



# REGIONAL FUEL TAX THIRD QUARTER REPORT

1 January – 31 March 2019

NZ TRANSPORT AGENCY

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## OVERVIEW

A regional fuel tax (RFT) scheme (the scheme) was implemented on 1 July 2018 for the Auckland region, excluding Great Barrier Island (the scheme area). The purpose of the RFT is to enable additional investment for transport projects in the Auckland region as set out in Auckland Council's RFT proposal that was approved by the Minister of Transport and the Minister of Finance.

RFT is charged at a rate of 10 cents per litre (plus GST) on petrol and diesel (including their bio-variants). The New Zealand Transport Agency administers the collection of RFT directly from fuel distributors (also known as 'taxpayers') and forwards the tax collected to Auckland Council, less any rebates paid and service cost. This includes, but isn't limited to, deliveries to service stations, fuel storage tanks, machines, marinas and vehicles.

This report covers the Transport Agency's quarterly reporting requirement under section 65Y(3) of the Land Transport Management Act 2003 (LTMA). The Transport Agency is required to report to the Minister on a quarterly basis and publish this information online.

RFT Quarterly reporting periods for 2018/19 financial year:

- Q1 2018/19: 1 July – 30 September
- Q2 2018/19: 1 October – 31 December
- Q3 2018/19: 1 January – 31 March
- Q4 2018/19: 1 April – 30 June

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This section sets out a high-level summary of the findings in this report.

- Median prices inside the scheme area for 91 have decreased this quarter by 15 cents compared to the previous quarter (1 October– 31 December 2018).
- Median prices outside the scheme area for 91 octane petrol have decreased by 21 cents per litre during this time.
- Fuel prices continue to differ across the country; some are still higher and lower than in the scheme area.
- Overall, diesel fuel volumes have continued to increase every quarter against baseline and overall petrol volumes as at the end of the third quarter reporting period have returned to baseline.
- The volume of petrol distributed outside the scheme area has decreased between the quarters 1 July– 30 September 2018 to the 1 October– 31 December 2018, while diesel volume has also decreased (this data is reported a quarter in arrears).

# VOLUME OF FUEL DELIVERED INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE SCHEME AREA

Under section 65Y(3)(a) of the LTMA the Transport Agency is required to report changes in the volume of fuel supplied inside and outside of the RFT region.

## Fuel delivered inside the scheme

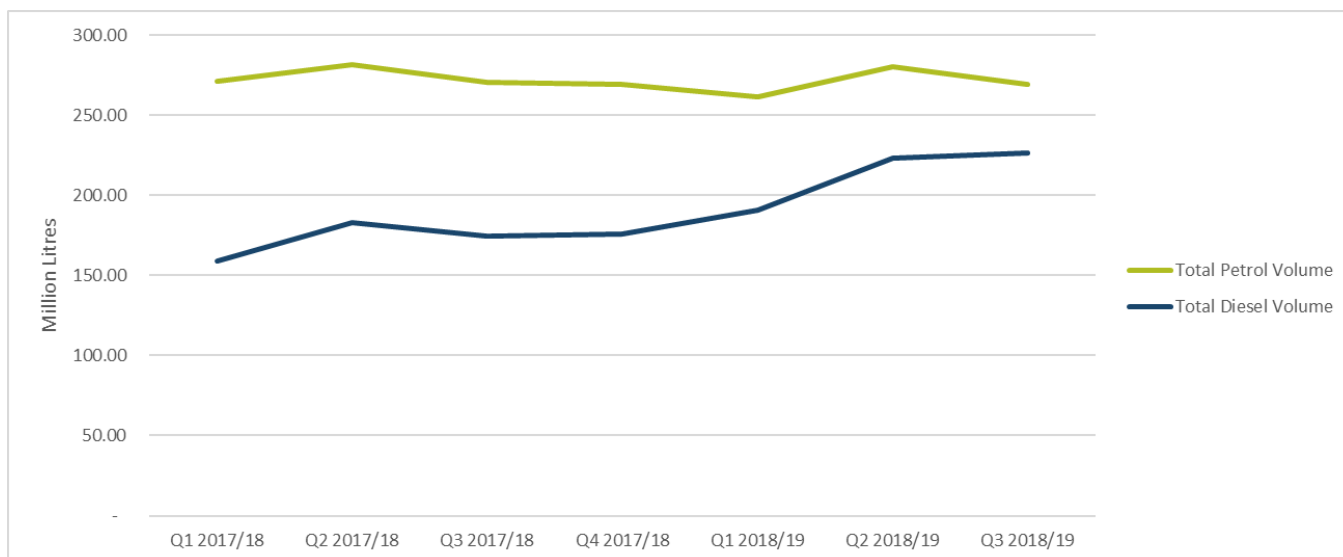
The quarterly data for the volume of fuel delivered inside the scheme is collected from regional fuel taxpayers' monthly returns, which are a requirement under section 65V of the LTMA. Due to legislative requirements and internal processing timeframes, this data is available the month following the end of the quarter. The quarterly totals for petrol and diesel in Table 1 include all fuel delivered within the Auckland scheme area, this includes all fuel delivered within the Auckland scheme area, whether or not it was liable for RFT (except for fuel exported to the Pacific Islands).

