

Ukraine envoy blasts ABC's 'bowl of vomit'

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ABC bosses have agreed to meet with Ukraine's ambassador to Australia, Vasyl Myroshnychenko, after he unleashed a searing take-down of the national broadcaster's decision to air a "pro-Kremlin" documentary about Russia's invasion.

ABC's promotion for Monday night's Four Corners, featuring "Ukraine's War: The Other Side", flagged that the documentary by British journalist Sean Langan would "offer a human perspective on life on the Russian frontline".

Mr Myroshnychenko said the program was a distortion of history, and demanded a meeting with ABC executives, including managing director David Anderson and Four Corners executive producer Matthew Carney, to discuss the decision to air "propaganda narratives emanating from the Kremlin".

"The program aired last night on Four Corners, 'Ukraine's War: The Other Side', was the journalistic equivalent of a bowl of vomit," Mr Myroshnychenko said in a statement on Tuesday.

"It unquestioningly repeated and aired countless blatant lies, historical distortions, racist claims and propaganda narratives emanating from the Kremlin.

"Inasmuch, it completely served the interests of Russia's dictator, Putin. It also minimised and denigrated the deaths of thousands of innocent Ukrainian

men, women and children who have been killed by Russian soldiers in an illegal and brutal invasion strongly condemned by Australia and the majority of countries through the UNGA resolution in March 2022.

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

The Australian Federation of Ukrainian Organisations also condemned the ABC's decision to air Langan's documentary.

"It is nonsense for the ABC to pretend this was fearless journalism, bringing us 'extraordinary access' to the 'other side'. It was a stage-managed, Kremlin-controlled media exercise," said

AFUO co-chair Stefan Romaniw. "The Russian media is not free. It is plain as day that a British journalist, accompanied by a fixer endorsed by Russia's Foreign Ministry, was going to be a pawn to promote Moscow's rhetoric about its war in Ukraine.

"This is why platforms such as the Russian-controlled Russia Today and Sputnik were banned in Australia and around the world at the beginning of the full-scale invasion. Spreading lies and sowing confusion about right and wrong is a direct aim of Russian propaganda.

"And now the ABC has fallen into the trap, using taxpayers' money to beam Russian propaganda directly into Australian living rooms.

"The AFUO calls on the ABC

to apologise for the editorial oversight which allowed for this program to be aired in Australia.

"The program has also caused profound distress for the Ukrainian-Australian community, many of whom have family, friends and loved ones suffering due to the actions of Russian soldiers on the frontline, in occupied areas, or in daily missile and drone attacks on Ukrainian cities and towns."

A Russian embassy spokesman declined to comment.

Langan spent weeks embedded with Russian troops in the Donbas, a region of Ukraine claimed by Russia in September 2022. His documentary was originally screened on Britain's ITV earlier this year.

In a statement on Tuesday afternoon, an ABC spokesperson said: "'Ukraine's War: The Other Side' is a challenging but legitimate documentary ... that offers a rare insight into the lives of Russian soldiers during the war.

"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 ... about their beliefs and opinions. We believe Australian audiences also have the right to watch it and make up their own minds."

The spokesperson confirmed "the ABC will be meeting with the Ukrainian ambassador to discuss his concerns", but declined to clarify whether Mr Anderson would attend the meeting.

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VASYL MYROSHNYCHENKO
UKRAINIAN AMBASSADOR

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