



Media Release

5th August 2013

CORRECTING THE RECORD

The Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) is pleased *The Sun Herald* published a clarification of its page 4 story on July 28 *Agency Waited for Boat Debris Before Search* in its August 4 edition.

The correction is a result of the following letter to the editors of *The Sun Herald* and *The Sunday Age*, which carried the same story on page 3, under a different headline.

It is disappointing *The Sunday Age* did not seek to clarify the facts and AMSA will pursue a correction.



CLARIFICATIONS

- ▶ Last Sunday's story on tattoo parlours reported that tattoo artist Loic Barbot said some people under 18 had come into his shop to have home-made tattoos fixed. Mr Barbot has clarified that he would not tattoo anyone aged under 18 without parental consent.
- ▶ Last Sunday's story on the search for an asylum seeker boat that sank in June said the Rescue Co-ordination Centre refused to mount a search after the boat was reported to be "dead in the water". In fact the agency began a search on the third day after the sighting. The RCC initially declined to search as the Defence Department was already doing so and it did not want to duplicate efforts. This explanation was omitted in the editing process. The RCC gave assistance by beginning drift modelling.



CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

The Editor
Sunday Age
GPO Box 257
MELBOURNE VIC 3001

Dear Sir

I refer to the article "Agency waited for boat debris before search" by Natalie O'Brien published on 28 July 2013 in Sun Herald and other Fairfax titles under different headlines.

The fundamental assertion in the story that a search for this missing vessel was not conducted until debris was found is completely wrong and contradicted by the information provided in both the chronology of events provided under Freedom of Information laws and AMSA's statement to Ms O'Brien on 27 July 2013 (included as an attachment to this letter).

The headline and introductory paragraphs explicitly state that a search for the vessel would not be mounted until AMSA had evidence of debris being found. The incident timeline (at pages 1 06028 UTC; 060716; pages 2 at 06084; 060957; page 3 061441; page 4 61737) and the statement clearly indicate that Defence assets were on scene from 6 June conducting searching activities.

Ms O'Brien writes that AMSA was 'refusing to mount a search'. This is not accurate.

AMSA was assisting Defence in its search activities for the vessel by providing search area planning, drift modelling and search activity advice. AMSA assumed coordination of the incident at 9.16 am AEST 7 June 2013 (page 5 062333 UTC) well before any debris is located (page 7 070600 UTC). Again, this information is included in the chronology of events.

AMSA worked with Defence and Border Protection Command during this incident and (as set out in the documents obtained by Ms O'Brien) the search activities and search would have been the same regardless of who had coordination of the incident.

Given all the information at the journalist's disposal, I am surprised the article was published in its eventual form. The implication that AMSA failed in its responsibilities is more than misleading. It is reprehensible as it undermines public confidence in AMSA and insults the integrity of its staff.

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 and the facts accurately represented in media reports.

I note the statement from Fairfax Media in the Sydney Morning Herald (29/7/13 page 2) claims your organisation is a defender of "...quality journalism...and an optimistic vision for the nation...(sic)". I ask you to demonstrate your commitment to these values by printing a correction to the story, highlighting the points raised in this letter and the accompanying attachments in your newspaper.

A copy of this letter has been sent to the Australian Press Council.

Yours sincerely



GRAHAM PEACHEY

30 July 2013

Atts. (2)

Chronology of Events

2013/3821

Incident Timeline

DTG (all June 2013)	Description
050858 UTC	SAR Coordination set to Defence
050858 UTC	NORCOM advise Contact of Interest (COI) located 37 [SIC] (30) nm northwest of Christmas Island. <i>HMAS Warramunga</i> enroute. Not SOLA Defence has coordination for COI.
050902 UTC	HQNORCOM issue Situation Report (SITREP 1). Update as at 1855 AEST, Wednesday, 05 June 2013. At approximately 1815 AEST today, a RAAF AP3C Maritime Patrol aircraft, operating under the control of Border Protection Command (BPC), detected a COI approximately 28 nm northwest of Christmas Island. There were multiple people sighted on the deck. A BPC asset is responding to the area to monitor the approaching COI.
060018 UTC	AMSOC advise RCC Australia that the COI, reported as 28 nm northwest of Christmas Island last night, and previously located by AP3C at 1815 UTC [SIC] on 5 June, has not been relocated by <i>HMAS Warramunga</i> .
060028 UTC	BPC provide RCC Australia with a photo of the COI located by the APC3 at 050743 UTC, approximately 28nm northwest of Christmas Island in position 10 04 South 105 21 East. The vessel was detected dead in the water at the time of sighting, with approximately 55 POB. <i>HMAS Warramunga</i> has been unable to relocate this vessel and reports weather conditions in the area at time 052130 UTC with winds at 140 degrees at 25 knots Sea State 4. Marginal for night boarding. An AP3C is scheduled to be in the area at approximately 0330 UTC on 6 June.
060716 UTC	From HQNORCOM advise RCC Australia that the COI previously reported in position 10 04.00 South 105 21.00 East at 050743 UTC was not relocated by the <i>HMAS Warramunga</i> last night. The AP3C was tasked and has conducted visual and radar searches today at a 25 nm radius of Christmas Island, 30 nm radius of last known position (LKP), southeast from the LKP 100nm, assuming track spacing of 40 (S=40). Vessel is reported as blue hull, white superstructure, Type III Indonesian vessel, minimum 55 POB. <i>HMAS Warramunga</i> reported possible target on a track of 117 degrees at 6 knots.

