



Meet the Ambassador – Lithuania

HE Mr Darius Degutis, Ambassador of Lithuania to Australia
in conversation with John Richardson

Monday 20 June: 5 pm for 5.30 pm – 6.30 pm AEST at Dyason House, 124 Jolimont Road, East Melbourne

Sharing a border with the strategically important Russian territory of Kaliningrad, Lithuania as a NATO member has assumed greater geopolitical significance since Russia's invasion of Ukraine. And as a member of the European Union, Lithuania's increasingly strained relationship with China also provides an important litmus test for EU-China relations.



A country of 2.8 million in the Baltic region, Lithuania recently drew Beijing's ire after breaking with diplomatic custom by agreeing that Taiwan's office in its capital Vilnius would bear the name 'Taiwan' instead of 'Taipei'. In response, China downgraded its diplomatic relationship with Lithuania, forcing Vilnius to repatriate its diplomats from China, and implemented an effective trade embargo against Lithuanian goods.

Although clearly not a party to the dispute, Australia has requested to be included in the WTO's consultation process, since it too has been a target of China's attempts at economic coercion. Lithuania's first embassy in the 31-year history of bilateral ties opened in Canberra in February 2022.

How has the Russian invasion of Ukraine altered European security? What role does Lithuania have to play? How should nations such as Lithuania and Australia cooperate on strategic challenges, and stand up to economic coercion from China?

In the next instalment of our *Meet the Ambassador* series, AIIA Victoria invites you to join HE Mr Darius Degutis in conversation with former foreign correspondent Jim Middleton.



HE Mr Darius Degutis is a career diplomat and has served at Lithuanian Embassies in Tel Aviv (2009-2014), Warsaw (2001-2004), Washington (1998-2001) and Copenhagen (1992-1995). He has also held numerous assignments in Lithuanian diplomatic service, including Special Envoy for Energy Security (2017), Ambassador at Large for External Economic Relations (2014-2016) and Director of the NATO Foreign Ministers Summit in Lithuania (2004-2005). He has also held a variety of teaching positions at Vilnius ISM University of Management and Economics and Kaunas Vytautas Magnus University covering public diplomacy, diplomatic protocol and negotiation management. He holds qualifications from Harvard Kennedy School, European Security and Defence College, and the University of Oxford. He is fluent in English, Polish, Russian and German, and has an array of experience in the fields of international security, energy policy, middle eastern affairs and public diplomacy.

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John Richardson is Vice President of AIIA Victoria and served as Ambassador to Brazil from 2016 to 2018. Previously Mr Richardson was DFAT State Director Victoria, having served overseas as Ambassador to Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay, and as Deputy Head of Mission in Australia's Embassies in Germany and Thailand. In Canberra, Mr Richardson served as Assistant Secretary of the Canada and Latin America Branch; the APEC Taskforce; the Diplomatic Security Branch; the North-East Asia Branch; and the Trade Strategy Branch. His early career focused on Australia-Japan relations.

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