

Kings Canyon cliff death: Tour company admits failing in health and safety duty

By [Tom Maddocks](#)

Posted yesterday at 5:50pm



PHOTO: English backpacker Zoe Woolmer died at Kestrel Falls in Kings Canyon in June 2014. (Supplied: Facebook)

MAP: [Alice Springs 0870](#)

A tour company have admitted to health and safety failures in the case of a British backpacker who fell to her death while posing for a photo at a popular tourist spot in the NT.

Zoe Woolmer, 23, died after stumbling backwards off a cliff edge Kings Canyon in Watarrka National Park in June 2014.

Nearing the end of a guided tour of Kings Canyon, Ms Woolmer climbed down to a hidden ledge to have her photo taken on the Rim Walk at Kestrel Falls.

However the dangerous stunt proved fatal after she stumbled backwards and fell 30 metres on to rocks below.

In the Alice Springs Local Court today, directors of Alice Springs-based company, The Rock Tour, that led Ms Woolmer pleaded guilty to failing to comply with their health and safety duty to the tourist, which exposed her to a risk of injury or death.

The lawyer for the Work Health Authority, NT Worksafe, Jodi Truman, argued the tour acted in direct contradiction of numerous signs along the walk warning people to stay away from the cliff edge.



PHOTO: Photos like this were promoted by many tour operators through Kings Canyon. (Supplied)

Ms Truman told the court the tour guide had demonstrated to the group how to take a photo on the rock ledge outside the marked path.

How would you feel if this was said about your safety system!

Lawyer Tony Whitelum said the health and safety system in place was "defective" and "incomplete" and there was nothing to ensure the guide would not "do their own thing" on the tour.

Almost four years earlier, Northern Territory Parks and Wildlife sent a letter to all tour operators and guides, warning "don't risk your life to get the perfect photo".

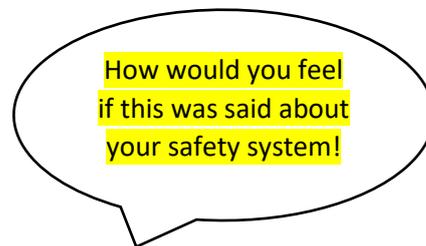
It also recommended that all visitors stood at least 2 metres from the cliff edge.

Following Ms Woolmer's death, The Rock Tour modified its guidelines so that specific and qualified training guides were employed, as well as other changes.

Victim Impact Statements from Ms Woolmer's mother, father and only sister spoke of their indescribable pain after her death.

"We've been totally robbed of an ordinary and normal life, the company should have kept Zoe safe," one of the statements read.

Her mother Dawn said: "My belief is that this awful tragedy could have easily happened to others on the tour."



Lawyer Tony Whitelum said the health and safety system in place was "defective" and "incomplete" and there was nothing to ensure the guide would not "do their own thing" on the tour.

The matter will return to court for sentencing on Thursday, with a maximum penalty for the charge being \$1.5 million.

Update

Family of British backpacker who plunged 30m off an Outback cliff while posing for a photo 'relieved' the tour company has been fined \$140,000 over her death

- **Zoe Woolmer died at Kings Canyon in Northern Territory in June, 2014**
- **The 23-year-old was walking the canyon rim as part of a tour group**
- **It is believed she was resting on narrow ledge for photo when she fell**
- **The tour company pleaded guilty to health and safety failures in court**
- **Company has been convicted and fined for failing health and safety duty**
- **Woolmer family expressed relief at the findings after two years of fighting**

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Read more: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3657626/Family-British-backpacker-plunged-30m-Outback-cliff-posing-photo-relieved-tour-company-fined-140-000-death.html#ixzz4QJYa4jIW>

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