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# Ukrainian-Australians call for support as aid dwindles


By [Dominic Giannini](#)

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 Australia has given aid to Ukraine worth \$960 million, including 120 armoured Bushmaster vehicles. (Mick Tsikas/AAP PHOTOS)

The Ukrainian community is calling for more help and urging the Australian government to be proactive with their support so military equipment doesn't end up in the dumpster.

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Australia had stepped back with its support as aid packages became less frequent and smaller, Australian Federation of Ukrainian Organisations co-chair Stefan Romaniw said.

"Australia's military support needs to be delivered at a scale and frequency that will help shift the dial," he told a parliamentary hearing on Friday.

"Stepping back is not in Australia's national interest."

The Australian government has provided about \$960 million in support for Ukraine including 120 armoured Bushmaster vehicles.

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The Defence Department needed to be in constant contact with Ukraine and collaborate on the decommissioning and phase out of military hardware, Mr Romaniw said.

He pointed to Australia burying decommissioned Taipan helicopters, which could have been provided to Ukraine to aid its defence against Russia's invasion.

"As the sad story of the Taipan helicopters shows, there is a pressing need for creative and proactive thinking about opportunities to support Ukraine," he said.

"This hinges on two way dialogue with defence."

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Australian Strategic Policy Institute senior analyst Malcolm Davis implored the government to see military aid as an investment in not only international security but the Australian defence industry.

"When we talk about providing military assistance to Ukraine, and money, a lot of that money doesn't necessarily go to the Ukraine, it goes to defence industry locally," the defence expert said.

"So in that sense, at a financial and monetary level, we're investing in our own economy because we're strengthening our defence industry output."

It would also send a message to China about the cost of invading Taiwan, Dr Davis said.

"That we will not simply back down in the face of aggression," he said.

"This is not just about Australian assistance to Ukraine, this is about decisions that we make now that could determine whether we are facing a major

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war in coming years."

Ukrainian ambassador to Australia Vasyl Myroshnychenko has called for a revamp of how the government delivers aid and backed a long-term plan similar to the European Union that provided certainty.

The opposition has also called for more aid to flow and the reversal of the decision to decommission the Taipan helicopters so they may be sent to Ukraine.

Defence Department officials have previously indicated the Taipans were unreliable, expensive to operate and not suitable for medical evacuations, which is what Kyiv flagged their use would be.

The fleet was grounded early after a deadly crash during a training exercise.

But Ukraine should be given the opportunity to make its own assessments about equipment, the federation's co-chair Kateryna Argyrou said.

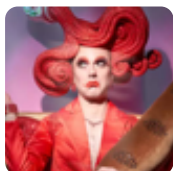
The biggest handbrake on more aid was hesitancy from the department, she said.

Russian forces have seized about one-fifth of the country and killed about 40,000 Ukrainian soldiers and civilians.

### *Australian Associated Press*

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