To accurately observe change requires comparable baseline data before the scheme took effect. Baseline data is collected from Auckland Council's Local Authority Fuel Tax (LAFT) and represents a wider geographical area than the scheme area – fuel sold within the Auckland region including Great Barrier Island. Since the baseline data is not sufficiently comparable, Figure 1 represents an approximate change in the volume of fuel delivered in the Auckland scheme area.

**Table 1 – Fuel volumes inside the scheme area**

Quarter	Total volume inside the scheme area (million litres)	
	Petrol	Diesel
Baseline before RFT implemented (Auckland region) Q4 2017/18 1 Apr–30 Jun 2018	269.15	175.80
Quarter 1 (RFT Auckland scheme area) Q1 2018/19 1 Jul–30 Sep 2018	261.32	190.70
Quarter 2 (RFT Auckland scheme area) Q2 2018/19 1 Oct–31 Dec 2018	280.11	223.14
Quarter 3 (RFT Auckland scheme area) Q3 2018/19 1 Jan–31 Mar 2019	269.16	226.21

Note: The data for the baseline (fuel sold) and quarters 1-3 (fuel delivered) is derived from different sources. The fuel volumes include both petrol and diesel (including bio-fuels and ethanol portions).



**Figure 1 – Change in fuel volume inside the scheme area**

## Fuel delivered outside the scheme

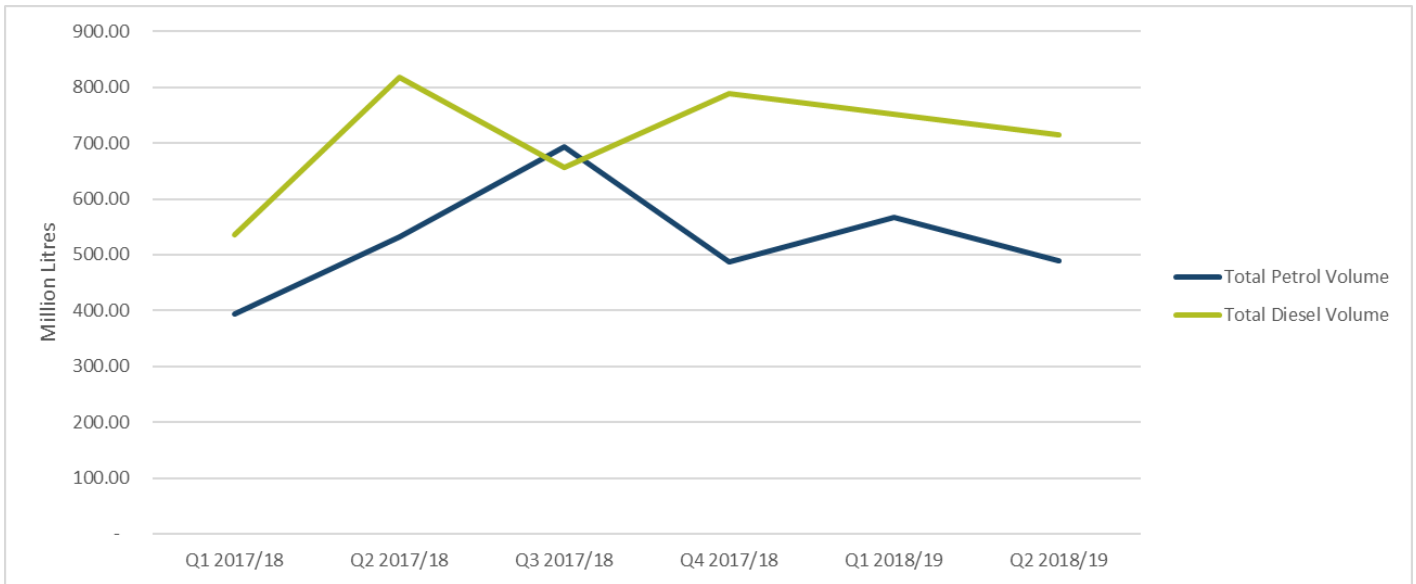
The quarterly and baseline data for fuel volumes outside the scheme is collected by other government organisations for the whole of New Zealand. To approximate the volume of petrol and diesel fuel distributed outside the scheme area, the Transport Agency must subtract the scheme area volumes from the total volumes for the entire country. The reported volume includes fuel imports, refining volumes (not exported out of the country) and stock change. The baseline data is calculated similarly, but subtracts the LAFT volume sold within the Auckland region (including Great Barrier Island), meaning the baseline is not directly comparable.

