

8 July 2024

## Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee

### Andrew Mencinsky Opening Statement

My name is Andrew Mencinsky, and I was born in Australia to Ukrainian parents. Thank you for the opportunity to appear today.

I have been actively involved in the support of displaced Ukrainians in Australia, and have also spoken widely to schools, fundraisers and community gatherings about the invasion of Ukraine and the impact upon Ukraine and Ukrainians.

It is my opinion, and also an opinion I hear constantly from non Ukrainian Australians, that Australia could do much more on a domestic and international level for Ukraine and Ukrainians.

Domestically, displaced Ukrainians in Australia are under significant stress due to the ongoing uncertainty around their visas. While they are extremely grateful for the support they have received, many of them have no homes to return to, and their lives are now in limbo as the humanitarian visa period is approaching its end and there is no word on extension of this visa and virtually impossible pathways to permanent residency.

Internationally, despite numerous surveys showing over 80% of Australians support maintaining or increasing aid to Ukraine, calls from the Ukrainian government for support seem to fall on deaf ears. Australia was a leading non NATO supporter of Ukraine, however is now in fifth place. Australia ranks 35th out of 41 donor countries by GDP. We are the last among G20 developed countries supporting Ukraine.

Putin has made it clear that his intent is to destroy Ukraine and Ukrainians. Ukrainians are prepared to defend their land, but need the means to do so. Ukraine needs to be given not just enough to “hang on”, but needs to be given enough to **win**.

Australia has done much but it can do a lot more. If it does Ukraine and the world will be a better place, and Ukrainians will forever be grateful.

Regards,

Andrew Mencinsky