



EVENT BRIEFING

Meeting with Hon Chris Bowen on Fuel

Date:	1 May 2026	Priority:	High
Security classification:	Restricted	Tracking number:	BRIEFING-REQ-0030487

Action sought		
	Action sought	Deadline
Hon Simeon Brown Minister for Energy	Note the contents of this briefing to support your meeting with Hon Chris Bowen on fuel.	4 May 2026

Contact for telephone discussion (if required)			
Name	Position	Telephone	1st contact
Bronwyn Turley	Acting General Manager, Fuel Supply Policy	Privacy of natural persons	
Peter Bartlett	Director, Innovation and International		

The following departments/agencies have been consulted
MFAT

Minister's office to complete:

☐ Approved

☐ Declined

☐ Noted

☐ Needs change

☐ Seen

☐ Overtaken by Events

☐ See Minister's Notes

☐ Withdrawn

Comments



EVENT BRIEFING

Meeting with Hon Chris Bowen on Fuel

Date:	1 May 2026	Priority:	High
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Purpose

To provide background information and talking points for your online meeting with Hon Chris Bowen from 4.00-4.30pm on Monday, 4 May 2026.

Recommendations

The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) recommends that you:

- a **Note** the contents of this briefing to support your meeting with Hon Chris Bowen.

Noted

Privacy of natural persons

Bronwyn Turley
Acting General Manager, Fuel Supply Policy
Building, Resources and Markets, MBIE

1 / 5 / 2026

Hon Simeon Brown
Minister for Energy

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Meeting purpose and logistics

Date:	Monday, 4 May 2026	Time:	4.00-4.30pm
Location:	Either your electorate office or the Auckland Policy Office.		
Attendees:	Hon Chris Bowen, Australian Minister for Energy and Climate Change. A biography is included at Annex One . Suggested talking points are included at Annex Two . The latest fuel stocks data pack (including a comparison to Australian stocks on page 6) is included at Annex Three . New Zealand's Fuel Plan and Fact Sheet is included at Annex Four .		
Agenda:	To discuss fuel crisis cooperation.		

1. You are meeting virtually with Hon Chris Bowen, Australian Minister of Energy and Climate change, at 4.00-4.30pm on Monday, 4 May 2026. You last met Bowen in October 2024 alongside Minister Watts in Auckland.
2. This call was sought to ensure that you have an ongoing line of communication with Bowen on the fuel crisis, and reiterate that New Zealand and Australia need to work together to respond.

Key messages

3. The key messages we recommend you stress with Bowen are:
 - New Zealand remains relatively well placed in terms of fuel supply, and our importers have confidence in their forward orders out to the middle of the year. The war has primarily caused a price shock for New Zealand so far, however the Government is planning for a worst case scenario and supply shocks through our national fuel plan, and through securing additional diesel supplies.
 - New Zealand is looking for a closely aligned approach with Australia - we want our officials working with yours to share intelligence and potential approaches to responding. This collaboration is now in excellent shape, and we highly appreciate the access Australian departments **international relations** have given New Zealand officials.
 - The need for continued early heads up on any specific fuel response measures Australia will take **Free and frank opinions**

Background

There is now close engagement with Australia to align our approaches

4. Ministers and agencies are now engaging regularly with Australian counterparts in our responses to the crisis. This includes:
 - Prime Minister Luxon spoke with Prime Minister Albanese shortly following the beginning of the war

- the Minister of Finance met with Treasurer Chalmers on 24 April, with discussions canvassing our responses to the fuel crisis
- the Associate Minister for Energy attended a sub-group of the Energy and Climate Change Ministerial Council with state energy Ministers responsible for responses on 20 March
- the former Minister for Energy engaged with Australian Resources Minister Madeline King on the margins of the Tokyo-hosted Indo Pacific Energy Security Ministerial Meeting on 15 March
- DPMC is leading engagement with the Australian Fuel Supply Taskforce and is meeting regularly to discuss our responses
- MBIE is engaging weekly with the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCEEW) to share our approaches to the response and give each other heads up of policy announcements
- the New Zealand High Commission in Canberra is in regular contact with Australian fuel and energy counterparts including at the Australian Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, and Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Summary of Australian fuel related announcements

