

2026 ADVOCACY TOUR

WITH LIEUTENANT VIKTORIIA "MALVINA" SAVKIV

21 SEPTEMBER 2026

35TH ANNIVERSARY OF UKRAINE'S INDEPENDENCE



AUSTRALIAN FEDERATION
OF UKRAINIAN ORGANISATIONS
СОЮЗ УКРАЇНСЬКИХ ОРГАНІЗАЦІЙ АВСТРАЛІЇ



AUSTRALIAN FEDERATION OF
UKRAINIAN ORGANISATIONS
DEFEND
UKRAINE
APPEAL



Armed Forces of Ukraine

AUSTRALIA 21 AUGUST- 2 SEPTEMBER 2026

Through direct engagement with political leaders and communities, and a strategic media presence, the 2026 Advocacy Tour built momentum and support for Ukraine and amplified urgent calls for air defence, military aid, and an end to the sanctions loophole on russian-origin oil.

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OVERVIEW

The Australian Federation of Ukrainian Organisations (AFUO) coordinated a national Advocacy Tour with Lieutenant Viktoriia “Malvina” Savkiv, a decorated Ukrainian servicewoman and commander of an Unmanned Aerial Strike Systems Platoon with the 214th Separate Assault Battalion “OPFOR” of the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

Visiting Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne from 21 August to 2 September 2026, Lieutenant Savkiv travelled directly from the frontline in Donetsk Oblast to Australia.

Her visit provided Australian audiences with a direct frontline perspective on Russia's ongoing war against Ukraine, while strengthening political, diplomatic and community engagement and generating practical support for Ukrainian defenders.

The advocacy tour was sponsored by the Ukrainian Council of NSW (UCNSW), the Ukrainian Association of Cabramatta/Fairfield, the Ukrainian Community of Queensland Inc. (UCQ) as well as the Association of Ukrainians in Victoria (AUV), and was coordinated nationally by the AFUO.



Ukrainian community marching with a 21-metre flag at Sydney's iconic Bondi Beach for the Independence Day of Ukraine. Event organised by the Ukrainian Council of NSW (UCNSW) 23 August 2026. Photo by Michelle Haywood

OUR GUEST



Lt Viktoriia Savkiv being presented an award by the President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskyy

Lieutenant Viktoriia Savkiv, callsign “Malvina”, is a decorated servicewoman of the Armed Forces of Ukraine who has defended Ukraine since the beginning of Russia’s full-scale invasion. Originally from the Ivano-Frankivsk region, Viktoriia returned to Ukraine from Poland in February 2022 and volunteered to serve in defence of her homeland. She initially served as a combat medic, including evacuating wounded personnel from combat zones, before transitioning into drone operations and subsequently becoming a commander of an Unmanned Aerial Strike Systems Platoon within the 214th Separate Assault Battalion “OPFOR”.

Her service has been recognised through Ukrainian military and state honours. In 2023, she received the “Cross of the Brave” (Хрест Хоробрих), a Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine award recognising personal courage and dedicated military service. In December 2025, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy personally presented Savkiv with the Ukrainian state award Order “For Courage” (Орден «За мужність») in recognition of her courage and dedicated performance of military duty.



Lt Viktoriia Savkiv received the “Cross of the Brave” from the Commander-in-Chief of the Ukrainian Armed Forces

214TH SEPARATE ASSAULT BATTALION

The 214th Separate Assault Battalion “OPFOR” is a unit of the Ukrainian Ground Forces with a distinctive history and operational role. The unit was established in 2016 and originally operated as an OPFOR — opposing force — training unit, simulating an adversary during military exercises to provide Ukrainian troops with realistic combat training. Following Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022, the unit transitioned from its original training role to combat operations. In late 2024, it was reformed as the 214th Separate Assault Battalion. The battalion undertook combat and assault operations, including during the defence of Bakhmut.



Kateryna Argyrou, Chair of the AFUO, with Lt-Col Anton Lavryniuk, Lt Viktoriia Savkiv and the command of the 214th Separate Assault Battalion “OPFOR” on the frontline in Ukraine

Lieutenant-Colonel Anton Lavryniuk, known by his callsign “Mentol”, is the commander of the 214th Separate Assault Battalion “OPFOR”. He has led the unit through its transition from a specialised training formation into a combat assault battalion. The battalion's current role is focused on carrying out combat missions and special operations in the Donetsk region.