Due to the complexities of how this information is collected, there is a significant delay in obtaining data for quarterly reporting. Since the volume data is delayed and the Transport Agency is committed to providing this report in a timely manner, fuel volume outside the Auckland scheme area will be reported one quarter in arrears for all RFT quarterly reports.

**Table 2 – Fuel volumes outside the scheme area**

Quarter	Total volume outside the scheme area (million litres)	
	Petrol	Diesel
Baseline Q4 2017/18 1 Apr–30 Jun 2018	486.64	788.84
Quarter 1 Q1 2018/19 1 Jul–30 Sep 2018	566.68	752.09
Quarter 2 Q2 2018/19 1 Oct – 31 Dec 2018	488.58	714.09

Note: This information is provided by other government and fuel distribution organisations and reported one quarter in arrears. The fuel volumes include both petrol and diesel (including bio-fuels and ethanol portions).



**Figure 2 – Change in fuel volume outside the scheme area**



## FUEL PRICES INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE AREA

Under section 65Y(3)(b) of the LTMA, the Transport Agency is required to report fuel prices inside and outside the scheme area. To meet this obligation, the Transport Agency had to identify a source for fuel price reporting in New Zealand. The Transport Agency used standard procurement processes and Datamine, a third-party provider, was determined to be the most appropriate supplier of fuel price data for this report.

Datamine information is publicly sourced, cleansed and aggregated through robust statistical methodologies prior to being provided to the Transport Agency. This means the final quality of the dataset cannot be quantified by the Transport Agency. The price observations are based on 'board prices', which means discounts from individual service stations are included but customer promotions (ie discount vouchers) are excluded from the dataset.

**Table 3 – Average fuel prices by region (NZD cents per litre)**

Region	Baseline				Q3 2018/19			
	(1 April – 30 June 2018)				(1 January– 31 March 2019)			
Fuel type	91	95	98	Diesel	91	95	98	Diesel
<b>Auckland</b>	207.90	222.90	226.90	138.90	210.90	224.40	225.70	153.90
<b>Average outside scheme area</b>	211.90	222.90	226.90	142.90	200.90	214.90	212.70	139.90
Bay of Plenty	206.70	220.90	222.70	135.90	195.90	209.90	208.90	133.70
Canterbury	219.90	226.90	236.90	152.90	215.90	224.90	230.90	158.90
Gisborne	208.00	221.90	227.90	136.90		207.90	204.70	
Hawke's Bay	205.90	217.90	217.70	135.90	196.70	207.90		139.90
Manawatu-Whanganui	205.90	219.90	228.70	134.90	198.90	210.90	210.70	140.90
Marlborough	219.90	226.90	235.90	151.90	213.90		223.90	155.90
Nelson	221.90	230.90	238.90	157.90	211.90			146.90
Northland	212.70	221.90	217.70	141.90	200.90	212.90	204.70	142.90
Otago	219.90	224.90	234.90	152.90	215.90	226.90	232.90	138.90
Southland	213.90	219.90		143.90	201.90	213.90	211.90	136.90
Taranaki	201.90	214.90	218.70	132.50	192.90	207.90	204.70	136.90
Tasman	219.40	223.90	239.90	152.90	210.90			139.90
Waikato	207.90	221.00	224.70	136.90	197.90	211.90	216.90	137.90
Wellington	215.90	226.90	236.90	148.90	210.90	224.90		158.90
West Coast	223.90	228.90	251.90	155.90	215.90			162.90

