

## **NOTICE OF FILING**

### **Details of Filing**

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A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Sia Lagos".

Registrar

### **Important Information**

This Notice has been inserted as the first page of the document which has been accepted for electronic filing. It is now taken to be part of that document for the purposes of the proceeding in the Court and contains important information for all parties to that proceeding. It must be included in the document served on each of those parties.

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Form 59

Rule 29.02(1)

**Affidavit**

No. WAD37 of 2022

Federal Court of Australia

District Registry: Western Australia

Division: General

**YINDJIBARNDI NGURRA ABORIGINAL CORPORATION RNTBC (ICN 8721)**

Applicant

**STATE OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

Respondent

Affidavit of: **Margaret Roslyn Read**

Address: 29 Lockyer Way, Roebourne, Western Australia,

Occupation: Pensioner

Date: 23 February 2023

Document number	Details	Paragraph	Page
1	Affidavit of Margaret Read in support of Yindjibarndi Ngurra Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC (ICN 8721) for sworn on 23 February 2023	1-45	1-13

Filed on behalf of the Applicant  
Prepared by Simon Blackshield  
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*Margaret Read*

*Simon*

Document number	Details	Paragraph	Page
2	Annexure "MRR-1", being a copy of a photo of Margaret Roslyn Read at the Karratha Health Campus on 21 February 2023.	8	14-15
3	Annexure "MRR-2", being a copy of a photo of Margaret Roslyn Read presenting at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies conference in Broome in June 2018.	36	16-17
4	Annexure "MRR-3", being a copy of a story about Andrew Forrest in a ABC report on 15 February 2023	45	18-24

I, Margaret Roslyn Read of 29 Lockyer Way, Roebourne WA, Pensioner, say on oath:

1. I am a common law native title holder as determined by the Federal Court in the Yindjibarndi #1 claim.
2. The information contained in this affidavit is true to the best of my knowledge, information and belief.
3. My name is Margaret Roslyn Read. I was born on 22 March 1955 in Carnarvon when my Dad was working on the stations around there. When I was 2 years old we moved to Roebourne. Judith, my sister, was born in 1957 so it must have been after that. I think Mum was pregnant with our brother when we moved. My Mum had my brother when we lived at the Old Reserve on the north side of the Harding River in Roebourne. My brother died when he was about 9-10 years of pneumonia. Our youngest sister Elizabeth was born in Roebourne in 1963. I am an Yindjibarndi woman of Burungu skin.
4. When we lived in Roebourne Dad would work with a man called Terry Blake moving things in a truck to Adelaide, Perth and other places. He was away a lot. We lived in the Old Reserve in a tent with old people from Dad's family, Mable Malcolm and Alice Albert. We went to school every day. Mum and the old ladies were looking after us. But for some reason I'll never understand, Coppin Dale, our abajee (grandfather), brought in the welfare. He must have thought Mum was drinking or something. When the welfare came to get me I was 12 years old. Judith, Mum, the old ladies and me were all crying. They took me out to Roebourne airport and there was a plane waiting and they loaded on many Aboriginal children and we were flown to Perth. They left Judith

*Margaret Read*  
*Burungu*



and my brother in the Old Reserve. Welfare sent me to a boarding school in Perth and I was not allowed to visit my family in Roebourne. I did not see my family again for 15 years. After school I trained as a nurse in Perth. Then I worked as a nurse in Carnarvon where I got married and had 3 kids. In the 1980s, when I was about 27 years old, I came home to Roebourne to visit my family with my kids. My family were so happy to see me. When I visited that first time I stayed a few days, and then went back to Carnarvon where I lived. I was sad when I left and everyone was asking me when was I coming back. After a while I decided to move back to Roebourne and I did. I did a bridging course at UWA first to get some skills and then I moved to Roebourne in 1993. I then trained at TAFE for a certificate to be able to work at the Aboriginal Legal Service as a liaison officer for about 8-10 years, I travelled all around the Pilbara helping people with fines and getting drivers licences. I would also go to court to support people when their cases were being heard.

