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Raleigh's Big Tree the biggest of all



The whole school of 34 children (minus a couple of absent students) underneath Australia's biggest Camphor Laurel tree. Photo by Derek McIntosh.

BY JANENE CAREY

RALEIGH Public School's beloved heritage-listed "Big Tree" is the largest Camphor Laurel in Australia, according to a man whose passion is maintaining a National Register of Big Trees, Derek McIntosh.

Mr McIntosh visited Raleigh Public School on November 30 to check the current measurements of the tree and found they had not changed much in the seven years since he was last there.

His register, which can be accessed at www.national-registerofbigtrees.com.au, takes into account circumference, height and crown size in awarding points, enabling trees to be compared on an overall score.

Raleigh's "Big Tree" has 649 points, and its rivals for the title of "biggest" Camphor Laurel don't even come close.

There's a teensy Camphor Laurel in Adelaide with 264 points, some others rating in the low 300s in other states, and the one that's second-best resides in Brooklyn, Sydney and boasts a measly 385 points.

Principal of Raleigh Public School, Katrina Meenahan,

is not sure of the age or provenance of the Big Tree but notes that the school itself is one of the oldest in the region, being founded 143 years ago, on 24 August 1874.

"The story behind it – the rumour – is that many, many years ago the District Inspector at the time came in his horse and cart and delivered a Camphor Laurel tree as a gift to all of the local schools. But no one really knows if that's true."

Mrs Meenahan said the tree is younger than the school but could easily be 100 years old.

"I have seen photos of it taken in the 1960s, and it was like a normal-sized Camphor Laurel tree then," she said.

The tree may be 125 years old, if it was planted on Arbor Day 1892, as the heritage-listed Camphor Laurels in Bellingens Maam Gaduying Park supposedly were.

Raleigh PS has the tree incorporated into its school logo, and many generations of students have enjoyed eating their lunch in its shade and climbing up into its branches.

"It's had a few limbs trimmed off it over the years

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Big Tree gets vital statistics updated

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... that haven't been safe, but it's beautiful," Mrs Meenahan said. "If it's a nice day, the kids sit under the tree to have lunch. They play games under there as well."

These days, with more stringent safety provisions in force, the children are no longer allowed to climb the tree and can only sit underneath when it's not too windy or too wet.

"That's the advice from the arborist. Like gum trees, Camphor Laurels drop limbs when they're wet," Mrs Meenahan said.

Big Tree's vital statistics

Circumference: 13.40m

Height: 26m (85 ft)

Crown: 45m (147 ft)

Points: 649

Location: Raleigh Public School, NSW

Nominator: Ian Turnbull
Year Measured: 2017



Adriana Makaria, James Cracknell, Leonie Ivey, Marnie Wade

Windsong Travel Gold Choice

BELLINGEN'S own travel company Windsong Travel has joined an elite group of top Australian travel agencies by again winning a coveted Gold Choice Award.

Windsong Travel was one of just 10 Australian travel retailers presented with a Gold Choice Award during a

ceremony held this month in Perth. Travellers Choice is an exclusive collection of leading independently-owned travel agencies with approximately 150 stores.

"Winning agencies demonstrated outstanding customer service, travel expertise and business

acumen," Travellers Choice Managing Director Christian Hunter said. "Windsong Travel is one of Australia's leading travel agencies because it combines exceptional travel knowledge and skills with an understanding of its local community and the unique needs of its clients."



Poppy Col (Col Bradbrook), Zy Bradbrook, Nanna Neecie (Denise Bradbrook) and Miyah Bradbrook

NSW Grandparents Day celebrates the role grandparents and older people play in our society – both the things they have done, and the things they keep doing.

It recognises the diversity of grandparent relationships across age groups, cultural backgrounds, and geographical locations.

Bellingen Public School embraced Grandparents Day with students spending time with an older loved one and making connections across generations.

Over 100 grandparents, with some great grandparents in the mix, spent the morning in classrooms with their grandchildren observing lessons and sharing their stories.

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