In July 2026, Kateryna Argyrou, Chair of the AFUO, visited the 214th Separate Assault Battalion “OPFOR” on the frontline in Ukraine, meeting with Lt-Col Lavryniuk, the battalion's command and personnel. During the visit, she was able to see first-hand the conditions in which the unit operates, hear directly about the situation on the ground and gain a deeper understanding of the equipment and practical support required by Ukrainian defenders. The visit provided an important foundation for subsequent AFUO advocacy and fundraising efforts in Australia, with a particular focus on identifying practical ways in which the Ukrainian-Australian community could support the battalion's ongoing efforts to defend Ukraine.

ADVOCACY TOUR AIMS



*Members of the Sydney Ukrainian community greeting Lt Viktoriia Savkiv with traditional bread & salt at Sydney Airport
L-R: Roman Marchyshak, Dmytro Rogozin, Daria Gudemchuk, Anton Vitaly, Lt Viktoriia Savkiv, Kateryna Argyrou, Anastasiia Marchyshak, and Olya Olkhoviyk*

The 2026 Advocacy Tour was designed as a coordinated national advocacy initiative to strengthen Australian understanding of Russia's ongoing war against Ukraine, communicate Ukraine's immediate needs and deepen practical Australian support.

The participation of Lieutenant Viktoriia Savkiv was central to this approach. As a decorated servicewoman and serving commander of an Unmanned Aerial Strike Systems Platoon with the 214th Separate Assault Battalion "OPFOR", she was able to provide Australian audiences with direct insight into the realities of contemporary warfare and the conditions facing Ukrainian defenders and civilians.

KEY MESSAGES

1. Australian support - what is still needed

Lieutenant Viktoriia Savkiv communicated appreciation for Australia's existing assistance.

She expressed gratitude for Australia's contribution of Abrams tanks and Bushmaster vehicles, while explaining that Ukraine's changing battlefield circumstances mean additional support remains necessary.

Particular areas of advocacy included:

- Continued and increased support for air defence, given the scale of Russian missile and drone attacks.
- Consideration of suitable decommissioned Australian Defence Force equipment that could be repurposed to support Ukraine.
- Continued Australian military and humanitarian assistance in response to Ukraine's evolving requirements.
- Maintaining political and diplomatic support for Ukraine over the longer term.



Independence Day fundraising dinner hosted by the Consulate-General of the United Kingdom in Sydney



Lt Savkiv conducting SBS Ukrainian Radio interview

2. Human toll of Russia's war

A primary objective was to ensure that the continuing war in Ukraine remained visible within Australia's public and political discourse.

The tour sought to communicate that Russia's war continues to impose severe costs on Ukrainian civilians and military personnel, with missile and drone attacks targeting cities, homes and critical infrastructure. Lieutenant Savkiv's personal testimony provided a human dimension to these developments and helped audiences understand the consequences of the war beyond statistics and geopolitical analysis.

The tour also aimed to reinforce awareness that Ukraine continues to require international assistance despite the length of the conflict and the significant support already provided by countries including Australia.

3. Partnering with Ukraine

An important new focus of the tour was the opportunity for Australia and Ukraine to cooperate on unmanned systems and drone technology.

Ukraine has developed extensive operational knowledge through the use of drones in active combat, while Australia possesses significant industrial, technological, research and engineering capabilities.

The tour therefore sought to encourage discussion about potential knowledge-sharing, research, development and technology partnerships between Australia and Ukraine.

Such cooperation has potential benefits beyond immediate military assistance. It can facilitate the exchange of frontline lessons and technological expertise while supporting the development of Australia's own understanding of emerging defence technologies.

4. Strengthening sanctions

Another objective was to maintain attention on the economic mechanisms supporting Russia's war effort.

The tour highlighted concerns regarding Russian fossil-fuel revenues and the ability of Russian-origin crude oil to enter international markets after being refined in third countries.

The advocacy message called for Australia to consider measures that would reduce the ability of Russian-linked energy revenues to contribute to Russia's war effort, including addressing identified sanctions loopholes.

The aim was to reinforce the connection between economic policy and battlefield outcomes: revenues generated from fossil-fuel exports contribute to Russia's capacity to finance military production and sustain its war effort.



Lt Viktoriia Savkiv and Kateryna Argyrou at the Parliament of NSW



Community meeting in Melbourne, hosted by the Association of Ukrainians in Victoria

5. Mobilising community

Ukrainian-Australian community mobilisation was a core component of the tour.

