

GLOBAL

Russian oil flowing in APAC is "disappointing and also very dangerous" Ukraine ambo tells ENB

What guarantee do Australians have that ASEAN liquid fuels aren't made from Russian crude?

Russell Yeo



Credits: ENB

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Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Australia and many other nations have moved to prevent the nation's purchases of oil from benefiting Putin's regime.

In Australia this has meant the implementation of a suite of more than 1,800 sanctions enacted since February 2022, including financial sanctions and travel bans on 1,186 people, financial sanctions on 293 entities as well as restrictions on about 200 vessels.

However, as the conflict in Iran continues, the supply chain on which Australia relies upon for its liquid fuel imports is changing.

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Vasyl Myroshnychenko, the Ukrainian ambassador to Australia, says the sanctions need to remain in place while Russia continues its aggression against Ukraine.



Vasyl Myroshnychenko | Credits: Embassy of Ukraine to Australia

"The Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine is illegal and immoral, and that is why international sanctions were imposed on Russia.

"It is disappointing and also very dangerous for Ukraine that some sanctions on Russia have been temporarily relaxed," said Ambassador Myroshnychenko.

"I am looking forward to the re-imposition of these sanctions as soon as possible so that Russia remains accountable for its illegal invasion of Ukraine and stops waging a war."

As is well documented, Australia buys the vast majority of its liquid fuels from its Asian neighbours. Australia imports about 90% of its refined fuel, with the vast majority - particularly petrol, diesel, and jet fuel - sourced notably from Singapore, South Korea, China, and Malaysia. And roughly half of Australia's refined petroleum products are sourced from Singapore, making it the largest supplier.

In turn Asia gets about 60% of its total crude oil imports from the Middle East, making it highly dependent on the region for energy security. Major buyers like Japan imports more than 90% of its crude from the region. Estimates show about 90% of the oil transported through the crucial Strait of Hormuz is destined for Asia.

But – Albanese's begging bowl tour of Asia demonstrates – the supplies Australia gets from the region is and will remain crucial.

However, with Middle Eastern supplies being squeezed those Asian countries are looking also elsewhere for their crude oil supplies and have turned to Russia.

On Monday the Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto arrived in Moscow – his third visit to Russia in 10 months – to meet President Vladimir Putin for talks aimed at securing oil supplies as the Iran war depletes the southeast Asian nation's fuel reserves.



President Putin (R) in December with Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto | Credits: Kremlin.ru, CC BY 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons

Australia imports a relatively small amount of refined petroleum products directly from Indonesia compared to top suppliers like Singapore and South Korea. Based on [2025 data](#), Australia imports roughly US\$34.95 million in refined petroleum oils and bituminous mineral products from Indonesia. But there are fears other nations could follow Indonesia's example and go cap in hand to Moscow.

"As the Prime Minister engages with partners in Singapore, Malaysia and Brunei to secure fuel supply, it is critical that Australia ensures we are not importing more fuel derived from Russian crude or oil products," said Kateryna Argyrou, the chair of the [Australian Federation of Ukrainian Organisations](#) (AFUO).



Kateryna Argyrou | Credits: Assoc of Ukrainians in SA

"If we do, we create the real risk that more Australian dollars will flow into the Russian war machine."

"Every dollar that reaches Russia helps sustain attacks on Ukrainian cities, families and critical infrastructure - destroying homes, hospitals and schools, and tearing families apart. Most Australians would be horrified to know they may be contributing to that suffering.

"The Albanese Government cannot claim to stand with Ukraine while allowing money to flow into the Kremlin's coffers," she added.

While direct imports of Russian oil are illegal under Australian law as a result of the sanctions put in place, it is possible for so-called Russian "blood-oil" to enter the Australian market by being refined overseas and then imported.

"While Australia has taken a strong position in support of Ukraine, it continues to import Russian-origin fuel products through a sanctions loophole that allows Russian crude refined in third countries to enter our supply chains," said Argyrou.

"Through this blood oil loophole, it has been estimated that Australia has already sent over \$2.4 billion to the Kremlin since February 2022 - more than the \$1.7 billion it has provided to Ukraine in aid."

Of particular concern is Australia's relationship with Brunei which has rapidly increased imports of Russian crude in recent years to its Hengyi refinery.

Last year 34% of the crude processed at the facility came from Russia. Supplies sent on to Australia will have included this mix.

"We don't want to see Russia benefit from the conflict in the Middle East to fund its unjustified war against Ukraine," the spokesperson added.

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