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## **Whole-of-Government Ministerial Talking Points**

### **SOLAS EVENT 110nm NORTH OF CHRISTMAS ISLAND AUSSAR 2012/4106**

**As at 27 June 2012  
1000 UPDATE**

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**ISSUE: CAPSIZED VESSEL NORTH WEST OF CHRISTMAS ISLAND (AUSSAR  
2012/4106)**

#### **KEY TALKING POINTS**

- This was a tragic incident. A number of people are known to have died when a vessel capsized north of Christmas Island on 21 June 2012.
- The Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) coordinated an exhaustive search and rescue operation response to the vessel which was approximately 109 nautical miles (around 200km) south of the Sunda Strait in Indonesia.
- At 2015 AEST on 23 June 2012, AMSA suspended the search for survivors. The decision to suspend the search was based on medical advice regarding the prospect of survivability after this length of time, and after reports from surface and air assets confirmed that there were no further survivors in the search area.
- AMSA assumed responsibility for the search and rescue at the request of BASARNAS the Indonesian search and rescue agency.
- Following the suspension of the search, AMSA released all aircraft and vessels involved.
- 110 survivors were rescued from the water where the vessel capsized. All of these survivors were transferred to Australian government authorities on Christmas Island.
- Initial reports were that 109 people had been pulled from the water. A recount of survivors on Christmas Island has updated this to 110 people.
- Seventeen deceased adult men have been recovered, with possibly 73 people unaccounted for, though the exact number of deaths may never be known.
- WA Police will take the lead in terms of the Coronial Inquiry into this tragedy with Australian Federal Police (AFP) in support.
- It is expected that the events surrounding this incident will be subject to a number of investigations.
- As the Minister for Home Affairs announced in Parliament, on 25 June 2012, a review into the incident will be held by Customs and Border Protection, Defence and the Australian Maritime Safety Authority.
- Some of the survivors have sustained injuries, but overall the survivors appear in good health.

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- Initial reports were that all of the survivors were adult males. Current reports are that the survivors include nine unaccompanied male minors. It has been established that the youngest survivor was born in 1997.
- The survivors are predominately Pakistanis and Afghans. Two Indonesian crew members have also been identified.
- At approximately 1500 AEST on Thursday, 21 June an upturned vessel was located by a Customs and Border Protection Dash 8 surveillance aircraft conducting aerial surveillance north of Christmas Island.
- The Australian Defence Force (ADF) has concluded its support to the Australian Maritime Safety Authority's assistance to the Indonesian government with a search and rescue mission for an upturned vessel north of Christmas Island.
- The Critical Incident Stress Management team will stay on Christmas Island for as long as necessary.
- *HMAS Larrakia* remained in the search area and continued the search at first light for three hours on 24 June 2012 before returning to Christmas Island with a number of bodies onboard to be transferred to Christmas Island authorities.
- Based on the accounts of survivors who have spoken to officials on Christmas Island, indications suggest the vessel departed Indonesia. This has yet to be confirmed.
- The Government is unable to provide imagery of rescue efforts.

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### AMSA

- The search and rescue operation on 22 June was conducted in good search conditions. Debris from the vessel was sighted, confirming the search was in the right area and that survivors would also be sighted.
- No survivors were found on 22 June.
- The search and rescue operation on 23 June was conducted in relatively good search conditions. Again, sightings of debris were made but no survivors. Search aircraft reported only a few sightings of bodies on Saturday 23. Where possible, bodies sighted have been recovered.
- The decision to suspend the search was based on both the absence of survivors and medical advice that there was no realistic prospect for anyone to survive to daylight on 24 June.
- AMSA does not have any further roles to perform in regards to the incident.
- AMSA thanks the many people involved in the search and rescue effort from the ADF, AMSA, Customs and Border Protection, volunteers, observers and staff of a number of agencies, as well the civilian aircraft and merchant vessels that answered the call for assistance.

