



AUSTRALIAN FEDERATION OF UKRAINIAN ORGANISATIONS
СОЮЗ УКРАЇНСЬКИХ ОРГАНІЗАЦІЙ АВСТРАЛІЇ

Representing 22 Peak Ukrainian Organisations in Australia
Member of Ukrainian World Congress

Mr Kirk Marcolina
Chair, Antenna Documentary Film Festival
Mr David (Dudi) Rokach
Lead Programmer, Antenna Documentary Film Festival

Via email: kirkym@gmail.com, dudi@antennafestival.org

2 February 2025

Dear Mr Marcolina and Mr Rokach,

We acknowledge your response to the concerns raised by the Australian Federation of Ukrainian Organisations (AFUO), the Ukrainian Ambassador, the Ukrainian Council of NSW (UCNSW) and the Ukrainian community regarding the planned screening of *Russians at War* at the Antenna Documentary Film Festival (ADFF). While we appreciate your engagement and ADFF's historical programming choices, we strongly reject the rationale provided for proceeding with this screening.

The claim that reading a disclaimer before the screening will mitigate the harm caused by platforming Kremlin-aligned narratives is naive at best and complicit at worst. The same applies to the post-screening discussion. This is not responsible curation — it is an abdication of responsibility. Further, neither action will undo the subconscious impact of a film designed to manipulate emotions, distort perceptions, and humanise Russian soldiers while erasing their crimes. *Russians at War* is not merely "challenging"; it actively undermines truth and seeks to weaken global support for Ukraine's fight for survival.

Propaganda does not always function through outright falsehoods. More often, it subtly distorts reality just enough to foster doubt and erode moral clarity. *Russians at War* does precisely this — the director's decision to omit even a single mention of the more than 140,000 registered Russian war crimes in Ukraine shows just how unjustifiably myopic this film is. Similarly, this film fails to acknowledge the invasion as a crime under international law, and selectively presents Russian soldiers as sympathetic, normal men who have no agency in their actions. By amplifying these narratives, ADFF risks being an unwitting tool of Russian information warfare.

Community concerns regarding this screening run exceptionally deep — people have read reviews and heard direct reports from Ukrainians abroad who have seen the film, as well as the views of the Ukrainian government, cultural institutions and creatives.

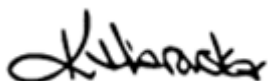
The AFUO's outreach to ADFP was made in good faith, yet our appeals have not convinced you to withdraw the film. We have received significant feedback from our community, and have now commenced a letter-writing campaign to the festival and its sponsors to demonstrate the breadth and intensity of opposition to this decision. For your visibility, we have also written to the Hon. Tony Burke MP, who is the relevant minister for the arts and multiculturalism, including for Screen Australia, to highlight our concerns at a federal level.

Let us be clear: this is not about suppressing free speech. The film is not being banned, and those who wish to seek it out will still have that opportunity. However, we believe ADFP — as a festival that receives government and corporate support — has a duty to uphold democratic values and act responsibly.

ADFP still has a choice. It can either act responsibly and refuse to be a vehicle for Russian disinformation, or it can knowingly participate in the Kremlin's information war. If you persist in screening this film, we will take further steps to ensure that sponsors, government bodies, and the wider public are fully aware of the reputational risk associated with this decision.

We hope that you reconsider your initial response to the Ambassador and our community.

Yours sincerely,



Kateryna Argyrou
AFUO Co-Chair

cc: Vasyl Myroshnychenko, Ukrainian Ambassador to Australia and New Zealand