

# Forrest mega-gift new benchmark for billionaires

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Rich List coeditor

Andrew and Nicola Forrest's \$5 billion gift to their Minderoo Foundation, the biggest single charitable donation in Australian history, will inspire other billionaires, according to a prominent philanthropy adviser.

The transfer of shares from Andrew Forrest's Fortescue Metals Group to Minderoo, announced yesterday, eclipses the \$3.3 billion that healthcare mogul Paul Ramsay left to his eponymous foundation on his death in 2014.

The Forrests have given a total of \$7.6 billion in Fortescue shares to Minderoo, which partners with other charities to create programs addressing 11 priorities, ranging from cancer research to abolishing slavery.

"As our world faces enormous challenges, we have elected to continue to use our material wealth to help humanity and the environment meet these existential risks," Mr Forrest told *The Australian Financial Review*.

While Dr Forrest's \$5 billion gift puts him first in the single Australian donation stakes, it will likely keep him from the top of the Australian Financial Review Rich List.

The huge donation, representing one-fifth of the Forrests' Fortescue holding, is an outworking of the couple becoming the first Australian signatories to The Giving Pledge, a 2010 initiative from Warren Buffett, Bill Gates and Melinda French Gates. It cajoles fellow billionaires to commit to giving away more than half their wealth to philanthropy, in their lifetime or their wills.

"I've had lots of conversations with wealthy people about philanthropy, and they're often uncertain about the right amount to give," said John McLeod, senior research consultant at JBWere Philanthropic Services.

"So seeing what others are doing is an encouragement, and something like The Giving Pledge provides a bit of a benchmark."

After the Forrests signed The Giving Pledge in 2013, pokie billionaire Len



Biggest single donation: Nicola and Andrew Forrest. PHOTO: KATE GERAGHTY

Ainsworth followed in 2017, and Canva founders Melanie Perkins and Cliff Obrecht in 2021.

"Billionaires tend to see each other as peers, and as philanthropy has become less quiet, that peer pressure has become a real multiplier," Mr McLeod said. "These are purpose-driven people – that's how they made their money – so I don't think being the 'richest in the graveyard' ever appealed to many of

them anyway." The philanthropy of wealthy Australians had broadened in scope as it had fattened in size, Mr McLeod said.

"A few years ago, the recipients were really dominated by universities and medical research, and the arts also did pretty well out of it," he said.

"Those causes are still well supported, but we're starting to get a few of society's bigger current problems com-

## Deep pockets

Australia's largest foundations, based on publicly listed values\*

Name of foundation	Net assets (\$m) at June 2022
1 Paul Ramsay Fdn	3310
2 Minderoo Fdn**	2555
3 Yajilarra Trust	1389
4 Ian Potter Fdn & Trust	743
5 Susan McKinnon Fdn	530
6 Judith Neilson Fdn & trusts	458
7 Peter & Lyndy White Fdn	328
8 Sidney Myer Fund & Fdn	324
9 Neilson Fdn	234
10 Vincent Fairfax Family Fdns	215

\* Kinghorn Fdn, 7th on AFR Philanthropy list, doesn't share values publicly. \*\* Pre-June 2023 announcement.

SOURCE: JOHN MCLEOD, JBWERE

ing in to the mix." Mitigating the impacts of climate change, for instance, is now an important focus area for Minderoo and the Paul Ramsay Foundation, Australia's two largest philanthropic funds.

Ranked second on the Rich List at just under \$34 billion before the announcement, Mr Forrest will dip to around \$29 billion given Minderoo assets are not counted as those of the couple, even though they occupy two of the foundation's four board seats.

The philanthropic donations of Gina Rinehart, top of 2023's Rich List at \$37.4 billion, have a less dramatic impact on her wealth estimate as she makes some of them directly through her Hancock Prospecting.