



2026 UK SUBMARINE MAINTENANCE PERIOD

Australia’s journey to operate and maintain conventionally-armed, nuclear-powered submarines has entered a historic new phase with the arrival of UK Astute Class submarine, HMS *Anson* (S123), at HMAS *Stirling* for a period of maintenance and joint training.

What is a Submarine Maintenance Period?

A submarine maintenance period (SMP) – often referred to as a ‘Self Maintenance Period’ in the Royal Navy, is a period of routine, low-level maintenance when a boat is in port. It is an integral part of the successful operation of a nuclear-powered submarine and will typically last anywhere from a few days to a few weeks depending on the work required.

Astute Class Submarines

The United Kingdom’s Astute Class SSNs are the Royal Navy’s latest generation of nuclear powered attack submarines, delivering stealth, endurance, and advanced strike capability.

Astute Class submarines will visit Australia for a maintenance period in 2026 as we prepare to host the Royal Navy for a rotational presence at HMAS *Stirling*.

These visits are particularly important for Australia and HMAS *Stirling*’s capabilities given the UK and Australia will both operate SSN-AUKUS, our next generation nuclear-powered submarine – which will be UK-designed and incorporate technologies from all three AUKUS nations.

AUKUS Partnership Achieves New Milestone

Over the coming weeks, Australia personnel will work with our AUKUS partners to carry out a range of maintenance and familiarisation activities on HMS *Anson*. The arrival of HMS *Anson* represents another step-up for Australia as we build upon the previous packages of work carried out on US Virginia-class submarines, USS *Hawaii* and USS *Vermont*.

This is the first visit by a UK SSN to Australia since October 2021, and the first time a UK SSN has performed a maintenance activity in Australia. This critical training opportunity will enhance Australia’s exposure and experience with maintenance of SSNs.

In addition to maintenance work, the visit by HMS *Anson* to Australia will involve a sea period for joint training, exercises and capability demonstrations further enhancing the interoperability between the Royal Navy, the Royal Australian Navy and the US Navy.

Astute Class Submarine Specs

Displacement: 7,400 t	Length: 97 metres
Speed: 30 knots (55.5km/h)	Range: unlimited
Propulsion: Rolls Royce Pressurised Water Reactor 2	
Armament: Tomahawk Land Attack Cruise missiles and Spearfish torpedoes	

Submarine Rotational Force-West

Activities like the SMP are designed to accelerate Australia’s capability to conduct SSN maintenance before the commencement of the rotational presence of up to four U.S. and one UK SSN at HMAS *Stirling*.

This initiative, known as Submarine Rotational Force-West (SRF-West), will further develop Australia’s ability to safely own, operate, maintain and sustain its own future conventionally-armed, nuclear-powered submarine capability. SRF West will test our workforce, regulatory system, our supply chain and the development of our nuclear enterprise before we are Sovereign Ready to own, operate and regulate our sovereign SSNs.

Nuclear safety and stewardship are the cornerstones of AUKUS, underpinned by the decades-long unmatched safety records of the UK and the U.S. During the maintenance period, no radiological material or waste will be transferred ashore.

AUKUS partners are committed to setting the highest nuclear non-proliferation standard as part of Australia’s acquisition of conventionally-armed, nuclear-powered submarines.

