



Officers injured in Bass Strait crash

Rock wrecks cop boat

BRUCE MOUNSTER

A POLICE skipper and two crewmen were injured when the police vessel Karri struck a rock in Bass Strait.

The two policemen and a State Emergency Service employee were rescued by another police vessel, the Fortescue, about 80 minutes after the 7m Karri hit a submerged rock near Waterhouse Island on Tuesday night.

Commander Glenn Frame said two of the men were knocked unconscious.

"If you come to a very sudden stop, even at 30 or 40km/h, there's no soft bits on those boats, unfortunately, they are fibreglass," he said.

"Two of them were seated, including the skipper, the other fellow may have been stand-

ing and they just went forward and hit the cab."

Commander Frame said that after the collision, the Karri still had power and the crew was able to keep it moving, which helped keep it afloat.

He said by the time the men had been taken on board Fortescue, the Karri was close to sinking and was abandoned.

Commander Frame said a search yesterday failed to find the boat, which was believed to have sunk.

The crew arrived at Launceston General Hospital early yesterday.

The skipper suffered chest fractures and a facial fracture, another crew member had a suspected fracture and the third man was released from hospital.

Before the rock collision, the boat's crew had been prepar-

ing for a series of police exercises held yesterday near Bridport.

"It was fortunate the Fortescue was nearby as part of the exercise," Commander Frame said.

He said an extremely low tide was a factor in the incident and also impeded the rescue, with the Fortescue having to take the injured men to George Town because it could not get in to Bridport.

Commander Frame said the Karri, based at George Town, was built in 1990 and was due for replacement.

He said an investigation would involve Marine and Safety Tasmania and Workplace Standards.

Liberal MP Rene Hidding said the sinking exacerbated critical problems with Tasmania's ocean search and res-

cue and law enforcement capabilities.

Police and Emergency Management Minister Lin Thorp said police executed contingency plans to maintain marine policing services around George Town.



FORTUNATE RESCUE:
Commander Glenn Frame



ISLAND ACCIDENT:

The remote Waterhouse Island, off the north-east corner of Tasmania, where the police vessel Karri hit a submerged rock on Tuesday night.