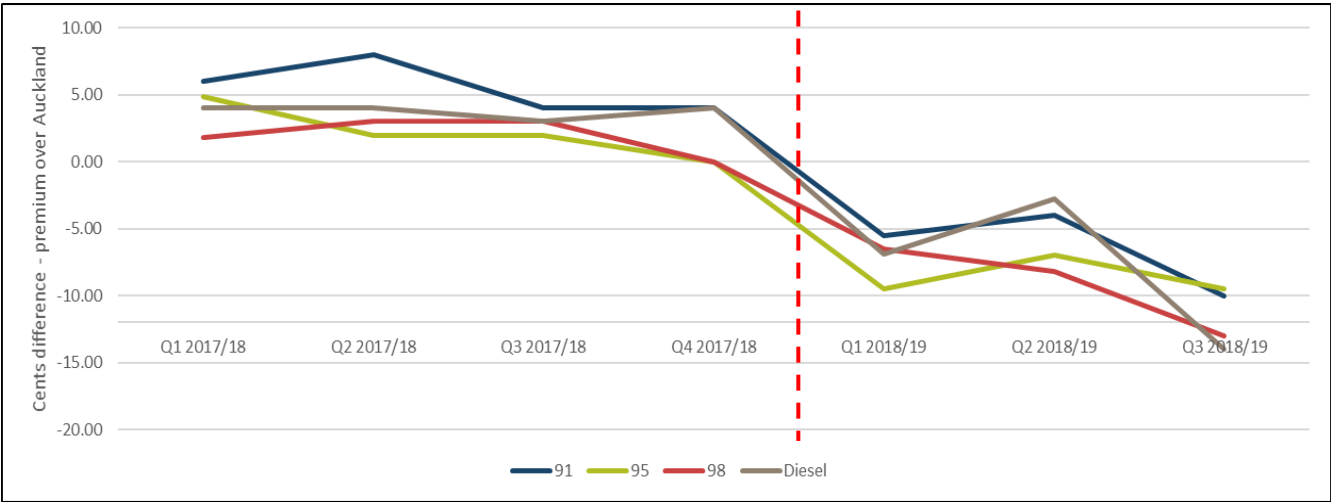
Note: The fuel prices for 91,95 and 98 octane petrol are recorded where available, and the blank cells indicate no prices were observed.

**Table 4 – Fuel price range by region for Q3 1 January – 31 March 2019 (NZD cents per litre)**

Fuel type Region	91			95			98			Diesel		
	Lowest	Median	Highest	Lowest	Median	Highest	Lowest	Median	Highest	Lowest	Median	Highest
<b>Auckland</b>	191.50	210.90	229.40	209.30	224.40	240.40	202.10	225.70	250.10	130.60	153.90	175.90
<b>Overall outside scheme area</b>	171.90	200.90	231.90	188.10	214.90	244.30	177.10	212.70	253.50	102.80	139.90	181.50
Bay of Plenty	175.40	195.90	215.50	186.10	209.90	235.00	180.60	208.90	240.30	110.40	133.70	156.10
Canterbury	187.30	215.90	236.10	200.80	224.90	242.70	209.80	230.90	250.00	104.40	158.90	198.40
Gisborne				199.00	207.90	221.20	201.10	204.70	207.60			
Hawke's Bay	182.10	196.70	213.80	197.10	207.90	218.90				116.00	139.90	162.20
Manawatu-Wanganui	178.40	198.90	218.70	188.00	210.90	232.80	181.00	210.70	235.10	119.30	140.90	160.60
Marlborough	191.40	213.90	231.40				197.20	223.90	255.00	122.90	155.90	194.20
Nelson	188.80	211.90	232.80							116.10	146.90	183.70
Northland	173.80	200.90	224.00	191.10	212.90	236.50	188.80	204.70	221.70	109.10	142.90	169.80
Otago	190.60	215.90	237.20	199.30	226.90	251.60	200.70	232.90	260.70	91.50	138.90	197.90
Southland	170.60	201.90	233.50	188.30	213.90	239.60	202.50	211.90	222.90	105.10	136.90	170.30
Taranaki	171.50	192.90	214.10	185.20	207.90	227.90	181.80	204.70	227.30	116.90	136.90	157.70
Tasman	182.60	210.90	237.30							116.20	139.90	166.30
Waikato	178.20	197.90	215.90	195.30	211.90	229.80	185.00	216.90	253.50	114.30	137.90	159.90
Wellington	182.00	210.90	235.30	201.10	224.90	241.80				121.90	158.90	187.30
West Coast	193.10	215.90	239.40							111.40	162.90	206.80

