

New forest icon officially opens

ONE of the South West forest's landmarks was officially opened to the public recently as part of a combined forest protection and tourism initiative by CALM.

Diamond Tree—one of the renowned fire lookout trees of the karri forest—is destined to become one of the icons of the southern forest, drawing visitors from far and wide.

The tree was recommissioned as a fire lookout last season and Environment Minister Peter Foss last month officially opened it to the public at a function attended by representatives of the local community, including members of Friends of Diamond, who were instrumental in having the facility upgraded.

Diamond Tree, 10 km south of Manjimup, was first identified as a suitable lookout tree in 1939. District forester George Reynolds used 120 karri pegs to create a spiral 'stairway' to the first fork in the tree almost 50 metres above the ground.

Legendary axeman Dick Sproge lopped the crown to pave the way for a cabin built by George Reynolds and millwright and bush carpenter Laurie Jones. This was later hoisted up among the prepared branches.

The tower was used from 1941 and was a major tourist drawcard until the mid-1970s, when it was considered the tree had become unsafe. The cabin was removed for renovation in 1991 and replaced to maintain the authenticity of the tree.

Mr Foss said the Diamond Tree redevelopment was a \$150,000 project which had been provided from timber

royalties. The work included repegging the tree, refurbishing the cabin and installing new facilities at the recreation site.

The development includes new toilets, carparking and picnic and barbecue areas. A longer walk trail also is being created to complement the existing Jim Fox Adventure Trail.

Mr Foss said the integration of protection and tourism in the one facility was an innovative CALM initiative that promises a great challenge and an environmental and economic payoff.

Diamond Tree and its well-known counterpart, the Gloucester Tree, will soon be joined by a third lookout tree—the Bicentennial Tree in the Warren National Park.

This will be the last link in a three tree climb that is bound to inject further tourism dollars into the local community, as well as provide added fire protection for local residents.

Other nature-based forest tourism projects to be announced soon will demonstrate how a sensitively managed tourism industry can exist in harmony with the environment and its ecosystems.

As with the Diamond Tree redevelopment, the new projects will largely be funded by the forests themselves, via income generated through, among other things, log royalties.

Soon the South West will be dotted with forest icons that maintain the integrity and conservation values of the forests, while giving visitors a bird's eye view of its sustainable, multiple use management.



John Lloyd, ex-Manjimup District Manager, Jeanette Sturis, Friends of Diamond and Peter Foss, Environment Minister, at the opening of Diamond Tree. Photo by Nigel Higgs



Don Nicol and David Bell of Tricorp Trading, the contractors who re-pegged and refurbished Diamond Tree, with the wine they had bottled to commemorate the occasion. Photo by Penny Walsh

SOB No 266/1

Don Nicholl (Left)
David Bell - Tricore Ltd

Oct. 1995
- Richmond Tree Contractors



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Pics by Penny Walsh.