

■ PETROL PRICES

Parish pump may not bite drivers so much after all

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Transport Reporter

THEY drive further, earn less and pay much more for petrol. But new research shows country drivers might not be as badly off as their city cousins have been led to believe.

A survey for a regional marketing and research company found country folk spend little more than the national average on petrol - partly because they do not

get stuck in traffic jams. However, the results were dismissed by motoring groups and regional motorists.

The survey, conducted for Regional Television Marketing, found regional commuters travel about six kilometres further to get to work than metropolitan workers, whose trips average 14 kilometres.

But their journeys were faster: three-quarters of regional drivers get to work in less than 30 minutes, while 55 per cent of city

folk take more than half an hour to get to work.

"The result is that the average weekly household spending on fuel in regional areas is only \$1.37 above the national average of \$32.73," said RTM's general manager, Brian Hogan.

"You would think it would be reasonable to say that the overall impact of the increased petrol prices is no greater for the average regional family than the average city-based family."

The results are based on a

survey conducted by foreseexchange Consumer Pulse in June 2006, which encourages companies to advertise on regional TV broadcasters.

The president of the NRMA, Alan Evans, questioned the results: "Household incomes are lower [in the country], petrol prices are higher. Something's not quite right there."

Mr Evans said a truer picture would come from comparing the average weekly household spending on fuel in the country

with the city average rather than the national average.

The NRMA's Petrol Watch website says the average price of petrol in the city yesterday was 141.4 cents per litre, compared with 144.8 in Bathurst and 146.8 in Bega.

Phil Jones, a school principal from Armidale, believes country people spend much more on petrol than city folk. During the school holidays, he has spent \$300 as he drives around visiting relatives.