‘Petrol madness’ is back

Sydney’s unleaded, diesel prices soar by 40c a litre as Middle East conflict escalates

Jason Morrison

Fuel prices are roaring back towards the record highs that hammered motorists earlier this year, with wholesale costs surging and diesel already pushing beyond $2.80 a litre across Sydney.

The city’s terminal gate (wholesale) prices for petrol and diesel have jumped sharply over the past fortnight as escalating conflict in the Middle East sends global oil and refined fuel prices soaring again. The ACCC says wholesale and retail prices are “broadly tracking international prices”, with the latest surge rapidly flowing through to the bowser and threatening another cost-of-living hit for households.

NRMA spokesman Peter Khoury said the national average had climbed to 234.6c a litre for unleaded and 284.2c for diesel by Friday afternoon.

Both have surged almost 40c a litre since September 1.

“No doubt about it, these are sharp increases,” Mr Khoury said.

“It’s a reflection, unfortunately, of what has been happening globally with oil prices. Families will be really feeling it right now.”

The spike has put fuel back within striking distance of the extraordinary highs reached during the first oil shock of the Iran war in April, when E10 unleaded hit about $2.59 a litre and diesel peaked about $3.27.

“We’re seeing these prices starting to creep up towards those record highs,” Mr Khoury said. “We’re not there yet, to be fair. It’s still about 50c off for diesel now, but unleaded is about 20c off the peaks.”

NSW data on Friday showed median prices of 233.9c for unleaded and 279.2c for diesel – both up about 20c in just a week. And worse could be to come, with wholesale increases typically taking time to flow fully through to service stations.

The federal government continues to collect the full fuel excise of almost 54c a litre, with Energy Minister Chris Bowen all but ruling out a return of the temporary tax cut used to provide motorists relief the last time prices were this high.

The scramble for cheaper fuel was already playing out on Sydney streets on Friday. Along Victoria Rd at West Ryde, a fiercely competitive fuel strip with three independent service stations within 1km, drivers queued in waves for much of the day to fill up at prices almost 20c a litre below the Sydney average.

By Friday evening, the queues were snarling with peak-hour traffic.

An attendant at independent APEX Petroleum said motorists had been streaming in all day.

“It has been a crazy day,” the attendant told The Saturday Telegraph.

“We’ve had a line of cars all day and now people with jerry cans.

“Petrol madness is back.”

The NRMA and ACCC rejected suggestions oil companies were exploiting the crisis, with margins tightening as wholesale costs surged.

“Oil company margins have come right in,” Mr Khoury said.

“And just as well, because had they not, we’d be paying even higher prices than we are now.”

BACK IN DIRE STRAITS, P32

Lunna Fraser, Mia Britten and Leo Berry at Royal Randwick Racecourse. Picture: Justin Lloyd

Why fans are off and racing

Zara Powell

The track is not just the stomping ground for seasoned punters, with Gen Z turning out in growing numbers for Sydney’s spring carnival.

As the season kicks off at Royal Randwick today, new figures reveal racing crowds are getting younger – and women are increasingly leading the charge.

The 10th running of the TAB Everest is on track to sell out general admission a month before race day, with more than 50,000 people expected at Royal Randwick for the third consecutive sellout.

Women now account for 52 per cent of ticket purchasers, up from 42 per cent last year, while the number of 18 to 24-year-old ticket buyers has increased by 5 per cent.

Young racegoer Mia Britten said the chance to dress up was a big part of the appeal, revealing she and her friends spend “months planning outfits. “It’s the perfect excuse to pull out those dresses,” she said.

The 20-year-old once thought the races were “a boring thing” where people went to bet but quickly changed her mind: “The atmosphere is just amazing, the energy is so high.”

The shift is also being seen among Australian Turf Club members, with new female memberships among those aged 35 and under doubling in the past 12 months.

RACING LIFTOUT, PAGE 45

A plea to world leaders

Anthony Albanese will defend international rules and make the case for co-operation to tackle global challenges at the UN in New York.

“Australia’s prosperity and security depend on a strong global system, where nations work together, agreed rules are respected, and co-operation delivers shared benefits,” he said ahead of his departure on Friday.

“Australia is working to prevent online harm, particularly for our children, and I am proud that Australia is setting the world standard for digital safety.

“I look forward to joining other world leaders to discuss ... how we can work together to find solutions.”

It comes as Australia navigates an increasingly volatile world, between Donald Trump’s tariffs and China’s desire for Taiwan.

Jai Arrow, wife Berina and their daughter Ayla Rae.

Award lets Arrow take a bow

Jackson Robb

Rabbitohs star Jai Arrow has been celebrated for his courageous efforts to spread awareness about his Motor Neurone Disease diagnosis.

Arrow was awarded the My Guardian Stand for Change Award on Friday night.

The 30-year-old NRL player was presented the award by Premier Chris Minns, who said the award recognises the “character and determination” he continues to show as he battles against his diagnosis.

“Jai has shown extraordinary courage in the face of an incredibly difficult diagnosis, but what stands out most is the generosity and strength he continues to show others,” he said. “Tonight is a chance to recognise not just what Jai has achieved on the field, but the character and determination he continues to show off it.”

Arrow was celebrated alongside Ita Buttrose and the 2025 SA Senior Australian of the Year, Anne Burgess.

My Guardian CEO Jad Haber said Arrow had made a “genuine difference” by bringing awareness to MND and has changed the future for others living with the disease.

“Jai Arrow represents what it means to stand for something bigger than yourself,” he said.