

YOUNG LEADER HONOURED

Madeleine's royal appointments

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WHEN Madeleine Buchner's nanna once insisted at the Shabbat table that she use her napkin properly, "just in case you might have to sit with royalty one day", little did she know how prophetic nanna's advice would be.

Last week, Buchner, 24, not only met Queen Elizabeth, but also dined with royalty – literally – with Prince Harry seated to her immediate left, at a lavish dinner.

Buchner had been invited to travel from Melbourne to Buckingham Palace, along with 60 other exceptional young individuals from around the Commonwealth, to accept an award for her participation in the Queen's Young Leaders Program. The scheme discovers, celebrates and supports young people from the Commonwealth who are dedicated to creating lasting change in their communities and beyond.



Madeleine Buchner receiving her award from Queen Elizabeth.



Madeleine Buchner dining with Prince Harry.

Buchner was invited to join the program for the exemplary work that she had done for Little Dreamers, the not-for-profit organisation that she began when she was just 16.

Little Dreamers aims to recognise, celebrate and amplify young carers across Australia.

Upon receiving the award, Buchner had the opportunity for a quick conversation with the Queen.

"I told her that I do what I do because I have grown up in this situation [caring for my mother and brother], and I think it is important that no one feels the way that I felt."

In response, the Queen commended her for her efforts. "She said that it is incredible to take a challenge like that, and turn it into something that changes lives, and that I should keep going," recalled Buchner.

But her brush with royalty did not end there.

As she entered the dinner event, she was shocked to find Prince Harry's place card next to her own.

"I was like, ok, you have two seconds to prepare yourself. I took a deep breath and I put my napkin on my lap."

Buchner dined with the Prince for two hours, the conversation flowing the entire time.

"He knows everything about everything," Buchner said. "It felt like I was talking to a friend."

She was so comfortable that at one point she almost used a swear word but stopped herself just in time. "I thought you were going to swear," Prince Harry remarked.

"Oh, I was but I remembered that you are a Prince," said Buchner.

The Prince chuckled. "I've been in the army for 10 years. You could say no swear word that would surprise me!"