



## Media Release

Sunday, 24 May 2009

### DRIFTING BARGE SAFELY UNDER TOW

The Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) acted yesterday and overnight to prevent the possible grounding of a barge adrift off the coast of Forster, New South Wales.

The unmanned pipe-laying barge, *Aussie 1*, enroute from Eden to Darwin parted its tow from its tug *Lewek Kea* at approximately 5.45am yesterday. Adverse weather conditions prevented the *Lewek Kea* from reconnection of its tow with the barge.

Under the National Maritime Emergency Response Arrangements, AMSA coordinated the actions of the barge owners and Newcastle's *Westpac* helicopter service to transfer a salvage crew to the barge. Last night they were able to reconnect the tug to the barge with an emergency towing arrangement, arresting its drift inshore. Under a commercial arrangement with the barge owners a Svitzer Salvage tug, *Wickham*, was also deployed from Newcastle. It arrived on-scene at approximately 9.00pm last night and connected a more sturdy line to safely take the *Aussie 1* under tow.

National Plan personnel and resources from Sydney and Newcastle were placed on stand-by to assist NSW Maritime and local authorities with shoreline pollution response if required, with AMSA providing specialist advice and access to equipment stockpiles under the national arrangements.

The barge, towed by the *Wickham*, will remain around 10 miles (18.5 km) offshore from Forster until the parted towline is recovered. AMSA is currently working closely with salvors and the barge owners who have organised for the barge to be towed in to Newcastle where assessment and repairs will take place.

AMSA wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of operators and authorities that worked together to successfully arrest a serious and deteriorating situation. They include *EMAS Offshore*, *Trident Australasia*, *Svitzer Salvage*, *Westpac Helicopter Service*, *AeroRescue*, *Newcastle Port Corporation*, *Sydney Ports Corporation* and *NSW Maritime*.

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