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NEWS RELEASE

GVDB Trust releases first round of funds

(PERTH) – The Great Victoria Desert Biodiversity Trust is set to release the first round of funds for projects in the Great Victoria Desert.

The Great Victoria Desert Biodiversity Trust, a biodiversity offset model unique to the Western Australian environmental landscape, is excited that it is now moving forward with expressions of interest (EOI) to facilitate priority projects on threatened species in the Great Victoria Desert region.

The projects range from foundational projects, which will set the framework for future research, to adaptive management projects that aim to work with Traditional Owners to produce sustainable, on-ground measures to help protect threatened species.

Expressions of interest open on July 1 and close at the end of the month.

Six years in the making, the Trust forms the centrepiece of the Tropicana Joint Venture's (AngloGold Ashanti Australia Ltd 70% and manager, Independence Group NL 30%) biodiversity offsets strategy for the new Tropicana Gold Mine, which is located 330 kilometres east-northeast of Kalgoorlie on the western edge of the Great Victoria Desert.

The Trust is a condition of the Federal EPBC Act approval for the mine, and reflects the joint venture partners' recognition of the need to base environmental management decisions on robust science. Its aim is to conserve and, where appropriate, enhance the ecological and cultural and social values of the Great Victoria Desert.

The focus of the first EOIs is two threatened species, the Malleefowl and the Sandhill Dunnart. The vastness and remoteness of the Great Victoria Desert means that very little is known about the population numbers and distribution of these species in the region.

The aim of the first EOIs is to capture the best available data and put in a format that is accessible to anyone working in the region.

In addition, the Trust is seeking a key partner to design and implement an adaptive management project that will use the skills of Traditional Owners together with robust science to produce on-ground outcomes that will benefit threatened species and biodiversity in the region.

The Chair of the Trust, Dr Garry Middle elaborated.

“The Trust is moving forward and is set to fund projects that will deliver a lasting benefit for species and ecosystems in the region,” he said.

“I’m looking forward to getting some great initiatives happening and developing partnerships with some of the people already working in the desert, especially the Traditional Owners”.

The EOIs have been produced based on expert feedback received during threatened species workshops funded by the Trust. A Technical Advisory Panel (TAP) has also been established to prioritise the outcomes from the workshops and make recommendations on the EOIs.

The TAP comprises Belinda Bastow, Ryan Ellis, Katherine Moseby and Blair Parsons. Kathryn Sinclair, the Trust Coordinator, chairs the TAP. Stephen Van Leeuwen from the Department of Parks and Wildlife is an advisor to the TAP.

Involving collaboration between industry and conservation regulators, funds from the Trust will directly contribute to conservation activity and knowledge gathering in this remote part of WA. Initial funding of A\$1.6 million has been provided by the TJV, but over Tropicana’s current 10-year mine life this will reach around \$4.4 million with contributions comprising an annual fee and \$/hectare for the cleared footprint.

The structure of the Trust allows other companies operating in the region to contribute to the Trust and play a role in the management and decision making of the Trust.

One key aspect of the Trust is its commitment to make public all findings from the projects it funds. This will allow all companies, researchers and community groups operating in the region to build on knowledge for the benefit of biodiversity in the region.

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