

## THE Courier

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St Catherine's School students Jasper Neilson, 13, left, Luc Farrer, 12, and David Moore, 13, struggle to wrap their arms around the giant tree's trunk.

# From a single acorn ...

By **Rhody Gleeson**

A project to closely monitor a 150-year-old Stirling oak tree has planted the seed of conservation at St Catherine's School after a group of eco-minded students successfully nominated the tree to the National Big Tree Register.

The tree's current owners contacted the Stirling school as they thought it might be a nice educational opportunity for the school's Forever Green program which focuses on environmental and conservation issues.

Students regularly visited the tree to monitor its changes throughout the seasons and measure its growth before preparing their nomination.

Trees recorded in the national register are judged on a points system which takes into consideration the circumference, height and crown spread.

National Register of Big Trees co-ordinator Derek McIntosh said while it wasn't the biggest tree in SA, he was encouraged to see students involved in the project.

"Having a tree nominated by children is particularly important as they are the ultimate custodians of our trees and plants," he said.

"Any encouragement they can obtain is important."

The giant oak tree towers more than 25m above the ground with a crown (the full extension of all branches and leaves) measuring more than 36m in diameter.

The mighty oak's roots stretch back almost as far as the history of Stirling with the tree planted roughly 10 years after the town was founded in 1854.



A 150-year-old oak tree is now featured on the national register of big trees.

At 150-years-old the tree has withstood much of the Hills development where it became the main feature in the backyard of 'Blinkbonny', a summer house built by merchant and department store owner James Marshall who founded Marshalls – now Myer.

The home was later used to house convalescing soldiers as they returned from the front in WW1 with many resting under the cool shade provided by the oak tree.

The current residents of Blinkbonny said they were happy to be involved in the students' project and were glad to share the tree with the community, saying they felt more like custodians than owners.

The tree's entry in the national register can be viewed at <http://bit.ly/2gWSzrp>.