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Immediate Use

## SEARCH SUSPENDED FOR THREE MISSING YACHT CREW OFF NSW

The aerial search for three missing crew from the upturned ocean racing yacht *Excalibur* off Port Stephens has been suspended after an extensive aircraft and vessel search since midnight on Monday.

Nine aircraft including eight helicopters from NSW, Qld and Victoria completed another search this morning, in very poor weather conditions, up to 110 kms off Port Stephens between Forster and Newcastle but nothing was sighted.

Yesterday Six helicopters, four fixed-wing aircraft and seven surface vessels searched a 330 square nautical mile (1000 sq km) region east of Port Stephens for two missing women and a man from the Melbourne-owned yacht.

On Monday night, two men from the *Excalibur* were rescued from the water after they activated a distress beacon picked up by satellite and a search aircraft detected one survivor's strobe light at 11.49pm (AEST).

They were picked up by the 50,000 tonne Swiss-flagged bulk carrier *Curia* which was diverted to the survivors about 45 nautical miles offshore. After assisting in the search yesterday, the two men were taken by the bulk carrier to Pt Kembla overnight.

On Tuesday morning the hull of the upturned yacht was sighted and a deceased crewman in a lifejacket recovered nearby.

Vessels used in a large surface search included three merchant ships, the NSW police launches *Intrepid*, *Fearless*, *Alert* and *Vigilant* and a launch from the Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol, Nelson Bay.

The recovery of the stricken yacht is being handled by the NSW Water Police.

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