



## Media Release

28 JULY 2013

### RESPONSE TO SUN HERALD ARTICLE 28 JULY 2013

The story in today's Sun-Herald *Agency Waited for Boat Debris Before Search* (page 4) and other Fairfax newspapers misrepresent facts provided to Fairfax media under Freedom of Information laws.

Australian authorities commenced an extensive search for a missing vessel north west of Christmas Island on 6 June before any debris was found.

The facts are:

- Australian authorities conducted an extensive search for a missing vessel and then for survivors from 6-9 June involving up to three vessels and five aircraft;
- On 6 June Border Protection Command (BPC) advised AMSA that a previously sighted vessel was unable to be relocated and they would look for it during the day;
- An operational decision was made following consultation between BPC, Defence and AMSA on 6 June that Defence assets were best placed to retain coordination of this incident overnight. Defence had naval assets in the area already attempting to relocate the vessel;
- AMSA provided search area planning, drift modelling and search activity advice to Defence and then assumed coordination at first light Christmas Island time on Friday 7 June;
- Debris was sighted at 3pm on Friday around 65 nautical miles West North West of Christmas Island;
- A search for survivors continued until last light Christmas Island time on 9 June.

At no stage did the vessel contact AMSA or any other government agency and AMSA had no specific information about its location. Regardless of who had coordination overnight 6-7 June the same ships and aircraft would have been used in the same search area.

The professional search and rescue officers at AMSA's Rescue Coordination Centre manage operations in difficult conditions and their priority is to protect life at sea. They deserve to have these efforts accurately represented in media reports.

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