Chronology of Events

DTG (all June 2013)	Description
060843 UTC	HQNORCOM advise RCC Australia of concern for a vessel previously located approximately 25nm northwest of Christmas Island. Vessel was located 10 04 South 105 21 East at (05)0743 UTC, dead in water. <i>HMAS Warramunga</i> attempted to relocate and searched datum and expected drift pattern then slow sweep to the south until 2037 UTC. AP3C conducted visual and radar search of datum and 30nm around datum, visual clearance of Christmas Island, radar search out to approximately 30 nm around Christmas Island then out of datum a radar search (20nm either side of track) on a bearing of 117 degrees for 140 nm. Vessel remains unlocated. Intentions - <i>HMAS Warramunga</i> is devising new search based on initial datum, water movement and environmental conditions AP3C (1) is planned to be airborne from Darwin at 062130 UTC, and on task 070200 UTC. Intention is to conduct surveillance based on initial datum, environmental conditions and already searched area. AP3C (2) will launch from Cocos Island and provide follow on SAR surveillance (if required), timings to be determined. Request RCC Australia to provide assistance with search area planning and net water movement modelling.
060856 UTC	RCC Australia advise HQNORCOM that net water movement modelling is being processed.
060957 UTC	HQNORCOM request RCC Australia to confirm the receipt of a request for search areas for the un-sighted vessel. RCC Australia advise that an area is being developed. HQNORCOM state that the Admiral's level of apprehension has risen throughout the incident. BPC will put two AP3Cs and one Dash 8 on task the following day and that HQNORCOM "feel that it's approaching an appropriate time to hand coordination of the incident to RCC Australia." HQNORCOM advised they would still provide the same assets. RCC Australia advised that it was unable to accept coordination at this time, but will investigate the issue further and consider indications of distress and will have a good look at all indicators and advise HQNORCOM. <i>HMAS Warramunga</i> is also undertaking a search pattern now. Planning to be advised ASAP.
061035 UTC	RCC Australia advise HQNORCOM that planning for a search area is progressing and that a drift model will be provided for consideration as soon as possible. RCC Australia request timings for completion of visual and radar searched by AP3C. Particularly require time of commencement of the trackline search (bearing 117 degrees for 140 nm with 20nm radar search either side of track); the time at which the furthest point (140nm from datum) along bearing 117 was reached; and the completion time of the search. This will assist RCC Australia with determining the likelihood of the aircraft being able to detect the COI had it been making way at 6 knots for the duration of the search. Details of search integrity conditions in-terms of radar effectiveness to reacquire the target vessel, other items located or spotted, weather conditions during search operations are requested.
061125 UTC	HQNORCOM advise that they are working on a search pattern. The Admiral asks whether RCC Australia can take the lead after that work is done. RCC will look at search area. RCC Australia advise that the same assets will be used in the same search area, regardless of who has coordination. This is discussed and decision made that the incident is still a surveillance task. <i>HMAS Warramunga</i> is looking at new datum.