5. Since the beginning of the war Australia has made the following policy announcements:

- Establishing a Fuel Supply Taskforce to provide coordination between federal and state level responses and an Energy Security Taskforce within DCEEW to focus on energy and liquid fuels policy.
- Issuing the National Fuel Security Plan to coordinate a consistent response across the Commonwealth, states and territories. The four-level plan is similar to New Zealand's. Australia has transitioned from Level 1 ("plan and prepare") to Level 2 ("keeping Australia moving"). On 23 April, Prime Minister Albanese confirmed Australia remains at Level 2.
- Released 20 percent of the baseline Minimum Stockholding Obligation for petrol and diesel.
- Temporarily relaxed the petrol sulphur standards, increasing the sulphur content limit from 10 parts per million to 50 parts per million, until 30 September.
- Temporarily reduced the diesel flashpoint standard from 61.5 degrees Celsius to 60.5 degrees Celsius, until 1 October.
- Passed legislation to implement a scheme allowing Export Finance Australia to underwrite the purchase of shiploads of fuel through supports like insurance, derivatives, or loans. Australia has now announced several such deals, including with Ampol, BP and Viva Energy. As of 24 April 2026, Australia has secured shipments of approximately 400m litres of diesel through this scheme.
- The Federal Government halved the fuel excise on petrol and diesel by 26.3 cents per litre, and States and Territories recycled GST windfalls (from elevated fuel prices) to further reduce fuel excise, totalling a 32 cents per litre reduction until 30 June.

- The Federal Government also reduced heavy vehicle road user charges to zero, and deferred the next heavy vehicle road user charge increase by six months.
- Due to issues with overbuying earlier on in the crisis, Prime Minister Albanese made a national address on 1 April which included asking Australians to only buy as much fuel as they need over the Easter Weekend, and to save the rest for the critical industries and regional Australia.
- The Federal Government announced a concessional finance package for industry and critical supply chains, including AU\$1 billion in interest-free loans for freight, fuel and fertiliser businesses; AU\$5 billion for hard-to-abate sectors; and \$150 million in forestry.

6. Commercial Information, International relations

7. At an officials level meeting with the Australian Fuel Supply Taskforce on 31 March, Australia indicated that there has been no reduction in fuel supplies coming to Australia. Australia struggled early with localised fuel supply disruptions and service station shortages, exacerbated by panic buying and hoarding, but pressures appear to have since eased since April. International relations, Free and frank opinions

New Zealand's response workstreams

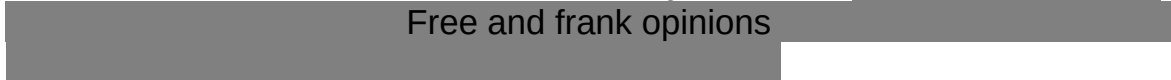
8. New Zealand's response has several facets:
- Establishing a Ministerial Oversight Group (MOG) to oversee agencies' responses.
 - The Government announced its National Fuel Plan on 27 March – a fact sheet is attached at **Annex Four**. This has four phases, with differing levels of Government intervention at each phase. New Zealand remains at phase one. Finalising the details of the plan at phase three and four and how this would be implemented is the current focus of officials, and MOG Ministers discussed this on 29 April.
 - The Government has temporarily changed fuel specifications to allow Australian standards, except for one issue related to sulphur.
 - Daily fuel importer engagement. MBIE meets with fuel companies daily to understand their forward supply chains. We have also established a Major Users Group to understand any demand challenges.
 - Providing information and messaging to the public. This includes publishing twice weekly stocks information which indicate when shipments are coming.
 - As you are aware through your recent engagement with Korea's Minister for Energy, Ministers have been regularly engaging with Asian counterparts to shore up the openness of our fuel supply chains. Australia has also been active in this regard.

