

‘We stand with you, Ukraine’



[Ambassador of Ukraine to Australia, Vasyl Myroshnychenko, poses for a group photo with senators and MPs on the floor of the House to demonstrate the Australian Parliament's solidarity with the people of Ukraine.](#)

[BEN PACKHAM](#), The Australian, FEBRUARY 17, 2023

In a show of unanimity and solidarity rarely seen in the House of Representatives, federal MPs and senators gathered on Thursday with Ukraine’s ambassador to demonstrate Australia’s support for the war-torn country ahead of next week’s 12-month anniversary of Russia’s invasion.

The assembly of politicians from all sides of parliament came as Vasyl Myroshnychenko urged the Albanese government to reopen the nation’s embassy in Kyiv, saying it was missing out on valuable briefings on the ground because of a lack of diplomatic representation.

Australia is the biggest non-NATO supporter of Ukraine but is not among the 57 nations whose diplomats have returned to Kyiv.

Mr Myroshnychenko said Australia’s ambassador to Ukraine, Bruce Edwards, who remains based in Poland because of “work health and safety” issues, was unable to stay on top of developments on the ground.

“He cannot see anybody. He’s probably getting updates from Twitter,” the Ukrainian envoy said. “He has some access, but it’s very limited. He doesn’t have access to the government to communicate directly with the Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, or Office of the President.

“There are many different events where he’s not invited and cannot attend. They happen in face-to-face meetings because of security.”

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade secretary Jan Adams told a Senate estimates hearing that the government’s failure to reopen its embassy in Kyiv was because of “my risk assessment”.

“The security situation in Ukraine and Kyiv in particular remains complex, challenging. It hasn’t improved,” she said, adding that missiles continued to strike Kyiv, forcing residents to

regularly seek shelter underground. “We’re operating our embassy out of Poland. We’re doing so very satisfactorily. We are working with partners ... in a very effective way.”

Foreign Minister Penny Wong backed her department chief, saying Ms Adams needed to satisfy herself “it is responsible to continue our presence there”, and that the risks of reopening the embassy could be mitigated.

Australia has committed \$655m in assistance to Ukraine, including \$475m in military aid, and provision of 70 army trainers to help prepare everyday Ukrainians to defend their homeland.

Mr Myroshnychenko said he hoped the support would keep flowing as Ukraine’s resistance against Vladimir Putin’s forces entered its second year.

“We need more Bushmasters, we need more M113s (armoured personnel carriers),” he said.

“What’s important is that Australia continues sending military assistance. It could be ammunition, it could be drones, it could be counter-drone technology.”

Mr Myroshnychenko said one-third of Australia’s promised 90 Bushmasters were yet to arrive, but deliveries of tracked M113 armoured personnel carriers had been accelerated in anticipation of a Russian offensive.

His message to Australians was simple: “We are fighting for every one of you because we are out there at the forefront of defending democracy.”