Chronology of Events

DTG (all June 2013)	Description
061441 UTC	<p>HQNORCOM update RCC Australia with information from <i>HMAS Warramunga</i>.</p> <p>At 050815 [SIC] UTC the vessel was located by aircraft in position 10 04 South 105 21 East and was reported as dead in the water. At 051528 UTC <i>HMAS Warramunga</i> held a radar contact at 10 04 South 105 18 East with course 117 at 6kts. This was not the vessel they were looking for. <i>MV Shanghai Spirit</i> was contacted (it was drifting within 5 nm of the previous datum supplied). <i>MV Shanghai Spirit</i> reported that they had noticed no small vessels. <i>HMAS Warramunga</i> to continue an expanding spiral search along predicted drift for approximately 11 nm from the last known position. Sea state four, wind 140 at 25kts.</p> <p>At 061102 UTC <i>HMAS Warramunga</i> started a further search to the northwest based on LKP for vessel. Coordinates for a boxed area are 09 32 South 09 49 South and 104 45 East 105 07 East. Nothing significant to report at this time. Wind 109 at 16 knots, swell 340 at one metre, Sea State two.</p> <p>At 060517 UTC <i>HMAS Warramunga</i> saw what appeared to be a light in the vicinity of 09 57 South 105 00 East. <i>HMAS Warramunga's</i> position at that time was 10 18 South 105 43 East. <i>HMAS Warramunga</i> proceeded to that location but [it] was not the [COI] vessel. Nothing seen along route.</p> <p>Request confirmation that RCC Australia received the AP3C track data sent previously. AP3C team in Darwin has been requested to provide RCC Australia with answers regarding track information as previously sought.</p> <p>[Post-event analysis confirms that the contact on 117 degrees at 6 knots was a spurious radar contact, and was neither the COI nor <i>MV Shanghai Spirit</i>. The light reported as being sighted by <i>HMAS Warramunga</i> was sighted at 061249 UTC.]</p>
061511 UTC	<p>RCC Australia sends maps to HQNORCOM of recommended search areas for the COI.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The recommended search area route is derived from a drift model based upon a scenario route for the target from the last known position of 10 04.00 South 105 21.00 East at 050743 UTC to last light on 07 June 2013 based on a course of 117 degrees true at 6 knots. 2. The recommended search area point is derived from a drift model based from the last known position (10 04.00 South 105 21.00 East at 050743 UTC) to last light 07 June for initially stationary targets. 3. The recommended search area combined incorporates both recommended search areas route and point. <p>NOTE: Targets for all drift models are based on person in water (general); debris from a fishing vessel; and sampan/Type III foreign fishing vessel.</p> <p>Drift models cover the timeframe 050743 UTC through until 071200 UTC.</p>
061603 UTC	<p>RCC Australia and HQNORCOM discuss radar information RCC Australia explain how the search areas have been determined. The vessel reported on a course 117 degrees at 6 knots now identified as <i>MV Shanghai Spirit</i> not SIEV. Discussion regarding ongoing surveillance plans. If debris is sighted, the surveillance would then move to a SAR phase.</p>

Chronology of Events

DTG (all June 2013)	Description
061737 UTC	<p>RCC Australia sends a message to HQNORCOM and requests HQNORCOM to pass the flight times of the AP3C to RCC Australia when they are available. RCC Australia attaches another two maps to this message. One map shows the combined search area and the other the search area for the AP3C. RCC Australia asks HQNORCOM to note the assessment of the information previously provided by HQNORCOM regarding the COI. A. The COI was originally sighted in position 10 04 South 105 21 East at 050734 [SIC] UTC; it was dead in the water. B. A radar contact was observed in position 1004 South 105 18 East at 051528 UTC. This was <i>MV Shanghai Spirit</i> and not the COI. <i>HMAS Warramunga</i> was 38.59 nm to southwest of <i>MV Shanghai Spirit</i> at the time. Contact with <i>MV Shanghai Spirit</i> lead to the surveillance area to southeast of Christmas Island, with a course of 117 degrees at 6 knots. C. A light was sighted in approximate position 09 57 South 105 00 East at 060517 UTC and <i>HMAS Warramunga</i> was 47.25 nm to the southeast of the light. D. At time 061102 UTC <i>HMAS Warramunga</i> has conducted a search of an area 33.6 nm to centre point to northwest of last known position of COI. 4. SAR ASSESSMENT: The COI was dead in the water and would have drifted to the west then southwest over time from LKP to present. It was unlikely that <i>HMAS Warramunga</i> would have detected the COI on radar at time 051528 UTC. The COI was probably 15 nm to the west-northwest of the radar contact at that time. The light sighted by <i>HMAS Warramunga</i> is unlikely to have been related to COI owing to low height of eye of vessel and distance from predicted position of COI to <i>HMAS Warramunga</i> at time of sighting. The COI was likely to have been southwest of <i>HMAS Warramunga</i> search area when vessel was conducting search to northwest of LKP. The COI was likely to have been a full sweep width to the west of AP3C search area and detection may have been compromised due to sea state and hull profile and composition. The net water movement drift model places the COI to currently be drifting to west-northwest of Christmas Island at between 74 and 84 nm with an approximate centre point of 10 03.14 South 104 17.96 East. As discussed, the first surveillance area for surveillance aircraft is recommended as 4023 square nm as the highest probability to locate a drifting vessel. RCC Australia's assessment is that the vessel may not have been sighted during surveillance, owing to its low hull profile and the sea conditions. Radar contact was incorrectly attributed to <i>MV Shanghai Spirit</i>. If <i>HMAS Warramunga</i> is deployed to the west of Christmas Island, the COI may be detected by electronic or visual means. RCC Australia does not hold a SAR phase at this time owing to the likelihood that it has drifted out of the surveillance area prior to the arrival of assets on scene. RCC Australia concurs with HQNORCOM plan to deploy an AP3C Orion to conduct surveillance for this COI under tasking of Defence. RCC Australia further acknowledges that at present this vessel is an unaccounted for contact of interest under Joint Task Force (JTF) 639 tasking.</p> <p>[Post-incident analysis by Customs and Border Protection Command indicates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that BPC air and surface assets conducted surveillance of the areas that the COI could have been expected to be in, had that vessel remained drifting since its initial detection; • that there was partial error in the operational report from <i>HMAS Warramunga</i>; and that • this lead to RCC Australia making an assessment that the light was at a significant distance from <i>HMAS Warramunga</i>.]

