

**Australian Government
Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional
Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts**

**Executive Summary from Concept and
Refinement Testing of Fuel Security Campaign
(Level 2)**

10 April 2026

Our ref: 6177

Research Methodology

Qualitative concept and refinement testing research was conducted for the fuel security campaign on 6 and 9 April 2026. The total research sample comprised **13 focus groups** (n=103 participants) with **general public audiences who were fuel users** aged 18-30 years, 31-55 years and 56+ years living across Australia in metropolitan, regional/ rural and low fuel supply locations.

Overall findings

1. The current fuel situation was a topic of high concern, anxiety and interest.

The **main causes** of concern among research participants were: the cost of fuel, which was adding pressure to the already high cost of living; perceived restriction of freedom of mobility due to growing fuel access limitations; and unease about the potential wider impacts on access to food and other essential services as well as the economy. Many participants were thinking about or had already started making changes to their driving habits to save fuel, but some were **unclear about what changes to make** besides the obvious options of replacing driving with other modes of transportation.

Therefore, participants were **receptive to requests and examples of how to save fuel**, and had a **strong need to know what the government was doing** to address the issue.

2. There was strong support for a national fuel security campaign as soon as possible – with an informative, empowering and achievable tone that avoided being alarmist.

Most participants indicated that they **needed communications** from the government to address **information gaps; mounting concerns and ongoing uncertainty** about the fuel situation; and to help people and businesses to **prepare practically and emotionally** for any upcoming restrictions.

Furthermore, when participants were made aware of the National Fuel Security Plan, they strongly felt that such knowledge was the **type of information necessary and valuable** to encourage early action to reduce the likelihood of higher-level measures. Participants who had already made changes to save fuel considered that a communications campaign along these lines would provide validation and reassurance that they were doing the right thing.

There was a strong expectation that the public **would be given sufficient warning and transparent communication as the fuel situation progressed from Level 2 to Levels 3 and 4**, rather than being subjected to sudden unforeseen shifts without prior notice or ongoing communication (to minimise disruption, anxiety and panic-related behaviours).

Some participants were worried and anxious about how far fuel restrictions would go in the future and the impact this would have on them personally/their families and for the economy – reportedly similar to the types of concerns they had during the COVID-19 pandemic.

3. Current awareness of the National Fuel Security Plan was limited.

Current limited awareness of the National Fuel Security Plan included lack of awareness of the 4 levels, the current level that Australia was in and what it meant. There was also limited understanding of the relationship between managing supply and reducing collective demand. **Knowledge of the Plan** was found to be important to **enhance transparency**, provide a rationale for the **need for fuel saving behaviours**, **empower collective action**, and provide some **reassurance** that the government was taking action.

Furthermore, knowledge of a multi-level, national plan helped to demonstrate that the response to fuel security was strategic, unified and considered, rather than being ad-hoc or reactive as was generally perceived to have been the case during the government response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

4. There was a clear preference for the collective approach that was tested rather than an individualistic approach.

The tested **collective-based creative approach** was felt to be appropriate for: a nationally important topic; fuel saving behaviours being asked of people across Australia; and supporting the national economy – all elements that required fostering a sense of **empowerment** and appealing to **civic-mindedness**. Such an approach also implied **shared responsibility**.

In addition, there was a perception that some people were inclined to be self-focused and hence that an individualistic approach could unintentionally limit fuel saving objectives and thereby be counterproductive to addressing the issue.

5. An messaging hierarchy based on the ‘what’, ‘why’ and ‘how’ was important for promoting a sense of empowerment and supporting prosocial behaviours including voluntary compliance now and for the longer term.

The research found that the campaign content should be focused on three key areas of messaging: **‘what’** the government was doing to secure supply (i.e. the 4-level plan, the current level and what it meant); **‘why’** collective slowing of demand was necessary (i.e. that simple individual actions could collectively contribute to making our supply go further); and **‘how’** to save fuel via practical achievable small actions (including tangible proof points to support how much fuel efficiency would be achieved with each action to enable people to choose which options better suited them/their needs).

Such a **key message mix** was found to be necessary to **build transparency, trust, confidence and motivation** towards **prosocial behaviours**, including **voluntary compliance** now at Level 2 as well as for building goodwill, cooperation and support for higher levels of the Plan to be achieved successfully.

6. The execution style, 4 level graphic, lock-up logo and tagline supported the collective-based concept.

The **execution** achieved good **affinity** through showing a **diversity of real people** across locations, settings, industries as well as role modeling actions. These features and the **“Australiana” filming style** were effective in supporting the collective-based national approach.

The **4 level graphic** had good **cut-through and ease of understanding** with a recognisable traffic light-based colour system. The **lock-up logo**, as the map of Australia, was found to be appropriate for the collective-based creative approach as it was felt to be appealing to people’s **sense of patriotism** and **represented a national, united response** to the fuel situation. Finally, the **tagline of ‘Every little bit helps’** was found to be appropriate for **encouraging the desired call-to-action** for Level 2.