



Melissa Smith (left) and Paula McLean of She Gives.

RISING FORCE

Women are making their move among Australia's top givers.

STORY BY **LAUREN SAMS** PHOTOGRAPH BY **DOMINIC LORRIMER**

IS DIVORCE GOOD FOR PHILANTHROPY? THIS COULD be the year Australia finds out. Nicola Forrest, who split from former husband Andrew in 2023, now gives through both the Minderoo Foundation and her own Coaxial Foundation. And while Coaxial didn't make the Philanthropy 50 List this year, it will almost certainly next year.

Likewise, Mike and Annie Cannon-Brookes' divorce may lead to greater levels of giving from both, through Mike's Boundless Earth and the Cannon-Brookes Foundation, which is led by the former couple. It's all been pioneered globally, says JBWere's John McLeod, by MacKenzie Scott, ex-wife of Jeff Bezos, who set in motion a wave of impressive philanthropic giving in 2020, currently totalling \$US19 billion (\$31.7 billion). Next year's Philanthropy 50, in other words, could be quite different to 2025's.

Marriage break-ups aside, philanthropy has already changed markedly in the time that *The Australian Financial Review* began documenting our biggest donors (JBWere began analysing the for-purpose sector in 2001). While direct philanthropy contributes just 7 per cent of charitable income in Australia (about half comes from the government, another 43 per cent from providing goods and services to clients), it's significant, says McLeod. "Philanthropy is different to other funding," he says. "It is the risk capital of the sector and allows charities to search for new solutions. Broadly, we have fewer people donating more." The top three donors this year – the Yajilarra Trust, Minderoo Foundation and Paul Ramsay Foundation – gave more in total than the top 50 combined in the first three years of the list, resulting in a 10 per cent increase on 2024's total, to \$1.4 billion. There are now 25 donors who give more than \$10 million annually, and four over \$100 million. "What we're seeing is more young people, often from the tech sector, giving away more, earlier in life,"

McLeod says. One such debutante is Canva's Cameron Adams, who, with wife Lisa Miller, has given away \$9.8 million through the 4am and Wedgetail foundations. There's also been a shift in the approach to charitable giving, notes McLeod. The DAK Foundation, led by Dave and Kerry Rickards and focused on international health, and others such as Tony and Maureen Wheeler have been willing to publicly disclose their giving to help promote causes and encourage others. "There's now higher levels of awareness of the impact these stories can have," says McLeod.

One person trying to drive the narrative of philanthropy is Melissa Smith, founder of She Gives, a campaign that aims to build awareness of female-led philanthropy in Australia. With significant amounts of intergenerational wealth being passed to women, as well as women's increased earning power and longer life expectancies, there will be more XX chromosomes on the Philanthropy 50 in years to come. Smith is eager to accelerate this timeline. "We focus on women because women give more substantially, they drive philanthropic decisions in their family and they are coming into even more financial power," she says. "But women play a quieter role. So to grow women's giving, we need data and we need role models." High-profile female donors this year include Jane Hemstritch, who gave \$8 million to the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research.

At the end of 2025, Smith and She Gives will hand down an extensive report into women's philanthropy in Australia, in partnership with the Centre for Social Impact at the University of Western Australia. "Often women feel that their efforts aren't 'enough' to talk about publicly," says Smith. "But what we hear is that women want to hear stories of real women, who have a story of philanthropy. It doesn't have to be billions to make an impact." ●

RANK	NAME	CAUSE AREA	GRANTS (\$M)
1	Yajilarra Trust	Australia's First Nations people, climate change, disability, Christian faith	\$213.9
2	Minderoo Foundation	Children through thriving communities, gender equality, healthy ecosystems, existential threats and urgent challenges	\$210.1
3	Paul Ramsay Foundation	Children and young people, First Nations, barriers to employment, under-resourced communities and disadvantage	\$182.8
4	Estate of Marc Besen & Besen Family Foundation	Eva and Marc Besen Centre at TarraWarra incl. artworks, Jewish community, early childhood education, environment	\$143.7
5	Stan Perron Charitable Trust	Community, wellbeing and medical research particularly for children in Western Australia	\$45.4
6	Ian Potter Foundation & Cultural Trust	Arts, community wellbeing, early childhood development, environment, medical and public health research	\$38.1
7	Judith Neilson Foundation & charitable trusts	Disadvantaged and marginalised rural communities in Sub-Saharan Africa and women/girls in Australia, arts	\$33.0
8	Kinghorn Foundation	Medical research, poverty and talented Australian youth	\$31.0
9	Pratt Philanthropies	Food security, mental and medical health, arts, education, cancer care, Jewish life, environment, community, veterans affairs	\$30.7
10	Susan McKinnon Foundation	Improving government through effective elected representatives, robust state institutions and quality policy dialogue	\$28.8
11	Snow and Snow Medical Research Foundations	Canberra community, social justice issues through systemic change and social entrepreneurs, sector capacity, health and medical research	\$23.1
12	McCusker Charitable Foundation	Health and medical research in Western Australia, youth, age and infirmed, arts	\$20.4
13	Peter and Lyndy White Foundation	Homelessness and disadvantage, youth, family and aged care	\$19.4

