



New Zealand  
Speech-language  
Therapists' Association

*Te Kāhui Kaiwhakatikatika  
Reo Kōrero o Aotearoa*

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## Submission re Fuel Response Plan

At the outset, the New Zealand Speech-language Therapists' Association (NZSTA) notes that this submission concerns essential staff's ability to access fuel or other practical transport arrangements to travel to their workplaces and perform the duties necessary to deliver priority services. The issue is not a general claim for unrestricted commuting but rather ensuring that priority services can continue to operate in practice by maintaining the workforce needed to deliver them.

MBIE's proposed framework is structured around priority services and customer groups. NZSTA's concern is therefore with how those settings will translate into real service continuity on the ground, including whether essential workers can physically reach the service delivery site.

NZSTA submits that this is particularly relevant to speech-language therapists (SLTs) working within services that are already identified as, or closely aligned with, Government priority bands. This includes hospital-based SLTs whose work supports acute care and swallowing safety, as well as SLTs acting as Communication Assistants in the courts. In these contexts, the intended priority for hospitals and courts cannot be fully realised unless the specialist workforce required to deliver those services can access the transport needed to get to work and carry out their duties.

NZSTA also notes that, for some SLTs, the practical issue may involve not only private vehicle access but also continued access to public transport, or a combination of both. This is relevant where clinicians travel between sites, work across community settings, or support access to other essential public services.

NZSTA is not suggesting that all speech-language therapy roles should receive the same level of priority in a fuel shortage. Rather, our submission is that where speech-language therapists are part of services that the Government intends to prioritise, fuel and transport arrangements must be practicable so those services can continue to be delivered.

