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Forrest donates \$100m to help save marine life

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One of Australia's largest philanthropic bodies created by billionaire miner Andrew Forrest will donate \$100 million to establish the Munderoo Ocean Research initiative to protect global marine life.

Mr 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. He said catches from wild fisheries in Australia had fallen more than 30 per cent in recent years, and were still falling.

"Overseas, entire fishing industries have been bankrupted and shut down, and numbers of some fish species have plummeted by 90 per cent," he said. "This helps no one — not recreational fishers, not industry and certainly not the environment." Mr Forrest is undertaking a PhD in marine science at the University of Western Australia, and has bought the Pangaea Ocean Explorer, a deepwater marine research vessel that will be loaned to marine conservation efforts.

He said Munderoo was committed to supporting Australia's oceans "at a moment when we are losing sight of our responsibilities to sustainably manage the vast seas under Australia's control".

"We can and must do better, and that includes the new marine parks management plans before the Senate, which represent the largest rollback of marine protection in human history," Mr Forrest said.

The donation will be invested in new efforts to track global fishing patterns and research into ocean plastics pollution.

A world-class research centre is planned for Exmouth near Ningaloo Reef to study the migration of sealife passing through the Indian Ocean. Munderoo will also establish a global fishing index to measure human impact on marine life, a move welcomed by University of British Columbia professor Daniel Pauly, head of the Sea Around Us project that will collaborate with the new research body.

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