Chronology of Events

DTG (all June 2013)	Description
062108 UTC	To/ from RCC Australia recommend the AP3C drop a SAR Datum Buoy (SDB) to validate the net water movement. The Customs Dash 8 aircraft, relocating to Christmas Island, can also reacquire the SDB for further validation.
062136 UTC	NORCOM advise RCC Australia that AP3C will depart Darwin at 062145 UTC and ETA on station 060130 UTC; <i>HMAS Warramunga</i> will go to search location and start surface search.
062138 UTC	RCC Australia provide tasking advice to AP3C via HQNORCOM. RCC Australia has provided a search area, based on the net water movement, for the AP3C to relocate the target. RCC Australia request that the AP3C drop a SDB at the LKP (10 04.0 South 105 21.0East). Tasking for the Dash 8 is to proceed to Christmas Island and to re-acquire the SDB for validation of the net water movement modelling. This will assist RCC Australia to validate the probability of detection.
062138 UTC	RCC Australia sends a message to HQNORCOM advising that RCC Australia has provided the AP3C with a search area for the relocation of the target. RCC Australia recommends that the SDB is dropped at the last known position so that the search area can be validated for probability of detection. Other aircraft proceeding to the area can then re-acquire the SDB so that the net water movement modelling can be further validated.
062316 UTC	RCC Australia advise all authorities that SAR coordination has been transferred to RCC Australia. Owing to the extended time lapse since last detection of COI, RCC Australia has concern for the vessel's safety and an alert (Urgency) phase is declared. RCC Australia requests that AP3C search the area previously provided.
062329 UTC	HQ Joint Operations Command request RCC Australia send a request for military assistance.
062330 UTC	RCC Australia request SAR weather forecast from the Bureau of Meteorology.
062333 UTC	Confirmation message to AMSOC/BPC/NORCOM sent from RCC Australia, advising of declaration of alert (Urgency) phase and formal request for transfer of coordination from Defence to RCC Australia. RCC Australia provide a description of the vessel and the search area size of 8000 square nm. RCC Australia request assistance with assets including SAR drop-capable search aircraft that are capable of locating the target.
062334 UTC	RCC Australia request AMSOC confirm SAR equipment status on DASH 8 out of Broome.
062337 UTC	RCC Australia send Defence a formal request for military assistance.
062338 UTC	AMSOC report that DASH 8 has no SAR gear on board from Broome, but can pick some up at Exmouth without refuelling if required.
062359 UTC	AMSOC requires a tasking request for BPC aircraft.
070000 UTC	RCC Australia issue Urgency broadcast.

Chronology of Events

DTG (all June 2013)	Description
070020 UTC	SITREP 3 from BPC resent due IT issues with the group mail address. Subject: AMSA SAR 2013/3821 (formerly Contact of interest, detected 28nm north-west of Christmas Island): SITREP 3 as at 0940 AEST, Friday, 07 June 2013 At approximately 0921 AEST today RCC expressed concerns for the safety of the COI based on the extended timeframe from the last detection. Owing to the above concerns, RCC Australia has declared an urgency phase, has taken coordination, and designated this incident AMSA SAR 2013/3821. RCC Australia has requested Defence assistance, and a RAAF Maritime Patrol aircraft is responding.
07022 UTC	RCC Australia provide SAR area forecast to operational assets. Nil warnings wind southerly 15 to 20 knots. Cloudy to overcast with visibility to 10 km, Sea State 3-4, swell 2 to 2.5 metres. Surface current northward at 2 knots. Extended outlook – flow moderating light to moderate over the weekend as the next anticyclone moves east, south of the area and the depression to the east fills. A low to moderate level of convective activity is expected to persist in the vicinity of the search datum.
070028 UTC	Master <i>MV Safmarine Makutu</i> responds to broadcast. RCC Australia tasks merchant vessel to Day 2, Search 1 (D2S1) search area; ETA for vessel 17 hours.
070036 UTC	AP3C briefed for 7 June tasking.
070123 UTC	Master <i>Safmarine Makutu</i> responds to broadcast to shipping, provides email address and requests acknowledgement.
070126 UTC	HQNORCOM advises that <i>HMAS Warramunga</i> remains in search area continuing search to northwest of Christmas Island. AP3C has departed Darwin at 2201 UTC (0801K) with ETA on scene of 0145 UTC.
070139 UTC	RCC Australia issue Urgency message.
070140 UTC	RCC Australia advise HQNORCOM of SAR tasking for <i>MV Safmarine Makutu</i> .
070150 UTC	RCC Australia confirm receipt of message from <i>MV Safmarine Makutu</i> .
070202 UTC	RCC Australia provide aviation search area coordinates to <i>MV Safmarine Makutu</i> .
070210 UTC	RCC Australia query position of <i>HMAS Warramunga</i> - 09 37 South 104 37 East, course 180, speed 13 knots. <i>HMAS Glenelg</i> checking/confirming whether COI detected by radar on Christmas Island is same COI.
070238 UTC	AP3C reports relocating the SDB.
070248 UTC	<i>MV Thai Bright</i> acknowledges receiving the urgency broadcast but not transiting the area.
070322 UTC	<i>MV Alpha Vision</i> acknowledges receiving the urgency broadcast but not transiting the area.
070342 UTC	<i>MV Mol Eminence</i> 45 nm east of COI last reported position. No sightings, awaiting instructions.
070356 UTC	Master <i>MV Mol Eminence</i> confirms tasking of vessel.
070408 UTC	<i>MV Mol Eminence</i> advises that tasking is received and that searching has commenced.

