

Stricken ship refloated after Solomons oil spill

May 11 2019



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The ship at the centre of an environmental disaster near World-Heritage listed waters in the Solomon Islands was refloated Saturday after being

stranded on a coral reef for more than three months.

The MV Solomon Trader ran aground on February 5 while loading bauxite at Rennell Island, about 240 kilometres (149 miles) south of the capital Honiara.

The 225-metre (740-foot) ship was carrying more than 700 tonnes of heavy fuel and leaked a huge amount of oil into the sea, sparking an [international effort](#) to contain the spill.

"They have been trying to refloat the vessel since Thursday but because of low tide they have not been able to, until today", the chairman of the Solomons National Disaster Council, Melchior Mataki, told AFP.

An oil slick more than six kilometres long has spread along the shoreline, destroying the livelihoods of islanders who rely on waters in the ecologically delicate region.

Rennell Island is the largest raised coral atoll in the world and includes a UNESCO World Heritage site which extends kilometres out to sea.

Authorities have said the site was not affected by the spill, although Mataki said a detailed environmental assessment will be undertaken now that the vessel is out of the way.

"There is a preliminary report but the full report will be made known once assessments and investigation findings are compiled properly", he said, adding the government would likely seek compensation for environmental damage.

The Australian government had sent salvage experts to assist the response and vowed to help the Solomons make sure those responsible for the [spill](#) are held to account.

The Hong Kong-registered ship was chartered by Indonesian-based Bintan Mining and was loaded with almost 11,000 tonnes of bauxite at the time of the incident.

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