

Sunraysia is home to the largest Norfolk Island Pine in Victoria...

Green giant is truly tree-mendous

By BEN PISCIONERI

SUNRAYSIA is now officially home to the largest Norfolk Island Pine tree in Victoria.

The green giant, estimated to be 97-years-old and measuring 41 metres high, with a circumference of 4.55 metres, is so large it's now registered with the National Register of Big Trees.

The tree has enjoyed a dominant presence in the front yard of a Karadoc Avenue house, near Nichols Point, for decades, and was recently brought to the attention of the Register's founder, Derek McIntosh, by Melbourne-based tree lover Andrew Blackman.

Mr McIntosh said the tree was also registered with the National Trust of Australia, where it's described as "a specimen of outstanding form" and "possibly the tallest tree in the Mildura district."

He said there are only eight Norfolk Island Pines on his register, and Mildura's is certainly the biggest.

It's one of three Sunraysia-based trees on the National Register of Big Trees, which only came into being just over 12 months ago.

The other two trees are a Queensland Narrow-leaf Bottle, which is planted on the Rio Vista Homestead property, and a Sugar Gum in Elswood Crescent.

The 110-year-old Bottle measures 10.5 metres high and 4.4 metres in circumference. The Sugar Gum meanwhile is 23 metres tall and has a circumference of six metres.

Mr McIntosh said his almost life-long love of trees drove him to set up the register.



A native of South Africa, he immigrated to Australia in 1981 and is based in Sydney.

After retiring from a career in real estate development, he was finally able to dedicate his time to his love of trees and promptly compiled a team of botanical experts and went ahead with the National Register of Big Trees.

• Continued Page 17



• OVERSIZE: National Register of Big Trees founder Derek McIntosh, TOP, measures the circumference of Victoria's biggest Norfolk Pine Tree, ABOVE.

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• From Page 7

Despite only being in existence for a little over 12 months, Mr McIntosh said there has been significant interest in the concept.

"When I started in May last year I had

about 18 trees in the Sydney Botanic Gardens to kick things off," he said.

There are now more than 430 trees on the register.

"I've put most of them on, but I've had a wonderful amount of support

from a fellow down in South Australia, Dean Nichol, who's an expert on Eucalyptus and has written a few books. He's put on about 60 trees, so he's been fantastic," Mr McIntosh said.

"But I'm increasingly getting nomina-

tions out of the blue. People who may have heard about the register or read about it and it's now developing, so the response has been wonderful." He said his main priority is the size of trees.

"I look objectively

at a tree for its size," Mr McIntosh said.

"It doesn't matter if it's a tree of historic significance or of great beauty. It's all about the size of the tree."

Trees are ranked on a points system based around a for-

mula that includes girth, height and crown spread.

Trees must be either Australian natives or naturalised trees.

For more information visit www.nationalregisterofbig-trees.com.au.