

MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE



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Lietuvos valstybės naujasis archyvas

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LITHUANIA - DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

The Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Senator Gareth Evans, today made the following statement in response to last night's declaration of independence by the Lithuanian Parliament:

"The Australian Government acknowledges the resolution of the freely elected Parliament of Lithuania declaring it to be an independent state. We welcome any development which lends reality to the Lithuanian independence we already legally recognise.

"This declaration marks the latest and most significant stage in the tide of change sweeping Europe which we hope will lead to the peaceful re-emergence of all the Baltic States into the family of nations.

"Australia has already recognised for many years the legal right of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia to exist as independent states. Like many other Western governments we have refused to accept in international law the incorporation of the three Baltic States into the Soviet Union in 1940, rejecting the self-proclaimed Soviet sovereignty over them.

"Australia thus recognises that the declaration represents the aspirations of the Lithuanian people to achieve economic and political independence through peaceful and democratic means.

"The Government fully appreciates that it is the unprecedented process of reform in the Soviet Union which has made it possible for the newly elected Lithuanian Parliament to approve the declaration. The Soviet Government has already shown vision in acknowledging the validity of granting greater economic and cultural autonomy to the Baltic states, and is currently examining constitutional changes to provide a formal mechanism for enabling secession by its constituent republics.

"I urge the Soviet Union to recognise and respect the declaration, and to refrain from actions inimical to the interests of either party. I hope that both parties will now avoid confrontation, and enter into a period of constructive negotiations leading to full and viable economic and political independence for Lithuania"

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