Chronology of Events

DTG (all June 2013)	Description
070409 UTC	RCC Australia provides aviation search area coordinates to <i>MV Mol Eminence</i> .
070415 UTC	NORCOM advise vessel (SIEV 737) is not the same incident. RCC Australia request AP3C divert back to original search area tasking.
070427 UTC	BPC provide update on SAR 2013/3821. At approximately 1230 AEST today, a RAAF Maritime Patrol aircraft, operating in support of the SAR, arrived on scene and commenced searching. <i>HMAS Warramunga</i> is also operating in support of the SAR. RCC Australia retains coordination of the incident.
070433 UTC	RCC Australia request approval of AMSOC to task DASH 8 to search for target and gets approval.
070519 UTC	AP3C reports sighting a submerged object and an orange object in the area. Now conducting a sector search 300 yard radius.
070523 UTC	<i>MV Mol Eminence</i> acknowledges receipt of RCC Australia message; steaming course to 312 True at 14 knots. ETA to position 08 54S 105 53E is 0900 UTC on 07 June.
070540 UTC	RCC Australia requests <i>MV Shin Izu</i> to maintain course and speed and to keep a look as they transit the area.
070546 UTC	RCC Australia provide aviation SAR coordinates to <i>MV Mol Eminence</i> .
070559 UTC	RCC Australia request that 92 Wing task an AP3C to conduct a five nm radius sector search based on the debris field. Request for lat/long of debris field. DASH 8 to assume search take over at completion of AP3C tasking PLE (prudent limit of endurance).
070600 UTC	AMSOC report sighting by AP3C to RCC Australia. AMSOC report that an AP3C has sighted a submerged Indonesian, Type III multi-coloured hull with some debris, 5 life preservers. <i>HMAS Warramunga</i> is proceeding with ETA 0630 UTC. RCC Australia advise that the broadcast will be resent as a distress broadcast. AP3C to conduct a sector search of the datum 09 57.0 South 104 34.0 East. RCC Australia has been compiling a surface picture of merchant ships; some are close by, others are far away. Light will become an issue, so the debris field will be the focus of searching up until last light.
070602 UTC	RCC Australia issue a Distress broadcast.
070604 UTC	RCC Australia declare Distress Phase, based on visual reports and wreckage.
070616 UTC	RCC Australia request assistance to locate submerged hull from <i>MV Shin Izu</i> .
070616 UTC	RCC Australia update request for military assistance.
070618 UTC	HQNORCOM SITREP 2: <i>HMAS Warramunga</i> continues to search area provided by RCC AUS based on drift modelling until informed of debris by AP3C. AP3C has located debris in water 65 nm west northwest of Christmas Island (position 0957 S 104 34 E) in the form of a submerged multi coloured Type III hull and approximately five life jackets. APC3 recovering to Cocos Island owing to fuel (time 1730 Kilo) and fuel limitations. RCC Australia has tasked AP3C to conduct five nm sector search around debris datum. <i>HMAS Warramunga</i> is enroute to datum ETA 0640 UTC (1640 K) to investigate and possibly confirm vessel as hull sunk two days prior. Second AP3C airborne from Cocos Island with ETA datum 0730 UTC (1730 K). RCC tasking to be advised. RCC Australia advise that a broadcast has been made for all merchant vessels transiting the search area to provide sighting reports whilst passing through