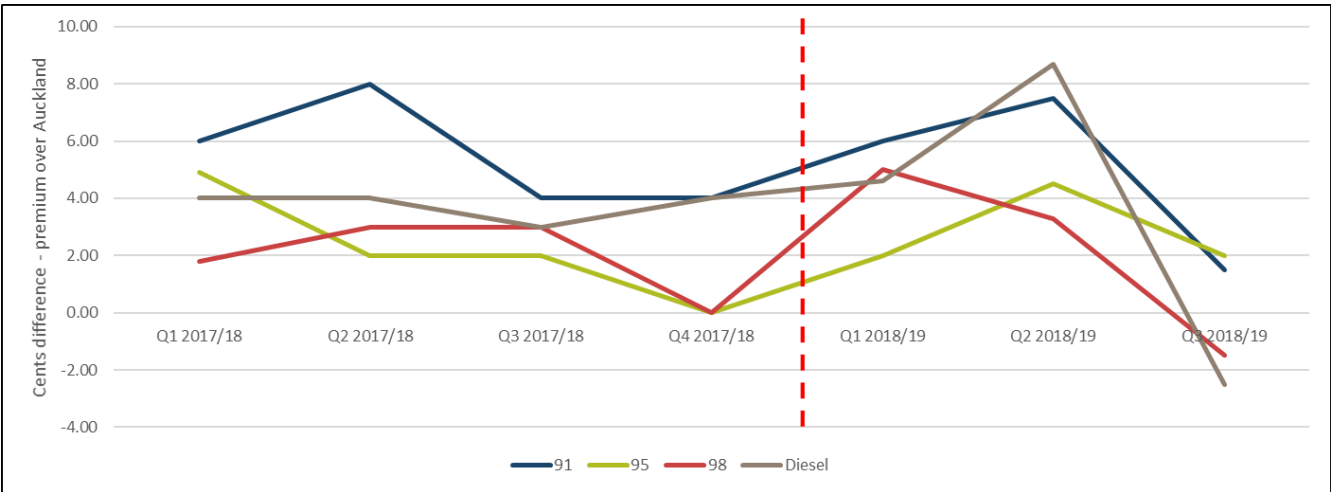
Note: Blank cells indicate no prices were observed.

Figure 3 shows the difference between scheme area fuel prices and the average fuel price nationally outside the scheme area. The baseline shows that historically (April - June 2018), the median fuel prices outside of the scheme area were higher for all 91 octane petrol and diesel and the same for premium petrol. The Q3 report compares average prices inside and outside the scheme area after its implementation.



