

Sat 28 June, 11:30 to 12:00 BBC World

Ray Mears tells a cautionary tale concerning two foolhardy Austrian tourists who lacked respect for a harsh and unforgiving landscape in the Australian outback.

Background ([www.courts.sa.gov.au/courts/coroner/findings/findings\\_2000/grossmueller.finding.htm](http://www.courts.sa.gov.au/courts/coroner/findings/findings_2000/grossmueller.finding.htm) )

1.1 On 15 December 1999 two German tourists, Christoph Kupper and Hans-Martin Kieser, were driving on the track which turns off from the Oodnadatta Track, about eleven kilometres South of William Creek. They were heading East towards Lake Eyre. About 30 kilometres along the track, they discovered the body of a person lying on the side of the road.

1.2 Without touching the body, they returned immediately to William Creek and informed the manager of the hotel, Mr. Mal Anderson. Mr. Anderson advised the police, who requested that he drive out and verify that it was not a hoax. Mr. Anderson did so, then arranged to meet the police at the turn-off.

1.3 Senior Constable Paul Liersch from Marree met Mr. Anderson, and they drove together to the body.

1.4 Mr. Liersch noted that the deceased had been carrying a rucksack and also saw a two-litre bottle, which contained approximately 1.5 litres of water. A later search of the rucksack revealed that she had been carrying another five litres of water in a container, and another two litre container containing 80mls of urine.

1.5 Also found in the rucksack was a note which read:-  
"HELP!

Had to leave boyfriend alone due to health problems with less water.

( 5-10km past sign WC 50 - direction Lake Eyre.

Myself still trying to get out of this hell heading towards William Creek, which 2 inhabitants simply forgot us.  
Please try to find us!"

(part of Exhibit C.8c)

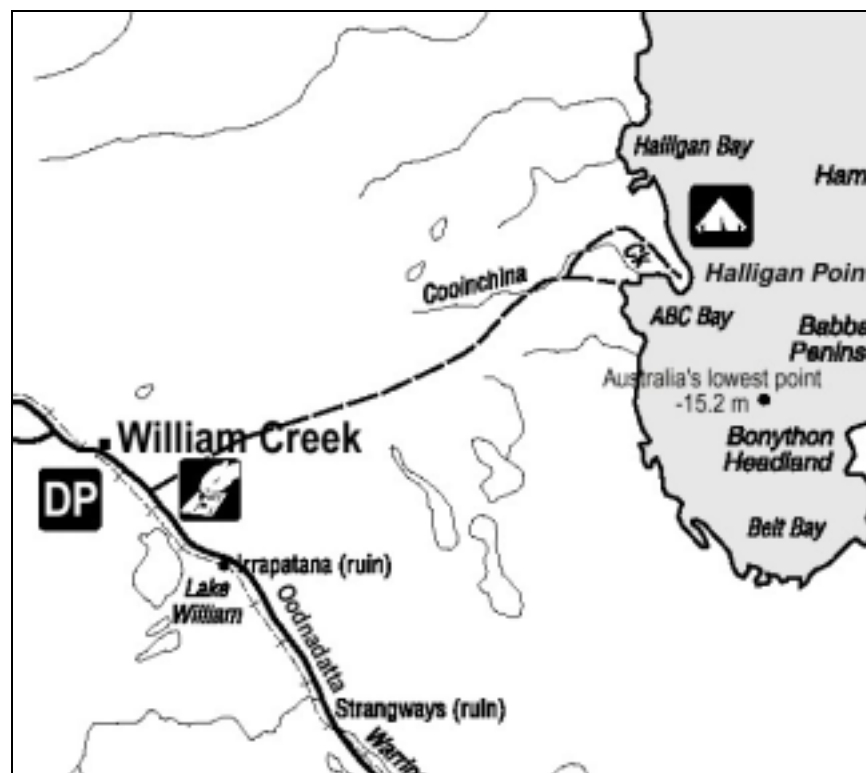
1.6 The two men then drove further East to a junction in the road 24 kilometres further on, and found a note taped to a sign. After taking one road to the South East, and finding nothing, they took the North East road, and found the remains of another note on a sign. Driving further to the shore of Lake Eyre, they found shoe prints and tyre prints on the sand, and Senior Constable Liersch saw the sun reflecting off an object in the distance. They followed the tyre tracks to the tourist shelter at Halligan Bay.

1.7 Parked near the shelter, and bogged in the sand, was a Toyota Land Cruiser converted into a camper-van. It carried "Britz" signs, apparently indicating the company from which it had been hired.

1.8 Senior Constable Liersch said the vehicle was in "axle-twist", meaning that the front and rear axles were at an angle to each other (T.45). Since the differentials were not locked, this meant that power was not being applied to the wheels that were in contact with the sand, and so no traction could be obtained.

1.9 Inside the vehicle was a male person who identified himself as Karl Goeschka. Mr. Goeschka was in an agitated state initially, but was able to communicate that he and his girlfriend, Gabriele Grossmueller, were Austrian tourists, that they had driven to the area on Monday 7 December 1998 and become bogged, that on 9 December they had commenced to walk back, they camped that night but he felt unable to continue the next day so Gabriele continued alone. He said that he returned to the Toyota, arriving at about 2.00a.m. on 11 December, where he remained until they arrived.

1.10 In all the circumstances, I accept that the deceased has been sufficiently identified as Gabriele Grossmueller.



Western part of Lake Eyre



Lake Eyre Parks Web