



Tradie Matt Dawson fills up his ute at Metro Petroleum Blacktown, saying the surge in prices is 'scary' but unlikely to stop any time soon. Pictures: Thomas Lisson

# True cost of going green on power

## \$600 bill shock warning

Eilidh Sprout-Mellis

East coast households could face a staggering \$600 a year increase in electricity bills without major changes to the delivery of the nation's energy transition infrastructure, new modelling has found.

Independent think-tank Policy Institute Australia (PIA) has recommended the Albanese government hand over responsibility for the building of \$65bn to \$85bn worth of transmission towers, poles and wires needed for a transition to green energy to Australia's more "agile" states and territories.

PIA argues future capital expenditure – a low-balled figure that "will almost certainly rise given abundant evidence of exceedingly low initial costings on projects that have been contracted so far" – will have a direct impact on consumers.

Households along the east coast would pay an extra \$600 a year in network charges by 2035, on average, while small businesses would pay an additional \$10,000 on average, based on the PIA's two modelling scenarios.

Queenslanders would cop the biggest hit of \$628.40 under the first scenario, followed by NSW at \$522.90, then Victoria at \$348 per household. Under the second scenario, all three states would see an increase between \$622 and \$626 per household.

Low-income households would feel the greatest hip-pocket pain overall, with the additional charges translating to a 1.3 per cent loss of income.

PIA chief executive Amy Auster said even as the wholesale cost of energy fluctuates as

more renewable sources enter the grid, transmission network service providers still stand to increase the fees charged to households as they recoup their spending on physical infrastructure.

"The transmission part has traditionally been the lowest part of a household energy bill, only about 9 per cent," Ms Auster explained. "But if we pass the total cost of this transmission build directly to consumers, that part ... is going to go up quite a lot."

The findings raise new questions for Energy Minister Chris Bowen, who has seized on the Australian Energy Regulator's latest draft of the "default market offer" (DMO), telling the ABC's Insiders program on Sunday that renewables were "putting downward pressure on prices". "(The AER draft) is an indication that turns out, renewable energy is the cheapest form of energy," he said.

Mr Bowen's office rubbished the PIA's findings, with a spokesman stating "this report is not a serious contribution".

"It incorrectly models how energy bills are made by ignoring key inputs," he said.

However, major transmission projects have already suffered cost overruns and significant delays, the PIA report noted, including the Central-West Orana REZ which is approximately three years overdue and will cost at least \$5bn more than first expected.

Ms Auster said state governments should be responsible for the strategic planning of all major transmission infrastructure "because they're closest to the ground ... and know how to procure with agility".

## city crime stats tell different story

said he had noted an increase in drive-offs, sharing with the Telegraph CCTV footage of a woman filling up the tank of a white van over the weekend before she hopped back into the passenger seat as the male driver abruptly left the servo without paying.

He said drive-offs were becoming a daily occurrence.

"We have 10-15 recordings of CCTV footage that we have already sent to the police. Just yesterday a lady drove off with \$165.81 in fuel and the day before that someone left with \$122 worth," he said.

At Croydon, in Sydney's inner west, a truck with no number plates drove off after filling up with \$812 worth of fuel on Thursday.

NSW Crime Prevention Commander Superintendent Phil Hallinan warned the "consequences of being charged with fraud far outweigh (the value of) a tank of fuel".

"Monitoring systems are far

more sophisticated these days and CCTV is of a very high quality, providing police with excellent vision to investigate," he said.

Supt Hallinan urged businesses and members of the public to provide any relevant evidence of fuel thefts to Crime Stoppers.

Energy Minister Chris Bowen said "stealing fuel is a crime" and urged any and all instances of theft to be reported to police.

"It's a bloody dog act and it's not on," he said. "Australians can work together through these tough times. We don't need to stockpile fuel or take what is not ours."

The rise in thefts also comes as the NRMA reported an increase in the number of desperate motorists running out of fuel in NSW.

"We have seen a 15 per cent rise in the number of people calling us because they have run out of fuel," NRMA spokesman Peter Khoury said.

"So far this month there have been 306 calls to roadside assistance where we have to take petrol to a motorist.

"If people are hoping that maybe the price of petrol will drop before they refill, they should think again ... I'm sorry to say these record prices aren't going to drop suddenly."

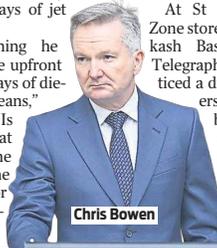
Coalition energy spokesman Dan Tehan said Mr Bowen and the Albanese government needed to be clearer with Australians on the state of the country's fuel supply, which as of Saturday included 38 days of petrol, 30 days of diesel and 30 days of jet fuel.

"The first thing he needs to do is be upfront about what 30 days of diesel actually means," Mr Tehan said. "Is some of that reserve for the military? Is some of that reserve for emergency services?"

He also demanded information on where shortages were the most pressing, as well as a "whole-of-government approach" on where Australia would procure more fuel from in the event more shipments were cancelled.

Over at Metro Zone Blacktown, tradie Matt Dawson told the Telegraph the rise in petrol prices was "scary" and had left him about \$60 extra out of pocket each week since February. "It's pretty expensive, it's pretty scary," he said. "Hopefully it doesn't go too high, I think it will though."

At St Marys, Metro Zone store manager Prakash Bastea told the Telegraph he had noticed a drop in customers since prices began rising and he had been catching public transport to work rather than driving.



Chris Bowen



An Iranian missile in flight.

commitments from Australia, as well as New Zealand, Estonia, Romania, Sweden and Norway, Bahrain and the United

Arab Emirates. The statement noted disruptions to international shipping and global energy supply chains "constitute a threat to international peace and security" under United Nations Security Council Resolution 2817, and called for a moratorium on attacks on civilian infrastructure, including oil and gas installations.

"We express our readiness to contribute to appropriate efforts to ensure safe passage through the strait. We welcome the commitment of nations who are engaging in

preparatory planning," the statement read.

"We welcome the International Energy Agency decision to authorise a co-ordinated release of strategic petroleum reserves.

"We will take other steps to stabilise energy markets, including working with certain producing nations to increase output."

As the crisis escalated, two Iranian missiles struck southern Israel, injuring more than 100 people in the most destructive attack since the war began.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed to retaliate "on all fronts."

The strikes in Dimona, which slipped through Israel's missile defence systems, tore open the facades of residential buildings.

Iran said the targeting of Dimona was retaliation for Israeli strikes on its Natanz nuclear facility, with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) saying forces also targeted other southern Israeli towns as well as military sites in Kuwait and the UAE.



US President Donald Trump. Picture: Roberto Schmidt/Getty