Through events in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne, the tour aimed to:

- Strengthen the connection between Ukrainian communities in Australia and Ukraine's defenders.
- Provide communities with a direct opportunity to hear from a serving Ukrainian military officer.
- Maintain community awareness and engagement with Ukraine.
- Encourage fundraising and practical assistance.
- Provide our communities with a stronger platform for communicating Ukraine's needs to the broader Australian public.

The tour demonstrated the capacity of community events to combine advocacy, awareness, solidarity and fundraising.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & POLITICAL ADVOCACY



Ukrainian Festival Brisbane 2026 - Lt Viktoriia Savkiv with community, religious and political leaders

The 2026 Advocacy Tour was delivered as three interconnected city-based initiatives, each developed in partnership with the local Ukrainian community organisation and tailored to its local political, diplomatic and community environment.

Together, the Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne programs created a national platform for Lieutenant Viktoriia “Malvina” Savkiv to communicate the realities of Ukraine's frontline, advocate for continued Australian support and mobilise communities in support of Ukrainian defenders.

BRISBANE

Host: Ukrainian Community of Queensland Inc. (UCQ)

Community Mobilisation and Public Advocacy

The Brisbane initiative centred on large-scale community mobilisation and public advocacy, using the Ukrainian Festival Brisbane 2026 as a platform to bring Lieutenant Savkiv's frontline experience to a broad Australian audience.

Lt Savkiv was a keynote speaker at the festival, which attracted more than 4,000 attendees. Her participation provided an opportunity to communicate directly with one of the largest audiences of the tour and to connect the human experience of Ukrainian defenders with the wider Australian public.

The event also provided extensive political engagement. Federal representatives, including Kara Cook MP, Federal Member for Bonner, and Senator Paul Scarr, attended alongside members of the Queensland Parliament from both government and opposition. This created an important opportunity for the Ukrainian community to communicate its advocacy priorities directly to elected representatives.

The Brisbane program emphasised the practical needs of Ukraine, including additional air-defence support, military equipment, stronger sanctions pressure on Russia and opportunities for Australia-Ukraine cooperation in drone and defence technology.



Ukrainian Festival Brisbane 2026



Anton Vitaly, Lt Viktoriia Savkiv, and Svitlana Yarosh at Brisbane airport



Ukrainian Festival Brisbane 2026



Peter Bongiorni, Lt Viktoriia Savkiv, Anton Vitaly



Lt Viktoriia Savkiv with Cr Adrian Schinner, Lord Mayor of Brisbane



Peter Bongiorni and Lt Viktoriia Savkiv with Joe Kelly MP, Member for Greenslopes



Lt Viktoriia Savkiv with Tomas Miljenovic, AFUO Director

SYDNEY

Host: Ukrainian Council of NSW (UCNSW)

Political, Diplomatic and Defence Engagement

Sydney served as a major political and diplomatic component of the tour, combining community engagement with high-level meetings and international diplomatic outreach.

Lieutenant Savkiv was the keynote speaker at the Ukrainian Council of NSW's (UCNSW) Independence Day event at **North Bondi RSL**, attended by more than 500 people. Her address provided the Ukrainian-Australian community and Australian guests with a direct account of the realities facing Ukrainian forces and civilians, including the profound human cost of the war.

Reflecting on the impact of the invasion on her generation, she said: "I'm part of a generation of Ukrainians who attend more funerals than weddings of their friends." She also highlighted specific areas where Australia could continue to support Ukraine.



Ukrainian community marching with a 21-metre flag at Sydney's iconic Bondi Beach. Event organised by the Ukrainian Council of NSW (UCNSW) - 23 August 2026. Photo by Michelle Haywood

The Sydney program also facilitated engagement with the Hon Matt Thistlethwaite MP, Assistant Minister for Immigration and Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, as well as senior representatives of the NSW Parliament.

These engagements provided an opportunity to communicate the tour's key advocacy priorities directly to Australian policymakers.

Lieutenant Savkiv also attended the Jean Arnot Recognition Awards event at the Parliament of NSW, providing an opportunity for further engagement with The Hon. Jodie Harrison MP, Minister for Women and Minister for Seniors, and other community and civic leaders.

Her presence and story received a standing ovation, reflecting the strong response to her personal account of service and sacrifice and providing another valuable platform to raise awareness of Ukraine's ongoing defence and humanitarian needs.



