

Item 3.1

Solidarity with the People of Ukraine

File No: S051491

Minute by the Lord Mayor

To Council:

On 24 February 2022, the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin launched an invasion of the Sovereign State of Ukraine. In the days that followed Russian Armed Forces crossed the Ukrainian border at several points, leading to several cities now being besieged. Russian aircraft have indiscriminately bombed Ukrainian cities, with at least 67 cities and towns having been hit as of 12 March 2022, according to the New York Times. A later air strike at a military air base close to the city of Lviv, 20kms from the Polish border killing 35 people and injuring another 134.

On 16 March 2022 an airstrike destroyed a theatre sheltering around 1,000 people in Mariupol, a port city in South-Eastern Ukraine. On the ground, neighbourhoods in cities and towns, including the capital Kyiv, continue to be bombarded.

Perhaps the one of the most shocking of these bombings was the Russian airstrike on 9 March 2022 which devastated a Mariupol children's and maternity hospital. Three people, including a child, were killed and 17 patients were injured. Hospital staff and patients, including pregnant women and children were forced to scramble out of the rubble and burnt wreckage. According to the World Health Organization, this was one of 18 attacks on medical facilities since the invasion began.

Yet it has not proceeded as Putin may have expected. It has met fierce resistance from the Ukrainian people and has been bedevilled by logistical problems. On 12 March 2022, Joshua Yaffa observed in the New Yorker: "The sense of purpose and solidarity among Ukrainians was in sharp contrast to the apparently demoralized state of many of the Russian soldiers sent into the fight."

According to Yaffa, the spirit of the country's resistance has been exemplified by its President, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, former law graduate, comic performer and television producer. Elected in 2019 with 73 per cent of the popular vote, he concluded his inaugural presidential speech with: "Throughout my life, I've tried to do everything I can to make Ukrainians smile ... In the next five years, I will do everything to ensure that you, Ukrainians, don't cry."

Since the invasion, he has become a hero to his people and the world with his leadership and inspiring, spirited defiance. When the United States offered to evacuate him from Kyiv, Ukraine's capital, he replied "The fight is here; I need ammunition, not a ride."

The invasion has created a humanitarian and refugee crisis. As of 16 March 2022, over three million people, including 1.5 million children have fled Ukraine, according to the United Nations, with this potentially rising to four million. Those who remain have faced shortages of food, water, essential supplies and lack of heating. An unknown number of people are internally displaced, their homes having been destroyed or rendered unsafe. While the ultimate outcome of this war is uncertain, its toll on the Ukrainian people will continue for years to come.

The war's devastating impact is being felt beyond Ukraine's borders, not least by Ukrainians living abroad. According to the 2016 Census, 14,446 people with Ukrainian ancestry resided in NSW with 749 living in the City of Sydney Local Government Area. Along with others worldwide who are part of the Ukrainian diaspora, they will undoubtedly be concerned with the safety and welfare of family and friends. By standing with Ukraine we stand with them as well.

In late February 2022, the City joined with others in showing solidarity with all Australians of Ukrainian heritage by flying the Ukrainian flag and lighting Sydney Town Hall with its colours.

Australians may also show solidarity by donating to the Ukraine Crisis Appeal www.ukrainecrisisappeal.org. This appeal is a collaboration between the Australian Federation of Ukrainian Organisations Rotary Australia World Community Service (RAWCS) and Caritas Ukraine. The Appeal's priority is providing emergency humanitarian aid for food, shelter, medical aid, psychological support and child welfare.

The Ukrainian Council of NSW, the peak body representing Ukrainians in NSW, has sought the support of the City in promoting this appeal by holding a fundraising event at Sydney Town Hall. I propose that Council agree with this request.

I also invite all persons in the Chamber to join with me in standing for one minute as an expression of solidarity with and support for the people of Ukraine and the Ukrainian diaspora, including the millions who have fled their country.

This donation complies with the City of Sydney Humanitarian Emergency Response Guidelines, adopted by Council in August 2010, the Support for Charities Guidelines which were approved by the Chief Executive Officer in May 2018, and are in line with previous donations.

Recommendation

It is resolved that:

- (A) all persons in the Council Chamber stand for one minute as an expression of solidarity with and support for the people of Ukraine and the Ukrainian diaspora, including the millions who have fled their country;
- (B) Council approve a cash sponsorship to the Ukrainian Council of NSW Inc for an amount of up to \$50,000 (excluding GST) for venue hire and associated costs to use Sydney Town Hall for the Ukraine Fundraiser event, with funds to be sourced from the 2021/22 General Contingency Fund; and
- (C) authority be delegated to the Chief Executive Officer to negotiate, execute and administer a sponsorship agreement with the Ukrainian Council of NSW Inc in relation to (B) above.

COUNCILLOR CLOVER MOORE

Lord Mayor