

as the mining... home what is likely to be the biggest individual dividend cheque in Australian corporate history. Dr Forrest, the chairman and founder of Fortescue Metals Group, signed over an almost \$2.4bn dividend to himself on a day when the payout dwarfed yet another lucrative day for him and Fortescue shareholders on the ASX.

The massive... Forrest said, was testament to Fortescue's original aim when he started it in 2003 of never stopping until it was "one of the world's first high growth and high yield companies". Fortescue had "absolutely shot the lights out with that" strategy, he said. "The reward for shareholders,

Forrest... the monetisation for shareholders, is dividends." Dr Forrest, who adopted the honorific after earning a PhD in marine science at the University of WA in 2019 although is still

over 20 years... Dr Forrest said. "That growth have never seen before in iron ore to now." The Fortescue chairman's payout is for now above other iron ore

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Peninsula Preservation Group president Mark Fancett with daughter Alexandra at the site of a proposed quarry in the Mornington Peninsula

Wilderness Society grant 'hypocritical'

EXCLUSIVE
MAX MADDISON

The Wilderness Society took an almost \$200,000 grant from a philanthropic organisation that derives its income from the operations of a quarry, with conservationists likening the ongoing relationship to a "cancer ward taking donations from Phillip Morris". Plans by Hillview Quarries to develop a new and larger quarry on Arthurs Seat, in Victoria's Mornington Peninsula, have been met by fierce resistance from local environmental groups that say the project will destroy more than 90ha of untouched native habitat, including trees hundreds of years old. Established in 1970 by the will of quarry owner Roy Ross, the Ross Trust is a charitable organis-

ation set up to create "positive social and environmental change", but has drawn the ire of environmentalists who decry the plans to develop the Arthurs Seat quarry. Donating about \$4.5m a year to biodiversity conservation and educational equity, the trust has markedly increased funding directed towards environmental groups from 5 per cent to 50 per cent in recent years - an effort to "greenwash" its quarry development plans, critics say. One beneficiary of the trust is The Wilderness Society, which received \$198,000 to help protect "high conservation value forests" in East Gippsland. This has perturbed conservationists, who say taking money from the trust is "hypocritical". Peninsula Preservation Group president Mark Fancett is leading the campaign against the development of the Arthurs Seat quarry. Calls to The Wilderness

Society to forego their relationship with the trust had fallen on deaf ears, he said. "We said there is a risk to your group if you're accepting money from a company and that money

'It would be like a cancer hospital accepting donations from ... cigarette companies'

MARK FANCETT
PENINSULA PRESERVATION GROUP

is generated by destroying the forest. It's incredibly hypocritical to use that money to protect a forest," Mr Fancett said. "We have a cancer hospital called the Peter MacCallum Cancer Hospital. It would be like them accepting donations from Phillip Morris ciga-

rette companies, and having a sign at the top saying 'Smoke more cigarettes'."

The Wilderness Society declined multiple opportunities to comment.

Although 75 leading environmental organisations have signed an open letter calling on the Ross Trust to abandon its Arthurs Seat proposal, The Wilderness Society had refused to sign the letter, Mr Fancett said. Instead, it had repeatedly told him it was waiting until the environmental effects statement came out, which he labelled a "cop out ... If you look at the history of EESs, it basically means for developers to get their projects approved, with a few tweaks around the edges. It's not really an effective mechanism to protect the environment."

While Mr Fancett appreciated charities needed to fundraise in some capacity, he said that fundraising should be questioned

when it "compromised your moral standing". His organisation turned down a \$40,000 grant offer from the trust.

One mission of the Ross Trust is to enhance the "biodiversity for the sustainability of Victoria's native flora, fauna and ecosystems" but Mr Fancett compared the Ross Trust's efforts to get the quarry accepted with the Juukan Gorge caves, which were destroyed by Rio Tinto in 2020.

"The shit is gonna hit the fan," he said. "People that give their money to The Wilderness Society, or any of these other groups, they're not going to be happy if they have a relationship with the Ross Trust."

The decision by The Wilderness Society not to dissociate from the trust follows its snub of an agreement by more than 100 environmental groups calling for an end to logging of native forests on public land.

Proud graduates are an inspiration to all



munities in pursuit of education. But the graduation is bitter-sweet for the boys, who will be unable to have their parents attend due to Covid-19 restrictions. In- AIEE will hold the

Hunt for offenders

ANGELICA SNOW... Victoria Police is