



North Queensland Consumers' Association Inc.

Mr CraigWallace MP,

Please accept the following contribution to the inquiry. The NQ Consumers Association Inc represents Consumers from Cape York to Mt Isa in the west and down south as far as Gladstone. All are unpaid volunteers. Currently there is no Government subsidy or assistance.

There is no question that high fuel prices are hurting North Queenslanders. Those suffering the most are those living in remote towns and in country areas.

The real effect of the high tax on fuel forces those in our community that can least afford it to pay the same tax as the rich. Some are unemployed, disadvantaged, or just struggling with families and children to make ends meet. High fuel prices impacts on their lives and the lives of their loved ones. This needs to be addressed.

As a group we are concerned that fuel pricing is harming Consumers with a double whammy, not just the pain at the pump but the flow on effect of higher freight charges which in turn leads to higher cost of food and grocery items as well as other consumerables. This in turn will contribute to increased inflation and harm our Nation. Some consistent comments and complaints from within our Community-

- We are being taken advantage of.
- There is a lack of transparency in fuel pricing as to who gets what and just who within the industry gives the order and decides to increase the cost of fuel.
- The oil industry is making enormous profits. Very little is staying in Australia.
- The government will not take on the oil industry because they are making a fortune from taxes on fuel.
- Petrol is bad enough, however many Consumers feel that Diesel and "Gas" prices are ripping us off more! Diesel is the least refined, yet it is currently higher than unleaded petrol. The increasing price of "Gas" could indicate to the more cynical that they are also trying to get in for more profits 'because they can'.
- Fuel is quick to rise and slow to fall, a clear lack of consistency. What is government doing to monitor those organizations that increase prices due to so called higher fuel prices, yet when the

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price per barrel falls, those increased fees or price hikes are not removed! For example, the airlines and transport firms are but two examples. There must be consistency, with a Government supervised process in place to remove the increases.

- When the price per barrel increases, up goes the price of fuel, yet when the price per barrel falls to what it was previously, the pump price never seems to drop down to reach the low price previously offered. Consumers notice with dismay.
- The industry either owns or controls many service stations. Consumers need to be able to identify if sites are owned by oil companies, the distributors, or 'independents'.
- There have been a number of complaints that so called independent operators are being forced out by having to buy fuel at a higher price than the oil industry owned site sell to the general public at the pump. So much for competition.
- Those Consumers in remote and country areas are doing it especially tough, yet because they are not large in numbers, are virtually ignored. This must change.
- Motoring organizations and Government Regulatory organizations should give clear guidance for the Community as to the suitability or otherwise of ethanol.

If action is not taken by Government, we are headed for even higher fuel prices.

Deregulation has not worked. If the ACCC needs more power to act, our elected politicians should enact appropriate Legislation. In a country that is largely self sufficient in resources, ordinary Australians appear to be taken advantage of for the sake of even higher profits for big business.

Profit before people is simply greed. Australians need a fair go!

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President NQ Consumers Association Inc.
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