### DIAC

- The Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) is providing support services to the survivors on Christmas Island.
- The single adult males in this group are now being accommodated at the North West Point immigration detention centre while the minors remain at Phosphate Hill. The two crew members who were on board are being accommodated at Construction Camp.
- DIAC officers are liaising with detainees on Christmas Island and elsewhere in the detention network to support them in the event that they had family or friends on board the stricken vessel.
- DIAC is managing enquiries for members of the Australian community who believe they might know someone who was on board the vessel that capsized north of Christmas Island on June 21.
- If you are a relative or close friend, you can phone **1300 724 010** to provide information about those you believe to have been on board the vessel.
- Please note this service is for people to provide information that may assist the Australian Government to identify individuals. The department is not in a position to provide people with personal information about the passengers.
- The three clients in Perth who have been discharged from Royal Perth Hospital (two at the Perth Immigration Detention Centre and one at Perth Immigration Residential Housing) are receiving post-release care with mental health support being offered.
- The client still in Royal Perth Hospital is receiving hospital support services including social work and mental health.
- Decisions on longer-term placement of these four individuals will be made in due course.

**AFP**

- The AFP is supporting the whole of government response to the tragedy which occurred in international waters north-west of Christmas Island.
- The AFP is working collaboratively with other government agencies including DIAC, Customs and Border Protection and the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) in response to this incident.
- The Western Australian Coroner has accepted jurisdiction and responsibility for the coronial investigation into this tragedy. WA Police is the lead agency conducting the coronial investigation.
- WA Police is also leading the Disaster Victim Identification process to identify the deceased.
- The AFP is supporting WA Police in regard to the coronial investigation and Disaster Victim Identification processes.
- The AFP is conducting investigations into any offences against the Commonwealth relating to people smuggling connected to this incident and has deployed additional policing resources to Christmas Island.
- Further, the AFP will continue to work diligently to collect evidence against people smugglers in Australia, and overseas with our foreign law enforcement partners. There are currently over a dozen active investigations taking place into people smuggling ventures being organised from Australia.
- DIAC is providing support services to the survivors on Christmas Island.

**WA Police**

- WA Police will take the lead in terms of the Coronial Inquiry into this tragedy.
- At approximately 1536 AEST on Thursday 21 June 2012 a request was received from AMSA for WAPOL assistance in a marine search and rescue operation for an upturned vessel 200 nautical miles off Christmas Island.
- WAPOL is continuing liaison with the AFP relating to cost sharing arrangements. Assessments are underway as to resource commitments by WA agencies.
- WAPOL deployed 20 officers to Christmas Island on Saturday morning, 23 June 2012.
- The team included a Contingent Commander, six Forensic specialists for Disaster Victim Identification, 12 Investigators and one Emergency Operations Unit representative. These officers are in addition to the four search and rescue specialists who deployed for the initial rescue phase.
- WAPOL officers arrived on Christmas Island in the afternoon of Saturday, 23 June 2012.

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- There is no set time frame for the WAPOL deployment – this will be guided by the work that needs to be done.
- WA Police are investigating on behalf of the WA Coroner to establish the causal factors and to enable reunification of deceased with family to provide closure.
- Initial interviews with survivors have begun and are expected to continue on Monday, 25 June 2012. Follow up interviews will happen in the coming days.

**Indonesian action**

- AMSA RCC and BASARNAS, Indonesia's National Search and Rescue Agency, have a long standing relationship sharing information and cooperating on matters that occur in our adjacent search and rescue zones. Liaison support is provided from the Embassy in Jakarta on behalf of AMSA.
- On advice from AMSA of a possible distress situation in Indonesian waters, BASARNAS accepted coordination of the search and rescue response, and issued the usual broadcast messages to shipping vessels in proximity and looked to deploy resources from Indonesia. AMSA continued to monitor the situation also and received further distress calls.
- Coordination was transferred to Indonesia BASARNAS 10:52am AEST Wednesday 20 June
- AMSA liaised directly with BASARNAS and on Thursday 21 June requested an Australian Customs and Border Protection Service representative to attend BASARNAS Coordination Centre to facilitate next steps when it became known the vessel had capsized.
- Given Australia's proactive assistance and existing resources, BASARNAS requested AMSA to take operational command. BASARNAS and AMSA are committed to working together to achieve successful outcomes for search and rescue operations in the region.
- RCC Australia assumed overall coordination for the search and rescue incident from Indonesia BASARNAS at 10.41pm AEST (211241UTC)