Chronology of Events

DTG (all June 2013)	Description
070619 UTC	Bureau of Meteorology issue SAR Forecast valid 070600 – 080600 UTC. [Note: regular 6 hourly forecasts provided by BoM throughout].
070628 UTC	<i>MV Mellum Trader</i> informs RCC Australia present position – enroute Singapore from Bunbury.
070638 UTC	<i>MV Safmarine Makutu</i> advises RCC Australia of their intention to proceed with present speed and course to latitude 10 40.00E. ETA 071430 UTC. Inmarsat urgency message received.
070741 UTC	DASH 8 completes SLDMB drop in position 09 57 South 104 33 East and reports intent to conduct radar/visual search between debris field and last known position then recover to Exmouth.
070754 UTC	<i>MV Safmarine Makutu</i> advises RCC Australia of position 10 29.00 South 104 50.00 East at 1500 UTC on 7 June.
070811 UTC	HQNORCOM inform RCC Australia that <i>HMAS Warramunga</i> has reported two lifejackets (10 04.32S 104 34.06E) and debris field over four nm diameter. One large piece of blue/green debris sighted - assessment of HQNORCOM was that it didn't match imagery of missing vessel. <i>HMAS Warramunga</i> and AP3C tasking now focussed on relocating the submerged superstructure previously reported.
070831 UTC	<i>MV Athinea</i> responds to broadcast and diverts to assist.
070905 UTC	DASH 8 reports sighting SIEV related to incident 2013/3759.
070906 UTC	<i>MV Mol Eminence</i> 70 nm northeast of reported debris field.
070914 UTC	<i>MV Athinea</i> reports position and ETA.
070932 UTC	HQNORCOM contact RCC Australia to discuss ongoing search requirements and need for AP3C and Dash 8. RCC Australia confirms continuation of search on 8 June and requirement for aircraft. HQNORCOM confirm <i>HMAS Warramunga</i> had recovered a lifejacket, but assessed that it didn't look like one normally associated with asylum seeker vessels. HQNORCOM also advised that attempts had been made to destroy a SIEV two days ago approximately 60 nm from the 'debris field'. The position and description of the vessel would be on passed to CC Australia for consideration.
070951 UTC	RCC Australia contact HQNORCOM and request contact details for <i>HMAS Warramunga</i> . Also request the AP3C be told to move the sector search to the debris field they reported sighting.
070953 UTC	RCC Australia task AP3C to conduct sector search based on debris field.
071020 UTC	RCC Australia confirms <i>HMAS Warramunga</i> to proceed to debris field.
071039 UTC	Search instructions provided to merchant vessels.
071039 UTC	RCC Australia thanks <i>MV Mol Eminence</i> for assistance.
071057 UTC	RCC Australia advises <i>MV Tasco Amarit</i> to continue scheduled voyage.
071100 UTC	HQNORCOM report AP3C sighted a body in position 10 05.37 South 104 39.44 East at 1046 UTC. <i>HMAS Warramunga</i> eight nm from location and diverting.

Chronology of Events

DTG (all June 2013)	Description
071114 UTC	AP3C commence sector searches, 5 and 10 nm around debris field. Second debris field located to the south. One AP3C tasked to second debris field to conduct 5 nm sector search. One body sighted at 1046 UTC and reported to <i>HMAS Warramunga</i> who is enroute to new datum to continue the search for survivors. One AP3C to proceed off task to Darwin at 1130 UTC owing to fuel.
071139 UTC	HQNORCOM confirm <i>HMAS Warramunga</i> recovering body from the water [see endnote 2]; no satellite phone communication with <i>HMAS Warramunga</i> therefore HQNORCOM will relay RCC Australia's instructions via Defence system. RCC Australia request <i>HMAS Warramunga</i> focus search efforts on this debris field and along the associated drift line. HQNORCOM confirm that <i>HMAS Warramunga</i> is comfortable with coordinating surface search activities of two merchant vessels.
071203 UTC	HQNORCOM SITREP 4 - SAR 2013 AP3C extending and recovering to Cocos Island. New off task time approximately 1330 UTC.
071203 UTC	HQNORCOM SITREP 5. RCC Australia has released AP3C. <i>HMAS Warramunga</i> has arrived in vicinity of new datum and conducting search for survivors. <i>HMAS Warramunga</i> remains OSC and will coordinate further merchant vessels being diverted to scene.
071257 UTC	<i>HMAS Warramunga</i> report one life jacket and a large piece of debris recovered. Relocation of the body is proving very difficult in total darkness. All available light sources have been utilised to assist in search.
071321 UTC	<i>HMAS Warramunga</i> unable to locate body, but has recovered life jacket and blue debris - refer to BPC HQNORCOM SITREP 6
071350 UTC	Aerorecue Perth-based Dornier aircraft advise RCC Australia of intention to depart for Christmas Island and estimate search time on scene to be one hour.
071407 UTC	AMSOC advise RCC Australia that no other aircraft available.
071417 UTC	HQNORCOM SITREP 6. <i>HMAS Warramunga</i> not able to locate the body; remains on scene continuing the search. RCC Australia maintains coordination responsibility. AP3C aircraft have departed the area with no further sightings reported.
071525 UTC	RCC Australia advise merchant vessels of intentions overnight 7 June and following day, 8 June. Merchant vessels are tasked as the primary rescue platforms for 8 June and are requested to be positioned across the search area to provide the best coverage to respond to sightings by the aircraft. Vessels should be in position by 0200 UTC on 8 June.
071542 UTC	RCC Australia request HQNORCOM contact <i>HMAS Warramunga</i> and ask them to call <i>MV Safmarine Makutu</i> regarding search operations.
071712 UTC	HQNORCOM SITREP 7. <i>MV Safmarine Makutu</i> confirmed in contact with <i>HMAS Warramunga</i> .
071738 UTC	<i>HMAS Warramunga</i> advises on scene weather: wind 130 degrees at 16 knots, partly cloudy, Sea State 3, swell 200 degrees at 1 metre, pressure 1009.2 and falling sea temp 28.9 degrees.
071758 UTC	Indication of on scene drift sent to HQNORCOM by RCC Australia, who ask HQNORCOM to pass this information to <i>HMAS Warramunga</i> . The drift is less than one knot.
072119 UTC	Day Three search plan.

