

observing a pair of penguins

In 1998, the *Aurora Australis* became stranded in ice and was towed into clear water by the Japanese icebreaker *Shirase*.^[5]

On 8 May 2011, *Aurora Australis* was chartered by the [Department of Defence](#) for a two-month deployment (ending 30 June) as an amphibious transport ship supporting the [Royal Australian Navy](#).^[4] The charter, costing A\$3.375 million, was to assist in the Australian government response to humanitarian crises and natural disasters that occurred while the naval heavy lift ship *HMAS Tobruk* undergoes maintenance.^[4]

In December 2013, *Aurora Australis*, Chinese research vessel *Xuě Lóng* and French icebreaker *L'Astrolabe* attempted to rescue *Akademik Shokalskiy*, trapped in an outbreak of old glacial ice in the [Antarctic Ocean](#). *Xuě Lóng* reached within 6NM of the ship before being forced to turn back. *L'Astrolabe* failed to reach that far before turning back to open water. *Aurora Australis* reached within 10 nautical miles (19 km; 12 mi) before also being forced to turn back.^[6] After failure of all three icebreakers to reach the beset vessel, the personnel aboard *Akademik Shokalskiy* flattened a helipad on the ice to prepare for helicopter evacuation when the weather cleared. On January 2, 2014, the heli-rescue was performed by *Xuě Lóng*'s helicopters, directly transferring people from *Akademik Shokalskiy* to a makeshift helipad prepared on the sea-ice near the *Aurora Australis*, the boat transfer having been cancelled due to excess ice around *Xuě Lóng*; left aboard were 22 crew members to attempt to free the ship when winds clear the ice, or when a Russian heavy icebreaker arrives to clear a path. The rescued people are expected back in Hobart, Australia, in mid-January, after *Aurora Australis* completes her scheduled resupply of Casey Station which was interrupted for the rescue mission.^[7]

On 5 January 2014, the 399-foot (122 m) [USCGC Polar Star](#) departed Sydney to assist in freeing the Chinese icebreaker and the Russian ship.^{[8][9]} On 7 January 2014, a change of wind direction which loosened the icepack around the ships enabled *Xuě Lóng* and *Akademik Shokalskiy* to work their own way free before the American ship arrived.^[10]

References [edit]

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- ↑ ^{*ab*} Barlow, Karen (25 January 2011). "Revhead heaven in icebreaker's engine room" . ABC News Online. Retrieved 13 May 2011.
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- ↑ "U.S. Icebreaker to Assist Stuck Russian, Chinese Ships" . *news.usni.org*. U.S. NAVAL INSTITUTE. 6 January 2014. Retrieved 6 January 2014.
- ↑ "Antarctic ships escape from ice trap as weather changes" . *www.bbc.co.uk*. The BBC. 7 January 2014. Retrieved 7 January 2014.

External links [edit]

- Media related to **Aurora Australis (ship, 1990)** at Wikimedia Commons
- Webcam aboard *Aurora Australis*
- Breaking the Ice* - blog from *Aurora Australis* by [Australian Broadcasting Corporation](#) reporter **Karen Barlow**, during the January–February 2011 scientific trip to [Mertz Glacier](#)
- P&O Maritime Services

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