



MEDIA RELEASE

Solar Panels Stolen From Watarrka National Park

The cost of the latest theft of solar panels at one of our National Parks has been estimated at \$52,000, the Northern Territory Parks and Wildlife Service said today.

Early this morning a Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS) Ranger at Watarrka National Park discovered that 27 solar panels and the control box had been stolen from the Kings Canyon toilet block.

PWS Chief District Ranger South West, Michael Heywood, said staff made the discovery during routine morning checks and following a report from the cleaners that there was no water to the toilets.

“We are urging the public to contact police if they know anything about the solar panel thefts,” Mr Heywood said.

“About 260,000 visitors visit the Canyon each year and without the solar equipment the toilet block will need to be shut down within a day or so.

“Parks and Wildlife is currently trying to source replacement equipment and appropriate trades people to carry out initial repairs. Full replacement of equipment is expected to take at least a week.

“This criminal act has the potential to impact significantly on visitors to the park.

“Water to the toilets is now on gravity feed and the toilets are operational, however without power the septic blowers & pump are not working.

“With visitor numbers increasing as the tourist season gets into full swing, the blowers will need to be addressed in the next few days to avoid the likelihood of sewerage overflow. If this is not possible then portable toilets may be required at additional expense.”

Mr Heywood said this theft follows four separate incidents at Trepinna Gorge Nature National Park last year where it is estimated \$20,000 worth of equipment was stolen.

“Money used to replace the stolen solar panels must come from within the Parks’ budget and infrastructure programs, such as walking tracks and park facilities maintenance programs may suffer,” Mr Heywood said.

“The use of solar panels are not only desirable from an environmental perspective, but are essential as there is no other source of power for these visitor facilities.

“If anyone out there knows anything about the stolen solar panels, or observed a vehicle in the vicinity of Watarrka National Park that appeared heavily laden or was carrying solar panels, they are urged to contact NT police on 131 444.”

Ends

Media Note – For more information contact Michael Heywood on 89567460 or 0428 300296.

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