



Australian Government

Australian Maritime Safety Authority

Media Release

12.30pm AEDT: 2nd January 2014

Rescue operations delayed by ice conditions

The Australian Maritime Safety Authority's (AMSA) Rescue Coordination Centre (RCC Australia) has been advised this morning that sea ice conditions in the area are likely to delay today's planned rescue of passengers from the *MV Akademik Shokalskiy*.

It is now likely the rescue will not go ahead today.

AMSA understands that current sea ice conditions prevent the barge from *Aurora Australis* from reaching the Chinese vessel *Xue Long* (Snow Dragon) and a rescue may not be possible today.

The *Xue Long's* helicopter is unable to land on the *Aurora Australis* due to load rating restrictions. It is not safe to land the helicopter next to *Aurora Australis* at this time.

The preferred and safest option at this stage is to ultimately transfer the passengers onto *Aurora Australis*.

All passengers on board the *MV Akademik Shokalskiy* are currently safe and well. The preferred option is to wait for conditions that will allow the rescue to be completed in a single operation to reduce unnecessary risk.

Alternative measures to complete the rescue operation are now being investigated by AMSA and the ships involved.

This rescue is a complex operation involving a number of steps. Operations in Antarctica are all weather and ice dependent and conditions can change rapidly. The priority is to ensure the safety of all involved.

RCC Australia continues to be in regular contact with all vessels involved and continues to monitor the situation. The vessels involved are also in close contact with each other via VHF radio.

The search and rescue operation commenced on Christmas morning AEDT after the Falmouth Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC) in the United Kingdom received a distress message via satellite from the *MV Akademik Shokalskiy*. The distress message and subsequent coordination of the incident was passed to RCC Australia, who is the responsible search and rescue authority for this area.

Media Note: Media are advised to keep an eye on AMSA's Twitter feed @AMSA_News for the latest information relating to this rescue.