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## CHRONOLOGY

### Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> June

- On Tuesday 19 June at about 2200 AEST, the AMSA Rescue Coordination Centre, received calls from a vessel indicating it was experiencing difficulties<sup>1</sup>. Later than evening, the location of this vessel was determined to be within Indonesia's search and rescue zone and as such AMSA forwarded the information to BASARNAS. There was no indication of where the vessel was located.<sup>2</sup>
- Border Protection Command also received information about the vessel that day, that indicated that the vessel was underway, the sea conditions were favourable and the people on board were well.<sup>3</sup>
- AMSA had assumed responsibility for the search and rescue at the request of BASARNAS the Indonesian search and rescue agency.

### Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> June

In the early hours of Wednesday morning (20 June 2012) at about 0130 AEST, AMSA received further calls from a vessel indicating it was experiencing difficulties. At that stage a vessel was reported to be 38 nautical miles south of the Indonesian mainland. AMSA advised the vessel to return to Indonesia if it was experiencing difficulty.<sup>4</sup> AMSA advised the Indonesia Search and Rescue agency, BASARNAS. At approximately 1052 AEST, BASARNAS accepted coordination of the search and rescue response<sup>5</sup>.

- Information was also passed to our Indonesian counterpart agencies.<sup>6</sup>
- At approximately 1700 AEST on 20 June 2012, a Customs and Border Protection surveillance aircraft undergoing routine surveillance detected a vessel then suspected as being the source of the distress calls. The vessel was underway, travelling in a southerly direction and there were no visual signs of distress reported.<sup>7</sup>
- At approximately 2130 AEST AMSA received further phone calls from the vessel. (No further phone calls were received by AMSA after this time)<sup>8</sup>
- On Wednesday evening, BPC vessels at Christmas Island were prepared to respond if assistance was requested.<sup>9</sup>

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**Thursday 21st June**

- On Thursday morning (21st June 2012) BPC received additional information that raised concerns about the safety of the vessel.<sup>10</sup> The information was passed to AMSA and to the Indonesian Search and Rescue authority.<sup>11</sup>
- Royal Australian Navy patrol boats, assigned to BPC were moved north of Christmas Island in anticipation of a possible search and rescue response.<sup>12</sup>
- A routine Customs and Border Protection surveillance flight departed Christmas Island at just after 1300 AEST, and was specifically tasked to locate the vessel.<sup>13</sup>
- At approximately 1500 AEST 21 June 2012 the Customs and Border Protection surveillance aircraft detected the capsized vessel 109 nautical miles south of the Sunda Strait in Indonesia.<sup>14</sup> The information was passed to AMSA<sup>15</sup>.
- Acting Administrator of Christmas Island, Stephen Clay activated the Island's Emergency Management Plan (EMP) at 1530 local time in consultation with the AFP.
- AMSA issued a request for assistance to merchant vessels in the area and offered its assistance to the Indonesian Search and Rescue authority.<sup>16</sup>
- The Customs and Border Protection aircraft continued to monitor the situation. A RAAF AP-3C Orion maritime patrol aircraft was diverted to attend the scene.<sup>17</sup> The RAAF aircraft arrived at the scene at approximately 1700 AEST and commenced dropping air sea rescue kits (life rafts).<sup>18</sup>
- Shortly after (at approximately 1740 AEST) a merchant vessel arrived, shortly followed by two more merchant vessels responding the AMSA request for assistance, and commenced rescue efforts<sup>19</sup>.
- At approximately 1920 AEST two Royal Australian Navy patrol boats (HMAS *Larrakia* and HMAS *Wollongong*) arrived at the location and commenced search and rescue operations.
- An AMSA Dornier and another RAAF AP-3C Orion maritime patrol aircraft provided further assistance throughout the night.

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- Doctors were available to triage the injured throughout transportation to Christmas Island for treatment upon arrival.
- The body of one deceased person was transferred to morgue facilities at Christmas Island hospital.

**Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> June**

- AMSA continued to coordinate an exhaustive search and rescue operation, encompassing Defence surface and air assets, Customs and Border Protection air assets and assistance from merchant vessels.
- HMAS *Wollongong* completed the offload of the survivors rescued in the early morning and re-commenced rescue operations at approximately 1700 AEST Friday, 22 June.
- No further survivors were recovered on Friday, 22 June. Reports indicated that further deceased people in the water had been sighted. The priority remained identifying and rescuing survivors.
- The AFP, Customs and Border Protection and DIAC received the survivors on Christmas Island.
- HMAS *Wollongong* relieved HMAS *Larrakia* of on-scene-commander duties. HMAS *Larrakia* investigated reports of a survivor in a life raft before transiting back to Christmas Island; however the life raft was empty upon inspection.
- Four other merchant vessels assisted in the search and rescue response on Friday: Liberian flagged MV *Conti Selenti*, Panamanian flagged MV *Margaret River Bridge*, Antigua and Barbados flagged MV *BBC Iceland* and German flagged MV *Gaschem Pacific*.
- Three survivors (one suffering acidosis and two suffering severe abdominal pain) were medivaced to Perth to undergo medical treatment.
- Three RAAF AP-3C aircraft assisted in the search and rescue operations on Friday.
- A Customs and Border Protection Dash 8 surveillance aircraft also arrived on scene at approximately 1650 AEST.
- The AMSA Dornier, after leaving the scene to refuel, returned to the scene at approximately 1945 AEST.
- Two civilian aircraft also assisted in the search and rescue operation on Friday.

**Saturday, 23 June**

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- The search and rescue operation continued throughout Saturday, 23 June, with the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) coordinating Defence surface and air assets, Customs and Border Protection air assets and assistance from merchant vessels.
- At approximately 0130 AEST on 23 June, HMAS *Larrakia* completed the transfer of the remaining 16 survivors to Government authorities at Christmas Island. HMAS *Larrakia* then returned to the search area.
- HMAS *Wollongong* remained in the search area, assisted by RAAF Maritime Patrol Aircraft (AP-3C) and a Customs and Border Protection Dash-8.
- Two of the merchant vessels that had been assisting in the search and rescue on 22 June were released by AMSA.
- At 2015 AEST, AMSA suspended the search for survivors. The decision to suspend the search was based on medical advice regarding the prospect of survivability after this length of time, and after reports from surface and air assets confirmed that there are no further survivors in the search area.
- After the suspension of the search by AMSA, the participating ships and aircraft were released to resume their normal operations.

**Sunday, 24 June**

- *HMAS Larrakia* arrived at Christmas Island at approximately 2000 AEST with a further six deceased people from the upturned vessel.
- *HMAS Wollongong* arrived at Christmas Island at 0700 AEST to transfer the bodies of the deceased to Christmas Island authorities.
- A Royal Australian Air Force C130 Hercules transported a support team to Christmas Island which included a Critical Incident Stress Management team and an ADF legal officer to assist with the preparation of statements.
- The Royal Australian Air Force C130 aircraft that delivered the Critical Incident Stress Management team returned to Australia last night.

**COMMERCIAL VESSELS THAT PROVIDED ASSISTANCE**

MV CONTISELENTI  
MV CAPEOCEANIA  
MV JPO VULPECULA  
MV MARGARETRIVERBRIDGE  
WSA DRAGON  
Cargo vessel BBC ICELAND  
Gas carrier GASCHEM PACIFIC

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**QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

***If asked: Has the AFP interviewed the two suspected crew members?***

- It is not appropriate for the AFP to comment on an active investigation or provide a running commentary on an ongoing operational matter. To do so could jeopardise the investigation and potentially the outcome of a criminal prosecution.
- While this remains an active investigation, the AFP will not be commenting further.

***Could you please tell me what was the purpose of a meeting today between embassy representatives and BASARNAS and what the result was?***

- Representatives from the Australian Embassy regularly meet with their counterparts in Indonesia including those in BASARNAS. We do not comment on the scheduling or nature of these meetings. As would be expected there is regular dialogue and communication between the search and rescue agencies of both countries, including with Australian representatives in Jakarta.

***Were there ANY active communications between RCC and the vessel (in either direction) AFTER 2130 AEST Wed.***

- AMSA have confirmed that they did not attempt to contact the vessel after 2130 AEST Wed, nor did any further calls from the vessel to AMSA take place after this time.

