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## **Minderoo Foundation Research Centre will help Exmouth flourish**

The Shire of Exmouth has signalled its intention to rent the Ningaloo Centre's research facilities to the Minderoo Foundation's Flourishing Oceans research initiative following more than 12 months of negotiation.

Exmouth Shire President Matthew Niikkula said Council intended to rent the facility to the Minderoo Foundation for a peppercorn amount in recognition of the significant social, economic and environmental benefits the centre would bring to the region.

He said the Minderoo Foundation had committed to spending \$2.5 million on capital works for the project. This excluded investment in supporting equipment such as research vessels.

In addition, Minderoo has committed to engaging with local businesses and will invite them to tender on building works and ongoing maintenance of facilities and operational assets including boats, seawater systems, accommodation and vehicles.

"As well as having a significant economic spin off for local businesses, the Centre will bring four full time jobs to town and develop training and volunteer opportunities for our school and TAFE students and members of the community with an interest in marine research and aquarium husbandry," Cr Niikkula said.

"The Flourishing Oceans research initiative will also put Exmouth and Ningaloo on the international research map and is confident it will be able to attract leading Australian and International researchers to the region.

"As well as promoting the region on the world scientific stage visiting scientists will bring additional spending to our local shops, accommodation and service providers."

Cr Niikkula said the project must be viewed in light of the ongoing economic prosperity it would bring to Exmouth.

"This project ticks all the boxes as far as our Strategic Community Plan: Exmouth 2030, which clearly outlines the communities desire to create a diverse and environmentally aware economy that can attract business investment and provide local employment opportunities," he said.

Community members who want to make their views known on the proposed lease arrangements can make a submission. Public submissions close on 25 October, 2019. More information is available by contacting the Shire on 9949 3000.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Why is the Shire providing the Minderoo Foundation with a peppercorn rent?**

The Minderoo Foundation is a not-for-profit organisation and its Flourishing Oceans initiative will bring considerable social, economic and environmental benefits to the Exmouth community. These long-term benefits align with priorities identified by the Exmouth community in the Strategic Community Plan: Exmouth 2030. In particular outcome 1.1 “to create a diverse and environmentally aware economy that can attract business investment and provide local employment opportunities”.

### **When will the Minderoo Foundation begin its works?**

Plans for the fit out of the centre are well advanced and will commence immediately after the Minderoo Foundation takes on the lease. The Minderoo Foundation intend to be in a position to accommodate the first research programs at the centre in time for the March-April 2020 coral spawning event and be fully operational by late 2020.

### **What will be the capital works budget estimate to retrofit the facility?**

The Minderoo Foundation’s Flourishing Oceans initiative has allocated more than \$2.5 million for capital works at the Exmouth research centre. This amount does not include two boats that are also being purchased to service the facility.

### **How will local businesses benefit from the Flourishing Oceans initiative?**

Local trades will be invited to tender for all aspects of the building works and maintenance of the centre’s various facilities, which includes boats, vehicles, seawater systems, HVAC and accommodation. Specialist equipment (particularly for the experimental aquarium facilities) that is not available in Exmouth, will be sought from Perth, interstate and overseas where necessary.

### **How many full-time staff will be employed by the Centre once operational?**

There will be at least 4 full time jobs with opportunities for locals to apply. In addition, Flourishing Oceans intends to develop training and volunteer opportunities for high school and TAFE students and other members of the local community with an interest in marine research and aquarium husbandry to be involved in the centre’s work.

### **What is the Minderoo Foundation doing to promote the facility and fund research?**

The Minderoo Foundation will make the facility and ancillary support services available to third party researchers through a competitive merit-based application process. The application process will be advertised through biannual calls for Expressions of Interest via the Flourishing Oceans website.

Research, conservation and educational project proposals that address issues under our three priority themes will be evaluated by an independent Scientific Advisory Board, with facility use granted to the highest rated applications.

Priority themes are:

1. Fish distribution, abundance, population structure and movements
2. Human impacts on ocean ecosystem health and resilience
3. Plastic Pollution

Through this significant in-kind funding contribution, Flourishing Oceans is confident of attracting leading Australian and international research organisations and their funding partners to the centre.

# Shire of Exmouth **MEDIA RELEASE**



**What interest is there from leading international research institute in using the facility?**

While the names of organisations remain confidential, the Minderoo Foundation has had enthusiastic responses from leading research organisations in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, New Zealand and major Australian institutes.

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