



## **'Awkward': Forrest hails an end to 'puerile' politics**

The Australian

June 18, 2024 Tuesday

Australian Edition

Copyright 2024 Nationwide News Pty Limited All Rights Reserved

**Section:** THENATION; Pg. 5

**Length:** 590 words

**Byline:** PAUL GARVEY

### **Body**

---

This week's visit from Chinese Premier Li Qiang should mark an end of a "puerile" era in Australian political attitudes towards China, billionaire **Fortescue** chairman Andrew Forrest has declared.

Speaking to The Australian ahead of Mr Li's visit to **Fortescue**'s research and development facility in Perth on Tuesday, Dr Forrest said the deterioration in the relationship between Australia and China in the early years of the pandemic - which resulted in China introducing trade barriers on a host of Australian exports - had risked our economic prosperity.

"Australia's attitude to China during that period was puerile and was matched only by China's response. To get out of that awkward era as soon as possible is the responsibility for any good government," Dr Forrest said.

"Any government of Australia which goes out of its way to annoy its biggest customer is probably going to stop being that customer's favourite supplier.

"You can't run around kicking your customers and still expect to sell a lot of boots." Dr Forrest's stake in his iron ore miner **Fortescue** Metals, whose main customer is China, has made him one of the richest men in Australia. He is now driving the company to push into hydrogen and the production of "green steel".

He was also critical of Peter Dutton's recent decision to flag that he would abandon Australia's 2030 carbon-reduction targets if he came to power.

He said maintaining the goal was critical for business planning, and warned that scrapping the target could lead to Australia missing out on the enormous economic opportunity around the global -energy transition.

"Barnaby Joyce and others know I am likely to call out behaviour which is going to be directly against the standard of living, the national interest, the economic growth of Australia," he said.

"Causing fear and division or claiming you can run a business, let alone a country, without targets just says to me you've obviously never employed anyone, you've never created value from scratch." Slowing down the energy

## 'Awkward': Forrest hails an end to 'puerile' politics

transition by scrapping the target, he said, would mean slowing down the economic growth opportunities associated with the transition.

"The reason why we can drive potentially the next big economic wave, the biggest economic growth, the highest employment multiplier and economic multiplier in Australia's recent history is thanks to the necessity to address climate change," he said.

"There is a serious economic opportunity here for every single Australian. You wouldn't want to stand in the road of that." The Chinese Premier's visit to **Fortescue**'s Perth facility will centre on the efforts the company is putting into developing hydrogen-fuelled trucks and a battery-powered locomotive it has named "the infinity train".

Dr Forrest will also detail **Fortescue**'s plans to develop an Australia-China green iron supply chain. "We have the leading tech in the world now," he said. "I see this as a really key historical step to creating the next wave of major economic growth and employment for Australia." Dr Forrest said this week's visit showed China too had shifted its diplomatic approach. "You can see wolf diplomacy failed, and the dip-lomacy of Premier Li is absolutely the right step," he said. "We've always been able to export and drive the standard of living we have in Australia. Now the last thing we want to do is start hurting that standard of living, hurting that economic growth, and a strong relationship between China and Australia is absolutely necessary to continue the growth of the economies of both countries."

**Load-Date:** June 17, 2024

---

End of Document