



MEDIA RELEASE

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Diesel: just a singer for Hidden Valley

Like a bad Diesel cover – the *sun is shining* on Hidden Valley Cabins. The North Queensland tourism operators are celebrating the first anniversary of their switch to solar power.

Hidden Valley installed its solar power system on the 16th December 2007 - and has only used the generator for seven hours, and just 21 litres of diesel since firing up the solar panels.

In previous years the family run business had relied solely on expensive and environmentally harmful diesel fuel – using in excess of 26,000 litres.

Hidden Valley Operations Manager Ross McLennan said the decision to switch to solar had reaped dividends.

“It was a matter of *Faith and Gasoline* – we had a lot of the former and wanted to move away from the latter.”

“The only reason we’ve had to run off diesel at all was a few days of solid rain. It has *all come together* nicely. We’ve been surprised at how resilient the system has been.”

“As an operator keen to focus on environmental issues the decision to switch off diesel was an easy one. The *masterplan* was supported by State Government grants and we’ve been so happy with the results we’re now offering workshops to other businesses considering the switch to solar.”

“Running diesel is quite loud. It can be a pretty obnoxious noise. Guests are coming to us and saying *up in my room* it’s like a *brand new song*.”

“For us, things are looking *brighter than the sun*, it’s not that *I can’t stand the rain*, nobody can *steal my sunshine*.” Mr McLennan said.

Townsville Enterprise Destination Marketing and Development General Manager Brent Randall said the focus on sustainability is paying off.

“Besides the obvious financial impact of the decision – Hidden Valley are being recognised globally through the media as a best practice sustainable operator.”

“The McLennans should be commended for their initiatives – their workshops have been a great way to encourage other businesses to consider their environmental and economic bottom lines,” Mr Randall said.

“Hidden Valley is hidden no more – the media coverage associated with the switch to solar power means *everybody’s talkin’*.”

The decision to switch to solar has been widely recognised, Queensland Premier Anna Bligh presented an award for leadership in Environmental Sustainability, Ecotourism Australia awarded Hidden Valley advanced certification, and the business took out two 2008 North Queensland Tourism Awards. Most recently Hidden Valley has been nominated for the Australian Travel Tourism Awards for the best Eco / Wilderness Experience – locals are encouraged to vote online at <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/tandtawards>.

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