

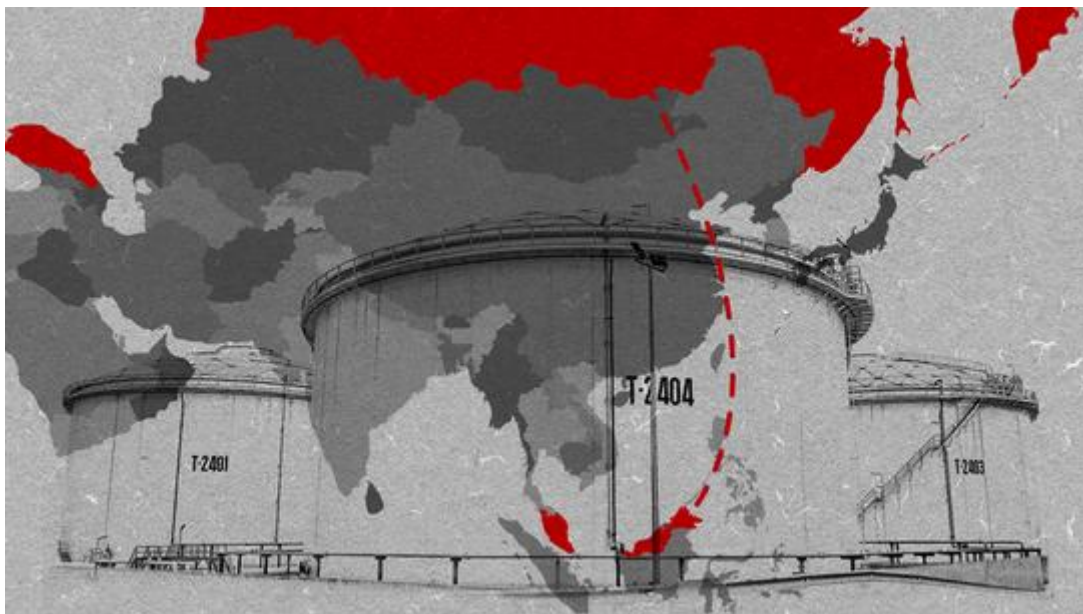
Australians have paid \$2 billion to help fund Putin's bloody war. Here's what that can buy

Two apartment blocks in Ukraine were hit by missiles on Wednesday. Australians are funding the military that fired them.

By [Eryk Bagshaw](#) Sydney Morning Herald/The Age, November 21, 2025

Liza Dmitrieva was on her way to a speech therapist when the missile struck. The four-year-old was being pushed in a stroller by her mother in Vinnytsia when the earth shook. The cruise missile fired from a Russian ship in the Black Sea had hit its target: the town square in this medieval city of 350,000.

Liza stood little chance in her purple stroller. The storm of fire and shrapnel engulfed her and 28 others.



In Mariupol, Arina Antipenko, 3, was sheltering in her apartment block with her parents when the blitz began.

As they huddled in the basement on Mytropolyska Street, the toddler told her 22-year-old neighbour, Dmytro Lastenko, "Look, Dyma, I am a princess," in a video obtained by [Human Rights Watch](#).

Then the bombs started falling. The windows in the apartments above Arina exploded. Five floors collapsed on top of them. When the fire came it tinged the air with the smell of burnt flesh.

On Wednesday, Russian drones and missiles hit two nine-story apartment blocks in Ternopil. Footage from witnesses shows a missile smashing into the residential towers, cleaving balconies from living rooms and bathrooms from bedrooms.

At least 19 among those killed were burnt alive, including three children aged 5, 7 and 16, said Ukraine's Interior Minister Ihor Klymenko. They have yet to be identified. The missiles struck at 7am, just as children and parents were getting ready for school in the town 200 kilometres from the Polish border.

"We are hundreds of kilometres away from the front line, but yet again it shows that no child is safe in Ukraine," said Nienke Voppen, UNICEF's field officer in the city. "This morning, children woke up to the sound of horror when they should have been going to school."

Belarus' leader in exile, Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, who visited Australia in November to lobby for greater aid against Russia's war, said Wednesday's strike on Ternopil was another "act of pure, heartbreaking terror".

"Ukraine needs support for stronger air defence, and Russia must be held accountable for every murdered civilian," she said.

The missile that killed Liza in 2022 was a Kalibr. The bomber that turned Mariupol into ash was a Tu-22M3. The drones that weakened Ternopil on Wednesday were Shaheds. The rocket that finished the job was a Kh-101.

Every year, the Russian war machine rolls on. And every year, it needs more revenue to fund it.

Despite sanctions aimed at crippling its economy, Australians are continuing to help Vladimir Putin wage war on Ukraine, not through donations or government funding, but through the petrol pump, according to [The Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air](#).

Russian-state-controlled crude still makes up 47 per cent of oil being refined in the world's biggest processor in India and shipped to Australia.



Between February 2023 and June 2025, the group estimated Australian purchases generated about \$2 billion in tax revenue for Moscow.

“This is not a technicality – it is a deadly loophole,” Australian Federation of Ukrainian Organisations’ chairwoman Kateryna Argyrou told [*The Australian Financial Review*](#) in October.

“Every dollar Russia earns from oil sales is a dollar funding missiles, drones and tanks that kill Ukrainians. It is unacceptable that, in 2025, Australia is still importing fuel made from Russian crude.”

Janis Kluge, deputy head of the research division at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs, says as much as half the Russian budget is now dedicated to defence spending.



[Kluge's research](#) found that the share of war-related expenditure in Russian budget documents reached a record 50 per cent in the three months of 2025 and 48 per cent by the end of the second quarter.

Based on those figures, Australians have paid up to \$1 billion to help Russia fund its war on Ukraine.

Combined, the funding would put four Sukhoi Su-34 fighter jets in the air, along with 10 T90 tanks, 45 Kh-22 missiles, 700 AK74 rifles and 1000 shells to hit targets on the ground, according to estimates of Russian military spending by the Centre for Strategic and Independent Studies and Ukrainian military analysts.

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Taken separately, the \$1 billion would buy more than 18,000 Shahed drones, 666 Kalibr missiles or 43 Pantsir launchers.

[In October, the European Union imposed rules](#) to halt the import of refined fuels produced from Russian crude, including petrol exports from India.

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer backed the EU's move and said the UK would act to take Russian oil and gas off the global market.

“We’re choking off funding for Russia’s war machine. I’m urging others to take these steps too, to go further to reduce their dependencies and incentivise third countries to stop buying these tainted resources.”

But Australia remains an outlier in allowing Russian crude imports via Indian refineries, despite the Australian government pledging to investigate ways to close loopholes in sanctions to stop Russian oil from entering Australia.

Malcolm Davis, the Australian Strategic Policy Institute's senior analyst, said the Australian government has not done enough to stop lucrative crude revenue from reaching Russian government coffers.

"The Australian people should quite rightly be demanding that the Australian government shut this down," he said.

"Australian taxpayers are inadvertently sponsoring Russian military drones that kill Ukrainians. It's ethically and morally unacceptable."