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24 March 2000

Mr John Abernethy
The Coroner
1998 Sydney-Hobart Yacht Race Inquest
Crown Solicitor's Office
60-70 Elizabeth St
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Sir

From discussion with Dr Geoff Love of the Bureau of Meteorology I have become aware of your interest in my views concerning the ocean currents affecting the area of the 1998 Sydney-Hobart Yacht Race.

On the basis of the attached maps, and from my own assessments of other sea surface temperature data, I am of the view that the notion of a current of any significance running east to west at the eastern end of Bass Strait, at the time of the Race, is doubtful.

Based on interpretation of several satellite images, and on geostrophic currents calculated from 15 days of satellite-measured sea topography data centred on 30 December, the strongest current flowed around an anti-clockwise eddy centred near 36° 30'S, 152°E. This meant that during late December 1998, for the ocean over the continental slope and outer continental shelf between Ulladulla and Eden, the current was southward. The current then turned to the east, being restricted to the north of 37° 30'S. The maximum current speed around the eddy would have been 3 to 4 knots, peaking near the edge of the eddy.

South of the eddy, at 38°S to 38° 30'S, 149°E to 151°E the currents were much weaker (less than 1 knot) and without a clear pattern.

Yours faithfully

Dr George Cresswell
CSIRO Division of Marine Research

cc Dr Geoff Love, Bureau of Meteorology
Mr Tim Mangan, Business Development Manager, C.M.R.

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