

Media Release ***EMBARGOED until 3pm AEST, 31 July 2018***

Minderoo Foundation announces landmark \$100 million donation to ocean research

ROTTNEST ISLAND, 31 July 2018 -- Minderoo Foundation, one of Australia's largest philanthropic groups, today announced the launch of a \$100 million Minderoo Ocean Research (MOR) initiative to help study and protect global marine life.

The landmark donation will be invested in new efforts to track global fishing patterns, fund research into ocean plastics pollution, and develop a world class research facility at Exmouth near Australia's iconic Ningaloo Reef to study the migration of sea life through the Indian Ocean.

Minderoo plans to partner with a range of institutions to establish globally impactful interventions in the marine conservation space, and has established informal collaborations with leading groups including the Sea Around Us, Scripps Institution of Oceanography, Ocean Elders, University of Western Australia's Marine Futures Lab, James Cook University's College of Science and Engineering, The University of Queensland's Centre for Marine Science, University of Technology Sydney, University College London's Department of Geography, University of Plymouth, Oceana, Global Fishing Watch, Eachmile Technologies (creators of Fishcoin), The Ocean Health Index, The Living Planet Global Footprint, Overseas Development Institute - ODI, FishSpektrum, WA Museum, The Red List Index, Luc Hoffmann Institute and WWF Australia.

Speaking aboard the Pangaea Ocean Explorer, a state-of-the-art deep water marine research vessel purchased commercially by the Forrest family and to be loaned to marine conservation efforts, Minderoo Foundation's chairman Andrew Forrest said Australia needed to do more to lead the world in ocean research as part of its responsibility in managing one of the world's largest ocean regions.

"Minderoo is making this timely commitment to support Australia's oceans at a moment when we are losing sight of our responsibilities to sustainably manage the vast seas under Australia's control," Mr Forrest said.

"We need to recognise from a recreational and business perspective, not just an environmental perspective, that looking after our oceans is a vital duty we owe to our children and grandchildren.

"Australia leads the world in many areas of ocean research and conservation, but there's so much more to do once we realise the dire shape our oceans are in. Catches from wild fisheries in Australia have fallen by over 30% over the past few years, and are still falling. Overseas entire fishing industries have been bankrupted and shut down, and numbers of some fish species have plummeted by 90%.

"This helps no one. Not recreational fishers, not industry, and certainly not the environment.

"We can and must do better, and that includes the new Marine Parks management plans before the Senate, which represent the largest roll back of marine protection in human history. These plans sorely let down Australia's tourism and recreational fishing sectors by opening up our marine parks to aggressive and unsustainable industrial fishing."

Minderoo's long-term plans to study and conserve ocean life include a commitment to found a Global Fishing Index, following Minderoo's success establishing the Global Slavery Index, the fourth edition of which was launched at UN Headquarters on 19 July 2018.

“A Global Fishing Index is a highly welcome initiative,” said Professor Daniel Pauly, head of the Sea Around Us project at the University of British Columbia, an international research initiative dedicated to assemble and interpret fisheries data. “We have good data on global fisheries both for the status of fished species and for the movements of fishing vessels. The Global Fishing Index will translate that knowledge into impact, assisting countries and businesses to improve their practices and thus ocean sustainability.”

“Minderoo’s evidence-based approach to advocacy has delivered great dividends for victims of modern slavery in recent years,” said Fiona David, Research Chair at Minderoo Foundation. “We now hope to translate that impact to sustainable ocean management, be it through tracking plastics and noise pollution, fishing patterns, or marine migration.”

Minderoo has also committed to establish a world-class research facility in Exmouth as part of the Ningaloo Centre. Exmouth is the gateway to the Ningaloo reef which is one of the longest near-shore reefs in the world and Australia’s largest fringing reef system. By opening the door to world leading research, Minderoo expects the region will receive greater scientific recognition and continue to attract more tourism.

“Telling the story of Ningaloo Reef through scientific research is essential to attracting international and local visitors to this unique region,” said Cameron Woods, Chief Executive Officer for Shire of Exmouth. “We expect new jobs, increased tourism, and renewed appreciation of Exmouth through this critical investment.”

The Australian federal government’s management plans for 44 Australian Marine Parks are currently before the Senate. Four hundred thousand square kilometres of ocean will lose their IUCN II (no extraction) zoning under the plans. Minderoo has joined a coalition of ocean ambassadors to oppose the plans, including prominent Australian musicians Cold Chisel, Flume, Cody Simpson, Gang of Youths, and Alex the Astronaut (<http://www.themarineparks.com.au/>).

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