

Our old trees are true champions

By Tahnae Goldsworthy

THE HIGHLANDS can lay claim to many things and champion trees are among them.

With many historic towns nestled in among a green countryside, it's not surprising the Highlands have no less than 12 trees listed on the national register for big trees, two of which are recent entries.

The big trees project was started in May last year by Manly man Derek McIntosh, who grew up with an interest in trees – especially climbing them – and often wondered, which was bigger?

Well now he knows exactly where the biggest beauties in the country are with 450 champion trees listed on the National Register of Big trees website, www.nationalregisterofbigtrees.com.au, among many species that are indigenous and foreign.

The trees nominated by community members or tracked down by Mr McIntosh himself are judged according to a specific formula that adds points for the trunk girth, tree height and crown spread.

The first new listing is an Oak (*Quercus robur*) nominated by Gail Page which stands 20 metres high with a 6.1 metre circumference and a 39 metre crown located on Old South Road, Mittagong.

Mr McIntosh said it's a tree many Highlanders will recognise and one that provides a little shade for passing motorists who drive under the leaning foliage without realising it's champion status.

Frensham School in Mittagong has claimed two of the nation's biggest trees with the recent nomination a White Topped Box (*Eucalyptus quad-*



HOME OF CHAMPIONS: Andrew McIntosh stands among the big branches of the Mittagong Oak champion tree, which his father, Derek, has included on his National Register of Big Trees. **Photo supplied**

rangulata) nominated by Jane Lemann and the previous nomination a Peppermint Narrow leaved (*Eucalyptus radiata*).

Standing 29 metres high with a circumference of 5.79 metre and a crown that stretches 32 metres, Mr McIntosh said the White Topped Box was a national champion.

"It's the biggest white top box in Australia – a national

champion," he said.

"It's just a stunning tree."

Mr McIntosh encourages anyone who knows the location of a big beauty to register it for measuring online at www.nationalregisterofbigtrees.com.au.

More details of Australia's Champion trees, including the twelve located in the Highlands can also be found at the site.