

**Att: Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee**

# Australian support for Ukraine

This short submission is simply in my capacity as an Australian citizen and voter. I have no foreign affairs expertise or affiliations.

My submission is direction towards the first term of reference, i.e. whether Australia's contribution is timely, co-ordinated and effective.

In my view it is not. I refer to the article by Aaron Patrick in the AFR dated 30 January 2024, which highlighted the difficulties in transferring 41 mothballed Super Hornets to Ukraine. Although there was clearly blame on both sides, the situation would have been improved had Australia had an embassy in Kiev. Secondly, we could and should have had a more co-ordinated approach across multiple levels of government.

The issue was further complicated because the Ukrainian Government was concerned about its ability to onboard two NATO fighter platforms (the other being the F-16). This would have been ameliorated if the Australian Government had begun this process in 2021, the year the Super Hornets were decommissioned. Russia was loudly signalling its intention to launch a military action in this year, which would have been an excellent time to transfer the planes to Ukraine. If Ukraine were not then prepared to accept them, Australia could have more decisively offered the planes at the start of hostilities in 2022. They could then have been online by end 2022, well before the expected arrival of F-16s in 2024.

The impact of all this indecision is that Ukraine is now facing a potential military defeat in 2024. This inability of democracies to co-ordinate an effective response to such a bloodthirsty and irredentist invasion must be of great concern to Australia, at a time when our key security partner is acting increasingly isolationist.

We have to learn to make decisions faster, thinking in terms of alignment across the democratic sphere, and co-ordinating better across diplomatic, military and political channels.

Regards,