27 March 2026

Funerals don't stop because of a fuel crisis

Funeral Directors are calling on government to recognise them as an essential service in any fuel contingency or priority-access planning and to consider temporary relief or support measures to reduce the need to pass on unavoidable costs increases to bereaved families.

The Funeral Directors Association has released the results of a Fuel Impact Survey showing funeral directors are highly mobile essential services; 81.8% travel more than 400 km and 30.9% travelling more than 1,000 km per week.

Operating cost increases, changes to service delivery and delays or logistical challenges are already being felt, and while funeral homes are absorbing costs now to protect grieving families, that cannot continue with 94.5% either already or planning to pass on fuel related costs.

Funeral Directors Association Chief Executive, Gillian Boyes says funeral directors must keep operating regardless of wider economic conditions.

"Transfers of the deceased, care of the deceased, funeral arrangements, hearse movements and support for police or coroner processes can't simply be deferred," says Ms Boyes.

"We are asking government to treat funeral services, including providers of funeral products, as an essential part of community resilience and ensure continuity of access during fuel disruption."

Ms Boyes says failure to recognise funeral directors as essential services during Covid had a devastating effect on families.

"We are desperate not to put families through that heartache and stress again."

"The fuel crisis isn't just a business issue; it risks adding cost and stress at one of the hardest moments in a family's life," says Ms Boyes.

NB: Funeral Directors Association Fuel Impact Survey results attached.

ENDS

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Funeral Directors
ASSOCIATION OF NZ

Fuel Crisis Impact on Funeral Homes

Funeral Directors Association Fuel Impact Survey – 26 March 2026

Responses 55 funeral businesses	**Coverage** 12 regions represented	**Field footprint** 45 travel 400km+ weekly (81.8%)
Cost pressure 81.8% report significant operating cost increases	**Profit pressure** 67.3% report reduced profitability	**Family pricing** 94.5% have passed on or expect to pass on costs

Executive summary

- The survey received 55 responses from funeral businesses across 12 regions, indicating the fuel crisis is already creating widespread cost pressure across the sector.
- More than four in five respondents (81.8%) travel 400km or more in a typical week, and 30.9% travel more than 1000km. This means even short-term fuel price spikes or shortages have a direct operational effect.
- 81.8% report significantly increased operating costs and 67.3% report reduced profitability.
- Although only 16.4% have already passed fuel costs on to families, a further 78.2% say they are likely to do so. That means 94.5% of respondents either already have, or expect to, pass on some fuel-related cost.
- Qualitative responses show the impact goes beyond petrol and diesel for fleet vehicles. Respondents also raised risks relating to cremation fuel, supplier freight charges, staff commuting costs, and the ability to respond to police and coroner work or long-distance transfers.

Key findings from the survey

1. Funeral homes have a large travel footprint

Most funeral businesses in the survey operate across wide catchments. **81.8%** travel 400km or more each week, and **30.9%** travel more than 1000km. **76.4%** serve mixed urban/rural or rural communities, where alternatives and route flexibility are often limited.