Chronology of Events

DTG (all June 2013)	Description
072341 UTC	RCC Australia amend day three search area, reorienting the area to take NWM, LKP sighting (050743 UTC) of drift and set, timeframe, distance from the SLDMB and SDB, sighting reports of submerged hull, the two sector searches completed by both AP3C aircraft on D2 and sighting report of person deceased in lifejacket (071046 UTC) and target type (person, small vessel) into consideration.
080014 UTC	BPC provide <i>MV British Curlew</i> with instructions relating to disembarking passengers at Christmas Island.
080044 UTC	RCC Australia provide Sitrep to BASARNAS.
080140 UTC	Search areas as assigned by <i>HMAS Warramunga</i> sent by RCC Australia to merchant vessels <i>Athinea</i> and <i>Safmarine Makutu</i> .
080302 UTC	RCC Australia advise medical survival expert with details of incident by RCC Australia to inform his assessment of timeframe for survival (TFFS).
080521 UTC	Body sighted in position 10 07.16 South 104 36.31 East. DASH 8 advise no life jacket visible. <i>HMAS Warramunga</i> ETA 080555 UTC
080544 UTC	DASH 8 report more bodies sighted in same position. Two hours remaining on scene.
080600 UTC	RCC Australia discuss recovery of deceased bodies by <i>HMAS Warramunga</i> with HQNORCOM. Agreement that recovery of bodies is difficult owing to their condition. Agreement that the focus of the search is for survivors.
080602 UTC	Customs provide reports of bodies to RCC Australia.
080618 UTC	RCC Australia advise Day 3 Search 2 to ships. Revised search area is based on sightings of five deceased persons. RCC Australia to send updated tasking to aircraft.
080635 UTC	Customs provide reports of bodies to RCC Australia.
080653 UTC	<i>HMAS Warramunga</i> – total of nine bodies sighted, 1 in lifejacket. Not recovering bodies.
080745 UTC	Medical survival expert provides RCC Australia with timeframe for survival assessment. Survival to end of day Sunday 09 Jun 13 is possible but unlikely. Survival though the night of Sun 09 June is not considered possible.
080757 UTC	Customs provide reports of bodies to RCC Australia.
080816 UTC	RCC Australia provide revised surface search area assignment to merchant vessels.
081032 UTC	<i>MV British Curlew</i> acknowledges Mayday.
081100 UTC	<i>MV Athinea</i> informs RCC Australia of intention to continue in search on 9 June.
081116 UTC	HQNORCOM SITREP 10. A total of 11 bodies observed by search assets. APC3 continues to update <i>HMAS Warramunga</i> (OSC) with debris and body sightings. DASH 8 off task at 0810 UTC returning to Christmas Island to refuel. Gulfstream has joined the search; currently refuelling before rejoining the search.
081127 UTC	<i>MV Athinea</i> available for search operations overnight and 9 June.

