



Police locate body near Alice Springs believed to be that of missing woman Claire Hockridge

Hockridge was one of three people to go missing in the Northern Territory outback two weeks ago, but her companions were both rescued in recent days

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Searchers have found a body believed to be Claire Hockridge, who has been missing in the Northern Territory outback for two weeks.

Hockridge was in a group of three people who became stranded in the central Australian outback a fortnight ago, but her partner, Tamra McBeath-Riley, and their friend Phu Tran, were both rescued in the last few days.

Formal identification is yet to be conducted, said police, and they will prepare a report for the coroner.

Tran was found on Tuesday in the area of the Palmer Valley by pastoralist Ted Fogarty. The 40-year-old told Fogarty he had survived after finding water.

Fogarty told the ABC he had decided to help out with the search on the “off chance” they were near his property. He said Tran was disoriented when he found him.

“I picked him up and asked where he was going, if he wanted to come with me,” Fogarty said.

McBeath-Riley and Hockridge, both Alice Springs locals, had taken Tran out for a drive and afternoon trek more than two weeks ago, heading to a region south of Alice Springs, when their ute became bogged in a river.

“The river was just too large, we couldn’t get out,” McBeath-Riley said this week.

“During the day it’s just really hot so we dug ourselves under the car during the day into the sand. At night they could sleep in the car.”

Police said the group survived on limited food and water supplies, as well as pre-mixed vodka drinks, before walking west for about 1.5km where they found water.

Authorities were first alerted that the trio was missing a week after they first set out, and the ute was located on Sunday with a note indicating McBeath-Riley had walked in one direction and Hockridge and Tran had walked together towards the Stuart Highway about 22km away. They carried about six litres of water with them.

After launching a new aerial search following the rescue of McBeath-Riley, police discovered footprints suggesting the pair had separated.

Hockridge was last seen by Tran at the Palmer Valley Station fence line two days ago, police said earlier on Wednesday. They believed she would have had little to no water supplies left.

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