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LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION**

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SHADOW MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

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SHADOW MINISTER FOR DEFENCE**

**\*\*under embargo until 10.30pm 23 August 2023\*\***

## **STATEMENT TO MARK UKRAINE INDEPENDENCE DAY**

As Ukraine today marks its Independence Day, we reinforce our commitment to Ukraine and its people.

This 32<sup>nd</sup> Independence Day comes 18 months after Russia's illegal and immoral invasion.

Despite the struggles Ukraine has faced in these past 18 months, its people continue to demonstrate enormous courage and resilience.

Today, we reaffirm our support for the people of Ukraine, its sovereignty, its territorial integrity and the stand it is taking for all democracies.

The toll of Russia's aggression on Ukraine and its people has been enormous with thousands of Ukraine troops and civilians losing their lives and many more injured, including women and children. A grim reality is that the number of deaths and wounded is likely to escalate before this conflict ends.

Just this week a six-year-old girl was one of seven killed and 15 children were among more than 100 injured in a Russian missile attack in the northern city of Chernihiv, adding to the growing toll.

The Coalition continues to provide bipartisan support for the Australian Government to support Ukraine's defence with as much support as possible, as quickly as possible.

The Coalition applauds the recent announcement by the Australian Government of 30 additional Bushmaster Protected Mobility Vehicles for Ukraine. We urge the Government to ensure their timely delivery to help save lives on the frontline.

Australia's comprehensive contribution to Ukraine, established under the Coalition Government, has, under the Albanese Labor Government, declined compared to that of other non-NATO nations. A considerable show of support for Ukraine would be the re-opening of the Australian Embassy in Kyiv. Many other nations have re-opened but so far, the Albanese Government has given no indication of when it will re-open Australia's Embassy.

We urge the Government to step up to match Australians' overwhelming support for Ukraine. Australians have opened their hearts to Ukrainian nationals, with the special humanitarian visa, created by the Coalition Government, granted to more than 10,000 people, with more than 5,000 already arrived in Australia to re-settle in peace and safety.

On Ukraine Independence Day, we stand with the people of Ukraine and all those who support its struggle against Russia.

We particularly hold in our thoughts and prayers those in Australia from Ukraine and those with family and friends in Ukraine. Today is another difficult day for them as they endure the constant uncertainty facing their loved ones and homeland.

The Coalition reaffirms its unwavering commitment to Ukraine and its people through both these darkest days and the rebuilding that will come in what we can all only hope, is the not-too-distant future.

24 August 2023