

Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkēvičs meets with Latvians in Adelaide, Melbourne, and Sydney

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From 5 to 7 August 2022, in continuation of his official visit to Australia, the Latvian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Edgars Rinkēvičs, visited Latvian communities in Adelaide, Melbourne, and Sydney. The Minister also had meetings with the Premier of South Australia, Peter Malinauskas, and Senator for South Australia, Simon Birmingham.

As he met with the Latvians living in Australia, the Foreign Minister thanked them for the warm welcome to Latvian community centres, expressed satisfaction with support offered to Latvia over many years, and praised the way how the Latvian spirit and cultural space were being sustained, which was evidenced by the numerous Latvian organisations, schools, choirs, and dance groups. Edgars Rinkēvičs voiced his hope that the newly opened Embassy of Latvia in Canberra would also have a major role to play in strengthening of cooperation with the diaspora.

The Minister provided information on current developments in Latvia with a special focus on challenges caused by the war that Russia has unleashed in Ukraine.

The compatriots were interested in a broad range of topics: the security situation in Latvia; mobilising additional forces by NATO member states to support the eastern flank of the Alliance; combatting disinformation; and the impact of sanctions on Russia. An issue of particular relevance was the proposal by the Latvian Ministry of Defence concerning a mandatory state defence service and how it would affect persons with dual citizenship. The Minister invited the Latvian community in Australia to contribute to the discussion so that decisions to be taken would be well-considered and reasoned.

In a meeting with Premier Malinauskas, the officials exchanged views on the security climate in the Baltic Sea region and the war started by Russia, as well as the possibilities of support for Ukraine. Edgars Rinkēvičs expressed his hope that the opening of an Embassy in Canberra would also promote economic contacts with the State of South Australia, and the Premier agreed that a Free Trade Agreement between the European Union and Australia would contribute considerably to the advancement of

cooperation.

Likewise, a conversation with Senator Birmingham included a discussion not only on challenges faced by Europe due to the war in Ukraine but also on their impact on security and the economic situation in the Indo-pacific region and across the globe.

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