With the Hon Matt Thistlethwaite MP, Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs & Trade; Assistant Minister for Immigration



Leshia Bubniuk, the Hon. Jodie Harrison MP, Minister for Women and Minister for Seniors, Lt Viktoriia Savkiv, Kateryna Argyrou, and Nadia Mencinsky

A significant diplomatic component was a fundraising dinner held at the UK Consulate-General, bringing together senior representatives from Australia, the United Kingdom, Poland and France. This created an opportunity to connect Lieutenant Savkiv's frontline perspective with representatives of partner countries and reinforce the importance of continued international coordination in support of Ukraine.

The Sydney program also included engagement with the Australian Defence Force Battle Lab, creating a direct connection between Ukrainian battlefield experience and Australian defence and technology stakeholders. This was particularly relevant to the tour's advocacy around drone warfare, emerging military technologies and potential Australia – Ukraine cooperation.



Anton Vitaly, Daria Gudemchuk, Dmytro Rogozin, Lt Viktoriia Savkiv, Roman Marchyshak, Kateryna Argyrou, Olya Olkhovyyk, and Anastasiia Marchyshak at Sydney airport



Independence Day march at Bondi Beach in Sydney



Lt Viktoriia Savkiv, Anton Vitaly, Kateryna Argyrou



UCNSW's Independence Day of Ukraine event at North Bondi RSL



Members of the Ukrainian Women's Association, Olha Basarab Branch with Lt Viktoriia Savkiv, Ambassador Vasyl Myroshnychenko, Andrew Mencinsky and the Australian band "breathe."



Lt Viktoriia Savkiv with Galiya Fashkutdinova

MELBOURNE

Host: Association of Ukrainians in Victoria (AUV)

Community, Youth and Cultural Engagement

The Melbourne initiative focused on strengthening community connections and creating opportunities for Lieutenant Savkiv to engage directly with Ukrainian-Australian families, young people and community leaders.

The program included a meeting with the Ukrainian community, providing an opportunity for community members to hear directly from a serving Ukrainian combat officer about the current situation on the frontline and the continuing needs of Ukrainian defenders.

An important component was engagement with Ukrainian schoolchildren at the Ukrainian Parish School (Українська братська школа ім. митрополита Андрея Шептицького). This provided a direct connection between the younger generation of Ukrainian-Australians and someone actively serving in Ukraine's defence. Lt. Savkiv's personal story offered students an opportunity to understand the experiences of their peers and families in Ukraine while reinforcing the importance of community solidarity.

The Melbourne program also included a meeting with His Eminence Cardinal Mykola Bychok, strengthening engagement with Ukrainian religious and community leadership, and a speech at the Independence Day Market, connecting the advocacy message with a broader community celebration of Ukrainian independence.



Michael Galea MP, Iryna Skubii, Lt Viktoriia Savkiv, Eugene Hawryszko, Kateryna Argyrou



Lt Viktoriia Savkiv speaking at an event hosted by the Association of Ukrainians in VIC (AUV)



Community meeting - Melbourne, hosted by AUV



Ukrainian Parish School (Українська братська школа), Melbourne



Ukrainian Parish School (Українська братська школа), Melbourne



Meeting with His Eminence Cardinal Mykola Bychok



Lt Savkiv speaking at AUV's Independence Day Market, Melbourne

While each city had a distinct focus, the three initiatives operated as a single national advocacy program.

Sydney provided a platform for political, diplomatic and defence engagement; Brisbane delivered large-scale public advocacy and community mobilisation; and Melbourne focused on community, youth and cultural engagement.

Together, the initiatives demonstrated the breadth of the Ukrainian-Australian community's advocacy network and created multiple pathways for Lieutenant Savkiv's frontline message to reach Australian decision-makers, diplomats, defence stakeholders, media, community leaders, families and the wider public.



UCNSW's Independence Day of Ukraine march at Bondi Beach, Sydney, NSW

DIPLOMATIC ENGAGEMENT



Independence Day fundraising dinner hosted by the Consulate-General of the United Kingdom in Sydney

Maintain diplomatic pressure on russia

The tour sought to reinforce Australia's role in the international diplomatic response to Russia's invasion.

A key message was the importance of maintaining diplomatic pressure and avoiding measures that could be interpreted as normalising or rewarding aggression.

This advocacy was framed within the broader rules-based international order, emphasising the principle that states should not be able to alter internationally recognised borders through military force.

The tour sought to communicate that the outcome of russia's aggression has implications beyond Ukraine, including for other countries whose security depends on respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and international law.