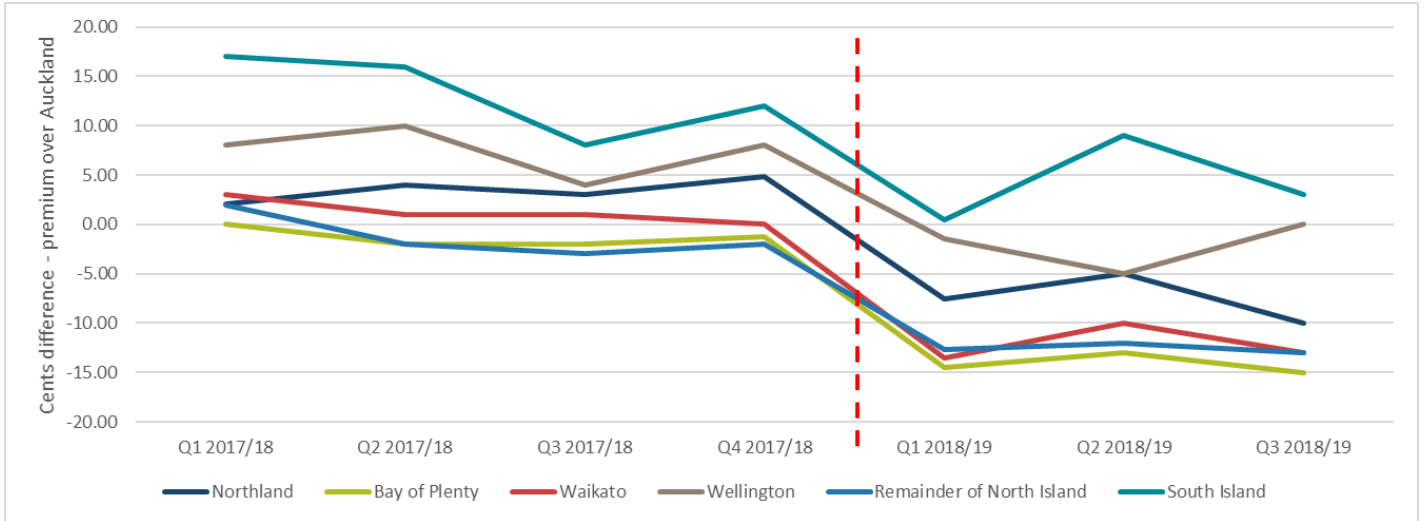
**Figure 3 – Price difference between fuel inside and outside of the scheme area (raw figures)**

Figure 4 shows the difference between average fuel prices inside and outside the scheme for 91, 95, 98, and diesel fuels when adjusting out the expected 11.5c impact arising from introducing RFT.



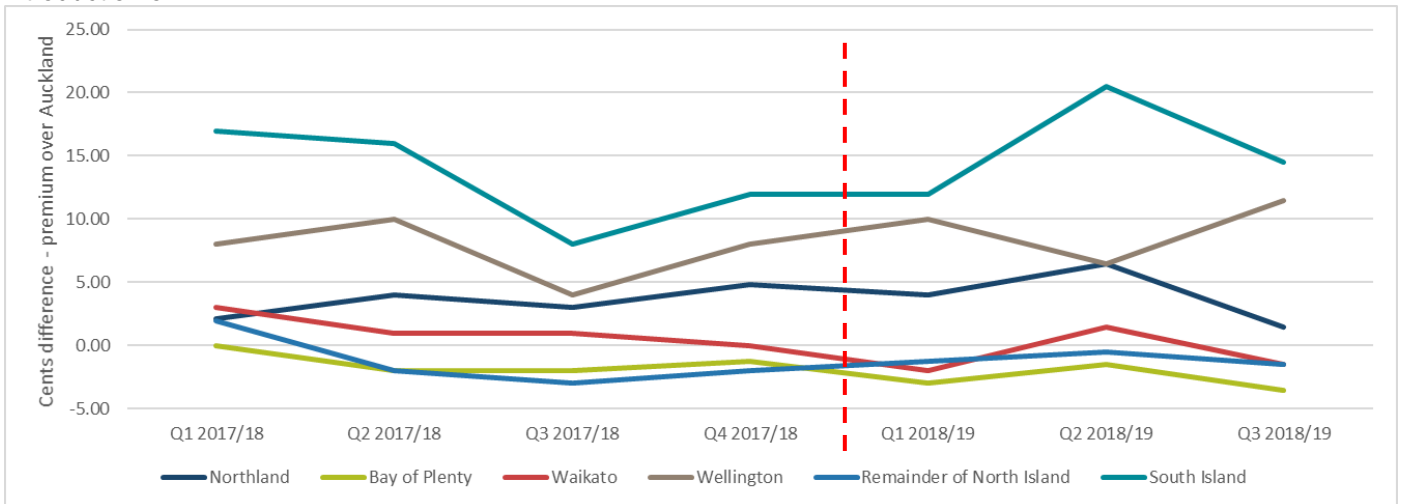
**Figure 4 – Price difference between fuel inside and outside the scheme area (adjusted figures)**

Figure 5 illustrates the difference between 91 petrol fuel prices in scheme area and other regions. The graph shows the regions bordering the scheme area, as they are likely to be affected by price differences; Wellington; the remainder of the North Island and the South Island. During the quarter immediately before the RFT scheme took effect, the median prices in Northland, Wellington, and South Island were higher than in Auckland but were lower than Auckland in the Bay of Plenty and remainder of the North Island, and the same in Waikato. Once the scheme took effect, only the average price in the South Island remained higher than in Auckland.



