



MEDIA RELEASE

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Immediate Use

RESCUE UNDERWAY FOR OCEAN ROWERS

The Royal Australian Navy Frigate *HMAS Newcastle* is expected to rescue two former British soldiers from their seven metre ocean rowing boat some 1500 nautical miles (2718km) out in the Indian Ocean.

Australian Search and Rescue is coordinating the recovery of the two men Mike Noel-Smith, 45, and Rob Abernethy, 30, after Noel-Smith suffered severe head injuries in their boat '*TRANSventure*' during a fierce storm.

The men are still facing over seven metre seas and 35 knot wind conditions as they wait for the Frigate which diverted to the rescue from a position south-west of Cocos Island. The ship is expected alongside the rowing boat about 1am (AEST) on Thursday (5 June).

AusSAR was alerted to the rowers predicament yesterday afternoon by the UK organisers of the event and broadcast to all shipping in the area. However there are no ships in the vicinity with a medical practitioner on board.

Mr Noel-Smith is reported to be semi-conscious in a serious condition after injuring his head on the side of the vessel. Information from the boat is being broadcast regularly to the *TRANSventure* coordination centre in the UK by satellite phone and relayed on to AusSAR in Canberra.

The former British Special Air Service (SAS) rowers left Carnarvon, WA on 19 April for the 4400 nm (8150km) voyage to the French island of Reunion attempting to break the 64-day record for the trip and raise money for medical research.

Further information:

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