

Wednesday, March 16th 2011

Protecting Victoria's 'Giants'

VicForests' staff have measured the largest known Messmate (*Eucalyptus obliqua*) in Victoria in State forest near Bonang.

The tree is the first to be protected under VicForests' new Giant Tree Protection Policy.

Michael Ryan, VicForests' Forest Scientist, said the Kelly Creek Giant Messmate was recently measured by VicForests' staff and found to be 4.2m in diameter.

"VicForests Giant Tree Protection Policy has been developed to protect any tree greater than 4m in diameter or 85m in height found during pre-harvest surveys in State forest where timber harvesting is permitted," Mr Ryan said.

"This protection will include incorporating these trees into large buffers or retained habitat islands, and using techniques such as extended clearing around the base of the trees to protect them from fire.

"The giant Messmate found near Kelly Creek will not be harvested and will also be protected by VicForests' staff from the effects of timber harvesting operations.

"We recognise the importance of protecting these trees due to their ecological value as habitat, as well as their significant historical and aesthetic value.

"The vast majority of 'giant trees' found in Victoria's forests are already protected in National Parks and conservation reserves, or by the range of legislations which govern native timber harvesting in Victoria.

"Our Giant Tree Protection Policy is another tool designed to ensure their survival," he said.

Mr Ryan said VicForests' policy regarding 'giant trees' will also see every effort made to protect trees which are greater than 3m in diameter

"Trees of greater than 3m in diameter are more common both in reserves and other forest areas. However, protecting these trees will allow them to also grow into giant trees over time," he said.

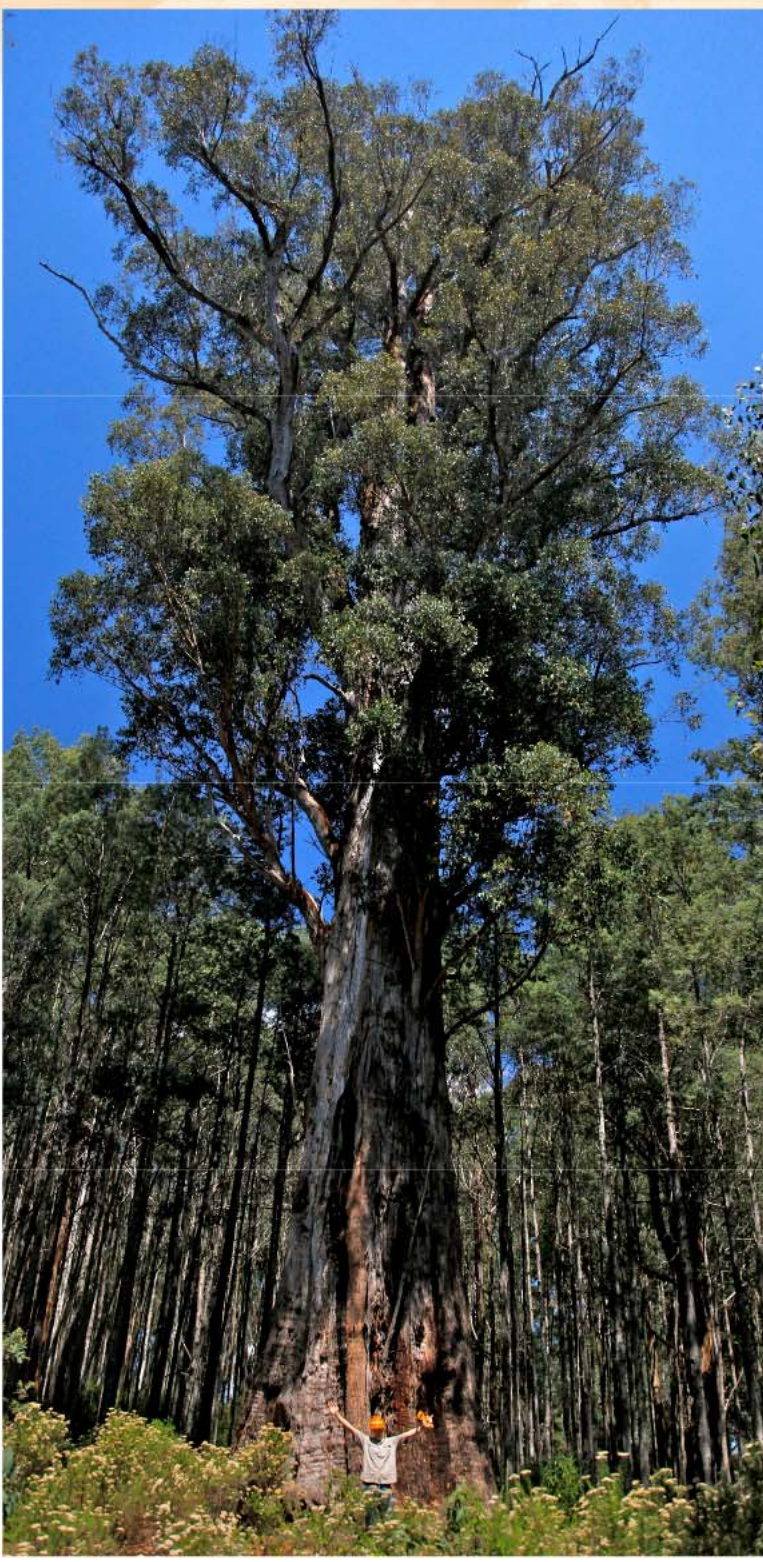
"VicForests has also created its own giant tree database to record the location of very large trees within areas of State forest available for timber harvesting.

"We will link this information with the Department of Sustainability and Environment's database to give us an even better understanding of where these trees are found across Victoria and assist us to protect them," Mr Ryan said.

Photo - See image included below

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Victoria's largest Messmate (*Eucalyptus obliqua*) – measured by VicForests staff near Bonang in East Gippsland. The tree is the first to be protected under VicForests' Giant Tree Protection Policy.

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