Strengthen diplomatic relationships

The tour created opportunities to connect Ukraine's frontline experience with Australia's diplomatic community and international partners.

Engagements with representatives of the United Kingdom, Poland and France, alongside Australian political representatives and defence stakeholders, helped broaden the network of people directly exposed to Ukraine's current needs.

The objective was to strengthen relationships between Ukrainian representatives, Australian institutions and like-minded international partners, creating further opportunities for cooperation and coordinated advocacy.

Diplomatic Engagement - Highlights

Lt Savkiv attended a fundraising dinner for Ukrainian Independence Day, hosted by the UK Consulate-General.

Among those present were Dr Brian Jones, Acting High Commissioner for the United Kingdom; Ms Anna Shotbolt, Consul-General of the United Kingdom in NSW and Deputy Trade Commissioner for Australia and New Zealand; and Mr Edward Kitt, Deputy Consul-General of the United Kingdom in NSW.

Also in attendance were H.E. Mr Vasyl Myroshnychenko, Ukrainian Ambassador to Australia, Mr Piotr Rakowski, Consul-General of Poland, and Mr Gilles Barrier, Consul-General of France.

The NSW Government was represented by The Hon Greg Piper MP, Speaker of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly and the Hon. Michael Daley, DipLaw, MP, Attorney General of NSW.



With the Deputy Consul-General of the UK in Sydney, Mr Edward Kitt



Lt Viktoriia Savkiv with the Consul-General of France, Mr. Gilles Barrier



Chef Yurii Boroviak with Viktoriia Bodnaruk



Fundraising dinner at the Consulate-General of the UK



With the Speaker and Attorney General of the NSW Parliament

MEDIA ENGAGEMENT



Interview with The Australian

A key objective of the advocacy tour was to convey its messages to the wider Australian public, well beyond the events themselves. The AFUO therefore pursued a coordinated media strategy involving television, print, radio and digital media.

The involvement of Lieutenant Savkiv created a strong opportunity for media organisations to report not only on the geopolitical dimensions of the war but also on the personal experience of a young female Ukrainian defender serving on the frontline.

The resulting coverage helped bring Ukrainian perspectives into Australian public discussion about Ukraine and extended the reach of the tour nationally.

Media Coverage - Highlights

- *The Australian*: featured Lt Savkiv's visit to the Ukrainian Festival Brisbane 2026 in coverage that also included a warning about Russian foreign interference: "Beware of Russian propaganda war raging in Australia."
- *SBS World News* and *7News* coverage of Lt Savkiv's participation in Sydney's Ukrainian Independence Day celebrations.
- *SBS Ukrainian Radio*: in-depth interview with Lt Savkiv "Malvina: from the front line in the Donetsk region to Australia."
- *The Australian*: feature article "I spend my youth losing friends".
- *News.com*: story and video feature "Drone warfare: what the future of modern conflict looks like."



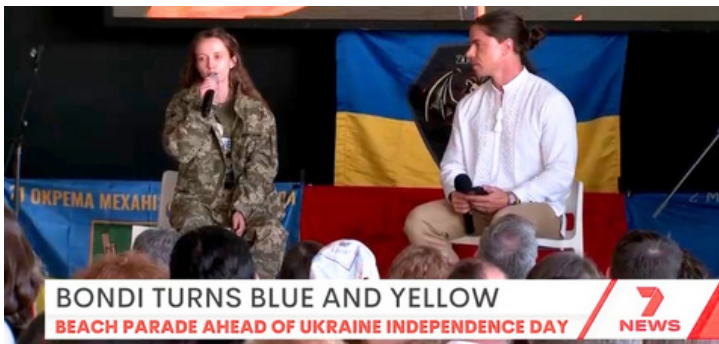
Interview with SBS World News



SBS World News



Interview with The Australian



7News - TV news report

'Beware of pro-Russian propaganda war raging in Australia'

EXCLUSIVE

JOSEPH HUMPHREYS

The leader of the country's largest local government has warned Australians of a "raging" propaganda war being fought online by pro-Russian groups, just days after the arrest of a dual Russian-Australian citizen on foreign interference charges.

Brisbane lord mayor Adrian Schrinner said Australians needed to be "alert" and to "push back" against the social media disinformation war that was designed to divide the local Ukrainian community and broader community.

"The war is not just raging in Ukraine; it's also raging here in Australia in attempts to divide our

community," Mr Schrinner said in a speech to the Brisbane Ukrainian Festival at the weekend.