***Why are the Indonesians/BASARNAS saying they received communication from Australian authorities about a vessel in distress last Sunday?***

- AMSA has confirmed there were two separate incidents they reported to the Indonesian search and rescue authority (BASARNAS) since Sunday 17 June.
- The first was in relation to a reported vessel 195 nm west of Christmas Island. AMSA sent messages to BASARNAS twice on 17 June and a further time on 18 June.
- AMSA also sent messages to BASARNAS from 19 June in relation a vessel 112 nm north west of Christmas Island, that is, the current incident.
- These reports clearly related to separate incidents, and AMSA has clarified this with BASARNAS who now agree the information relates to separate incidents.

***What role did Defence have in tracking the vessel?***

- The vessel was initially located on Wednesday 20 June by a Customs and Border Protection Dash-8 aircraft. Three Defence maritime patrol aircraft and two Defence patrol boats (HMAS *Wollongong* and HMAS *Larrakia*) were subsequently tasked by the Australian Maritime Safety Authority to assist in the search and rescue effort.

***How many people have been rescued and how many people have died?***

- 110 people were rescued. The bodies of 17 deceased people have also been recovered.

Survivors	110
Deceased	17

A breakdown of which vessels rescued survivors is as follows:

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HMAS *Wollongong*: 55  
HMAS *Larrakia*: 16  
MV *CapeOceania*: 4  
MV *WSA Dragon*: 8  
MV *JPO Vulpecula*: 27

\* Note, confirmation as to which vessel rescued one further survivor is currently being sought.

TOTAL: 110

HMAS *Wollongong* has also recovered 9 bodies. HMAS *Larrakia* has recovered 8 bodies.

TOTAL: 17

***Why were the people taken to Christmas Island and not Indonesia?***

- Under the International Convention for the Safety Of Life At Sea, survivors from a SOLAS event are required to be taken to the nearest appropriate port of call with adequate medical facilities. In this instance, Christmas Island was the closest choice.

***What will happen to the deceased?***

- Those brought to the Island that are deceased will be stored at the AFP compound.
- A major consideration between WA and the Commonwealth authorities (including DPC and DFAT/PMO) concerned whether this matter was Australian or Indonesian jurisdiction. Indonesia has reportedly agreed to Australia taking control. Once deceased persons are taken to Christmas Island, the WA State Coroner has jurisdiction.
- The State Coroner has been briefed on the incident by Deputy Commissioner at 1600 AEST 21 June. The Coroner has expressed his preference that WAPOL lead any Coronial Investigation inclusive of Disaster Victim Identification (DVI) while AFP lead investigations into alleged people smuggling. DVI matters will be assessed in conjunction with the State Pathologist in liaison with AFP.

***How many people were on the boat?***

- Initial indications suggest that approximately 200 people were on board the vessel when it capsized. It is too early to speculate on the total number of people who may have been on board.

***Can you provide an update on the condition of the survivors?***

- Nearly all of the survivors have minor injuries (including exposure, bruising, scrapes etc). They continue to receive medical treatment, as required.

***Where are the people from?***

- We cannot confirm the origin of the people, but initial indications are that the people are of Afghan nationality.

***What is the breakdown of people on board?***

- Current reports are that the survivors include nine unaccompanied male minors, with the youngest believed to be born in 1997.

***Are the people asylum seekers?***

- The intent of the people on the vessel is being investigated.

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***Search and rescue operation***

- AMSA was the lead agency for the search and rescue mission and Border Protection Command and other Australian Government agencies were supporting the rescue and response effort.
- At 2015 AEST on 23 June 2012, AMSA suspended the search for survivors. The decision to suspend the search was based on medical advice regarding the prospect of survivability after this length of time, and after reports from surface and air assets confirmed that there are no further survivors in the search area.

***Is the search for bodies continuing?***

- All search and recovery operations in the area have now ceased. This follows the suspension of the search for survivors by AMSA on 23 June 2012.
- Border Protection Command can confirm a total of 17 bodies have now been recovered from the search area midway between Christmas Island and Indonesia. This includes victims recovered by both HMAS *Larrakia* and HMAS *Wollongong* who have recovered 8 and 9 bodies respectively.
- All Border Protection Command vessels and aircraft have been released by the Australian Maritime Safety Authority.

