



Newsletter

Q1, 2024
Issue #05

News from our Community - January, February and March

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Summer Events

We started 2024 with a **5km walk around Lake Burley Griffin** and coffee to commemorate the Day of Freedom Defenders (pictured above). This event, organised by the Embassy, is now becoming a yearly commemoration. [Read here](#) how the world supported Lithuania.

To celebrate **Restoration of the State of Lithuania (V16)**, the community held an event with the Embassy, hosted at the Embassy. It was timely to have members of Lithuania's Parliament also attend to speak about the importance of Australia's continued support of Ukraine, the upcoming referendum and the benefits of Canberra starting a children's language class.

Chinese New Year was celebrated at 1980 Restaurant, where guests enjoyed a huge banquet, and each received a polished gold join and fortune cookie from members Ridas and Lucy Daukus.

The two-year anniversary of **Russia's invasion of Ukraine** was commemorated by the Ukrainian community. Members from our community also attended, with member Rimas Kabaila showcasing new anti-Putin signs.

We ended the quarter celebrating Lithuania's **Restoration of Independence (K11)** with two events - a formal Embassy event and a family-friendly picnic. The picnic was a BBQ event at Weston Park. Thank you to Ben Katauskas and Ben Cibiras who organised the catering, including kugelis! It was a fun day with music, food, games and wonderful company.

Vilkas Update

By Peter Andruska, Vilkas Captain

Fresh of the grand final win of the Winter 2023 season Vilkas came into the Summer season with high hopes. Unfortunately, before the season even kicked off, our key attacking wing Matthew Grecl was deemed out for the season with an ACL tear. After some careful negotiation the team was pleased to add big man Lukas Sadauskas to the roster to help plug the gap. With a new look team on the floor at the halfway point in the season Vilkas was sitting in 5th on the ladder and in striking distance of finals. Sadly, once again tragedy struck with man mountain Vyt Vilkaitis being taken out with major rib injuries that made him unavailable for the rest of the season. Shortly after this to add further insult injury Benny (big cat) Katauskas was also taken out with a major calf injury that saw him also sidelined.

In spite of the setbacks the team never lost hope. One game of particular note was the 2nd last game of the season against the number one team '1 in the bucket'. A team renowned for their un-sportsman like approach to the game (the same team that caused Vyt's rib injury). After leading in the first half 14-12 Vilkas managed to keep the scores close into the 3rd before some unfortunate calls by the inexperience referee resulted in Vilkas going down 23-28.

At the end of the season Vilkas managed a respective 6th place finish and went out on a high. The team took heart in the saying "Lašas po lašo ir akmenį pratašo" which translates to "Constant dropping wears the stone" which we took to mean, it's not the progress that we make in any one season that means something, it's the ongoing effort, season, constantly improving little by little that really matters.

To mark the end of season the team is going to be putting on an end of season Lithuanian Craft beer tasting session on the 13th of April.

The team has once again signed up for Winter 2024 and are looking for any members of the community that might be keen for a run on a Monday night. If you are at all interested, please reach out to Peter Andruska (peter@andruska.com.au).

Register to Vote

On 12 May, the Lithuanian Presidential election, and a compulsory referendum on the retention of citizenship will be held. Voters who have registered to vote in the Presidential election will be deemed to have registered for the referendum. European Parliament elections will be held on 9 June. On 13 October, regular elections to the Seimas are scheduled, and on 27 October, a possible re-vote in the single-mandate constituency of the Lithuanian World Parliament.

Don't forget to [register to vote online](#) before mid-April. All voters who intend to vote abroad by post or in person will need to register. You can register and vote with an expired passport or identity card.

Upcoming Events

There are a number of events coming up over the next quarter:

Every Sat 10am | **Ukrainian Protest** outside the Russian Embassy

Sun 07 April | **Easter** event in our Būstinė (1pm)

Sat 13 April | **Vilkas beer tasting** in our Būstinė (4.30pm)

Sun 05 May | **Mother's Day** event in our Būstinė (2pm)

Sat 15 June | **Baltic Deportations Day picnic** at Peace Park (12pm)

Special Thanks

Rasa Mauragis is a Canberra community member, but also the President of our Australian community. Rasa has worked tirelessly for our Australian community and was recently presented with a certificate of recognition from the Lithuanian Government. Thank you, Rasa for representing our community and for all the hours you put into making the future of Australia's communities viable. Rasa's speech for our V16 celebrations can be found on page 3.



Photo: Rasa receives certificate of recognition.

Restoration of the State Speech

On Monday 5 February, the community celebrated the Restoration of the State of Lithuania (V16), the with the Embassy, hosted at the Embassy. President of the Australian Lithuanian Community, Rasa Mauragis gave a moving speech, which is copied below.