"It (the foreign interference arrest) has been a wake-up call to the world because right now people in Brisbane are being fed propaganda through their social media.

"There are very co-ordinated attempts to divide our community and divide the Ukrainian community as well. We must be alert, we must push back, we can never allow ourselves to be divided."

His speech came two days after 27-year-old Russian-Australian citizen Vladimir Teslov was arrested in Brisbane, after allegedly sharing Ukrainian military secrets with the Kremlin's intelligence services. Authorities allege Mr Teslov had served in Ukraine's armed forces, after receiving



Viktoriia Savkiv with Adrian Schrinner at the weekend

military-style training in Russia in late 2024.

Ukrainian Community of Queensland Inc president Peter Bongiorno said Mr Teslov's arrest was a "sobering reminder" that

foreign interference in Australia "was not theoretical" and it highlighted the need to closely examine organisations seeking to divide the community.

"Foreign interference is not only about espionage, it's about influence, it is about narratives, it is about weakening trust, creating confusion and exploiting division," Mr Bongiorno said at the festival, attended by hundreds including local politicians and Armed Forces of Ukraine representative Second Lieutenant Viktoriia Savkiv.

Mr Bongiorno said pro-Russian groups had rebranded with "Slavic unity" events, which undermined notions of a distinct Ukrainian identity. "While Ukrainians are being killed ... we are simultaneously being encouraged to

blur the distinction between Ukrainian and Russian culture under labels like Slavic culture."

Mr Bongiorno said his organisation had raised suspected Russian interference with relevant government officials, adding that concerns were based on "conduct" and "evidence", not "somebody's ethnicities or the language".

Lieutenant Savkiv said she was interested to learn of the allegations against Mr Teslov but it demonstrated Russia's sprawling intelligence network.

"I'm surprised that Russia has (alleged) spies in Australia, but it makes total sense in the context of a major war. Russia is a large empire, she has spies everywhere in all countries," Lieutenant Savkiv said.

Lieutenant Savkiv pilots first

person view (FPV) drones and commands an unmanned aerial systems platoon in the 214th Separate Assault Battalion in Ukraine.

She participated in the defence of Bakhmut in eastern Ukraine during 2023, where she provided aid and evacuated wounded soldiers amid ferocious fighting.

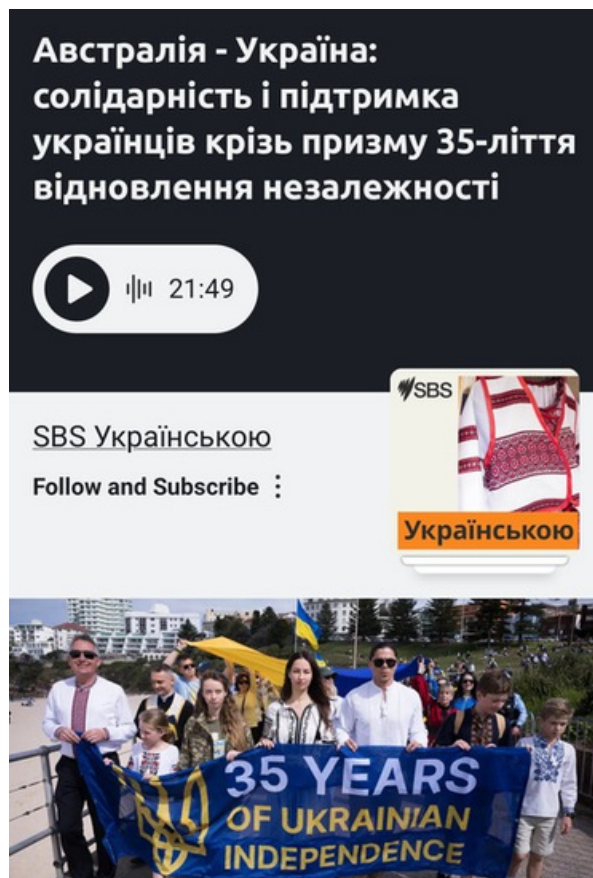
Lieutenant Savkiv said it was "pleasing" to see Queensland's Ukrainian community at the weekend event and thanked the Australian government for its \$1.8bn in military assistance for Ukraine.

"I'm grateful for the assistance and contribution to Ukraine to continue to defend itself, every piece of aid is important for Ukrainians, civilians and military," she said.

