

# USS Annapolis Visits Perth, Australia, in AUKUS Event



ROCKINGHAM, Australia (March 10, 2024) The Los Angeles-class fast-attack submarine USS Annapolis (SSN 760) pulls alongside Diamantina Pier at Fleet Base West in Rockingham, Western Australia, March 10, 2024. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Kaitlyn E. Eads)

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USS Annapolis (SSN 760) arrived in HMAS Stirling in Perth, Western Australia Sunday.

This marks the second visit by a U.S. fast-attack submarine to HMAS Stirling since the announcement of the AUKUS Optimal Pathway in March 2023. The Optimal Pathway is designed to deliver a conventionally armed, nuclear-powered attack submarine capability to the Royal Australian Navy (RAN).

“Historically, we’ve had allied SSNs visit Australian ports for many decades totaling more than 1,800 days,” said Rear Adm. Matt Buckley, Head of Nuclear Submarine Capability at the Australian Submarine Agency. “Starting with USS North Carolina (SSN 777) last August, these visits are taking on a more important meaning for the Royal Australian Navy and the Australian Submarine Agency as we build the infrastructure, knowledge, and stewardship needed to establish SRF-West in 2027.”

Increasing the number of SSN visits to Australia and the establishment of SRF-W comprise the first of three Optimal Pathway phases. As early as 2027, the United States will begin rotational presence in the Western Australia facility as a way to grow the RAN’s ability to operate and maintain a fleet of SSNs. Ultimately, there will be up to four U.S. Virginia-class submarines and one United Kingdom Astute-class submarine at

HMAS Stirling.

The second phase of the Optimal Pathway begins in the early 2030s, with the United States selling Australia three Virginia-class submarines, with the potential to sell up to two more if needed. Phase Three sees the combination of a base British submarine design and advanced United States technology to deliver SSN-AUKUS, the future attack submarine for both Australia and the United Kingdom. Australia plans to deliver the first Australian-built SSN-AUKUS in the early 2040s.

“Having our submarines rotating through HMAS Stirling is critical to building Australia’s sovereign capability to safely and competently operate SSNs,” shared Rear Adm. Lincoln Reifsteck, the U.S. AUKUS Pillar One Program Manager. “Each visit will build upon the previous one and allow the RAN team to grow its capabilities. This visit will see Australians take a more active role in the execution of a voyage repair period.”

“For decades, the U.S. Navy, Royal Australian Navy, and Royal Navy have trained and operated together,” said Rear Adm. Chris Cavanaugh, Commander, Submarine Group (CSG) 7. “AUKUS is a natural extension of our already close relationship, building unprecedented capability and interoperability that will pay dividends for generations.”

“It’s an honor to be here and the team looks forward to working with the Australians and furthering our relationship,” said Cmdr. James Tuthill, Commanding Officer, USS Annapolis. “The enthusiasm and professionalism of the HMAS Stirling team is apparent, and we look forward to making this visit as productive as possible.”

Initially announced in September 2021, the AUKUS trilateral agreement is a strategic endeavor aimed at strengthening the security and defense capabilities of the three nations that also promotes stability and security in the Indo-Pacific

region. Australia will acquire conventionally armed SSNs for the Royal Australian Navy under Pillar I of AUKUS via the Optimal Pathway announced by the heads of the three partner nations on March 13, 2023.