Chronology of Events

DTG (all June 2013)	Description
081301 UTC	HQNORCOM SITREP 9 as at 2300 AEST 8 June. A number of deceased persons have been located within the search area. The identity of an associated foundered vessel is not confirmed. Merchant Vessels <i>MV Athinea</i> , <i>MV Safmarine Makutu</i> as well as <i>HMAS Warramunga</i> continue to search for survivors. DASH 8, AP3C aircraft, and commercial aircraft have been released from SAR tasking for the day owing to failing light and fuel constraints. All aircraft are scheduled to resume search efforts on 9 June. RCC retains coordination of the incident.
081358 UTC	RCC Australia plans Day 4 Search 1.
081427 UTC	RCC Australia release <i>HMAS Warramunga</i> from tasking on 2013/3821 owing to second incident 2013/3888 response required and <i>HMAS Warramunga</i> being the only asset able to proceed.
081535 UTC	HQNORCOM SITREP 12. <i>HMAS Warramunga</i> has been released to respond to 2013/3888, 129 nm north of Christmas Island. Merchant vessels on scene will now coordinate search operations in conjunction with RCC Australia.
081601 UTC	<i>MV Safmarine Makutu</i> reports sighting of body in position 10.02.4 South 104-22.9 East in life jacket with white shirt –unable to tell if male or female.
082240 UTC	Day 4 Search 1 approval for tasking of two corporate jets aircraft, VH-PPD and VH-TXS, in addition to Rescue 461 and DASH 8.
090107 UTC	DAY 4 search areas provided to merchant vessels by RCC Australia.
090526 UTC	RCC Australia provide updated brief to medical survival expert of the ongoing search operation and confirm that his survival assessment remains the same as yesterday's report, that is that no one could survive beyond tonight (9 June).
090821 UTC	RCC Australia provides general advice to those involved in the search regarding day four (9 June) search and rescue operations. Search assets included four search aircraft and two merchant vessels, including Rescue 461, CUS 123, VH-TXS and VH-PPPD; <i>MV Athinea</i> and <i>MV Safmarine Makutu</i> . <i>HMAS Warramunga</i> was unable to participate owing to a requirement to locate an asylum seeker vessel approaching Christmas Island. A total of 14 deceased bodies were sighted within the search area today along with some flotsam/debris which may be related to the sunken vessel. One deceased was wearing a lifejacket. No survivors were found throughout the day 4 search. 5. RCC Australia received advice regarding survivability. The assessment has been based on the elapsed time since the vessel could not be relocated, the actual weather on scene, and sightings reported during search operations. Noting that the weather has not significantly improved, that nil survivors have been located during 9 Jun, and the absence of suitable assets to search for persons in the water overnight, RCC Australia intends to suspend further search operations on completion of the day's search activity.
090837 UTC	HQNORCOM SITREP 13. Two merchant vessels and four aircraft continued searching throughout the day. AP3C on standby for further SAR2013/3821 tasking has been verbally released by RCC Australia, who advise that there has been nothing significant to report and will formalise reporting on today's events.
090852 UTC	Defence advise cessation of ADF assistance for SAR operations (TASKOPORD 060/13).
091110 UTC	RCC Australia suspend search operations. <i>MV Athinea</i> and <i>MV Safmarine Makutu</i> released from SAR operations. SAR broadcast cancelled.

Chronology of Events

DTG (all June 2013)	Description
100503 UTC	HQNORCOM SITREP 14 & FINAL. RCC Australia has suspended search activities based on survivability models. All assets have been released to assist with other SAR events in the same region. Plans have been enacted to support all defence personnel involved with events of this SAR.
121000 UTC	Body reported by AP3C on 12 June during a BPC task.

Endnotes¹

1. Times are derived from a number of sources
 - Automated time stamps – automatically allocated time assigned to:
 - Drafts of messages where a time is allocated when a new message is started for drafting; and
 - Time of despatch is a time that the system automatically allocates when the message is transmitted.
 - When individuals take notes they check the time on the clock and make a note on handwritten notes.
 - When a note is entered into the incident management system, the note is stamped automatically. This time could vary from the time on the handwritten note.
 - Telephone recordings are automatically time stamped.
 - Time zones bring in another element.
 - RCC Australia report in UTC or Z (Greenwich MeanTime);
 - when speaking to other agencies in Canberra, the local or Australian Eastern Standard Time is sometimes used; and
 - Defence and Customs assets may also refer to local time at the scene which is Kilo time for this incident.
2. RCC Australia reported on 9 June that a total of 14 bodies were sighted within the search area on that day. This was the largest total of bodies reported by RCC Australia. RCC Australia received a number of reports that bodies had been sighted, however owing to the movement of water, it is difficult to say whether the same body was reported a number of times. RCC Australia was advised that no bodies were recovered.

AMSA's statement to Ms O'Brien on 27 July 2013

Why didn't AMSA accept coordination as requested by Defence?

An operational decision was made following consultation between Border Protection Command (BPC), Defence and Rescue Coordination Centre (RCC) that Defence assets were best placed to retain local on scene coordination of this incident initially, because it had naval assets in the area already attempting to relocate the vessel.

These vessels were searching for a vessel of interest under the direction of BPC, after BPC aircraft had previously sighted the ship.

This was the most practical position to take, given the same assets would have been used in the same search area regardless of who had coordination.

Prior to assuming coordination, the RCC provided search planning, drift modelling and advice.

At no stage of the entire operation had the vessel made contact with AMSA, or was AMSA in possession of any specific information about its location or contact details. Narrowing a search area was complex with potential radar and visual sightings needing assessment and buoys had to be dropped into the water to assist with drift modelling.