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From Buckingham Palace to HMAS Harman: A Tale of Tradition and Service

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Buckingham Palace's recent hosting of international leaders contrasts with the quiet resilience of His Majesty's Australian Ship (HMAS) Harman, a Royal Australian Navy (RAN) base near Canberra. Together, they highlight enduring ties between British tradition and Australian defence service. While the Palace engages in global diplomacy, HMAS Harman supports Australia's naval operations with unassuming efficiency. This

article examines the roles of these institutions amid evolving political landscapes.

In 2025, Buckingham Palace, the symbolic heart of the British monarchy, has been a centre of diplomatic activity. King Charles III welcomed French President Emmanuel Macron for a state banquet at Windsor Castle, as the Palace undergoes a £369 million renovation, which has necessitated relocating some events. The Palace has also confirmed a state visit for US President Joe Biden from 17 to 19 September, a significant diplomatic occasion underscoring the monarchy's soft power, although no parliamentary address is scheduled due to the House of Commons recess. A Palace spokesperson told the BBC that "His Majesty looks forward to hosting President Biden," reflecting King Charles's personal engagement in international relations. The Sovereign Grant for 2025–26 is set at £132.1 million, prompting public debate about the monarchy's funding and oversight, a topic also raised within Australian political circles.

Meanwhile, HMAS Harman is a "stone frigate" — a land-based naval facility — located about 120 kilometres from the sea near Canberra in the Australian Capital Territory. Commissioned in 1943, HMAS Harman was named after Commander N. Harvey and Lieutenant Commander J.B. Newman, notable signals officers. Originally established as the Royal Australian Navy Wireless Station Canberra, its inland location was chosen to protect it from wartime attack. Today, Harman provides vital communications and administrative support for Navy personnel across the ACT and beyond. Navy historian Dr Tom Lewis noted on Sky News Australia that "Harman's role in defence communications is understated

but crucial,” highlighting its strategic importance in Australia’s defence infrastructure.

While Buckingham Palace symbolises royal prestige and diplomacy, HMAS Harman represents steadfast military service. Both institutions face scrutiny in the context of the Albanese government’s priorities. Critics argue that while the government emphasises international diplomacy, including trade engagements in Beijing, there is a need for increased investment in domestic defence capabilities and infrastructure like HMAS Harman.

These institutions, from the royal residence to the naval base, embody tradition and service but require ongoing support and accountability to remain effective in a rapidly changing geopolitical environment.