The independence act signed on 16 February 1918 announced to the world that Lithuania was a democratic and independent country. However, this was short lived. Many of us are living in Australia because our parents escaped the occupation by the Soviet Union. We are reminded on this occasion of the efforts made by our parents to ensure that we maintained our Lithuanian heritage and language, and of the efforts made to help Lithuania regain its independence. Whilst those born in Lithuania, and now call Australia home, are reminded of their own or their parents experiences as Lithuania regained its independence.

This day is very special to all Lithuanians spread across the world. Lithuania today is independent so let us commemorate this momentous day with joy. At the same time, let's remember that all of us, regardless of where we live in the world, are part of Lithuania and are responsible for what sort of future our Lithuania will create in the future. Its freedom is not guaranteed especially considering the Ukrainian war that has continued for the past two years and the unrest around the world.

Happy national independence and restoration day to everyone. Let's be strong together by maintaining our ethnic identity and supporting the Ukrainian efforts to maintain their independence as the future of our nation could be decided by the struggles in the world today. Vardan Lietuvos!



2024 Australian Lithuanian Days (ALD)

In December this year, Adelaide will host the ALD / Australijos Lietuvių Dienos Festival, which will take place from 27 to 31 December.

The ALD occurs every two years, each time in a different state and city. Over four days, Australian Lithuanians from all over the country congregate to celebrate our shared heritage and culture. The program includes sporting events such as basketball, billiards and darts, art exhibitions, folk dancing, song concerts, literature shows and markets. And the best part about it...ANYONE can participate.

If you are interested in attending or participating - **whether it's submitting art, competing in billiards, shopping at the market, or just catching up with like-minded Lithuanians** - get in touch. More information can also be found on the ALD's [official Facebook page](#).

75th Anniversary

We are looking for members to join a volunteer working group to help organise our community's 75th anniversary celebrations. A black-tie event will be held for our community in August/September this year and we welcome expertise, ideas and assistance to pull together this special event.

Please get in touch with the Committee if you are interested in helping.

Children's Language School

On Saturday 3 February, the Embassy of Lithuania in Canberra started a language school for Canberra's children.

The Embassy says that "The goal of Lithuanian school in Canberra is to maintain Lithuanian identity by providing knowledge about Lithuanian history, ethnic culture, Lithuanian way of life. Developing an understanding of one's roots, instilling a love for parents, grandparents' land and their culture."

LT News

Lithuania has been [steadily climbing](#) up the **happiness rankings**. [Check out](#) the data dashboard.

People from all over the world travel to Lithuania to **learn the Lithuanian language**. [Why do they do so?](#)

The **first Lithuanian soldier**, fighting on the Ukrainian side against the Russian invasion, [was killed in February](#) when a Russian drone hit a moving car.

Baltics agree on [common defence line on Russia](#), Belarus borders.

Lithuania bars soldiers, police officers from [travelling to Russia](#), Belarus, China.

It has been **cold in Vilnius with pavements turned into ice rinks**..

A [sculpture is unveiled](#) to emphasise the **uniqueness of the Lithuanian language**.

Kaunas interwar architecture has recently earned a place on the [UNESCO World Heritage list](#).

A **passenger plane skidded off the runway** at the Vilnius airport.

Meet **Lithuania's 2024 Eurovision competitor** [Silvester Belt](#).

Kaunas man builds '[ice hotel](#)' in his backyard.

Less symmetry, more chaos: What's distinctive about [Lithuanian cemeteries](#).

Lithuania [phases out small coins](#).

Ačiū for taking the time to read our community newsletter. Regards, Elena Kusta, President.

Contact us via [email](#) and connect with the community's [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), [Website](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

Member News



Photo: Sophie and Matthew tie the knot.

Congratulations to our very own Committee member and Event Coordinator, **Sophie Kusta** and her partner and community member Matt Grečl on their wedding.

Sophie and Matt married on 14 March 2024 at the Marion overlooking Lake Burley Griffin. On behalf of the Canberra Committee and community, we wish Mr and Mrs Grečl a happy and healthy future together.



Photo: Vida Viliunas with surgeon Paulius Rudalevičius from Vilnius.

Member **Vida Viliunas** spent the first part of 2024 in West Africa with other doctors from around the world performing surgeries as part of Mercy Ships. Vida told us that "There is a lot of goitre in West Africa due to a combined effect of diet and genetics. That produces large neck tumours that are challenging for anaesthetists and surgeons and is very rewarding for the difference it makes to a patient's life."

One of the doctors Vida volunteered with was an ophthalmic surgeon name Paulius Rudalevičius from Vilnius. Vida and Paulius performed paediatric eye surgery together.

Vida also said "was also a lot of rickets (due to vitamin D deficiency and poor Calcium absorption) and I worked with a paediatric orthopaedic team from England. I was there for a total of 3 weeks - living on the hospital ship and also covering the surgical and medical wards after-hours."

If you have something you would like to share with the community, please let us know via email at CanberraLithuanianCommunity@gmail.com.