

Submission by contact person for Antiwar Protest Canberra Group to the Senate Inquiry on Australian Support for Ukraine

Introduction

The Antiwar Protest Canberra Group is an informal group of Australian demonstrators who have protested every week on the nature strip outside the Russian Embassy in Canberra since February 24, 2022. We are a like-minded group of conservatives; non-violent Australians from all walks of life, which include medical doctors, public servants, architects, research scientists and retirees. Our aim in these non-violent protests has been to voice continuing opposition against Russia's illegal, full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Our diverse membership includes individuals from various professions and ethnic backgrounds, united in our condemnation of Russian aggression and our commitment to peace for Ukraine.

Below, I express my views on the vital issues of Australian support for Ukraine, having regard to the terms of reference of this inquiry.

(a) Timeliness, Coordination, and Comprehensive Support Urgent Support Measures

Ukraine, a sovereign nation, has been attacked without provocation by its neighbour. Australia would also hope for support from other democratic nations if it was attacked.

It is therefore both principled and practical that Australia looks seriously to what else it could provide as a matter of priority. Delay means more innocent Ukrainians suffer. In context of the progress in the illegal Russian invasion of Ukraine as of the first quarter of 2024, it is apparent to observers that it is indeed urgent that Ukraine receive more support as fast as possible.

Australia must bolster its support for Ukraine to counter Russian aggression promptly. We urge the government to expedite the provision of Australian-manufactured Bushmaster vehicles to enhance Ukraine's defence capabilities. These vehicles are crucial for safeguarding Ukrainian armed forces and providing frontline logistics.

To further pressure Russia and demonstrate solidarity with Ukraine, Australia should impose a ban on imports of Russian petroleum products, both direct and via proxy countries (e.g. India). This action would reduce the economic base of Russia's war machine and weaken Russia's ability to sustain its military aggression.

Ukrainians are clearly currently short of ordnance, air defence capability, etc. While democratic NATO and European countries may, in many contexts, be better placed to directly provide that material, in addition to Bushmasters, Australia may have other practical expertise or spare supplies in military, medical (tourniquets, chest seals, bandages etc.) or civilian energy supplies (which are clearly targeted by Russian Military) and seriously impact ordinary civilians.

Australia possesses surplus Taipan helicopters and Australian-manufactured ordnance that could be deployed to support Ukraine's defence efforts. These resources should be promptly dispatched to provide much-needed assistance to Ukrainian forces confronting Russian onslaught on the frontline.

(b) Coordination on a Whole-of-Government and Whole-of-Country Basis

Efforts to support Ukraine must be coordinated across government agencies and with international partners. The Australian government should collaborate closely with Ukrainian authorities and allied nations of the US, UK and EU to ensure effective deployment of resources and assistance.

(c) Holding Russia to Account and Addressing Mis- and Disinformation

Australia must confront Russian disinformation campaigns undermining democratic principles. The Russian Embassy in Canberra is active on social media, spreading disinformation about the Russian aggression in Ukraine, about Ukraine and its government, and about Australian treatment of Russian nationals in Australia. They also post thinly veiled threats to the compatriots who oppose Russian invasion of Ukraine. The Russian Embassy in Canberra represents an embassy of a terrorist state on Australian soil and as such warrants expulsion of Embassy staff.

(d) Related Matters

Australia must remain vigilant against Russian intelligence activities targeting individuals within our borders.

Conclusion

The Antiwar Protest Canberra Group urges the Senate to prioritise decisive action in support of Ukraine. By providing Bushmaster vehicles and any spare military, medical (tourniquets, chest seals, bandages etc.) and civilian energy supplies, banning Russian petroleum imports, offering practical military assistance and expelling Russian Embassy staff, Australia can demonstrate unwavering support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. We stand in solidarity with the Ukrainian people and call for an end to Russian aggression. It is therefore both principled and practical that Australia looks seriously to what else it could provide as a matter of priority. Delay means more innocent Ukrainians suffer.

Australia would similarly hope for support from other democratic nations in the event it was attacked.

Thank you for considering our submission.

Sincerely,

Noting the concerns about the activities of members of the Russian Embassy in Australia, I request my real name be withheld from publication.



PROTEST EVERY WEEK SINCE ILLEGAL INVASION



TOURING MEMORIAL OF RUSSIA'S ATTACK ON UKRAINE AT THE BUSH CAPITAL The main plaque reads: In memory of the atrocities committed by Russia in the genocidal war on Ukraine unleashed by Russia on 24 Feb 2022. Smaller plaques read: Civilian Targeting – Mariupol Theatre; Rape – West of Kyiv; Infrastructure Sabotage – Kakhovka Dam; Child Kidnapping – Kherson Region; Prisoner Executions – Azov Olenivka; Civilian Torture – Irpin.

Imagine if these were Australian place names