

**Speech by Mrs Gina Rinehart
Patron of the Australian Rowing Team
Executive Chairman of the Hancock Prospecting Group
Hancock Prospecting Rower of the Year Awards Dinner
28 January 2017, Canberra**

Good evening President Rob Scott, distinguished guests and our exceptional Aussie rowing family.

I am very happy to be with you again to celebrate all that our rowers have achieved in 2016.

Tonight is a night to recognise the great efforts and dedication of everyone here. I would like to reflect on some of the outstanding accomplishments you all have achieved and have been a part of over the last year, including:

- The launch of CampaignNumberOne;
- Beginning development on the new and state-of-the-art Hancock Prospecting Women's National Training Centre;
- And of course, the highlight of last year, your brilliant performance in Rio winning a gold medal and three silvers medals - two silvers at the Olympics and one at the Paralympics.

Being with you in Rio, watching you perform in the heats, quarter-finals, semi-finals and finals, at times in not easy conditions, and seeing Josh Dunkley-Smith, Josh Booth, Alexander and Will in the Men's Four, and Karsten, Cameron, Sasha and James in the Men's Quadruple Scull sail over on the line on the beautiful Lake Lagoa to win silver, were very wonderful occasions.

And, Erik's stunning race in the Paralympics Men's Single Sculls to win another silver medal for Australia.

The early morning training commitments, extensive gym sessions, the time commitment, the financial cost - I can't begin to express all of the years and years of hard-work, discipline and sacrifice that went into competing at the biggest and most prestigious sporting event on earth.

Your selfless dedication and efforts are to be hugely commended.

As Patron of the team, I am always thrilled when I hear about your accomplishments. You are certainly outstanding role models, with your strong work ethic and pride in representing our nation well.

One champion of rowing – I have the privilege to individually recognise.

Tonight, I announce with great pleasure the inaugural Gina Rinehart Rowing Leadership Award.

This award is presented annually to a senior rower who competes at the international level, displays outstanding leadership skills on and off the water, shows personal excellence through study and career milestones, and finally, someone who is a strong and passionate representative of the Australian Rowing Team.

I am thrilled to announce that this year's inaugural winner is someone who, without a doubt, is a true inspiration to their teammates and country, having won 24 medals throughout an outstanding rowing career.

This person displays strong leadership and put in a performance in Rio that was one of the highlights of the games.

Not only is this person an award winning Olympic gold-medallist and three-time Olympian, but this rower was recently named the Female Athlete of the Year at the AIS Sport Performance Awards, the Women's Health Sportswoman of the Year, and on Thursday, this person became a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in the annual Australia Day Honours.

This person's incredible achievements over the last 10 years of competing internationally are perhaps even more remarkable as her successes were reached while completing law studies and then working, while also training and competing.

This rower is so dedicated that she even put their honeymoon on hold, and gave up her birthday celebrations so could represent Australia at the Olympics!

Ladies and Gentlemen, the winner is... the one and only... Kim Brennan AM!

Please come up to the stage dear Kim.

Kim, you are wonderful and truly deserve all of the recognition you have worked so hard for.

You have displayed the conviction, character, dedication and more, necessary to be one of Australia's best athletes.

Your win in Rio was fantastic, and watching the race I know that every Australian there, and watching on TV at home, was very excited when you approached the first 500 metre marker and were in the lead. Your stunning last 500 metres we felt we could begin to celebrate as we saw you push ahead and cross the line and break Australia's eight-year Olympic rowing gold medal drought – an extraordinary triumph.

I was truly touched when you looked up and waved at me and some of the Aussies in the stand when you were on the podium accepting your gold medal in Rio – this was a moment Australia and I should never forget.

Well done and warmest congratulations Kim, and a big well done and thank you to all of those who have been on the journey with Kim – her coach Lyall McCarthy, husband Scott and Kim's wonderful parents Sue and Max – congratulations on raising and developing a rowing superstar!

Every Olympic and Paralympic athlete in this room tonight is deserving of an award and recognition.

Qualifying for state, national and international teams are great successes that should not be underestimated. You all represent our country's elite sportsmen and women and you all very much live the Australian, Olympic and Paralympic spirit which is summed up so well in a quote by Kim:

"Even in individual events, performance is about teamwork and the support networks around the athlete. That moment of "glory" is a collective one. It is a moment for all involved to savour. As athletes, we compete both for the innate satisfaction of producing our best performance when it matters, but also for the people around us: our coaches, our families, our friends, our country."

Thank you.

ENDS