

## Ukraine envoy slams ABC over ‘bowl of vomit’ documentary

By [Matthew Knott](#) and [Calum Jaspán](#), March 19, 2024 — 3.47pm

Ukraine’s top representative in Australia has blasted the ABC for airing a *Four Corners* documentary focusing on the perspective of Russian troops fighting on the frontlines in Ukraine, describing it as “the journalistic equivalent of a bowl of vomit”.

The documentary, which was originally aired on Britain’s ITV network, showed filmmaker Sean Langan embedded with Russian troops in the Donbas, a region of Ukraine that Russia has claimed as its territory following the February 2022 invasion.



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Ukrainian ambassador to Australia Vasyl Myroshnychenko said the program, titled *Ukraine’s War: The Other Side*, “unquestioningly repeated and aired countless blatant lies, historical distortions, racist claims and propaganda narratives emanating from the Kremlin”.

“In as much, it completely served the interests of Russia’s dictator, Putin,” Myroshnychenko said of the program, which aired last night.

“The Australian Broadcasting Corporation should be ashamed that it put such total garbage to air.

“Through the Minister for Communications, I will ask for a meeting with the managing director of the ABC and the executive producer of *Four Corners* to understand what process led to the airing of this pro-Putin and pro-violence propaganda piece by Australia’s national broadcaster.”



Vasyl Myroshnychenko, Ambassador of Ukraine to Australia. *CREDIT: ALEX ELLINGHAUSEN*

Communications Minister Michelle Rowland said she had received a letter from Myroshnychenko on Tuesday afternoon. However, she affirmed the ABC’s operational and editorial independence, advising the ambassador to contact the broadcaster directly.

“I have received the Ukrainian Ambassador to Australia’s correspondence and have provided him with information regarding the ABC complaints process and relevant contact details.”

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Stefan Romaniw, co-chair of the Australian Federation of Ukrainian Organisations, said the program provided a platform for Russian propaganda and gave Russian soldiers free rein to justify the invasion of Ukraine.

“It is nonsense for the ABC to pretend this was fearless journalism, bringing us ‘extraordinary access’ to the ‘other side,’” he said.

“It was a stage-managed, Kremlin-controlled media exercise.”

Romaniw said he would be writing to the ABC board, managing director David Anderson and the communications minister about the program, which he said had caused “profound distress for the Ukrainian-Australian community”.

An ABC spokesperson said the documentary was “challenging but legitimate”, offers a rare insight into the lives of Russian soldiers during the war, and that Australian viewers should make their own judgment on the program.

“It adds to our understanding of this tragic conflict and shows the full, horrific impact of the war. The reporter challenges the Russian soldiers and civilians featured in the film about their beliefs and opinions.

“The documentary is being seen internationally and is considered an important contribution to the reporting of the war. We believe Australian audiences also have the right to watch it and make up their own minds.”

The spokesperson said the ABC had aired other programs exploring the Russia-Ukraine conflict, and that it will be meeting with Myroshnychenko to discuss his concerns.

According to ratings agency OzTAM, the episode had a national average audience of 606,000, with a total reach of 1,045 million. Comparatively, last week’s episode ‘*The Forever War*’ led by global affairs editor John Lyons had an average audience of 609,000, while the episode on Cranbrook School ‘*Old School*’ the week prior had an average audience of 801,000.

The program aired in the United Kingdom last month, with former Conservative Party leader Iain Duncan Smith calling it a “mistake” from the network, coming only a number of days after the death of Putin opposition and critic Alexei Navalny.

An ITV spokesman said at the time the documentary is “an example of independent journalism, which tells a human story of the impact of war”.