

Retiree branches out in nation-wide search for our biggest tree

By **ILANA TULLOCH**
on work experience

A SYDNEY retiree is in Rockhampton as part of his quest to find Australia's biggest tree, and he wants your help.

Derek McIntosh launched his website The National Register of Big Trees in May this year, creating an Australian prototype of the popular hobby of big tree spotting in the United States.

The US big tree register has been operating for 40 years, and has tens of thousands of followers.

Derek's site is an Australian first, but follows the same points system

used in the United States, where trees are measured according to girth, height and crown spread, then calculated to get the tree's score.

Since getting a mention in the Cairns Post last week, Derek's site has had over 600 hits.

Derek, a former property developer, has been wanting to do this for 25 years.

He aims to motivate children to submit their findings to the website, and individual regions are awarded champion trees. Children are encouraged to check their backyards for big trees, and can find out how to measure their trees by checking the website.

"It's fun and education-

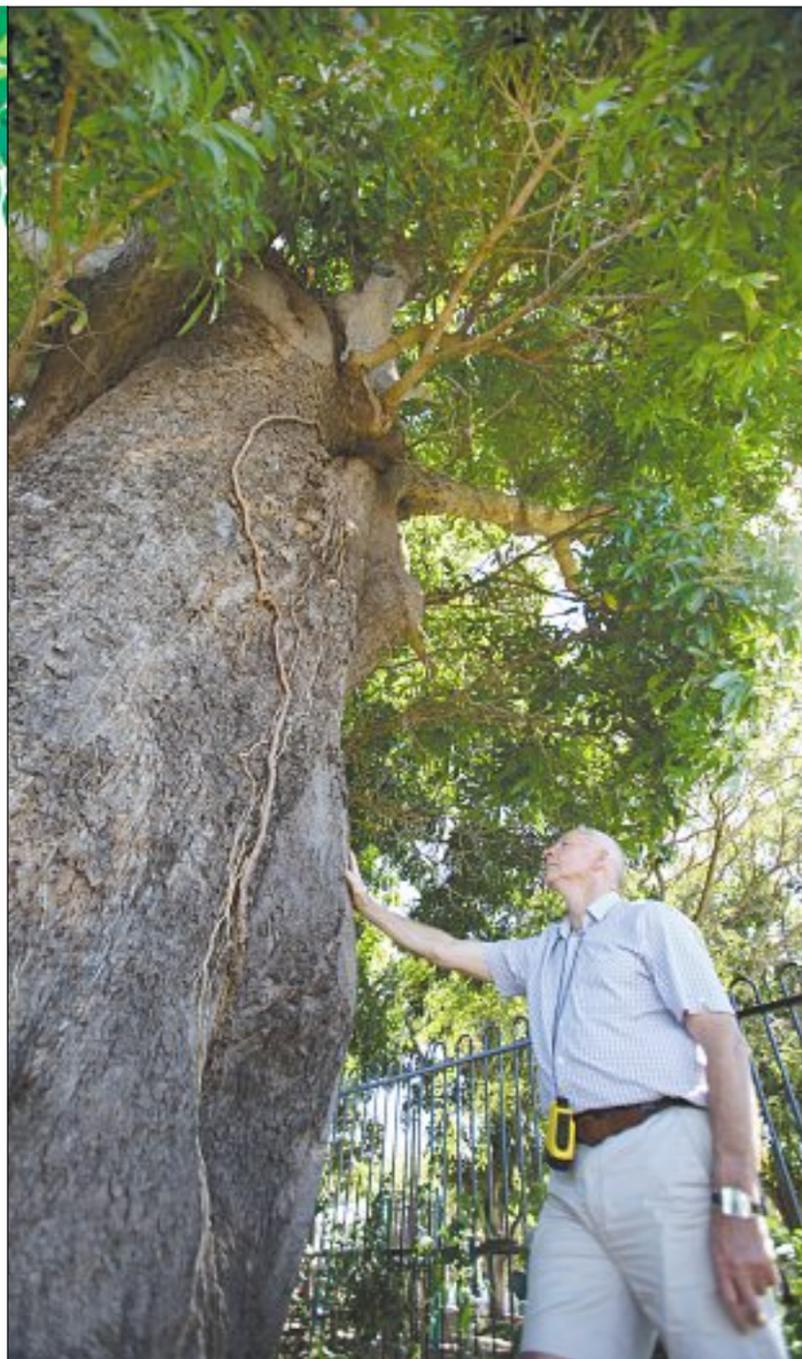
al, and anyone can do it," says Derek, who is motivated by his love of nature, trees and birdwatching.

"It's a real love of trees that drives me, and also the underlying fear that people don't appreciate trees enough. I mean they chop old trees down all the time."

In Mackay a tree has a score of 400, while Tasmanian trees from old-growth forests get scores of 900 to 1000.

A big old mango tree near the Mater Hospital got a score of 302, with a height of 20 metres and girth of 5.6 metres.

The website is www.nationalregisterofbigtrees.com.au.



CHAMPION TREE: Derek McIntosh was impressed by this mango tree near Rockhampton's Mater Hospital.

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