



## A NEW CHAPTER FOR EXMOUTH BEGINS TODAY

8 November 2019- Work on Exmouth's new marine research hub is expected to get underway in early 2020 after the Minderoo Foundation and Shire of Exmouth signed a lease agreement today.

The newly inked agreement will see Minderoo's Flourishing Oceans team progress with \$2.5 million of capital works for the new research centre.

Minderoo Foundation chairman Andrew Forrest AO said the signing of the lease marked the beginning of an exciting new chapter in Exmouth's history.

"Exmouth's natural beauty and proximity to the stunning Ningaloo Reef means it is one of the world's great tourist destinations. Now, it will also be known as one of the world's leading destinations for cutting edge marine research," Mr Forrest said.

"We want to work with the community to diversify the economy and provide reasons for people to be in Exmouth all year round, not just six months of the year."

Mr Forrest said Flourishing Oceans had held a number of meetings with researchers keen to study Ningaloo Reef and use the facility once it was up and running.

"Marine scientists the world over have shown great interest in utilising the new facility and we are in ongoing discussions with leading universities and research bodies," he said.

"This will be one of the world's pre-eminent marine research hubs right here in Exmouth, a stone's throw from Ningaloo Reef.

"We intend to be in a position to accommodate the first research programs at the centre in time for the coral spawning event in autumn next year, with the centre to be fully operational by late 2020."

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.

Shire of Exmouth President Matthew Niikkula said Minderoo's investment was a vote of confidence in Exmouth.

"Not only will local businesses benefit from the amount of people being attracted to town by the new research hub, local high school students and those studying at TAFE will be afforded a golden opportunity to study marine life on their doorstep," he said. "The Shire is excited to be working with Minderoo and the Flourishing Oceans team to deliver maximum community benefit from the project."