



# News Release

11 November 2008

Department  
for Environment  
and Heritage

## Simpson Desert closed during summer to ensure visitor safety

The South Australian Department for Environment and Heritage (DEH) has announced that the Simpson Desert will be closed during the hottest months of the year to ensure the safety of visitors and emergency personnel.

The closure, to apply from 1 December to 15 March each year, will affect the Simpson Desert Conservation Park and Regional Reserve in South Australia.

The closure was proposed after a risk assessment identified that extreme temperatures constituted a high safety risk to people attempting to cross the Simpson Desert during this period.

Consultation with local businesses, tour operators and other people with an interest in the area showed the community was very supportive of the closure.

Trevor Naismith, Director of Regional Operations for DEH, said it was unfortunate the area needed to be closed during summer, but that it was necessary to prevent fatalities from occurring.

"Temperatures in the Simpson Desert during summer are extreme, with daytime temperatures of between 40 and 50 degrees Celsius common," he said.

"During this period, dunes are soft and constantly changing shape, increasing the chance of vehicles becoming bogged and people becoming stranded.

"High temperatures also lead to an increased chance of vehicle failure.

"Most people that cross the desert during summer are from overseas, and many do not have the driving experience for such a crossing, or a properly equipped vehicle with radio communications and recovery gear in case of an emergency.

"At a time when there are very few vehicles in the desert to provide assistance in a timely manner, this is potentially a fatal situation, especially for the inexperienced, ill-prepared visitor. This high risk also extends to emergency personnel who are called out to help stranded visitors during this period."

Mr Naismith said the park closure would not have a significant impact on local businesses, because only about 35 vehicles traverse the Simpson Desert each year during summer.

Tourism outlets and visitor information centres have been notified of the park closure, advertisements have been placed in four-wheel drive magazines, and new entry information signs are being installed at all park entrances.

Witjira National Park and the campground at the famed Dalhousie Springs to the west of the Simpson Desert will not be affected by the closure.

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