



Twiggy's Moroccan energiser

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Body

Staff inside billionaire Andrew "Twiggy" Forrest's mining empire have confirmed he has been romantically involved with a Moroccan politician.

Mr Forrest, 62, was photographed passionately kissing a woman in the Place de Vosges in Paris at the weekend.

The woman who had enjoyed the romantic walk with the Australian green energy champion along the Rue des Francs-Bourgeois on the banks of the River Seine was later identified as Morocco's energy minister Leila Benali.

Confronted by Moroccan media, Ms Benali at first declined to comment. "No, no I will not speak," she said before being escorted away.

A statement later released to Morocco World News claimed she was preparing to start defamation proceedings over the "offensive publication" of the picture in The Daily Mail and her name in The Australian.

It said Ms Benali "denies any connection to either picture as a minister responsible in the government as well as a Moroccan woman and mother".

Instead it said the publication was an "attempt to defame" her by "interest groups" seeking revenge for failing to achieve their goals.

A spokesman for Mr Forrest's **Fortescue** mining company refused to comment on who his billionaire boss was pashing in Paris.

But a staff insider told The Daily Telegraph the pair have been romantically linked for some months.

It is understood Ms Benali was in Paris on ministerial business at the weekend which coincided with the arrival of a **Fortescue** delegation. Mr Forrest flew on to the Moroccan capital Rabat on Tuesday night.

Ms Benali was part of the official reception committee who welcomed Mr Forrest to Rabat in February after they had both been in the Swiss town of Davos a month earlier.

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Mr Forrest split from his wife Nicola after 31 years of marriage last year and announced they had agreed to "live apart" with no mention of a divorce. This is the first time he has been romantically linked publicly with anyone else.

Ms Benali is an energy expert who was appointed Morocco's Minister of Energy Transition and Sustainable Development in 2021 and in that role sits on the board of the state-owned OCP group that **Fortescue** is partnering with. A **Fortescue** spokesman said yesterday: "The **Fortescue** team is working with key stakeholders as we continue to develop our ambitious strategy with OCP, developed over more than two years, to develop green energy, hydrogen and ammonia in Morocco.

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