

16 October 2002

Immediate Use

## SEARCH FOR SEVEN MISSING PEOPLE: TORRES STRAIT

Australian Search and Rescue is coordinating an aerial search for seven people last seen on Monday afternoon travelling from Daru Island in Papua New Guinea to Darnley Island in the Torres Strait.

The seven people, including two children, were in a seven metre fibreglass banana boat when they were last seen about half way between the two islands. Darnley Island is about 43 nautical miles (80kms) south east of Daru Island.

A Customs Coastwatch aircraft is this morning conducting a radar search of the area while a helicopter is searching coastal areas. A second helicopter is on standby for rescue purposes.

Mid-morning, seven fixed wing aircraft will begin searching a 2200 square nautical mile area north east of Thursday Island.

It is understood the vessel did not contain any safety equipment.

The Queensland Police were advised of the missing people at 2pm (AEST) yesterday and conducted a search of several islands, cays and reefs near Darnley Island before passing search coordination to AusSAR last night.

The weather in the area is moderate with 15 knots winds and 1.5 metre seas.

Further information:

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