

\$200m pumped into Hancock foundation

Mark Beyer
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Wealthy Western Australians have made some eye-popping philanthropic pledges over the years but none as large as one of Gina Rinehart's recent moves.

Gina Rinehart could challenge fellow iron ore billionaire Andrew Forrest as Western Australia's biggest philanthropist, after making a one-off donation of \$200 million to the Hancock Family Medical Foundation.

That lifted the foundation's net assets to \$205 million as at June 2015, according to financial statements lodged with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission.

The massive donation will enable Mrs Rinehart to expand her substantial philanthropic activities, which, as outlined below, have been conducted through multiple entities, including Hancock Prospecting, Georgina Hope Foundation and the Roy Hill Community Foundation.

If the full amount were distributed to charities, Mrs Rinehart would come close to matching the contributions to philanthropic causes made by Andrew and Nicola Forrest. Their Minderoo Foundation is a rarity among philanthropic foundations.

Most, like Mrs Rinehart, are very private, whereas Minderoo publishes an annual report that discloses its activities in considerable detail.

Since Minderoo was established in 2001, it has contributed \$222 million to philanthropic causes.

This includes \$65 million for the Forrest Research Foundation, which provides scholarships for university researchers, and \$30 million worth of shares gifted to arts and community organisations.

In 2015, Minderoo spent \$28 million, with half going to the Walk Free foundation, a global anti-slavery campaign established by the Forrests.

It also contributed \$4.8 million to 30 community groups, including \$1 million for Telethon.

Another philanthropic group that is relatively open about its activities is the McCusker Charitable Foundation.

Tonya McCusker told Business News the foundation had donated more than \$50 million up to the end of 2015, and would prioritise medical and scientific research as its focus.

A quietly consistent philanthropist is Perron Group founder Stan Perron.

The Stan Perron Charitable Trust donates about \$3.8 million per year, according to its latest financial statements.

There are many other renowned philanthropists in Perth, including Kerry Stokes, Janet Holmes à Court, and Adrian and Michela Fini, though hard data on their contributions is not publicly available.

Others have come to prominence through large one-off donations, like Ralph Sarich's \$20 million contribution to the Sarich Neuroscience Research Institute under construction in Nedlands.

An encouraging trend is the emergence of new philanthropists who are sharing the fruits of their business success.

A prime example is Jon Stewart, who hit the jackpot when Aurora Oil & Gas was bought for \$1.9 billion in 2014.

The Jon and Caro Stewart Foundation has invested in Social Ventures Australia's WA philanthropy fund (see page 17) and is backing Broome indigenous publisher Magabala Books (see page 18).

Its co-investors include the Azure Foundation, set up by the staff at Azure Capital and sister company Azure Consulting, and the McClements Family Foundation, established by Resource Capital Funds' co-founder James McClements.

Another active group is the Rowley Foundation, which was established by former Fortescue Metals Group director Graeme Rowley with his wife and two daughters in 2010.

The foundation is relatively public about its activities, through its involvement in bodies such as Giving West and Philanthropy Australia.

The Rowley Foundation is also one of only a handful of philanthropic foundations in WA - along with the Fogarty, McCusker and Minderoo foundations - to have a public website.

Despite all that, director Lisa Rowley said the foundation had surprisingly few unsolicited approaches.

"You would think we would be inundated," she said.

"It's a myth, that's just not the case."

The Rowley Foundation involves three generations of family members.

"We sit around the kitchen table and pool our ideas," Ms Rowley said.

She said family members conducted their own due diligence, but that was more about meeting the people than reviewing and assessing formal grant applications.

"We can be more adventurous in our giving, supporting organisations that are addressing needs in new and creative ways," Ms Rowley said.

Nor does the family expect detailed impact assessment reports, preferring to visit grant recipients to experience the impact and see the progress in person.

The Rowley Foundation's beneficiaries include the Literature Centre in Fremantle, EON Foundation, Girls from OZ, and the Australian Chamber Orchestra, all of which run programs in regional WA.

Ms Rowley said she hoped publicity about the Rowley Foundation's activities would help other philanthropists.

"When we're giving we look at who else is supporting the same charity, so if people want to use our name, this in turn may help others with their grant making," she said.

Mrs Rinehart does not publicise her philanthropic activities, but a spokesperson has confirmed several major programs under way and a big project being planned.

She has sponsored the WA Swimming Association since 1992 - for \$165,000 per year, according to the latest financial statements - and supported Queensland swimming for the past decade.

Since 2012, Mrs Rinehart has supported the Olympic swimming squad, providing direct financial support to more than 120 swimmers at a cost substantially above \$10 million.

Mrs Rinehart has also sponsored the Australian swimming championships and provided support for volleyball, synchronised swimming and rowing, for which she has bankrolled specialist coaching and a pre-Olympics camp.

She was awarded the Australian Olympic Committee's Order of Merit in recognition of her support.

In the healthcare field, she initiated the first breast cancer foundation in Australia in the early 1990s and contributed to the Bendat Family Comprehensive Cancer Centre in Subiaco.

More recently, Mrs Rinehart established a program to deliver gift packs to patients at WA hospitals and, through her company Roy Hill, has been promoting breast cancer awareness.

Her biggest plan is to donate \$175 million for a high-end, not-for-profit hospital in Darwin, in support of her goal of developing northern Australia.

The spokesperson said work on the project, which was first reported in 2014, was still under way.

Preliminary designs have been drawn for both the hospital and nurses quarters but the site is still being sorted.

"This was at the time, the largest, individual, private donation in Australia's history," the spokesperson said.

"The funds have already been paid into the foundation, so are available and committed."