

Submission by the *Australian Lithuanian Community in Melbourne Association Inc.*
to the Senate Inquiry on **Australian support for Ukraine**

Introduction

The *Australian Lithuanian Community in Melbourne Association Inc.* is an umbrella organisation for all Melbournians of Lithuanian descent or related to a person of Lithuanian descent.

For the reasons given below, we agree with the Lithuanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Gabrielius Landsbergis's statement on X (Twitter) on 5 April 2024:

"We are in great danger. Russia, very predictably, has been emboldened by appeasement. The survival of the rules-based order is in doubt."

Terms of Reference

Australian support for Ukraine, with particular reference to:

(a) whether the support is timely, coordinated and comprehensive;

Summary: It is in Australia's national interest to substantially increase its military aid for Ukraine. Retired Army Major General Mick Ryan, AM is a very thoughtful and close observer of Ukraine. We recommend that the Senate Inquiry seek his extensive input on how Australia can increase this aid.

According to the *Kiel Institute for the World Economy*, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia are among the leading supporters of Ukraine as a percentage of GDP. Lithuanian President Gitanas Nauseda stated on X on 6 April 2024: "Lithuania is & will remain among the leading supporters of Ukraine. Our support accounts for 2% of GDP."

On 22 March 2024, Lithuanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Gabrielius Landsbergis stated on X that he is "Honoured to present Professor Timothy Snyder with the Commander of the Order of Merits to Lithuania, in recognition of years of studying, writing and speaking about our region's history. I also expressed my gratitude for his support for Ukraine".

A CNN Opinion piece dated 10 April 2024 and co-authored by Professor Timothy Snyder (Levin Professor of History at Yale University) states:

"Ukrainians are fighting for their existence. On territory that Russia occupies, it tortures Ukrainian citizens, kidnaps Ukrainian children and murders Ukrainian leaders. On territory Russia can reach with its weapons, it strikes civilians and rescue workers. ...

Russian leaders say openly that their goal is the destruction of the Ukrainian state and the elimination of Ukrainians as a people. Russian propagandists threaten genocide almost every day. Right now Russia is using missiles and glide bombs to destroy the ancient and beautiful city of Kharkiv, once home to 1.5 million people, just as Russia destroyed Mariupol, Aleppo and Grozny.

Ukrainians are also fighting for our safety and for everyone's freedom. By resisting Russian dictatorship, they show that democracy can defend itself. By defending their borders, they are protecting the international order and holding off chaos. By fighting Russia alone, they protect Europe. By showing how hard offensive operations are, Ukrainians make a Chinese war in the Pacific less likely."

On 24 March 2024, Lithuanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Gabrielius Landsbergis stated on X that he is "Delighted to present the Star of Diplomacy medal to three outstanding women, Anne Applebaum, Karen Donfried and Heather A. Conley, in recognition of their tireless work supporting Lithuania and our foreign policy aims."

For Anne Applebaum's forthcoming book *Autocracy Inc.: The Dictators Who Want to Run the World*, the publisher states "From the Pulitzer-prize winning, New York Times bestselling author, an alarming account of how autocracies work together to undermine the democratic world, and how we should defeat them."

(b) whether support is appropriately coordinated on a whole-of-government and whole-of-country basis;

Summary: The Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA) is "an independent research organisation focused on revealing the trends, causes, and health impacts, as well as the solutions to air pollution." (<https://energyandcleanair.org/>). CREA provides a very detailed analysis of Russia's fossil fuel exports and the circumvention of sanctions, as in the article "The laundromat: How the price cap coalition whitewashes Russian oil in third countries". We recommend that the Senate Inquiry seek a presentation from CREA about Australia's situation.

According to the CREA website <https://energyandcleanair.org/>:

"Fossil fuel exports are a key enabler of Russia's military buildup and brutal aggression against Ukraine. The Russian Energy Export Tracker is a project developed by CREA to bring light to details of energy exports from Russia and how they changed after the invasion of Ukraine. We do that by tracking detailed ship movements and pipeline flows in as much detail as possible.