**Figure 5 – Price differences between scheme area and other regions (raw figures)**

Figure 6 shows the difference between average fuel prices inside and outside of the scheme area for 91 octane petrol in various regions when adjusting out the expected 11.5c impact from the introduction of RFT.



**Figure 6 – Price differences between scheme area and other regions (adjusted figures)**

# COMPLIANCE CHECKS

Under section 65Y3(c) and (d) the Transport Agency must report non-compliance with the RFT scheme and also the avoidance of RFT.

As a first point of non-compliance checks, the Transport Agency has developed assessment processes for RFT revenue collection and rebates. The Transport Agency is further developing its RFT compliance framework for audit investigations. These audit investigations are to identify avoidance of RFT and non-compliance within the Auckland RFT scheme. The development of this framework sits within a larger review of the Transport Agency's regulatory functions.

The following activities are assessed and subject to audit investigations for non-compliance and avoidance of RFT:

## **Site exemptions** (sites exempt from paying RFT)

This includes site inspections, reports and recommendations upon customer applications for site exemptions, and the renewal/amendment of an approved exempted site.

In quarter two, three exempt sites have been inspected and granted approval.

In the third quarter, two exempt sites were inspected and granted exemption status.

- Audit frequency: As required (referred through RFT assessments or chosen at random)

## **Scheduled/unscheduled taxpayer (fuel distributor) audits**

This includes audits of all regional fuel taxpayer's record-keeping systems and their compliance in reporting and paying RFT.

- Audit frequency: As required (referred through RFT assessment processes)

## **Rebate claim audits**

This includes targeted and ad-hoc audits of rebate customers' RFT rebate claims.

- Audit frequency: As required (referred through RFT assessment processes).

## **Bureau audits**

Bureaus are organisations who file rebate claims on behalf of another entity (customer) for a profit. Bureaus must undergo an audit of their internal processes and systems upon entering into a service agreement with the Transport Agency. Bureaus are also subject to on-going regular audits to evaluate compliance and remediation of any issues identified. This may include audits of rebate claims submitted.

- Audit frequency: As-required (referred through RFT assessment processes).

Table 5 outlines the non-compliant and tax avoidance activities detected over all three quarters of the 2018/19 financial year.

**Table 5 – Activity of non-compliance and tax avoidance from 01 July 2018 – 31 March 2019**

Quarter	Non-compliance	Avoidance
Q1 2018/19	One non-compliant activity was detected over the July regional fuel tax return period, resulting in a late payment of tax penalty. The late payment was followed up by the Transport Agency and was rectified the following business day.	At this stage there is no evidence of RFT avoidance.
Q2 2018/19	Scheduled taxpayer audits have been postponed to begin January 2019.  One rebate claim audit was completed on 30 October 2018 which was approved and paid.	We investigated the following taxpayer's RFT returns:  Taxpayer (1) it was determined the fuel company correctly credited lost fuel.  Taxpayer (2) it was determined the fuel company correctly credited and calculated all fuel deliveries.  Taxpayer (3) is still under investigation.
Q3 2018/19	The audit compliance framework is still under development and audits have not yet commenced.  We are reviewing the processes of a Regional Fuel Taxpayer to ensure that all regional fuel tax is being collected for non-exempt fuel.	Taxpayer (3) is still under further investigation as further audit is required.  There is no evidence of RFT avoidance for this quarter.

## DEFINITIONS

The following definitions are the Transport Agency's interpretation of non-compliance and avoidance when specifically referring to section 65Y3(c) and (d).

- **Non-compliance:** includes any act or omission by any person subject to obligations under an RFT scheme that results in the person failing to comply with any of their obligations under the RFT provisions of the Land Transport Management Act 2003.
- **Avoidance:** includes any act or omission by any person subject to obligations under an RFT scheme that results in the person avoiding (or attempting to avoid) RFT, where the Transport Agency considers on reasonable grounds that the act or omission was deliberate or fraudulent in nature.