Significant work to procure additional fuel has also been undertaken, similar to Australia's approach

9. While fuel companies are not currently reporting any orders being stopped or a likelihood of a supply shortage, the Government has indicated it wants to establish a buffer on top of domestic fuel holdings required by the Minimum Stockholding Obligation as an insurance policy should there be a supply shock.
10. This work has involved providing funding to Channel Infrastructure to establish additional diesel storage at Marsden Point through refurbishing existing tanks.
11. MBIE and Treasury also ran a commercial process to identify options for the Government to support additional supply. This resulted in the Government announcing, on Tuesday 28 April, that it will enter into negotiations with Z Energy to procure 90m litres of diesel to store at Marsden Point.
12. Z Energy will procure, own and manage the volumes of fuel acquired under this agreement, while the Crown will control the release of fuel to the market. Additional diesel is expected to be delivered by late June/early July.
13. Commercial Information, Negotiations

14. Ministers will also shortly receive advice on similar options in relation to jet fuel.

Issues Minister Bowen may raise

15. Immediately prior to the Minister of Finance's meeting with Treasurer Chalmers over ANZAC weekend, Treasurer Chalmers published a press release on the visit, which included reference to Sustainable Aviation Fuels (SAF):
"We'll also discuss how we can grow the trans-Tasman Sustainable Aviation Fuel supply chain to attract more investment and strengthen regional fuel security. We will have more to say on low-carbon liquid fuels as part of the May Budget."
16. In their conversation, the Treasurer indicated Australia may announce a SAF mandate as part of their May 16 Budget
17. The Government does not currently support imposing a SAF mandate, in part because that it would add cost to consumers while the cost of living is elevated. Free and frank opinions


Other energy policy engagement

18. The previous Minister for Energy and Minister Bowen agreed a number of energy policy cooperation topics as part of the Annual Climate and Finance Ministers (2+2) meeting. MBIE is progressing these with Australian officials. Actions include:

- working towards a joint approach on enabling EV chargers to have smart functionality. Cabinet recently agreed to make regulations requiring EV chargers sold in New Zealand to have smart functionality. We will be consulting Australia on the development of technical specifications due to the interlinked markets
- New Zealand and Australia (on our side primarily through the EA and ComCom) will co-host a technical assistance and training initiative with Pacific energy regulators, expected in August 2026.

19. Separately, Ministers have also agreed there will no longer be an annual 2+2 process, and instead responsible portfolio ministers will engage directly where appropriate.

Annexes

Annex One: Biography

Annex Two: Suggested talking points and questions

Annex Three: Fuel Stocks Comparison

Annex Four: National Fuel Plan Fact Sheet

Annex One: Attendee biography

	Hon Chris Bowen, Minister for Energy and Climate Change The Hon Chris Bowen is Minister for Climate Change and Energy. He is also the Federal Member for McMahon, NSW. Chris grew up in Smithfield in Western Sydney, attending Smithfield Public School and St Johns Park High School. He graduated from the University of Sydney with a Bachelor of Economics. He has also a Master's Degree in International Relations and a Diploma in Modern Languages (Bahasa Indonesia). He joined the Labor Party in 1988 and was elected to Fairfield Council in 1995, serving as Mayor of Fairfield for 1998 and 1999. He also served as President of the Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils from 2000 to 2002. Chris entered the Federal Parliament in 2004 and has held a wide range of portfolios including serving as Treasurer, Minister for Human Services, Minister for Immigration, and Minister for Small Business. Chris lives in Smithfield with his wife Rebecca, children Grace and Max and his labradors Ollie and Toby and is a keen supporter of the GWS Giants.
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Annex Two: Suggested talking points and questions

Working together

- The purpose of my call today is to ensure we have an ongoing line of communication between us on the fuel crisis. My Cabinet colleagues are also reaching out to their Australian counterparts to do the same.
- I want to thank you for making your officials available to New Zealand agencies – I understand they are meeting regularly to share policy development and intelligence on the crisis. This is invaluable to us.
- Free and frank opinions