***Will the hull of the vessel be recovered?***

- The Government has considered a range of options for the possible recovery of the hull and the risks that would be associated with the recovery, given the current sea state.
- Given the prevailing sea state and the distance of the hull from Christmas Island, it is considered too dangerous for Government personnel to undertake such a task.

***Is Christmas Island resourced to receive these people and treat the injured?***

- The Indian Ocean Territories Health Service operates a small hospital on Christmas Island and provides a range of medical, nursing and ancillary health services with modern treating rooms and facilities.
- Patients requiring specialist care and emergency cases are evacuated to the mainland through the Royal Flying Doctor Service or other aero medical providers.
- The hospital is staffed 24 hours a day on a rotating basis by nursing staff, doctors and support staff.
- There are up to 20 medical staff including nurses and doctors on Island.

***Will there be an investigation or inquiry?***

- This tragedy will be subject to rigorous investigation and the WA Coroner will conduct a Coronial Inquest.

***Why wasn't there an attempt to reach the vessel after the vessel first made distress calls to AMSA on Tuesday and Wednesday this week?***

- The initial call received by AMSA on Tuesday 19 June did not disclose a location.
- In accordance with normal Search and Rescue protocols, AMSA passed the information to their Indonesian counterpart search and rescue authority (BASARNAS).

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- In the early hours of Wednesday morning, when the vessel indicated its position, it was approximately 38 nautical miles south of the Indonesian mainland. AMSA advised the vessel, that the safest course of action, was to return to the Indonesian mainland.
- Although BASARNAS did not request the assistance of surface assets for the search and rescue response, BPC made arrangements for its assigned assets to be prepared to support a search and rescue mission if tasked.
- Following further advice received by BPC late morning of Thursday 21 June that raised concerns about the safety of the vessel, BPC deployed two surface assets and a Customs and Border Protection Dash-8 aircraft to the scene.

***The life rafts that were dropped, were there enough for the 200 people?***

- The life rafts that were dropped from the RAAF AP-3C Orion on Thursday afternoon were able to carry up to around about 30 or 40 people. Reports indicate that survivors used the life rafts prior to being rescued by surface assets.
- When the Dash 8 arrived on the scene Thursday afternoon we found about 40 people that were on top of the upturned hull and other people that were holding onto debris as much as three nautical miles away from the scene.
- There were lifejackets on the boat but it is not known how many.

***And do you know if there are any more children on board?***

- Initial reports were that all of the survivors are adult males with the exception of one 13 year old boy. Current reports are that the survivors include nine unaccompanied male minors, including the 13 year old boy.

***What will happen to the unaccompanied minors who have survived?***

- The unaccompanied minors are being provided with appropriate accommodation and support at the Phosphate Hill detention facility.

***Why wasn't there an attempt to find the vessel as soon as you received that first distress call?***

- I think the chronology of events that I've read out shows that Australian search and rescue authorities and Australian border protection authorities have acted very proactively. I take you through the events.
- As soon as we were given the information that there was a boat out there we contacted Indonesian search and rescue authorities, we contacted AMSA, contacted customs and border protection authorities.
- Our planes flew over the area to identify where the boat was. It identified the boat that we think was in distress. It showed no visual signs of distress but based on the information we've received our boats and our planes were pre-positioned to check and see if that boat was okay. As soon as we identified a capsized boat Australian authorities took the action they did on Thursday.
- I'm not going to second guess the action they have taken other than to say it looks like they took proactive steps.

***There was a bit of conjecture about whether there was one boat, two boats, and there's still a boat in distress. What can you tell us about that?***

- RCC Australia, in consultation with RCC East Timor, have cancelled the SAR action in relation to the second reported vessel in distress. A Customs and Border Protection Dash-8 aircraft was

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***Australian authorities informed Indonesian authorities on Sunday that there was a boat in distress. Is that the same boat that's being helped now?***

- No.

