However, the most pressing issue for St John’s Ambulance volunteers is mainly being felt in regional and remote areas, especially the Wheatbelt and Great Southern, where volunteers have explained that fuel scarcity is a bigger concern than fuel cost. Prioritising fuel availability for volunteers in remote and regional areas is critical.

### **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 and continue to deliver essential services. (This could come via an immediate Volunteer Involving Organisation Grants Program, through 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. Prioritising fuel availability for volunteers in remote and regional areas is critical.**

### **About 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. These services include Emergency Services Volunteers operating across Western Australia, as well as services and supports in aged care, disability, young people, refugees and asylum seekers, mental health and environmental including wildlife and animal welfare.