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German Backpacker's Van Retrieved in WA Bushland

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A challenging four-day recovery operation has successfully retrieved a German backpacker's van that was left stranded in a remote part of Western Australia's Wheatbelt region for several weeks. The vehicle became stuck after its driver, 26-year-old Carolina Wilga, was forced to abandon it during a widely reported survival ordeal in June.

Wilga had gained international attention after her Mitsubishi Delica became bogged in dense bushland near Karroun Hill Nature Reserve, north of Beacon. With no phone reception and minimal supplies, she walked for days in search of help. After surviving nearly two weeks

in the harsh conditions, she was rescued by emergency services on the twelfth day of her ordeal.

Although Wilga has since returned to Germany, her van remained trapped in thick terrain. The recovery effort was coordinated by local farmer and volunteer firefighter Andrew Sprigg, who led a small team of Wheatbelt residents to retrieve the vehicle. Sprigg described the process as extremely difficult due to the overgrown and rugged 32-kilometre track leading to the site.

“It was so overgrown that we initially tried using a four-wheel drive, but had to switch to heavier machinery and eventually used a front-end loader,” he said in an interview with 9News.

The vehicle was eventually removed and transported to a private location, where it will remain until it can be collected by Wilga’s friends. According to Sprigg, Wilga requested that the van not be made public and offered to cover the costs of its recovery. “She’s very embarrassed and very thankful,” he said.

Local residents have raised questions about why Wilga ventured into such a remote area alone, without reliable communication tools or notifying others of her route. While the young traveler was fortunate to survive, the incident has reignited conversation about the dangers of exploring Australia’s remote landscapes without proper preparation.

“Rule number one is to always tell someone where you’re going,” Sprigg added. “And the second is to have a backup plan. Phones don’t work well out here, so take another car or a friend.”

The story has sparked broader discussions about travel safety for international visitors unfamiliar with the unique hazards of rural Australia. Authorities and locals alike are encouraging travelers to take extra precautions and plan more cautiously when venturing off-grid.