

Miracle rescue for yachtsman

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SYDNEY
yachtsman washed overboard during the Sydney-to-Hobart race was pulled from the freezing Tasman Sea last night after crewmen on an oil tanker spotted reflective tape on the man's jacket.

John Quinn, 49, was lost at sea for more than three hours after being washed overboard from his sloop MEM.

Crewmen aboard the oil tanker, Ampol Sorell, which assisted in the search, spotted a piece of reflective tape on Quinn's jacket and alerted other yachts in the area. The Atara then picked up Quinn.

"Thank God for that tanker and thank God for a piece of tape across his jacket," Mrs Bernice Mackenzie, Quinn's sister, said.

Quinn suffered hypothermia — extreme loss of body temperature — and was taken to the town of Eden on the southern coast of New South Wales state.

The commodore of the Cruising Yacht Club of Australia, Mr Leigh Minehan, said Quinn's rescue was "a miracle".

The Maritime Rescue Co-ordination Centre spokesman, Mr Chris Neilson, said: "After being in the water for 3½ hours in severe conditions he's extremely lucky" to be alive.

The rough weather and sea have forced 30 boats to drop out of the 105-strong fleet that sailed from Sydney on Sunday. Two boats have sunk, although their crews have been rescued. — Sapa-AP