



Australian Government

Australian Maritime Safety Authority

## Media Release

12:30pm, Wednesday 8 January 2014

### Antarctic rescue operations complete

The Australian Maritime Safety Authority can confirm that the *Akademik Shokalskiy* and the *Xue Long* have broken free from the ice in Antarctica and are no longer in need of assistance.

The United States Coast Guard ice breaker *Polar Star* has been released from search and rescue tasking by AMSA's Rescue Coordination Centre (RCC Australia) and will now continue on its original mission to McMurdo Sound.

At about 730pm AEDT on Tuesday RCC Australia received a message from the Captain of the *Akademik Shokalskiy* stating that about three hours earlier cracks had started to open in the ice around the trapped vessel.

A short time later the *Akademik Shokalskiy* began to make slow movements in an attempt to break free from surrounding ice. The Captain reported that at approximately 8pm AEDT they had managed to successfully clear the area containing the heaviest ice and had begun making slow progress north through lighter ice conditions. At approximately 830am AEDT the *Akademik Shokalskiy* informed RCC Australia that it had cleared the ice field and was no longer in need of assistance. The Captain of the *Akademik Shokalskiy* passed on his thanks to all those who assisted the vessel and informed the RCC that they will now proceed to Bluff in New Zealand.

Shortly after midnight RCC Australia was advised by the Captain of the *Xue Long* that, at about 9pm AEDT, it too had managed to break free of the heavy ice and is now making slow progress through lighter ice conditions. The *Xue Long* advised RCC Australia this morning that it is not in need of assistance and will continue its research mission in Antarctica.

AMSA again offers our thanks to all of the participants in the effort to assure a safe resolution to the situations that emerged following a distress incident experienced by *MV Akademik Shokalskiy* in Commonwealth Bay on Christmas Day.

In total five ships were involved in the multi-lateral cooperative effort – *Akademik Shokalskiy* (Russia), *L'Astrolabe* (France), *Xue Long* (China), *Aurora Australis* (Australia) and *USCGC Polar Star* (United States of America). The national Antarctic programs and other agencies of France, China, Australia, Germany and the United States of America have been engaged in actual operational responses, contingency planning or the provision of specialist data.

"This was a great example of the multi-lateral cooperative nature of Antarctic operations" said AMSA Acting CEO Mick Kinley.

**Media Enquiries:** 1300 624 633

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