Our aim is to inform politicians, policymakers, media and other stakeholders about the buyers and the sheer amount of money flowing to Russia selling its fossil fuels. By providing more transparency into the topic, we engage all stakeholders to push for actions that would block financial flows supplying the Russian war campaign as soon as possible."

(c) efforts to hold Russia to account, including by addressing mis- and dis-information in Australian public debate and the region;

Summary: Australia's budget for fighting against disinformation and propaganda is grossly inadequate. We recommend that the Senate Inquiry seek a presentation from Russian disinformation and propaganda specialist Pekka Kallioniemi (University of Tampere, Finland) on the situation faced by the democracies.

On 12 January 2024, Lithuanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Gabrielius Landsbergis stated on X that he is "Very happy to start the day by awarding the Diplomatic Star to Jessica Berlin, Pekka Kallioniemi and Dr. Benjamin Tallis for their outstanding work towards our shared goals, defending democratic principles against the spread of authoritarianism and disinformation. Lithuania thanks you!"

According to his LinkedIn page, Pekka Kallioniemi is "a postdoctoral researcher working in the field of human-computer interaction at Tampere University. My topics of interest in

research are social media, algorithms and disinformation. I have extensive experience in academia, ranging from lecturing to planning and conducting research.”

Pekka Kallioniemi has extensive practical experience in fighting disinformation. His *Vatnik Soup* series on X and YouTube provides entertaining analyses of the work of pro-Russian propagandists.

On 15 April 2024, Pekka Kallioniemi stated on X that “Both the European and American budget on fighting against disinformation and propaganda is a joke. That’s why the West is bound to lose the information war in the future, too. Russia is ready to throw 1.5 billion USD to campaigns like Maidan-3 because they are so effective.”

Lithuanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Gabrielius Landsbergis’s stated on X on 23 April 2024:

“We dodged a historical bullet, but there are more bullets coming. Now we must help Ukraine even more by addressing Russia’s infiltration of our institutions and preventing Iran from buying components that make drones.”

In the USA, congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene is very busily advocating for Russia and against Ukraine.

Undoubtedly, the penetration of Russian disinformation and propaganda into Australia is as dire as it is in the EU and the USA.

For example, Dr Matthew Sussex, a Fellow at the Institute for Regional Security, Australia, stated on X on 19 March 2024 that the ABC Four Corners program *Ukraine’s War – The Other Side*, aired on that day, is “An abysmal decision by ABC news to show “the other side” of Russia’s imperialist war of aggression against Ukraine, in the name of “balance”. We don’t platform Iranian or Chinese propaganda, so why give this mob – which produces videos for Russia Today – any airtime? Do better.”

and

(d) any related matters.

Summary: The GRU (Russian military intelligence) and FSB (Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation and successor to the KGB) are both capable and ready to carry out attacks on individuals in Australia. They must be stopped from doing so by ASIO.

The GRU has carried out bombings and attacks on individuals in the UK and the EU. It can be expected to also try to do this in Australia.

Christo Grozev’s “investigations into the identity of the suspects in the 2018 Novichok poisonings in the UK earned him and his team the *European Press Prize for Investigative Journalism* as well as the *London Press Prize*.”

<https://www.congress.gov/117/meeting/house/112696/witnesses/HHRG-117-FA14-Bio-GrozevC-20210527.pdf>

Christo Grozev also features prominently in the BAFTA Award-winning 2022 documentary *Navalny* about the poisoning of Alexei Navalny.

The following articles in *The Insider*, authored by Christo Grozev, Michael Weiss and Roman Dobrokhotoov, reveal the alarming infiltration of EU institutions by Russian intelligence:

A most wanted man: Fugitive Wirecard COO Jan Marsalek exposed as decade-long GRU spy. 1 March 2024.

How the FSB tried to buy an Italian political party. 7 February 2024.

The enemy within: How Russia's GRU agents blend in with human rights activists, journalists, and filmmakers. 5 February 2024.

The far-right Bundestag aide and his rapping FSB case officer. 2 February 2024.

Exclusive: Latvian Member of European Parliament is an agent of Russian intelligence, leaked emails confirm. 29 January 2024.