

# Chapter 6

## Summary and conclusions

6.1 The committee's *Interim Report* asked some simple questions which captured the essence of what Fuelwatch is about:

Wouldn't it be good to be able to take the family from Melbourne this Saturday to see Granny in Ballarat and be able to check on Friday exactly which station along the highway would have the cheapest petrol? Wouldn't it be better to be able to get a good price for petrol without having to queue up on a Tuesday night and hope you had picked the right station? And wouldn't it be better for small independent petrol retailers to have the same information about prices as the big supermarket chains so they can compete on fairer terms?<sup>1</sup>

6.2 The committee believes the answers to these questions are 'yes'. These are real advantages that a national Fuelwatch scheme would bring. It will give consumers a fair go. Consumers using Fuelwatch will save themselves time and money by knowing which petrol stations have the lowest prices. Even consumers that do not use the scheme can indirectly benefit, as having better informed consumers seeking out good prices will reward retailers who lower prices for all customers.<sup>2</sup>

6.3 For the community as a whole, the cost of monitoring, analysing and distributing petrol price information will be reduced.

6.4 The committee notes that, relative to margins in the eastern capitals, retail petrol margins in Perth have fallen since FuelWatch was introduced. No alternative factor affecting Perth but not the eastern capitals was established as an explanation for the drop in the relative price of petrol in Perth.

6.5 The committee notes concerns that independent petrol retailers face challenges, mainly in getting good prices in the wholesale market. However, introducing Fuelwatch will not make things more difficult for them. By evening up the retail playing field, and making the market more transparent, it will help them compete with the major retailers. The committee notes that independents have not been adversely affected by the introduction of FuelWatch in Western Australia.

### Recommendation 5

**6.6 The committee recommends that the Senate support the introduction of a national Fuelwatch scheme.**

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1 *Interim Report*, p. 1.

2 The same argument applies to measures such as unit pricing, which can also empower consumers to compare prices and find the best deal.

**Senator Annette Hurley**  
**Chair**