New Zealand situation and approach

- New Zealand remains relatively well placed in terms of fuel supply, but the longer this drags on the more difficult this will become. Our fuel importers continue to tell us they are not currently seeing issues, albeit that there is increasing risk the longer the crisis drags on.
- The war has primarily caused a price shock for New Zealand, rather than a supply shock. However our Government is still preparing for a worst case scenario, including by securing an additional 90m litre diesel buffer which we announced on 28 April. Confidential advice to Government
- Asian crude supply chains appear to be diversifying to make up for lost supply out of the Strait of Hormuz. Free and frank opinions
- We issued an update to our National Fuel Plan on 27 March. This has four phases and is similar to Australia. We are currently at phase one.
 - The phases respond proportionately to the risks to New Zealand's fuel security. These phases are assessed separately for petrol, diesel and jet fuel to reflect their different functions and challenges.
 - At each phase is a set of measures that would be taken in response to escalating risks to New Zealand's fuel security.
 - Demand restraints or prioritising fuels for critical users will be considered at later stages of the plan. We are clear we want to avoid ever getting to these stages.

Questions you may wish to ask

- What are Australia's views on the forward outlook for refined fuel supply chains from Asia? International relations
- How is your domestic response tracking? What are the key challenges Australia is facing two months into the crisis?
- Do you expect Australia will pursue commercial deals for other fuels than diesel?

If asked about Sustainable Aviation Fuel

- The Government does not currently support a SAF mandate as it would add costs to the economy. We are however interested in whether Australia may move to a mandate, and how this would affect New Zealand.

Annex Three: Fuel Data Pack

Commercial information, free & frank opinions

Commercial information, free & frank opinions

Commercial information, free & frank opinions

Commercial information, free & frank opinions

Commercial information, free & frank opinions

Commercial information, free & frank opinions

Commercial information, free & frank opinions

Commercial information, free & frank opinions

Commercial information, free & frank opinions

Annex Four: National Fuel Plan Fact Sheet

New Zealand's Fuel Response Plan 2026

Phase 1: Watchful

What's happening

The fuel market is operating effectively and fuel is available nationwide. However, prices are rising due to global market changes.

This phase is about supporting the market and making sure Kiwis have good information.

What the Government will do

- Monitor fuel stocks and shipments
- Publish twice-weekly stock updates
- Monitor global supply and maintain engagement with international partners
- Coordinate closely with industry players to ensure markets continue to work well
- Understand and prepare to reduce its own demand
- Provide information to the public, including on how to reduce fuel bills

What you can do

- Access fuel as you normally would
- Regularly check MBIE's website
- Be aware of EECA's information on fuel-saving measures

Phase 2: Precautionary

What's happening

The market continues to operate effectively and fuel is available nationwide, but there are signs of significant supply disruptions.

This phase is about shoring up supply, closer coordination between Government and industry, and managing demand.

What the Government will do

- Continue to monitor fuel stocks and shipments, and publish twice-weekly stock updates
- Work with international partners to keep fuel flowing to New Zealand
- Coordinate closely with key industry players to ensure fuel is effectively distributed
- Review regulations to enable reduced fuel use
- Implement a public sector fuel response plan
- Provide information to the public on how to reduce fuel bills and conserve fuel in the national interest

What you can do

- Access fuel as you normally would
- Consider combining trips, and/or other modes
- Regularly check MBIE's website
- Follow EECA guidance on additional measures to help save fuel day-to-day

Phase 3: Managed *UNDER CONSULTATION*

What's happening

Supply is tighter and the Government is making sure fuel gets where it is needed most.

This phase uses Government powers, implemented by industry, to protect critical services. Measures will be lifted as soon as conditions allow.

What the Government may do

- Prioritise uninterrupted supply to life-preserving services, and help direct fuel supply to others according to priority, for example via purchasing limits
- Provide regular public updates, listen to industry and communities, and adjust accordingly
- Regularly assess how things are going, and get back to Phase 2 as soon as possible

What you can do

- Be confident that ambulances, fire services, hospitals, and food supply chains are covered
- Follow any purchase limits
- Check the daily update to understand how long measures will be in place

Phase 4: Protected *UNDER CONSULTATION*

What's happening

There is a bigger or sustained supply disruption, and there are formal rules to ensure fuel is distributed fairly.

