

# Major air and sea search for fisherman missing off Port Fairy coast

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**A major air and sea search is continuing off Victoria's south-west coast after a fisherman went missing last night.**

Police said the 65-year-old Warrnambool man, a known professional fisherman, set off alone from the Port Fairy wharf to go gummy fishing about 1:30pm (AEST) on Wednesday.

It is believed the man was headed to Lady Julia Percy Island, however he failed to return home as expected at 10pm.

His family reported him missing in the early hours of this morning.

Jeremy West from Coastguard Australia said crews were mapping out an extensive search pattern for aircraft to trace this afternoon.

"We've got two coastguard vessels out there at the moment and one from volunteer marine rescue," Mr West said.

"The aircraft are refuelling, they've been up in the air since early this morning.

"They have conducted [a] fairly extensive search pattern over the Portland Bay area, and they will continue their search and extend out the search pattern this afternoon as well."

Earlier today, Sergeant Lachlan Holding from Water Police Victoria said the search area was "quite large".

"We're not exactly sure where the person may have been out fishing," Sgt Holding told ABC Ballarat.

"We've got a flotilla of vessels and several aircraft up searching at the moment."

Weather conditions overnight had been good and rescuers were holding out hope that the boat had experienced mechanical problems and was drifting, Sgt Holding said.

"We hope that that's all it is, he may be disabled out there in some manner and we hope to find him soon and give him some assistance to get back." he said.

Russell Lemke from the Port Fairy Marine Rescue Service said the man was used to working on the missing boat.

"It's a plywood cray fishing boat, about 35-40 feet in length, it's normally moored at the Port Fairy docks and from where I'm standing I can still see the owner's vehicle still parked beside his bay," he said.

**Topics:** police, missing-person, fishing-aquaculture, port-fairy-3284

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**PHOTO:** Port Fairy marine rescue boat returns to refuel during search for missing Warrnambool fisherman. (ABC News: Margaret Paul)

**MAP:** Port Fairy 3284