The Australian article



Newspaper article in The Australian



Interview published by SBS Ukrainian Radio



Interview with SBS Ukrainian Radio



Interview with news.com



Interview with The Australian

AWARDS



Medal presented to John McMurtrie at the UCNSW Independence Day of Ukraine event at North Bondi RSL

During the advocacy tour, individuals were recognised for their work and support of Ukraine.

The “Honorary Award of the Commander of the Operational Command South” Medal travelled all the way from the frontline in Ukraine - as an order from Major General Mykhailo Sydorenko. It is a rare and special award to recognise significant contribution to Ukraine’s fight for freedom and democracy.

We sincerely congratulate John McMurtrie on receiving the “Honorary Award of the Commander of the Operational Command South” Medal.

During UCNSW's Independence Day event at the North Bondi RSL, two other individuals were recognised for their contribution and support:

- Artist Dimitry Kuznichenko was presented with a Certificate of Appreciation from the Australian Federation of Ukrainian Organisations for his significant fundraising efforts for Future Ukraine.
- Master jeweller Rick Southwick was presented with a Certificate of Appreciation from the Honorary Consulate of Ukraine for all his support.



Josh Farquhar, Dan Fallon, John McMurtrie, Lt Viktoriia Savkiv & Ms Argyrou



Lt Viktoriia Savkiv with artist Dimitry Kuznichenko, and Kateryna Argyrou



Lt Viktoriia Savkiv with master jeweller Rick Southwick

FUNDRAISING



Lt Viktoriia Savkiv signing a flag from her battalion for auction winner John McMurtrie

Lieutenant Viktoriia Savkiv's visit generated a powerful response from the Ukrainian-Australian community and Australian supporters, turning a fundraising campaign into a national community effort.

The advocacy tour raised over \$70,000 across three cities (Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne) for the 214th Separate Assault Battalion "OPFOR" and veteran support, with funds raised via the AFUO's Defend Ukraine Appeal (DUA) and Future Ukraine.



From charity film screenings to community events, auctioned frontline items and private philanthropy, the campaign brought many forms of support together around one shared purpose: helping Ukraine's defenders.

The fundraising campaign was supported through a range of initiatives:

- *Kuzma* charity screening fundraiser, launched at the beginning of August;
- a dedicated PayPal fundraising page supporting the 214th Separate Assault Battalion;
- live auctions of unique items from the frontline in Ukraine, with winning bidders from Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne;
- a significant private donation made at the 24 August Independence Day fundraising dinner hosted by the Consulate-General of the United Kingdom in Sydney
- additional fundraising initiatives and community events across Australia.

These efforts complemented the broader advocacy tour, allowing Australians not only to hear directly from a serving Ukrainian combat officer, but also to provide practical support for those continuing to defend Ukraine.



With Ukrainian Film Festival of Australia committee members - Yaroslav Malinovskyi, Tymon Langford



Tetyana Kovalchuk, Lt Viktoriia Savkiv, and Kateryna Argyrou at the AUV Market in Melbourne



Uki Movie Club: Olesia Gordiienko, Anastasiia Marchyshak and Olya Olkhovyk



Video greeting from Lt-Col Anton Lavryniuk and Lt Viktoriia Savkiv

From the frontline to Australia — and from community solidarity to practical support

The fundraising campaign began in early August with the launch of the *Kuzma* charity screenings, the first opportunity for Australians to support Ukrainian defenders ahead of Lieutenant Viktoriia “Malvina” Savkiv’s arrival.

When Lt Savkiv travelled from the frontline in Ukraine to Australia, the campaign expanded into a national effort, continuing through a dedicated PayPal fundraising page and live fundraising at community events across the country.



Full house at the “Kuzma” Charity Screening fundraiser in Sydney - thank you to Uki Movie Club and UCNSW

The advocacy tour raised over \$70,000 and we sincerely thank every individual and organisation for their generous support.

In particular, we would like to acknowledge our top donors and fundraising partners.