PHILANTHROPY 50

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14	Gandel Foundation	Arts, education (incl. antisemitism), health and medical research, youth at risk, Jewish identity and leadership, indigenous programs	\$19.0	27	Brian M. Davis Charitable Foundation	Lasting transformational change for disadvantaged children and young people	\$9.6	40	Ernest Heine Family Foundation	Health and medical research, educational programs and social services	\$6.3
15	Cliff Obrecht and Melanie Perkins	To Canva Foundation for international aid and microfinance through GiveDirectly	\$18.9	28	Sylvia & Charles Viertel Charitable Foundation	Health and medical research	\$9.1	41	Andrew Rodgers	Deakin University, part of over \$10m artworks gifted	\$6.1
16	Boundless Earth	Environment, accelerating climate solutions at scale and speed	\$16.8	29	Miller Foundation	Health and medical research, social services, environment	\$9.0	42	Geoffrey Kruger Trust	Community of Harden-Murrumburrah, NSW district	\$5.9
17	Myer Foundation and Sidney Myer Fund	Arts, sustainability and environment, inclusion and equity, mental health, human, civil and legal rights	\$16.2	30	Prue & Alasdair MacLeod, Macdoch & Lansdowne	Global transformation for agriculture and food systems that benefit people, climate and nature, arts, inequality, education	\$8.9	43	Tony and Maureen Wheeler & Planet Wheeler	Human rights, refugees, arts and literature	\$5.8
18	Kerry Stokes	National Gallery of Australia	\$15.0	31	DAK Foundation	International health, eye surgeries, women's health, medical equipment, family planning	\$8.1	44	Shine On Foundation	Social services, economic, social and community development	\$5.4
19	Bertalli Family Foundation	Education for financially disadvantaged youth, arts, medical research	\$14.8	32	Naomi Milgrom	Art, design and architecture to improve Australian lives	\$8.0	45	William Buckland Foundation	Disadvantaged Victorians through housing, health, education and employment, resilience in rural and regional communities	\$5.4
20	Clive Berghofer Foundation	Health and medical research	\$14.7	33	Jane Hemstritch	Walter and Eliza Hall Institute for pancreatic cancer research	\$8.0	46	Medich Foundation	Indigenous Centre of Excellence at Western Sydney University, arts, community organisations	\$5.3
21	Estate of Donald Counter Cooper	Medical research	\$13.7	34	Eldon & Anne Foote Trust & LMCF subfund	Social causes, environment, health, education, medical research	\$8.0	47	Baker Foundation	Health and medical research	\$5.2
22	Fox Family Foundation	Part of \$100m to NGV, arts, health and medical research (incl. Melanoma and Cancer Centre at The Alfred), family services	\$13.4	35	Scanlon Foundation	Improving social cohesion, particularly for the transition of migrants into Australian society	\$7.8	48	Ken McKinnon and Suzanne Walker	Higher degree research fellowships at University of Wollongong	\$5.0
23	Neilson Foundation	Accessibility to the arts, enriching cultural diversity, individuals and communities facing extreme disadvantage	\$12.9	36	Tim Fairfax Family Foundation	Arts, education and community initiatives in rural, regional and remote communities of Queensland and the Northern Territory	\$7.7	49	Noel and Carmel O'Brien Family Foundation	International aid, disadvantage and education	\$5.0
24	Packer Family Foundations	Arts, mental healthcare incl. James Packer Chair in Mood Disorders at UNSW Sydney	\$12.4	37	Garnett Passe & Rodney Williams Foundation	Scientific and educational initiatives in health and medical research	\$7.6	50	Blackmore Family Foundation	Southern Cross University for naturopathic medicine research, Griffith for Blackmore Chair and leadership summits	\$5.0
25	Vincent Fairfax Family Foundations	Decent work and contribution to society particularly for young people, environment, Christian faith and values	\$10.8	38	Stafford Fox Medical Research Foundation	Medical research, public hospitals and universities	\$7.2	<p>HOW THE LIST IS COMPILED</p> <p>The amounts are those given to end recipients, mainly charities, in the 2024 financial year, by Australian individuals, families and bequests, both directly and through foundations. It does not include donations to foundations, anonymous gifts or corporate giving. With pledges and multi-year gifts, only the actual amount given to end recipients in financial 2024 is included. Where the exact amount for that year is not known, an average per year over the term of the pledge is assumed. Where the term is not known, five years is assumed. Researched and compiled by John McLeod of JBWere Philanthropic Services. Sources include the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission, Fundraising Research & Consulting, and Fundraising & Philanthropy Australasia.</p>			
26	4am Foundation and Wedgetail Foundation	Environment, nature-positive endeavours to accelerate the Earth's regeneration	\$9.8	39	JW & M Cunningham Foundation	St Vincent's hospitals in NSW	\$7.0				