***Just back to when it was first sighted and there were no obvious signs of distress, did AMSA suspect that those calls had been, for want of a better word, tricks to try - as they tried to reach Australia?***

- Well, no, you treat every single phone call seriously and I think the chronology of events that I've provided you demonstrates that Australian authorities have taken all of those phone calls seriously.
- The point I made was that when that phone call occurred on Wednesday morning at about 0130 AEST in the morning and said that the boat was experiencing distress, and was 38 nautical miles south of Indonesia, AMSA told the people on the boat at that time to return to Indonesia. That was very good advice then. I think that demonstrates the level of proactivity in the work that Australian officials have taken over the course of the last 48 hours or so.

***So there's evidence that they were on their way back Indonesia?***

- No. That was on - that was Wednesday morning where they were 38 nautical miles south of Indonesia. When we located the capsized boat that was more than 100 nautical miles south of Indonesia on its way to Christmas Island.

***Indonesian authorities say that they were confused that there might be two boats?***

- No, as I said in answer to another question, we had information about another potential boat off the coast of East Timor. That information has now concluded that there is not another boat in distress.
- Australian officials and Indonesian officials work very closely and I think the chronology of events that I've read out for you demonstrates the close work between not only - not only AMSA and BASARNAS but also the close work that's being done between customs and Indonesian customs authorities.

***Do you believe the Indonesian authorities could have done more when the boat was just 38 nautical miles away?***

- I've got no reason to believe that. The Indonesian authorities took responsibility for the search and rescue effort because it was in Indonesian waters. All of the advice I have is that there - that the work between the Australian agencies and the Indonesian agencies was very good.
- Obviously, as is the case whenever there are deaths at sea, there'll be a full investigation to make sure that everything that should have been done was done.

***How many Customs and Border Protection and Defence assets and personnel were involved in this situation?***

- 2 Royal Australian Navy Boats: HMAS *Wollongong* and HMAS *Larrakia*
- 1 Customs and Border Protection Dash-8 surveillance aircraft
- 3 Royal Australian Air Force AP-3C Orion maritime patrol aircraft
- Approximately 100 border protection personnel are involved. This figure includes personnel on surface and aerial assets and those working in the Australian Maritime Security Operations Centre.

***What is Customs and Border Protection doing on Christmas Island to support the whole of government response to this tragedy?***

- Customs and Border Protection are assisting with the Australian whole of Government response contribution being coordinated as a search and rescue effort by AMSA. Customs and Border Protection on Christmas Island are assisting other Government agencies including AFP, DIAC and the Christmas Island Emergency Committee with logistics and any requests for assistance that arise.
- These activities include:
  - reception processing and the movement of survivors on arrival
  - assisting with the coordination of the refuelling of BPC and SAR aircraft
  - maintaining an inshore response capability that is available to respond incidents and to assist other Government agencies if required

***Has Customs and Border Protection flown additional officers to Christmas Island to assist with the whole of government response and how many?***

- No additional officers have been flown to Christmas Island at this stage. These requirements will continue to be assessed in cooperation with partner agencies and the Christmas Island Emergency Committee

***How many officers currently work on Christmas Island?***

- There are :
  - 6 x Customs Officers (3 x permanent and 3 x short-term relief)
  - 9 x Acting Officers of Customs

***What equipment and resources do they have access to assist them in responding to this tragedy?***

- Customs and Border Protection work closely with other Government agencies including AFP and BPC to maintain an operational response capability on Christmas Island. This capability includes an inshore marine response capability as follows:
  - 1 x Customs Tactical Response Vessel (TRV)
  - 1 x 640 Rigid Hull Inflatable Boat (RHIB)

***What is Customs and Border Protection's role on Christmas Island?***

- Customs and Border Protection is responsible for the delivery of Customs and Immigration functions on Christmas Island. Customs and Border Protection also works closely with the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service, DIAC and the AFP to deliver these services.

***Can the DIAC accommodate the survivors at the detention facilities on Christmas Island?***

- Accommodation has been made available for those survivors who do not require hospital treatment at the Phosphate Hill facility, in separate accommodation.
- Christmas Island's detention facilities are **not** "near capacity" and there is sufficient accommodation and support services for these new arrivals and their circumstances.

***Can Christmas Island's hospital cope with the influx of injured people?***

- The department is working with other authorities and the community to respond to this situation under the Christmas Island Emergency Management Plan.
- The department and its detention services providers are assisting the Christmas Island hospital to manage and treat the injured survivors.

