



MEDIA RELEASE

18 July 2003

Immediate Use

SEARCH FOR 10 METRE SLOOP NEAR FRASER ISLAND

Australian Search and Rescue (AusSAR) is coordinating the aerial component of search for the 10-metre motorised sloop *Astrid* after the skipper failed to rendezvous with a helicopter yesterday morning.

The dismasted sloop was scheduled to be delivered fuel by helicopter under the direction of the Queensland Police yesterday morning after being discovered by a large merchant ship at about 3pm on Wednesday.

The skipper of *Astrid* requested fuel from the merchant ship but indicated he was not in distress. The captain of the merchant vessel contacted AusSAR and advised that he would be able to transfer fuel to the *Astrid*.

Despite a number of attempts, however, the transfer was unsuccessful due to factors unknown to AusSAR. As last light was approaching, AusSAR through the merchant ship asked the skipper twice if he wished to abandon ship as it was too dangerous to deliver fuel by helicopter at night.

He declined on the basis that he was not in distress.

The skipper of the *Astrid* was then asked if he would wait for fuel to be delivered in the morning.

The skipper agreed and advised that the sea state was not threatening, the drift was minimal and that he had dropped a sea anchor. Regular radio broadcasts overnight advised all shipping in the area of the sloop's position.

Overnight, a Royal Australian Air Force Orion conducted a radar sweep of the 5000 square nautical mile search area to the north of Fraser Island.

Eight fixed wing aircraft and a helicopter are continuing the search this morning.

The Hervey Bay Water Police has overall control of the search.

Further information:

Ben Mitchell

0418 164 901