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NEWS



Rene Watson feels the pain at a NPD service station in Christchurch yesterday as fuel prices rise across the country.
PHOTOS: KAI SCHWOERER/THE PRESS



Teacher Eru Metcalfe, also pictured filling up in Christchurch yesterday, says petrol prices mean he usually bikes 25km to work every day rather than driving.

New highs fuel frustration

Broken holiday plans and a new rush on EVs, as Cantabrians feel pain peak at the pump

PETROL PRICES

Amber Allott and Elsie Williams

Summer holidays plans might look a little different this year for many families, as a perfect storm of global factors drives petrol prices to new highs.

In April, the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment reported petrol peaked at an average high of \$3.48 per litre during the conflict in Iran's early days. But at many petrol stations across Christchurch yesterday, it sat at over \$3.60.

According to fuel price aggregator Gaspy, the average price for 91 octane across the country yesterday afternoon was \$3.53 per litre, up 20% on last month. Diesel was averaging \$3.22 per litre, up nearly 24%.

Prices for 91 in Canterbury rose from \$2.87 on July 9 to \$3.51 yesterday – a leap of 64 cents in less than three months.

Greater Christchurch is home to all five of the country's cheapest stations for 91, but that doesn't mean locals aren't feeling the pinch.

At one station yesterday morning, the mood was a mix of resignation

“

I've got certain tasks I have to do every day, which are hard to do without a car, so I just carry on.”

Rene Watson

Christchurch petrol consumer

and frustration.

Teacher Eru Metcalfe said he now bikes 30 minutes to work every day – what used to be an occasional choice has become a daily necessity.

“[Fuel costs] just add another layer of stress. Every time we get to the supermarket, every time we come to the gas station, we're quite shocked at how much we're

actually spending.”

Metcalfe estimated his family will spend about \$10,000 on petrol and \$25,000 on food this year. Their usual summer trip north – a tradition for a decade – is off the table.

“This year, it's local. Just because of the cost, we don't feel like spending that sort of cash on travel.”

Rene Watson said he has no choice but to keep filling up.

“I've got certain tasks I have to do every day, which are hard to do without a car, so I just carry on.”

The impact extends well beyond commuters. Marshall Forman, director of a contracting business that mows for the Christchurch City Council and Environment Canterbury (ECan), said his fuel costs have become almost unmanageable.

“My truck used to be about \$180 to fill. Now it's \$280, and I fill it twice a week.”

His three-strong mowing crew can burn through \$300 to \$400 in fuel a day, and his \$3000 to \$5000 monthly bills are often now between \$5000 and \$10,000.

“Our rates have pretty much doubled

because of petrol – and we can't do anything about it.”

He looked at switching to electric mowers but gave up when the numbers didn't stack up. A petrol ride-on costs about \$30,000 – the electric equivalent runs to \$80,000, he said.

AA principal policy adviser Terry Collins said the price Kiwis are paying at the pump is the result of a “perfect storm” of factors since the start of the Iran conflict.

Key oil pipelines have been restored and vessels are again travelling through the Strait of Hormuz, but the cost of shipping oil through the region has soared, with freight and insurance rates reaching more than \$1.2m a day for some large carriers.

Chinese refineries have suspended exports this month to secure domestic supply, while New Zealand's weak dollar is adding to costs.

The northern hemisphere's autumn harvest and approaching winter are also increasing demand for diesel and heating oil.

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TSUNAMI EVACUATION ZONES HAVE CHANGED



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and how to get prepared.

ccc.govt.nz/tsunami



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