



Australian Government
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet



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SENATE FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENCE AND TRADE REFERENCES COMMITTEE

Inquiry into Australian Support for Ukraine

**Department of the Prime Minister and
Cabinet**

Submission

10 May 2024

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Introduction

On 24 February 2022, Russia launched an illegal and full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The invasion has caused immense suffering and damage to Ukraine and its people, and its impacts have reverberated around the world – including in Australia and our region. Australia was quick to respond and, in the two years since then, has provided significant materiel, multilateral and moral support to Ukraine.

We should be proud of our response and the assistance we have provided to date. Working closely across government and in lock step with Ukraine’s government and international partners, Australia has consistently and effectively pursued its two key objectives: helping Ukraine to end the war on its own terms and hold Russia accountable for its actions.

This submission will outline Australia’s whole-of-government response to Russia’s war on Ukraine, focusing on the role the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) has played in overseeing a coordinated approach to considering and providing Australian support to Ukraine.

Australia’s Whole-of-Government Response

PM&C oversees whole-of-government and whole-of-country efforts to provide regular, targeted and sustainable support to Ukraine. PM&C serves the Prime Minister, supports Cabinet as the focal point of government decision-making, and convenes and provides guidance to policy agencies.

PM&C has overseen and participated in purposeful, routine and robust collaboration at every level across Government to enable timely consideration of Australia’s response to requests for assistance from both Ukraine and key partners. To this end, PM&C has worked closely with numerous agencies, including but not limited to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), the Department of Defence, the Treasury, Home Affairs and the Department of Industry, Science and Resources (DISR).

Consequently Australia has been able to contribute more than \$1 billion in coordinated assistance to Ukraine, closely aligned with Ukraine’s needs and priorities. This assistance has been well-received by Ukraine. As Ukraine’s ambassador to Australia, Vasyl Myroshnychenko, said: *“I can assure you that all the Ukrainian political and military leaders feel deep respect for Australia and are grateful for each new package of assistance”*.¹ International partners have also welcomed Australia’s assistance to Ukraine. For instance, NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg has publically noted Australia’s strong military and economic support to Ukraine, saying: *“We are extremely grateful for Australia’s support for Ukraine ... it*

¹ [Ukraine thanks Australia for extra Bushmasters as UK, US express frustration over Zelensky demands \(smh.com.au\)](https://www.smh.com.au/ukraine-thanks-australia-for-extra-bushmasters-as-uk-us-express-frustration-over-zelensky-demands-20230201)

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makes a difference every day".² Likewise, Grant Shapps, UK Secretary of State for Defence, said: *"I'm so incredibly grateful, despite the distance, that Australia has stepped up in this conflict."*³

PM&C's whole-of-government coordination of Ukraine support has been – and remains – effective and comprising both formal and informal mechanisms. As to be expected in a protracted conflict, the frequency and structure of agency collaboration and government consideration of these matters has varied over time – and reflects evolving international developments.

From December 2021, as Russian troops amassed on Ukraine's borders, PM&C, DFAT and Defence stood-up Interdepartmental Committees and other formal coordination measures focused on Ukraine – such as the Inter-Departmental Emergency Taskforce (IDETF). These mechanisms – chaired and/or co-led by these agencies – were held with consistent regularity to enable efficient information-sharing and close collaboration across government.

In time, the daily cross-agency meetings of January and February 2022 naturally evolved into regularised informal (though no less significant) consultation across Government as agencies began to understand government priorities and generate options for support from within their portfolios – for example DFAT consulted agencies on consular support, trade measures and sanctions on Russia, Defence on military assistance, Home Affairs on visas and Medicare, and DISR on resources. The effectiveness of this consultation allowed Government to announce a first package of Australian assistance on 28 February 2022 – only four days after the beginning of the conflict. Fifteen additional assistance packages have been announced since then, amounting to more than \$1 billion dollars.

Ukraine matters and considerations pertaining to Australia's support became part of PM&C's routine processes. A restructure of the Department's International Division in Q2 2022 allowed for more dedicated resourcing within PM&C to give Ukraine matters the focus they required.

PM&C has been at the core of efforts to facilitate effective formal and informal interdepartmental consultation and Government consideration of measures to support Ukraine. PM&C has leveraged its whole-of-Government and whole-of-country viewpoint to ensure that assistance measures are in line with Government expectations and consistent with Australia's national interests and capability. Using its strong networks across government, PM&C has maintained a contemporary understanding of Ukraine's needs, partner actions, and support measures under consideration.

² [Anthony Albanese at NATO summit: Australia a 'significant' defender of democracy, supporting Ukraine \(afr.com\)](#)

³ AUKMIN 2024, [Joint Press Conference, Adelaide, SA | Defence Ministers](#)

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PM&C provides regular briefing and updates to the Prime Minister's Office on Ukraine, and supports the Prime Minister's and Government's deliberative and decision-making processes. PM&C also supports the Prime Minister's international engagement with Ukrainian and foreign leaders regarding coordination of support for Ukraine. Leader engagement includes the Prime Minister's calls with his Ukrainian and international counterparts, his travel to Ukraine in July 2022, participation in NATO Summits in 2022 and 2023, and interactions with counterparts in the margins of international summits such as the G7 and G20. PM&C also supported the Prime Minister's engagement on Ukraine assistance at other multilateral fora such as the 2023 East Asia Summit, where he met with the Ukraine's Foreign Minister, Dmytro Kuleba, and committed further Australian support.

PM&C is regularly consulted on briefing being prepared by other departments, including but not limited to Ministerial or senior official engagements, which relate to or may affect Australia's support to Ukraine. These engagements often culminate in the announcement of closer international cooperation and/or additional Australian assistance to Ukraine: for instance, PM&C worked closely with Defence to support the recent announcement of \$100 million package by the Deputy Prime Minister during his visit to Ukraine on 27 April 2024.

The Australian Government continues to consider and assess all requests for support to ensure Australia's contribution is meaningful, reflects Ukrainian needs and aligns with Australian objectives.

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