



Australian Government

Australian Maritime Safety Authority

Media Release

7.30am AEDT: 2nd January 2014

Rescue operations likely to commence shortly in Antarctica

The Australian Maritime Safety Authority's (AMSA) Rescue Coordination Centre (RCC Australia) was advised this morning by the *MV Akademik Shokalskiy* that weather conditions have improved in the area and rescue operations are likely to commence shortly by helicopter.

Wind in the area is now down to 10 knots and visibility has improved. Weather conditions are expected to remain favourable over the next 36 hours.

The helicopter on board the Chinese flagged vessel *Xue Long* will be used to rescue the passengers from the *MV Akademik Shokalskiy*.

This rescue will be a complex operation involving a number of steps and subject to factors such as weather.

RCC Australia has been advised that all 52 passengers will leave the *MV Akademik Shokalskiy*. All 22 crew members are expected to remain with the vessel.

The passengers will be rescued by helicopter in groups of 12 and will be initially transported to the *Xue Long*. The rescue is expected to be undertaken in a total of seven flights. The first five flights will rescue passengers and the remaining two flights will transfer luggage and equipment.

Each return flight is expected to take about 45 minutes. The journey will cover a distance of about 12 nautical miles between the *MV Akademik Shokalskiy* and the *Xue Long*. The helicopter component of the rescue operation is expected to take at least five hours dependent on weather conditions.

The *Aurora Australis* will then use its barge to transfer all 52 passengers on board their vessel. The barge can take up to 22 people at a time. The journey between the *Xue Long* and the *Aurora Australis* is a distance of about two nautical miles.

RCC Australia continues to coordinate the incident and is 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. Details for facilitating audio grabs and vision will be issued in due course.