

# RCCIWA Survey Summary

Impacts of Fuel Security on WA's Regional Businesses

March 25<sup>th</sup> 2026



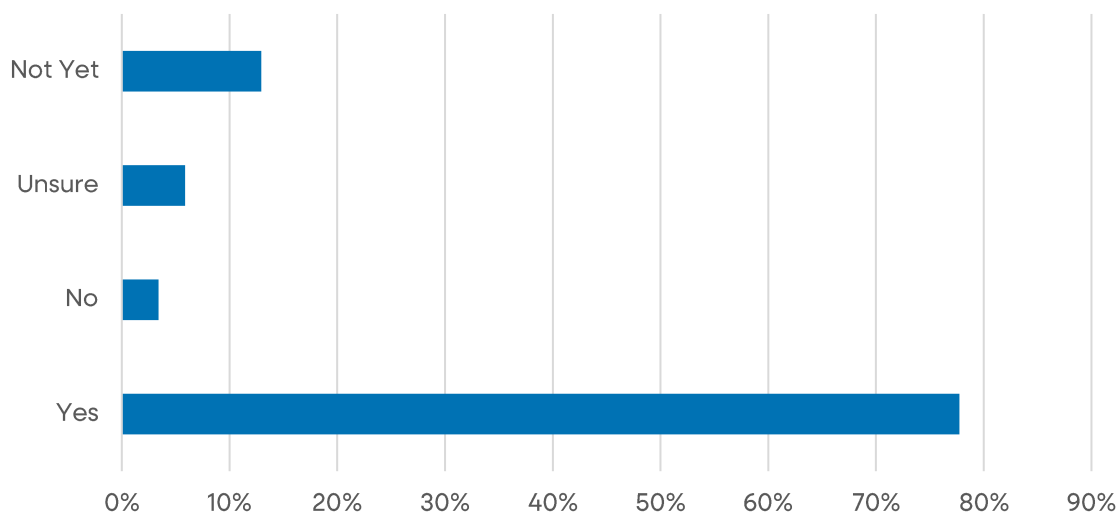
The Regional Chambers of Commerce & Industry of WA (RCCIWA) represents 46 regional Chambers of Commerce, Business Networks and Business Associations who collectively represent over 10,000 regional businesses. We also represent all sectors and all size businesses. This survey was conducted on behalf of our 46 members and was open from March 18<sup>th</sup> to March 24<sup>th</sup> 2026. We received 409 completed responses, all being from businesses located and operating in Regional WA. All industry sectors were represented with **24%** from Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing and **21%** from Retail, Hospitality and Tourism being the two highest sector responses.

## Summary Overview

The fuel crisis in the Middle East is impacting us all, however it is clear that the negative impacts being experienced by businesses and communities in Regional WA are far greater and much wider spread than those being felt in Metropolitan Perth. The difference is startling. In Regional WA the multiplier effect on costs for businesses is unsustainable, with many businesses telling us they are considering whether they will continue to operate at all.

**78%** of our respondents reported that their business is currently being impacted negatively. And of the remaining 22%, **19%** informed us that they expect to be negatively impacted within the next 2 to 8 weeks.

### Is your business currently being impacted negatively by fuel supply restrictions?



Western Australia is predominately a driving state, whether it's for private or commercial purposes, meaning that the rising fuel prices and uncertainty of supply is having an immediate and detrimental effect throughout Regional WA and is impacting all input costs, not just fuel. Most essential services in Regional WA, such as health, education and food supply are delivered by road, and there is no other alternative. Regional businesses rely on road travel to conduct their business each day. Several respondents also mentioned cancelling trips to Perth for long term



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medical appointments as they could either not afford the fuel or were limiting their own fuel usage due to uncertainty of supply.

This is a fast moving issue and the escalation of the impact it is having on regional businesses and their communities is alarming. We are also seeing concerning patterns of behaviour in some regional areas such as stockpiling, price gouging, abusive behaviour towards service station employees and fuel theft. The panic being felt in regional WA is real, and whilst it may be at a level that is not completely warranted in some regional locations, clear and genuine information is required to communicate the real situation and to reassure people. Many of our respondents are confused by the current situation and do not know where to go to get accurate and correct information.

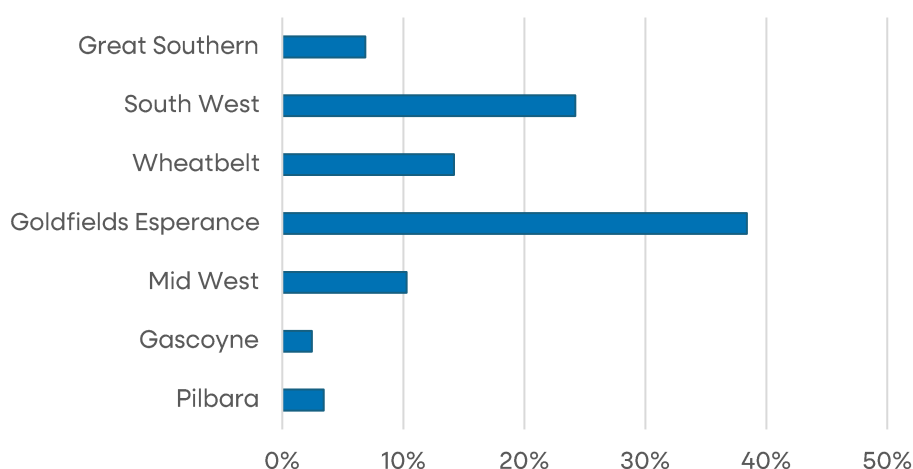
The further complication of Cyclone Narelle travelling down the coast of Western Australia is also adding high anxiety for the thousands of people and businesses who will be relying on diesel fuelled generators if the power supply is cut.

