

17 September 2002

Immediate Use

## **TWO RESCUED, FOUR MISSING, PORT STEPHENS, NSW**

Australian Search and Rescue is this morning coordinating an air and sea search for four people missing from the 15-metre sloop *Excalibur* near Port Stephens, New South Wales.

Six helicopters, four fixed-wing aircraft and seven surface vessels are searching a 330 square nautical mile (1000 sq km) region east of Port Stephens for two missing men and two missing women from the sloop.

Overnight, two men from the *Excalibur* were rescued from the water after they activated a distress beacon. Their beacon position was confirmed by satellite at 11pm (AEST) and a search aircraft detected a survivor's strobe light at 11.49pm (AEST).

The 50,000 tonne Swiss-flagged bulk-carrier *Curia* was diverted to the life raft position 45 nautical miles north east of Port Stephens and rescued the two survivors at 4 am (AEST) as a fixed wing aircraft circled overhead.

The survivors indicated there were four other people from the *Excalibur* in the water wearing lifejackets.

The surface vessels being used in this morning's search include three large merchant ships and the police launches *Intrepid*, *Fearless*, *Alert* and *Vigilant*.

The weather in the search area is poor with two metre seas and 26 knot north easterly winds.

Further information: Ben Mitchell 0418 164 901