This phase is about protecting critical services, and making sure everyone else gets a share. Measures will be lifted as soon as conditions allow.

What the Government may do

- Prioritise uninterrupted supply to all life-preserving services, and more strictly direct how fuel is distributed to other customers
- Maintain daily public updates, listen to industry and communities, and adjust as appropriate
- Regularly assess progress, and get back to Phase 2/3 as soon as possible

What you can do

- Know that essential services like food supply and emergency response are fully protected
- Use service stations as directed
- Check the daily update

Fuel response plan 2026

Phase 1: Watchful

What's happening

The fuel market in New Zealand is operating effectively and fuel is available nationwide. However, prices are rising due to external factors such as global market shifts and supply chain pressures.

This phase is about working closely with fuel importers, distributors and users, and making sure Kiwis have good information about what's going on so they can make informed decisions about what works best for them.

What the Government will do

- Monitor fuel stock levels and incoming shipments.
- Publish twice-weekly stock updates, so New Zealanders have accurate, up-to-date information on fuel supply.
- Work with fuel companies, airlines, and other key industry players to ensure markets continue to work well.
- Maintain engagement with international partners.
- Review and, if necessary, remove non-essential regulations to allow reduced fuel use where possible (such as changing fuel specifications).
- Understand and prepare to reduce its own demand, in case it needs to do so at Phase 2.
- Provide information to the public, including on how to reduce fuel bills.

What you can do

- Fill up vehicles as you normally would. There is no need to purchase more than you need – this helps to ensure that everyone, including those providing critical services, can access fuel when they need it.
- Stay informed by regularly checking MBIE's website for the latest information. The Government will provide clear, timely and accurate information to help you make well-informed decisions.
- Be aware of EECA information on additional measures that can help save fuel day-to-day.

Fuel response plan 2026

Phase 2: Precautionary

What's happening

The market continues to operate effectively and fuel is available nationwide, but there are signs of significant supply disruptions. These might include delays in deliveries or limitations on how quickly fuel is restocked in certain areas.

This phase is about closer coordination between Government and industry, shoring up supply, and taking steps to manage demand responsibly, both within the public sector and across the wider community. New Zealanders will continue to receive clear, accurate and timely information.

What the Government will do

- Continue to monitor fuel stock levels and incoming shipments.
- Continue to publish public stock updates twice weekly so New Zealanders have accurate, up-to-date information on fuel supply.
- Work with fuel companies, airlines, and other key industry players to ensure effective regional distribution of fuel.
- Work with international partners to keep fuel flowing to New Zealand.
- Review and, if necessary, remove further non-essential regulations to allow reduced fuel use where possible.
- Implement a dedicated public sector fuel response plan to manage its own demand, ensuring that government services continue to operate effectively while using resources responsibly.
- Provide information to the public on how to reduce fuel bills and conserve fuel in the national interest.

What you can do

- Access fuel as you normally would. There is no need to purchase more than you need – this helps to ensure that everyone, including those providing critical services, can access fuel when they need it.
- Consider combining trips, where it is practical to do so, to make the most of your travel, and consider other modes of transport if they are accessible and available to you.
- Follow EECA guidance on additional measures to help save fuel day-to-day.
- Stay informed by regularly checking MBIE's website for the latest information. The Government will provide clear, timely and accurate information to help you make well-informed decisions.

Fuel response plan 2026

Phase 3: Managed

UNDER CONSULTATION

What's happening

Supply is tighter and the Government is making sure fuel gets where it is needed most.

This phase is about using Government powers, developed in close coordination with industry and frontline service providers, to protect critical services. This phase will be implemented by industry.

Measures will be lifted as soon as conditions allow.

