

Tree-top trips to tempt the tourist

A TREE-TOP tour and an Ancient Empire tingle forest discovery walk in the Valley of the Giants will form the core of a CALM tourism initiative in the southern forest near Walpole.

Premier and Tourism Minister Richard Court said the two projects would become major international tourist drawcards for the Warren-Walpole region and establish the tingle forest as an icon for the State's burgeoning nature-based tourism industry.

"The aim is to provide a high quality visitor experience in the tingle forest while at the same time maintaining the forest's integrity and conservation values."

A team led by the Perth-based consultancy, Donaldson and Warn, Architects, has been awarded a contract to design and build the tree top walk, a low level walk and a 'Tingle Shelter'.

The team includes Ove Arup and Partners (engineers), David Jones (environmental artist) and Ralph and Beattie Bosworth (quantity surveyors).

The contract follows a national competition through which CALM called for entrants to present design and construction ideas.



Premier Richard Court, second from right, is briefed on the tree tops walk project by artist David Jones (left), architect Geoff Warn and consulting engineer Adrian Roberts. Photo by John Ibbs courtesy Sunday Times.

Four teams were selected to present their concepts which were judged by an independent panel under the guidance of CALM and the Royal Australian Institute of Architects. The Australian Institute of Landscape Architects and the Institution of Engineers also

provided assistance.

The judges were impressed with the elegance, simplicity and practical nature of the winning design, considering the emphasis was on minimal disturbance of the forest during construction.

The tree top walk will consist

of steel trusses with timber decking and steel support posts. The tingle shelter will be built from timber posts and beams and the tower will use timber members with steel bracing.

The double walking loop will give visitors an experience from

the tree tops and the ground from the exciting to the quiet and contemplative.

The overall concept and design integrates all the grandeur of the tingle forest, especially its sounds, texture, colour and shapes.

Work already has begun on the Ancient Empire. This would be an interpretive forest discovery walk around and through the bases of 20 red tingle trees and logs with signs and sculptures to explain the forest's rich heritage.

A new information shelter and some of the boardwalks have been installed and further boardwalks will protect the trees from root and soil compaction and help ensure the adventure is ecologically sustainable.

CALM also is providing interpretive signs, a new access road, safe parking areas and services to the site.

The tree top walk will be completed in two stages.

The first stage, costing \$600,000 and due to be completed next November, will provide the first phase of the tree top walk, the return ground walk, tingle shelter and toilets and a swing bridge.

In the second stage, a tower with cantilevered platforms will be built.