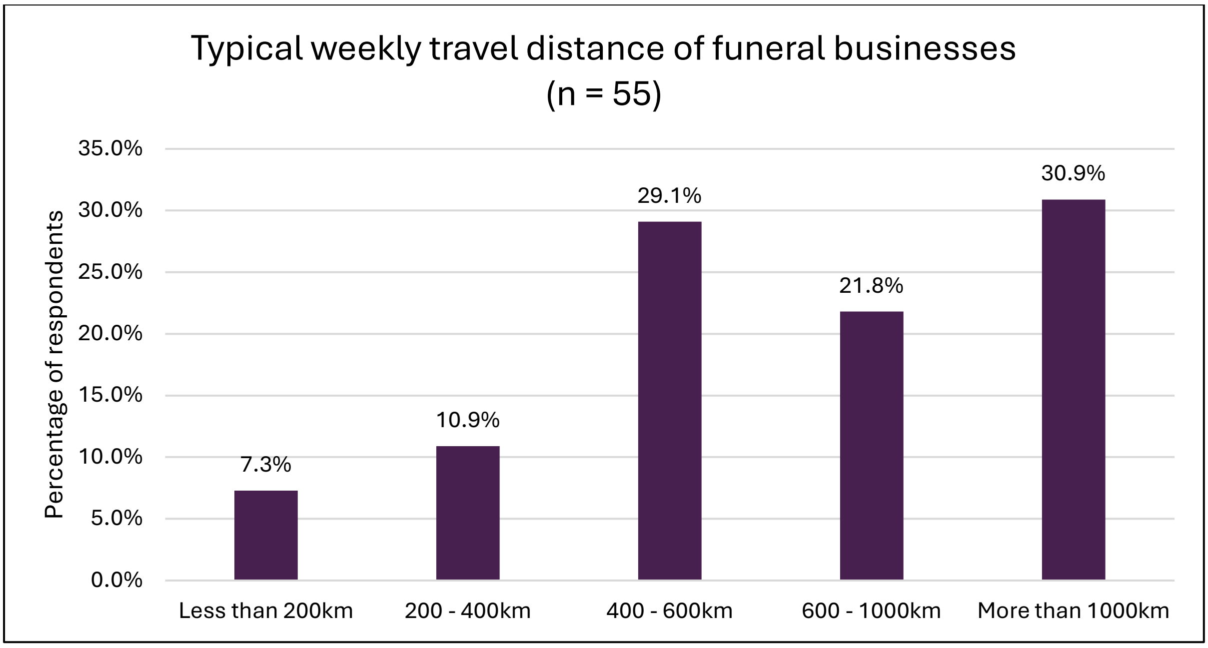

Figure 1. Typical weekly travel distance reported by respondents.

2. Cost pressure is immediate and widespread

45 respondents (81.8%) say the fuel crisis has significantly increased operating costs, while **37 (67.3%)** report reduced profitability. Smaller-margin offerings such as direct cremations and lower-cost farewells were specifically mentioned as becoming harder to sustain.

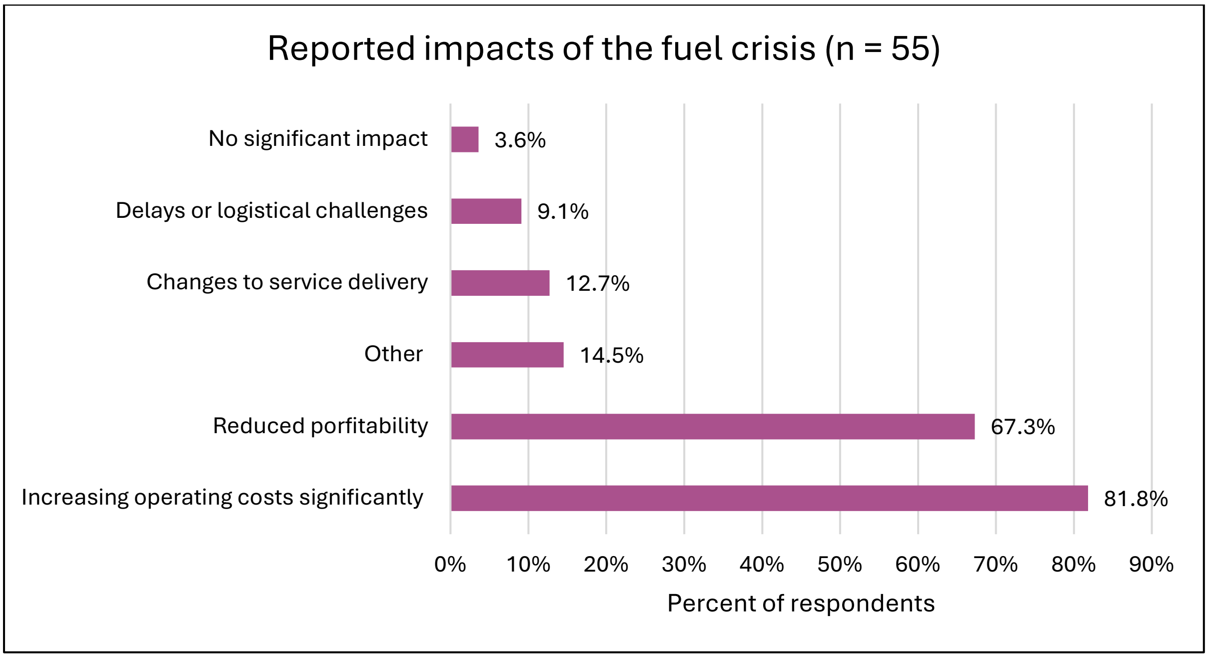

Figure 2. Main impacts selected by respondents. Multiple responses were allowed.

3. Families are likely to feel the impact next

Only 16.4% have already fully or partially passed fuel costs on to families, but **78.2%** say this is likely. The evidence suggests many funeral homes are currently absorbing costs to shield families, but that position is not sustainable if the crisis continues.

