



MEDIA RELEASE

13 March 2003

Immediate Use

SEARCH UNDERWAY IN TASMAN SEA

Australian Search and Rescue is coordinating the rescue of three crew from the catamaran, *Eroica*, about 420nm (780 kms) east of Byron Bay, NSW.

The crew issued a HF radio emergency (panpan) call last night, initially picked up by Taupo Radio NZ and then several other radio stations in Australia, advising the yacht was taking water and requested assistance.

AusSAR immediately diverted the New Zealand-registered cargo ship *Rotoiti*, 20,207 tonnes, which is due into the area about 1pm (AEST) today.

The yacht issued another panpan call at 8.30am this morning advising the crew were considering abandoning to a liferaft.

A RAAF Hercules with droppable equipment is due overhead in the next few hours and a long-range HS 125 Queensland Government jet has flown from Brisbane to establish communications with the yacht crew.

The crippled *Eroica* is positioned well within Australia's international search and rescue zone and is believed to be Vanuatu-registered.

Weather in the search area is bad with 3-4 metre seas, 40-50 knot winds under the influence of Tropical Cyclone Erica.

Meanwhile: the search for the missing Melbourne yachtsman, Alan Haining, 54, continues off the north and east coast of Tasmania.

Ten aircraft and police vessels are searching an area of 450 sq nm from Bridport to Eddystone Point near St Helens and particularly in the Ringarooma Bay-Tomahawk Point area where a yachting jacket was recovered late yesterday.

Weather in the search area is deteriorating with a front bringing winds to 30 knots and 3 metre seas.

Further information:

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