## Key Findings

RCCIWA has not seen this level of anxiety, business uncertainty and stress since the onset and first two years of COVID-19. Some businesses are telling us they are considering the future of their operations, and they are extremely worried about their whole community.

We saw a swift and detailed response from the seven regions we surveyed. Please note that the Kimberley and Peel regions were not included as their Development Commission or local Chambers were already conducting a survey. We were mindful of not duplicating information that was already being sought, and not over-surveying businesses who are already under duress. The impacts are just as strong from these two regions.

### In which region is your business located?



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**84%** of our respondents are small businesses, meaning they have less than 20 full time equivalent employees. This is a significant response as their average input costs have increased by 35% across the board – an increase they will not be able to absorb, and many fear they will not be able to pass on this increase in costs to their customers.

Key Findings Include;

- ➔ **81%** of businesses impacted reported on average a **40% to 60%** increase in fuel costs, which includes the cost of the fuel and fuel levy charges from freight and transport companies. Some businesses reported a 100% increase in their fuel levies. It is important to note that most businesses have to source goods and/or products from elsewhere as it is not locally available – meaning they all pay freight on these goods or products.
- ➔ Uncertainty of supply – **73%** of all respondents, and particularly the Agricultural Sector listed their priority concern as to whether they will receive enough fuel. This uncertainty has resulted in;
  - ➔ Many broad acre farmers are either reducing or cancelling their seeding program. Most would usually begin seeding in April and without certainty of fuel supply for seeding and the maintenance and harvest, they are being forced to make major operational changes. This is incredibly time sensitive and will have a major flow-on effect across WA.
  - ➔ Businesses not being able to plan, or take on future or additional work or contracts
- ➔ **28%** reported that they have been forced to stand down employees due to work and jobs being cancelled, not enough fuel for them to travel as a part of their employment and/or costs being too prohibitive.
- ➔ **41%** of our respondents reported that they had already had a reduction of custom, cancellations of work, cancellations of bookings and a reduction in business enquiries.
- ➔ **45%** of all respondents said that they are experiencing between a 30% and 45% increase in all costs, as each of their suppliers have cost increases. One business reported that one of their suppliers added a “War Time Fuel Surcharge” on their invoice which is incredibly concerning.
- ➔ All respondents also stated they are concerned about the “what’s to come” and believe it will worsen dramatically.

Other Key findings that should be prioritised are;

- ➔ Farmers who are about to commence their seeding programs must be given priority and a guarantee of supply.
- ➔ Regional WA must be prioritised for fuel supply as for most there is no other alternative to road travel. **95%** of all respondents stated this.
- ➔ Many parts of regional WA rely on home health services (aged care, disability services, mental health services, midwifery, child health etc) that are delivered by contracted providers who do this by car. Some of these providers have a



fixed fuel budget in their contract that they are already surpassing. Being able to access fuel is also a concern for these providers.

- Hospitality & Tourism – many businesses in the sector are reporting cancellations of up to 20% of bookings that had been locked in for over 12 months. For all of regional WA Easter accommodation is traditionally fully booked by tourists and visitors, however many businesses in these areas are reporting they are expecting their lowest Easter numbers in over 10 years. For some businesses that have also been impacted by the Demersal fishing ban, this may be the final straw in them being able to operate profitably. Restaurants and Cafes are also reporting lower customer numbers as cost of living impacts take effect.
- Many businesses are locked into quotes, work, jobs or tenders that are now costing them money, they will make a loss on these jobs. Some stated they will risk abandoning the job or work, to ensure they do not operate at a loss.
- Many respondents reported that employees were not turning up for their shifts, as they travel quite a distance to work and could no longer afford the fuel.
- Social isolation, food security, mental health impacts and delivery of essential health and emergency services were also mentioned by more than 50% of our respondents as to the concerns they had for their whole community.

### Suggested Actions and Support

We have only listed immediate and short term actions below, as this is the priority for Regional WA right now. This crisis has reinforced the urgent need to develop and implement immediate and long term strategies that will deliver fuel security for Western Australia long into the future.

- Prioritise Regional fuel supply - 95% of all respondents stated this
- Prioritise fuel supply and distribution to primary producers and all broad acre farmers about to commence their seeding programs
- Provide certainty of fuel supply to priority sectors and services – allocate fuel to those businesses or organisations that rely on fuel to operate or deliver their services
- Apply a cap or freeze on fuel prices for essential sectors and services
- Increase the fuel tax credits
- Provide subsidies to businesses providing the chosen essential services, so they can continue delivering and cover their costs.
- Provide grants to regional small businesses to offset their increase in cost inputs
- Provide temporary fuel excise relief
- Ensure all communication is clear and regular – people are feeling confused with how rapidly this is escalating. Utilise key stakeholders and peak bodies to assist with this.
- **For people and businesses in the Metropolitan area only**
  - Make public transport free for ALL people



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- ➔ Encourage all people who can, to work from home and encourage car pooling .
- ➔ Activate a short term Alternative Fuel days system – it can be based on their number plate. Similar to the watering system – you can only get fuel on 2 days per week or even 1.
- ➔ Whilst all regional fuel stations have fuel limits – a State mandated fuel limit should be applied for vehicles to prevent stockpiling (which is happening) and ensure sufficient supply for the regions.

RCCIWA will continue to collect and collate relevant and timely feedback and the concerns of Regional Businesses and their broader communities in an effort to produce practical and viable solutions. Please contact us if you have any questions or if we can assist in any way.

### Contact Details

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