

Союз Українок
Австралії
Стейтова Управа Вікторії



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Submission to the Senate Inquiry into the Effectiveness of Australia's Sanctions Regime on Russia

Submitted by the Ukrainian Women's Association of Victoria (UWAV)

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To the Senate Committee,

The Ukrainian Women's Association of Victoria (UWA Vic) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to this Inquiry. For our members, this is not simply a policy discussion—it is about lives, families, and whether Australia's actions align with its values.

UWAV is a long-established community organisation founded in 1949, representing Ukrainian women and families across Victoria. We comprise five active branches—Alla Horska, Olha Mak, Lesya Ukrainka (Noble Park), Lesya Ukrainka (Geelong), and "Malvy"—and have approximately 130 paid members. We are affiliated with the Ukrainian Women's Association of Australia and are a member of the National Council of Women Victoria.

Since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, our Association has changed. We have welcomed new members who arrived in Australia as refugees—women who fled missile strikes, occupation, and destruction. Many arrived with young children. Many are single mothers. Many are separated from husbands, partners, and parents who remain in Ukraine, often serving in the Armed Forces or living under constant threat. Most of these women found their first sense of safety and belonging in our Geelong branch and the Malvy branch in Melbourne.

For these women, sanctions are not theoretical. They are the difference between hope and despair.

One of our members arrived in Victoria with her two children after fleeing a threat of her hometown occupation, she has picked up children and left with no personal belongings, as she wasn't able to return home. Every time news breaks of another missile attack, she waits—like millions of Ukrainian women—hoping her family has survived another day. When she learned that Australia continues to import fuel derived from Russian crude oil, she asked us a simple question: *"Why is the world still silent and no actions are taken, paying for the bombs that destroyed my home?"*

Oil revenues are the lifeblood of Russia's war machine. Every loophole that allows Russian crude to reach global markets helps pay for the missiles that target apartment blocks, hospitals, schools, and playgrounds. Women and children are the primary victims—killed, injured, traumatised, displaced.

It is deeply distressing to our community that Australia continues to import refined fuel made from Russian crude oil through a sanctions loophole. This undermines the intent of Australia's sanctions regime and sends a painful message to Ukrainian families who believed Australia stood firmly against aggression and war crimes.

Voluntary standards and reputational pressure have failed. In the energy and commodities sector—where profits are high and supply chains opaque—only clear, enforceable legislation can stop sanctions evasion. Without it, Australia risks becoming a dumping ground for “Blood Oil,” while Australians unknowingly contribute through fuel consumption, superannuation investments, and public funds.

We cannot hope to help Ukraine win this war while helping russia pay for it.

UWA Vic strongly supports the recommendations of the Australian Federation of Ukrainian Organisations (AFUO), including legislating to close the sanctions loophole by banning all fuel made from russian crude oil, aligning Australia’s sanctions regime with UK and EU standards, requiring importers to prove that their fuel is russian-crude-free, sanctioning those who assist russia to sell oil above the price cap, increasing transparency around russian-linked assets, supporting the use of frozen russian state assets for Ukraine, and ending Commonwealth investments in companies that profit from sanctioned russian oil.

Australia has the power to act. Closing this loophole would not only strengthen Australia’s sanctions regime—it would save lives and restore moral integrity to our response to this war.

We thank the Committee for undertaking this Inquiry and urge Senators to listen not only to technical evidence, but also to the voices of women, mothers, and children who live every day with the consequences of decisions made far from the battlefield.

Yours sincerely,

Nataliya Poshyvaylo-Towler