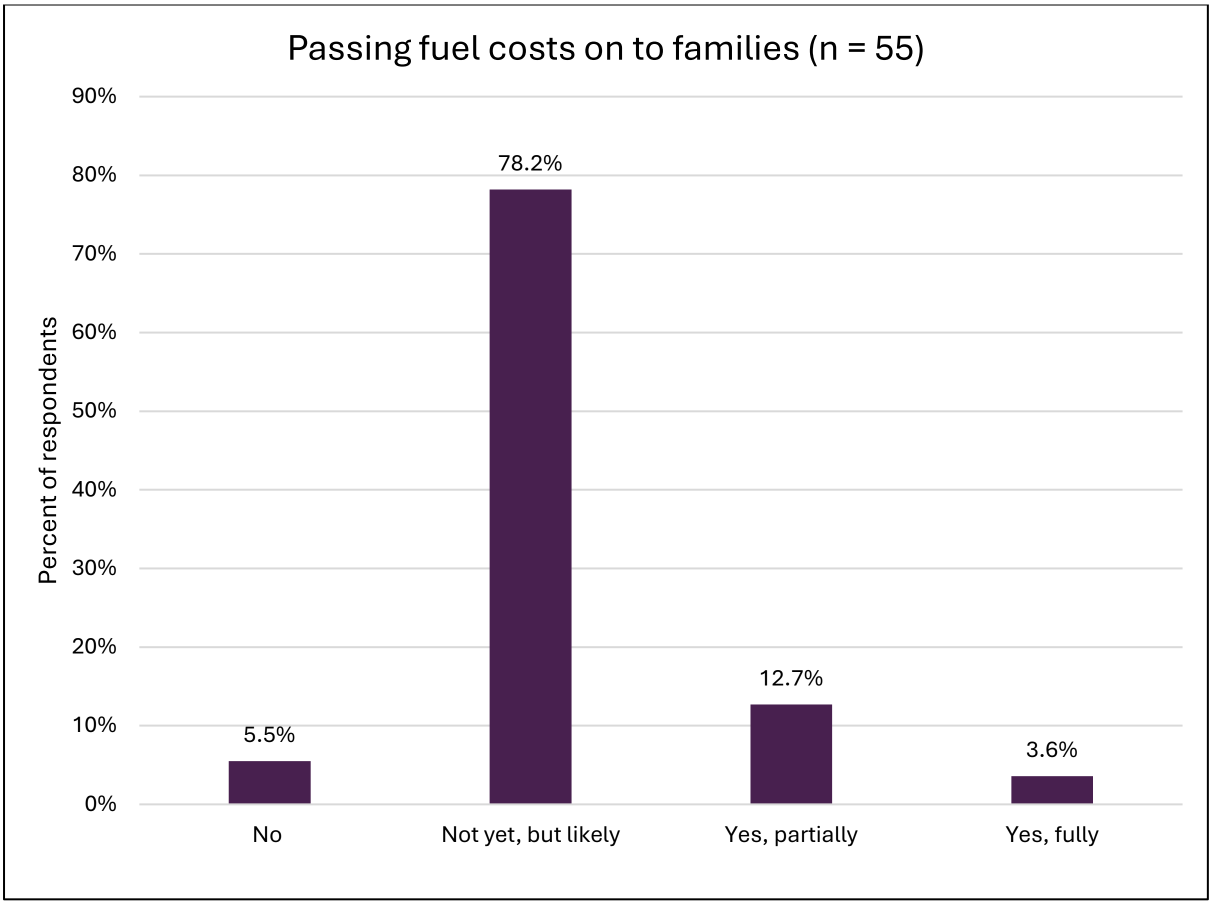

Figure 3. Have funeral homes had to pass fuel costs on to families?

Voices from the sector

The quotes below illustrate the human and operational consequences being reported.

> *"Unable to service the East Coast for removals, and repatriations. Unable to carry out police contact for removals, and Coroner for postmortems."*

> *"Our crematorium is fuelled by diesel. The increase in the cost of fuel has doubled the fuel component cost of each cremation."*

> *"In a time when families should be focused on honouring their loved one, the rising cost of fuel is becoming another burden during an already difficult and emotional time."*

> *"At this point it is being absorbed, but not sure for how long. Our area covers a large part of the top of the South Island, and with police calls some transfers are 2 or more hours away plus return."*

"Necessary employees are struggling to get to work, especially after hours, while budgeting for fuel."

Methodology and limitations

- This report is based on 55 survey responses received between 24 and 25 March 2026.
- Percentages are based on all respondents unless otherwise noted. For multi-select questions, percentages sum to more than 100% because respondents could choose more than one impact.
- The survey is a rapid sector pulse rather than a statistically weighted sample. It should be read as a timely indicator of current and near-term pressure on funeral providers.
- Qualitative comments have been lightly edited only for punctuation or readability when quoted in this report.

Appendix: respondent profile by region

Region	Responses	Region	Responses
Canterbury	10	Taranaki	3
Auckland	10	Manawatu - Whanganui	3
Waikato	7	Northland	2
Bay of Plenty	5	Tasman - Nelson	2
Wellington	4	Gisborne	1
Hawkes Bay	4	Unspecified	1
Southland	3		

End of report