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Media Release

MeOH Weekly Liquid Fuel Markets Update – w/e 23.10.2026

Is the World Running Out of Oil Tankers?

Global Crude Oil Prices at Close - w/e 23.10.2026 (USD/bbl)
Brent Crude: US$116.72/barrel — Up 3.14%
West Texas Intermediate (WTI): US$103.27/barrel — Up 3.80%

Indicative Terminal Gate Prices - Australia
Unleaded Petrol (U91): 229.2–239.5 cents/litre
Diesel: 245.0–257.0 cents/litre

Indicative Retail Prices - Australia
Unleaded Petrol (U91): 241.6 cents/litre
Diesel: 278.5 cents/litre

Global crude oil prices have climbed to their highest levels in almost six months, as escalating Middle East tensions expose a further vulnerability in international energy markets — an increasingly acute shortage of available oil tankers.

While international attention has focused on oil production, refinery capacity and geopolitical conflict, a developing shortage of available tanker capacity is adding another dimension to the global energy supply challenge.

For Australia, which remains heavily dependent on imported refined transportation fuels, the implications extend well beyond the price of crude oil.

Global Crude Oil Markets – Prices Continue to Climb

International crude oil markets finished the week sharply higher as renewed attacks on Saudi Arabian infrastructure, continuing hostilities around the Strait of Hormuz and instability across Middle Eastern shipping routes reinforced concerns over global energy security.

Brent recorded its highest closing price since April, gaining approximately 6% over the week, while WTI also advanced.

The latest increases reflect growing concern that geopolitical disruption could further restrict both the production and transportation of crude oil and refined petroleum products.

Global Tanker Shortage – A New Dimension to Energy Security

A developing shortage of available oil tankers is placing additional pressure on global petroleum supply chains, with vessel availability increasingly constrained by geopolitical disruption and changing international shipping patterns.

Four principal factors are contributing to the problem.

Firstly, tankers stranded, delayed or operating under restricted conditions around the Strait of Hormuz and Red Sea are effectively removed from normal international shipping availability.

Secondly, attacks on vessels, including tankers operating within the so-called shadow fleet, have further disrupted available shipping capacity. Some of these vessels operate with disabled transponders or within less transparent or sanctioned trading networks.

Thirdly, vessels avoiding high-risk maritime corridors are undertaking significantly longer voyages, including diversions around Africa's Cape of Good Hope. Longer transit times reduce the number of cargo movements each vessel can complete annually.

Finally, ship-to-ship transfers, increasingly employed to move crude oil and refined petroleum products, introduce additional costs, handling requirements and vessel utilisation. A single transfer temporarily requires two tankers, further constraining an already stretched international fleet.

The consequences are substantial. Supertanker charter rates have reportedly reached exceptional levels, with some routes attracting daily rates exceeding US$1 million.

Higher freight charges, insurance premiums and extended delivery times are increasing the delivered cost of petroleum products, independently of movements in underlying crude oil prices.

Critically, even an easing of geopolitical tensions will likely not immediately restore normal tanker availability or international shipping efficiency.

Australian Wholesale Fuel Prices – Elevated Import Costs Persist

Australian wholesale fuel prices remain elevated as international crude prices, refining costs and increasingly expensive maritime transportation continue to influence domestic supply.

Indicative Terminal Gate Prices across major Australian markets at the end of the week were:
Unleaded Petrol (U91): 229.2–239.5 cents/litre
Diesel: 245.0–257.0 cents/litre

Diesel continues to attract a substantial premium over petrol, reflecting international distillate market tightness and sustained demand from commercial transport, agriculture, mining and industrial operations.

For Australian businesses, elevated wholesale fuel prices are translating into increased operating costs across multiple sectors of the economy.

Australian Retail Fuel Prices – Consumers Continue to Feel the Pressure

Australian motorists and commercial operators continue to experience elevated retail fuel prices, with regional variations reflecting local competition, transport costs and retail pricing cycles.

Indicative national retail prices were:
Unleaded Petrol (U91): 241.6 cents/litre
Diesel: 278.5 cents/litre

The continuing premium for diesel is particularly significant for Australia's freight, agricultural and mining sectors, where fuel represents a substantial component of operating expenditure.

With international shipping constraints now adding to existing crude oil and refining pressures, the prospect of sustained elevated domestic fuel prices remains a material concern.

MeOH Energy – Australia's Geographic Reality Demands a Domestic Solution

MeOH Energy CEO Mick Spencer said the emerging tanker shortage demonstrated that energy security must be considered across the entire international supply chain, rather than simply through the availability of crude oil.

"Australia is an island nation. We will always require maritime transportation, and oil tankers will remain an essential component of international trade."

"Every additional disruption to shipping routes, every tanker delayed by conflict and every increase in freight costs reinforces the vulnerability of our dependence on imported transportation fuels."

"What's particularly concerning is that the world can have sufficient oil available yet still struggle to deliver that oil to the markets where it is needed."

"Australia cannot control international conflicts, the availability of global shipping fleets or the cost of maritime freight. What we can control is our capacity to produce more of the transportation fuels we consume domestically."

Mr Spencer said the development of Australian transportation-fuel production capability, utilising domestically available carbon-based feedstocks within a circular carbon economy, represented an important opportunity to strengthen national energy security.

"Australia will always need tankers. But we should not need as many tankers carrying imported transportation fuels."

"Australia relies on imports for more than 90% of its liquid fuel consumption, including petrol, diesel and aviation fuels."

"Every litre of transportation fuel we produce domestically is one less litre we need to source, ship and secure from overseas," said MeOH Chairman, Simon Tolhurst.

"That is not simply an energy proposition. It is a practical investment in Australia's long-term sovereign fuel security."

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Is the growing global shortage of tankers also a growing hole in global fuel security?

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MeOH Energy
Australia exports three times more energy than it consumes, yet imports 91% of its liquid transportation fuels.

MeOH Energy's advanced carbon transformation technology converts a wide range of stranded carbon resources into sustainable, low-emission liquid transportation fuels: end-of-life tyres, agricultural residues, biomass, plastics, paper, fibre and other carbon resources can all be converted into valuable liquid fuels, keeping valuable carbon resources in the Australian economy instead of sending them to landfill, while strengthening Australian industry and agriculture and reducing environmental impacts.

Australia has an opportunity to pursue a commercially proven pathway to stronger energy security, advanced manufacturing and lower-emission transportation fuels.
https://meohenergy.com/