

Tall tales and true – we have a new champion

By **ROBERT CRAWFORD**

OVER the years the Shoalhaven has had numerous Australian champions, particularly in sport.

But now the area can boast a national champion tree – yes, a tree.

Derek McIntosh established the National Register of Big Trees in 2009 and has more than 600 listings, recording Australia's largest trees of each species.

During a visit to the Shoalhaven last week he added another to his growing list of giants.

A Bangalay, southern mahogany (*Eucalyptus botryoides*) at Hyams Beach is the latest inclusion as a national champion.

Mr McIntosh was on holiday at the Jervis Bay beachside location and noticed a superb specimen in Cyrus Street.

"I couldn't believe it," he said.

"I was just on holiday and happened to spot the Bangalay and thought 'Gee that's big' and after some measurements and calculations we have a national champion."

To qualify for the register, points are awarded for each tree on the basis of a formula that includes circumference, height and crown spread.

Born in South Africa, Mr McIntosh said he has been a lover of trees since his teenage years.

"I lived in the US for a while and discovered their big tree register and in 1981 I migrated to Australia and am now fulfilling my dream of creating the National Register of Big Trees for Australia," he said.

"I have no specific botanical knowledge of trees that equips me to undertake the task, my background is real estate development,

but I love trees."

Mr McIntosh's register at www.nationalregisterofbigtrees.com.au presents the national, state and regional champions (within NSW and Queensland).

He said the reason for creating the state and regional categories was to promote a vibrant rivalry between the states and regions.

"The objective is to archive the records of the two largest specimens of each tree species in the Queensland and NSW regions and to archive the records of the three largest specimens of each tree species in the other states," he said.

"It also helps to promote the preservation of big trees as impressive examples of tree growth, natural beauty, valuable genetic resources, and inspiring symbols of conservation."

Mr McIntosh self-funds the register and would love to see local residents get involved.

"I would love to see the register grow," he said.

"But I need people's help to populate the register."

"So if you have a big tree in your area jump onto my website and we would love to hear from you."

"Likewise I would love to hear from any local schools in the area that would like to become involved."

WHAT A BEAUTY: Self-confessed Sydney tree-hugger Derek McIntosh with the Bangalay, southern mahogany he discovered at Hyams Beach – the latest inclusion as a national champion in the National Register of Big Trees.