Auction winners:

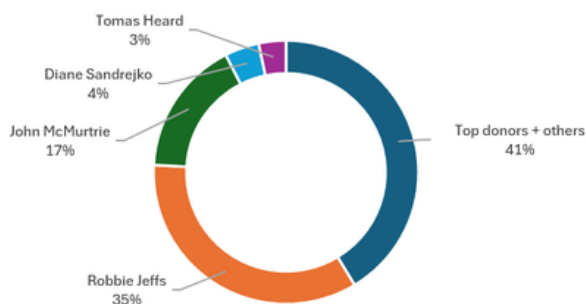
- Robbie Jeffs
- John McMurtrie
- Diane Sandrejko
- Tomas Heard

Other top donors:

- Ukrainian Council of NSW (UCNSW)
- Ukrainian Film Festival of Australia (UFFA)
- Uki Movie Club
- Ukrainian Women's Association of Australia, Malvy Branch
- Friends of Ukraine, Canberra-Queanbeyan

The campaign showed what is possible when the Ukrainian-Australian community comes together with Australian supporters: a frontline story becomes a national call to action, and community solidarity becomes practical support for Ukraine.

Fundraising - Auction Winners & Donors



Ukrainian Festival Brisbane 2026



Sydney auction winner - John McMurtrie (centre)



Auction item donated by Ruslana Gannenko, auctioned by Andrew Mencinsky



Jarema Polatajko collecting donations at AUV's Market



Lt Viktoriia Savkiv with auction winner David Yurchyshyn - Melbourne

CONCLUSION

The advocacy tour with Lieutenant Viktoriia Savkiv successfully strengthened Australia-Ukraine relations across political, diplomatic, community, and media spheres. By engaging with senior political leaders, the diplomatic corps and grassroots communities, the tour elevated Ukraine's immediate needs for air defence, emphasised the need for sanctions enforcement on Russian oil, and urged support for frontline combat units.

The tour demonstrated that Ukraine's fight for sovereignty resonates deeply in Australia, both as a matter of international security and as a shared stake in a rules-based order that protects borders from aggression.



Olya Olkhoviyk, Olesia Gordiienko, Lt Viktoriia Savkiv, Kateryna Argyrou, Daria Gudemchuk, Anton Vitaly



Anton Vitaly and Lt Viktoriia Savkiv at Sydney airport

The tour leaves behind more than goodwill. It leaves open defence channels, a sharper case against the sanctions loophole, and a diaspora more engaged than before. Australia can build on all three as Ukraine's fight for survival continues.

Advocacy Tour - Key Outcomes

- Built political momentum across federal and state governments to secure air defence support and close the sanctions loophole on Russian-linked fuel.
- Contributed to deepening pathways for an Australia-Ukraine drone technology partnership, pairing Ukraine's frontline expertise with Australian industrial and technical capacity.
- Mobilised the Ukrainian diaspora across major cities through fundraising, keynote speeches, and community gatherings.
- Secured national media coverage to keep Ukraine's message in front of policymakers and the Australian public, and Ukrainian-language media coverage to keep our community engaged.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We extend our deepest gratitude to all individuals, organisations, and community members who assisted the AFUO with organising the advocacy tour and supporting Lt Viktoriia Savkiv while she was in Australia.

In particular, we would like to acknowledge:

- Lt-Col Anton Lavryniuk and Lt-Col Andrii Berezovskyi for facilitating Lt Savkiv's trip.
- The Embassy of Ukraine for obtaining the necessary travel approvals for Lt Savkiv, as well as the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine.
- Our sponsors: the Ukrainian Council of NSW (UCNSW), Ukrainian Association of Cabramatta/Fairfield, the Ukrainian Community of Queensland Inc. (UCQ), and the Association of Ukrainians in Victoria (AUV).
- Holovy Hromad for hosting Lt Savkiv - Peter Bongiorno, Andrew Mencinsky, and Eugene Hawryszko.
- Svitlana Yarosh and Andrew Mencinsky for providing accommodation.
- Joshua Farquhar, Henry Jamieson and the team from North Bondi RSL for hosting our community's independence day event.
- Nadia Mencinsky, Communications Manager, AFUO, for organising significant media coverage of the advocacy tour.
- Anton Vitaly, AFUO Director, for interpreting.
- Major-General (ret.) Mick Ryan and Elvira Pyrczak for assisting with organising meetings.
- The organising committee for their commitment and hard work in making this tour possible, including Kateryna Argyrou, Andrew Mencinsky, Nadia Mencinsky, Anton Vitaly, Olya Olkhovyyk, Jarema Polatajko, Dan Wolody, Anastasiia Marchyshak, Olesia Gordiienko, Marta Artemenko, Anastasiya Yushchenko, Ksenia Lozbina and Daria Gudemchuk.



Lt Viktoriia Savkiv at the UCNSW Independence Day event at North Bondi RSL