

Tassie giant biggest in land

DUNCAN ABEY

A 400-YEAR veteran of Tasmania's southern forests is officially the biggest tree in Australia.

The Kermadie Queen, a 76m swamp gum or mountain ash growing in a rainforest just south of Geeveston, is only three-quarters the height of Australia's tallest tree, the nearby Centurion, which towers 99.7m.

But, using a formula that takes into account a tree's girth, height and crown size, the Kermadie Queen has outmuscled the competition to be named our biggest tree.

And, while the giant *Eucalyptus regnans* lives in proximity to working state forests, its safety is assured.

The Kermadie Queen is one of many high and mighty specimens protected by Forestry Tasmania's Giant Trees policy, which seeks to identify, manage and protect tall timber at least 85m in height or 280 cubic metres stem volume.

"We at Forestry Tasmania are proud to be custodians of the giant trees," said Huon district manager Roland Freyer.

Included in the policy's objectives is the development of a statewide tourism strategy for the trees.

Destination Southern Tasmania marketing manager

FOREST TITANS

Australia's four biggest trees (all in Tasmania):
1 "Kermadie Queen" (*Eucalyptus regnans*) Geeveston; circumference 21.65m, height 76.25m, crown 25m = 1125 points
2 "Big Foot" (*Eucalyptus regnans*) Geeveston; 20.45m, 81m, 20m = 1087
3 "Mt Cripps" (*Eucalyptus obliqua*) Cradle Mtn; 20.50m, 65m, 35m = 1049
4 Rullah Longatyle (*Eucalyptus globulus*) Geeveston; 19m, 82.3m, 25m = 1038

Karen Fraser said a Big Trees experience would fit neatly with the state's clean and green tourism draw.

"One of Tasmania's core appeals is accessible wilderness, and giant trees are drawcards for visitors in other parts of the world, including in northern California," she said.

"To protect them, provide visitors with access to them and provide good interpretation and an authentic experience of our natural wonders will definitely be an asset for southern Tasmania."

Tasmania has the largest hardwoods on the planet. The only place to produce taller trees is the US but its spruce and redwood trees are softwood species.



CROWNING GLORY: Forestry Tasmania's Roland Freyer, left, and Chris Bond with the Kermadie Queen, near Geeveston, Australia's biggest tree.

Picture: KIM EISELE

Aid for Aussie on death row

AUSTRALIAN diplomats are providing consular support to an Australian man on death row in Vietnam for heroin trafficking.

Pham Trung Dung, of Vietnamese origin, was arrested in May 2013 when customs officials reportedly found the heroin in his luggage as he was boarding a flight to Australia.

A court in southern Vietnam on Friday sentenced him to death for possessing more than 4kg of the drug.

Foreign Minister Julie Bishop said Dung was receiving consular support but declined to discuss details.

Gay but not so happy: study

GAY and lesbian Australians have significantly lower wellbeing than heterosexual men and women, a new study says.

Researchers tracking the wellbeing of more than 12,000 Australians as part of a household, income and labour dynamics survey, found homosexual people had lower life satisfaction than heterosexuals.

Gay and lesbian advocacy groups say homophobia and bullying of homosexual people, and the denial of rights such as the right to marry, are having a significant impact on wellbeing levels.

Charged over car rampage

A 20-year-old George Town man who has been charged over an alleged three-day car rampage that caused \$60,000 damage has been bailed to face court at a later date.

Police will allege that between June 25 and 27, the man drove into a number of street signs in the George Town area, ran over a phone box at Low Head and deliberately hit a parked car. He has also been charged with setting fire to a shack and farm building.

Anybody with information is encouraged to contact Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000.

SEE THE GALLERY
 themercury.com.au