



Keating our most influential Australian: Forrest

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Body

Billionaire mining magnate Andrew Forrest has described former Labor prime minister and treasurer Paul Keating as the Australian who he believes has had the biggest impact on the country in his lifetime.

"His floating the Australian dollar and making a number of other economic and social moves which were deeply unpopular at the time but he went ahead and did that," Dr Forrest says, describing Mr Keating's work on deregulation in the 1980s as being immensely influential.

Dr Forrest is the founder of the hugely successful **Fortescue** Metals Group and the Minderoo foundation, the biggest charitable foundation overseen, with wife Nicola Forrest, by a living Australian billionaire.

But in talking to The Australian after being named by the masthead as one of the most influential Australians of the past six decades - in a list to be published on Saturday - Dr Forrest said he remembers the first time he was prominently featured in the newspaper was in less auspicious times.

It was an icy day in mid-1999 when Dr Forrest, now 62, stood next to the then PM John Howard and West Australian premier Richard Court to open his \$1bn dream in the desert: Anaconda Nickel's Murrin Murrin laterite nickel project.

Dr Forrest promised the massive plant would be in full production within 18 months and revolutionise the global nickel industry, but a series of technical disasters crushed the dream and he was eventually forced out of Anaconda.

"Back then, there were very few supporters," Dr Forrest tells The Australian. Today though, Dr Forrest notes, Murrin Murrin has become an eventual success for its now owner Glencore, and he personally has since gone on to build **Fortescue** Metals into an iron ore powerhouse.

He is now onto his next revolution, turning **Fortescue** into what he hopes will eventually be the world's biggest energy company via his huge green hydrogen production ambitions.

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"I think, if I look back on anything with a semblance of pride, it will be switching off all fossil fuels of this huge industrial hyper-successful company," Dr Forrest says of **Fortescue**, every move of which continues to be covered in detail by The Australian.

Dr Forrest is a notable member of this newspaper's annual The List - Australia's Richest 250 edition, and his trials and tribulations as **Fortescue** boss have been written about extensively.

That has included tracking **Fortescue**'s incredible share price rise over the last decade, the huge amounts of dividends it has paid and that has also caused billions of dollars to flow to the Forrest family's Minderoo foundation, extensive executive and boardroom changes and much more.

Dr Forrest's personal battle against Meta, which he has claimed did nothing to stop thousands of scams being published on its platforms such as Facebook that fleeced scores of Australians of their life savings, has also been written about in detail.

The mining billionaire has also attracted plenty of publicity for his backing of various causes, ranging from vowing to help rebuild Ukraine to saving the Western Force rugby union team, and more recently his separation from wife Nicola. But it is **Fortescue**'s push into green energy, firstly via its **Fortescue** Future Industries subsidiary and which has more recently seen Dr Forrest return to the company as executive chairman, that has attracted the most - attention.

It is one that from a corporate point of view fills him with the most pride. "This company which has proved to its investors all over the world that it's high performing yet it was the one, even being a heavy industry mining company, that switched off fossil fuels," Dr Forrest says.

"And it further cemented its position as the leading industry player by doing so, setting the example for the rest of the industrial world that they can and must as well." See full video interview online at theaustralian.com.au/60thanniversary

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