

Subject: Fuel prices

Dear Mr. Hansen,

I only caught a snippet of an article on the radio today that said to convey our personal situation regarding the current fuel crisis and I didn't quite get the contact address, so please forgive me if I have contacted you by mistake.

After many years of struggling, living in terrible conditions under unscrupulous landlords, my fiancé and I resolved to live out the great Australian dream and buy our own home. With the exorbitant cost of rent, I had to work three jobs, up to 90 hours a week to scrape together a deposit, while my fiancé also worked full time and raised 2 little girls.

We thought we were on a good thing when we bought a block of land in Minden (Brisbane Valley) for \$36,000 while we had been renting a dump in Kenmore for \$260/week. At the time, September '03, fuel was only around 70c a litre and we thought we would be able to manage providing the reserve bank didn't put up the interest rates; we couldn't have expected fuel to nearly double in price.

Since moving to Minden, my fiancé is still (stuck) in Brisbane city, desperately trying to get work closer to home and we can't move the children from their school (Kenmore) until she does move, and I have taken a promotion to work in Toowoomba (before the huge fuel hikes).

Now with us both driving approximately 150km a day each, myself in a Toyota Hiace and her in a Corolla, I'm sure you can imagine what our petrol bills are worth, about \$400/fortnight. I can car pool occasionally, when rosters permit, and unfortunately need to drive a car on most occasions due to the amount of equipment and work I take to and from work. We are going backwards real fast!

I read in "The Courier Mail" a few weeks back that somewhere in the vicinity of 38c/litre for fuel goes to the USA, why? Our roads aren't getting any better, particularly from Ipswich road, west. Again why? I thought that part of the fuel taxes were to pay for better roads? I only heard on the radio yesterday that the price of fuel should come down by as much as 7c/litre in the next week, and today we are getting told that it will soon be more than \$1.50/litre. Why?

Mr Hansen, I know we are not the only family who are doing it tough. I know of several families who moved to semi-rural areas such as ours because it was the only place they could afford, that wasn't a living hell hole, or out the back of Burke. The dream of owning your own home is out of the question for so many people, so some, like us move to remote/semi-remote areas to do it. What hope has anyone got if we can't even afford to put fuel in the car, there is no public transport available, the nearest shopping centre is half an hour away (approximately 35 km) and the roads contribute to higher fuel consumption due to congestion?

Mr Howard only said a week or two ago that he wanted to lower taxes for high income earners, to "reward them for succeeding". Well can you pass on to Mr Howard please, that we have succeeded, we have gone from the brink of bankruptcy (due to medical problems), to having our own home in 5 years. Through our own hard work and dedication we have created a home for our girls, that will soon be taken away by escalating fuel prices that will cause us to sell up, move closer to the city and rent again, then fall back into that horrible cycle. But then I suppose we'll be renting from those who have really succeeded and benefited from Mr Howard's tax cuts. If only he would cut the fuel tax, so we could all enjoy the benefits.

Kind Regards,
Shaun Elliott and Karina Strybos