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- This assistance is ranging from providing food and welfare items to transferring people and providing additional equipment and storage capability if required.

***Are they in immigration detention while receiving medical treatment?***

- Our priority is ensuring they receive the medical treatment and support they need.
- Their immigration status will not interfere with their medical treatment, however, as unlawful non-citizens, those who have been transferred to the mainland are being first detained under the Migration Act.
- The department will arrange appropriate accommodation depending on their needs and circumstances.

***What is the immigration status of those surviving the incident?***

- They are unlawful non-citizens and so will be cared for in alternative detention arrangements in medical facilities which will serve the purposes of the Migration Act requirements. Their immigration detention will not interfere with their medical treatment in any way.

***Will any go into immigration detention centres as opposed to alternative detention?***

- The department will arrange appropriate accommodation depending on their needs and circumstances.
- If individuals are assessed as needing high-level care and supervision, then the accommodation arrangements will reflect these needs.

***What support is DIAC offering to detainees who may have had friends and family on board the vessel?***

- Departmental staff are engaging with detainees on Christmas Island and elsewhere in the detention network to support them in the event that they had family or friends on board the stricken vessel.
- Appropriate support including mental health support is being provided to these people.

***Will DIAC be providing any support to the Christmas Island community who may be affected by this tragedy?***

- The department will be issuing a community newsletter to inform the community of the events surrounding this incident.
- An offer is being made to provide counseling services should anyone in the community require them.

***Will DIAC be informing their families? Will family members be able to come and visit those who are critically injured?***

- Medical treatment is the first priority with these individuals. Until we know their identity, we are unable to communicate with their families.
- Any request for family support would be considered on a case-by-case basis.

***Has the DIAC increased resources in Christmas Island?***

**- UNCLASSIFIED -**



**- UNCLASSIFIED -**

- DIAC staffing levels on Christmas Island are adequate to deal with this incident at present, however, the department will be regularly monitoring and reviewing staffing requirements.
- The department will ensure that appropriate support is available for staff affected by this incident through the Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

***What should people do if they think someone was onboard the vessel?***

- The Department of Immigration and Citizenship is managing enquiries for members of the Australian community who believe they might know someone who was on board the vessel that capsized north of Christmas Island on June 21.
- If you are a relative or close friend, you can phone 1300 724 010 to provide information about those you believe to have been on board the vessel.
- Please note this service is for people to provide information that may assist the Australian Government to identify individuals. The department is not in a position to provide people with personal information about the passengers.

***If pushed - what about people overseas?***

- We would urge people overseas to contact their nearest Australian mission where information they may have will be recorded.

***Is this domestic number a 24-hour service?***

- The phone line will be operated during normal business hours 0830-1600 Monday-Friday. It will also operate from 0830 -1630 on weekends until further notice.

***If asked: Is it true that two crew members are in the IDC?***

- The AFP understands that DIAC's initial interview processes have identified two potential crew
- The AFP will continue to fully investigate the organisers and crew responsible for this people smuggling venture.
- While this remains ongoing, it is not appropriate for the AFP to comment or speculate further.

***If asked: Senator Milne believes Australian authorities have been instructed to treat asylum seeker boats differently to, for example, cruise ships or around-the-world sailors.***

- The requirements of all mariners (including Australian authorities) during emergencies at sea are dictated by the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea. The Convention does not differentiate between any type of vessel and applies to all in the same manner.
- Likewise, in responding to vessels in distress, no Australian Government agencies have been instructed to treat potential asylum seeker boats in any way differently from other vessels.

**- UNCLASSIFIED -**

**- UNCLASSIFIED -**

**CONSULTED AGENCIES**

<b>Clearance</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Appointment</b>	<b>TIME</b>
AMSA	Jo Meehan	Media	0655
PMC			Nil input
DFAT			Nil input
AFP	ROSIE GARLAND	NATIONAL MEDIA	Nil input
DIAC	Leah Goodman	National Communications Branch	Nil input
Defence			Nil input
AGD			Nil input
Regional Aust			Nil input
Customs and Border Protection	BPC	Dir BPC	0854
WAPOL			Nil input

**- UNCLASSIFIED -**