



MEDIA RELEASE

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IMPROVING SEARCH AND RESCUE IN THE PACIFIC REGION

Last week Australia hosted the Fourth Pacific Regional Maritime Search and Rescue workshop in Cairns. This regional cooperation initiative is designed to improve search and rescue capability in the Pacific region.

The meeting was jointly organised by the Fiji-based Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) and the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) in alignment with the objectives of the International Maritime Organization (IMO). The IMO funded the participants from Pacific Island countries.

Australia regularly contributes its technical expertise to search and rescue in the south-west Pacific through technical cooperation programs managed by AMSA.

In his opening address at the workshop, AMSA Chief Executive Officer Graham Peachey explained the search and rescue situation in the region.

“The Pacific region is one that presents unique challenges, with a high volume of maritime traffic in a vast and sparsely populated environment,” Mr Peachey said.

Saving lives at sea can be a difficult and costly mission for search and rescue authorities, especially those in the Pacific Island countries and territories. With the increase in cruise ship visits to the region over the years, search and rescue authorities need to be prepared for potential mass rescue operations.

Bruce Tweed, Ship Safety and Audit Adviser at SPC’s Economic Development Division, emphasised the importance of search and rescue preparedness and training in the region.

“Education, training, and preparation are the best means to reduce injury, loss of life, damage to the environment, and the economic impacts of maritime and aviation emergencies. It is with these goals in mind that we move forward,” Mr Tweed said.

A highlight of the workshop was a live search and rescue demonstration that took place on Thursday 9 June near Mission Bay. It involved local Australian Volunteer Coast Guard units, AMSA’s Cairns-based dedicated search and rescue Dornier aircraft and other local Cairns units.

This is the fourth search and rescue workshop that SPC has organised with support from IMO and their partners in AMSA, The United States Coast Guard, French Navy and Maritime New Zealand.

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