What the Government may do

- Prioritise uninterrupted supply to all life-preserving services.
- Help direct fuel supply to customers according to priority (e.g. emergency services, hospitals, and water and power infrastructure) so critical providers can access what they need.
- Introduce purchasing limits to keep supply available for everyone, under the following indicative priority bands:
 - *Band A: life-supporting services* – uncapped supply – e.g. emergency services, courts, corrections, hospitals, lifeline utilities and defence
 - *Band B: economically-important services* – e.g. critical transport services (e.g. road freight for supermarket and grocery supply chains, international air links), food supply and primary production during time-critical periods
 - *Band C: essential services* – e.g. public transport, essential infrastructure maintenance, and rural GPs and district nurses
 - *Band D: other commercial customers* – this comprises all other commercial and business fuel uses
 - *Band E: general retail sales to consumers.*
- Provide regular public updates on stocks, incoming shipments, and what to expect.
- Listen to industry and communities, and adjust the approach as appropriate.
- Regularly assess conditions and try to get back to Phase 2 as soon as possible.

What you can do

- Be confident that ambulances, fire services, hospitals, and food supply chains are fully protected.
- Help by following any purchase limits, only buying what you need, and leaving supply available for others.
- Check the regular updates to understand how long measures will be in place.

Fuel response plan 2026

Phase 4: Protected

UNDER CONSULTATION

What's happening

There is a bigger or more sustained supply disruption and there are formal rules in place to ensure fuel is distributed fairly.

This phase is about protecting critical services, and making sure everyone else gets a share.

Measures will be lifted as soon as conditions allow.

What the Government may do

- Prioritise uninterrupted supply to all life-preserving services.
- More strictly direct how fuel is distributed across all other customers.
- Set rules about when and how customers purchase fuel.
- Maintain regular public updates and give clear notice before any changes to the rules.
- Listen to industry and communities, and adjust the approach as appropriate – we would rather adjust quickly than stick to an approach that isn't working.
- Regularly assess how things are going, and try to get back to Phase 2 or 3 as soon as possible.

What you can do

- Know that essential services like food supply and emergency response are protected
- Use service stations as directed
- Check the regular updates for the current stock position and to understand how long these measures will be in place

Fuel response plan 2026

The process to move between phases of the plan

What will prompt a move between the phases?

The Fuel Security Ministerial Oversight Group will be responsible for deciding whether a shift between phases is appropriate, with the group required to consider a move when there is a change in any of the six assessment criteria.

These criteria will be used to assess a movement up or down a response phase. If there is a change in any of these criteria, the Ministers will meet to make their assessment and a decision on whether a move is appropriate. The assessment criteria are:

1. export restrictions – if any of New Zealand’s source refineries introduce or relax export restrictions
2. changes to New Zealand’s fuel stock levels of plus or minus three days since the most recent published update
3. a fuel company informs the government that they are unlikely or unable to fill future orders
4. a breach, or a notification of an imminent breach, of the minimum storage obligations
5. any significant policy changes in Australia or from the International Energy Agency
6. a significant disruption to regional distribution.

How will you know if decisions to move between phases will be made?

A group of senior Ministers will decide whether New Zealand needs to move between phases. Ministers may decide that New Zealand needs to be at different phases in the plan for different fuels: for example, we could move to Phase 2 for diesel but stay at Phase 1 for petrol.

Ministers will consider a broad range of information. There is no single change that will automatically move us up or down a phase. Ministers will assess the full picture each time and publicly explain any decision to change phases.

Ministers will exercise care and judgement in making decisions – we will only move up a phase when there is a clear and genuine need, and we will move back down as soon as conditions allow.

At the moment, it doesn’t look likely that we’ll need phases 3 or 4, but it’s best to be prepared in - having a plan in place gives Ministers the ability to make evidence-based decisions rather than reacting under pressure. New Zealanders also need confidence that we are ready to act in a measured way if circumstances change..

What could a decision to move phases be based on?

Ministers will receive advice on the following, which will inform decision-making:

- Whether fuel is getting to New Zealand as expected – e.g. whether countries that supply our fuel have restricted exports, or whether shipments are being delayed
- What fuel companies and airlines are telling us – e.g. whether they are having difficulty sourcing supply or whether they are seeing pressures at specific airports or terminals
- How our fuel stocks are tracking – whether levels are stable, falling, or increasing
- What’s happening internationally – whether our key partners, like Australia, are taking action and how these actions affect New Zealand
- Whether specific communities are being affected – e.g. whether fuel stations in a specific region are consistently struggling to get supply.