5. I then went travelling and came back to Roebourne and worked at the grocery store in Roebourne and worked as a cook at Yaandina (the aged care facility in Roebourne) and then got a job as a court liaison officer in Roebourne for about 3-4 years. I then did community work as a liaison officer for the Ngurin Cultural Centre where Centrelink and Linkcare were co-located. It was set up by the community. Then those of us working there saw that a lot of the young people didn't have access to cars or driver training to get their drivers licence so we set up driver skills training. I went to Perth for 2 months to do the training to be a driving instructor. That was in about 2004 or 2005. After that I became a driving instructor in Roebourne until about 2019. When COVID-19 hit I wasn't able to do the driver training so my sister Judith and me worked at the Roebourne Drug and Alcohol Services as part of Yaandina Community Services in Roebourne.
6. My *bibi* (mother) is May Coppin. She is a Ngarluma woman. Her parents were Coppin Dale and Lucy, who were also Ngarluma. My *babu* (father) is George Shackler who raised me. He is an Yindjibarndi man. My biological father is Don Kennedy. I don't follow him. My *jigaru* (father's father), Toby Nicolngunhgu, is a Marduthuniya man.
7. My *kabali* (father's mother) is Winnie Mack, who was Yindjibarndi. Winnie had a sister called Mable Mack. Winnie Mack's brothers were Long Mack (Angus Mack's father) and Peter Jacob (father of TJ). Angus Mack and TJ are senior Yindjibarndi law men. TJ died a few years ago.



Margaret Read



8. I have 3 children, Rebecca, Ross and Kelly. Rebecca has three children, 2 girls and a boy named Kachina, Candice and Zayden. Ross is in Bunbury and he has 7 children Tanisha, Belinda, Lesley, Brianna, Siara, Paige and Ross Jr. Kelly is in Perth and she has 3 children Chaz, Tia and Ava.
9. I have lung cancer and I make this affidavit from the Karratha Health Campus, at 62 Balmoral Road, Karratha. I have travelled to Perth for treatment from November 2022 and returned to the Pilbara on Thursday 9 February 2023. Annexed hereto and marked **MRR-1** is a true copy of a photo of me in the Karratha Health Campus on 21 February 2023.

#### **Financial circumstances**

10. I am a pensioner and receive \$1,029 per fortnight from Centrelink after all the utilities are taken out that includes approximately: \$300 rent fortnight, \$75 a month for water, and \$68 per month for electricity. I spend \$200 for food per week plus dog food for my 2 big dogs. Petrol costs me about \$150 a week. I have a phone plan of \$40 per month. Every year I need to get new tyres for my Hyundai that cost about at \$700. I have to maintain my car too. I have to travel to sorry business approximately 4 times a year (stay 2 nights in a place like Carnarvon) pay for petrol, food and flowers for the grieving families. My clothes, sun glasses, hats, shoes etc costs me about \$300-\$500 a year. There are vet bills for my dogs too. I get my hair cut and coloured once a year and it costs me about \$180. High blood pressure, diabetes medication and magnesium suppliments costs me about \$25 a month. I buy a \$11 water pack 24 bottles every fortnight. I drive to Ngurrawanna to paint art when I can, so I buy extra petrol for that. I love my art. Any money I have left I spend on my children and grandchildren.

#### **Compensation**

11. I often think about what would the Yindjibarndi People do if they had been able to agree on a fair agreement and sum of money with FMG for the Solomon Hub Mine Project. We have an agreement with Rio Tinto for its rail line and we were able to agree to a fair deal with them. If we would have been able to agree with FMG we would have been getting money for about 10 years now including all Yindjibarndi including the Wirlu-Murra mob too. If we get compensation from this claim it needs to be shared



Margaret Read

amongst all Yindjibarndi People. There should be no sides just one big mob sharing together.

12. Many of our people need dialysis and there is no dialysis centre with professional medical support in Roebourne or Karratha. There is one dialysis centre in Roebourne called Mawarnkarra Health Service but it requires self-supervising treatment that carers have to train to provide. Most people in Roebourne do not have the confidence to provide the dialysis to their family members. Many people in the Yindjibarndi community that live in Roebourne or Karratha need to travel to Port Hedland, 206 kms away, to get medically supervised dialysis treatment.
13. I had to go to Perth recently to get treatment for cancer and I stayed with family who don't have enough room and don't live close to the hospital. Other Yindjibarndi people have talked with me about how we need family accommodation in Perth so we can get treatment and our family can stay with us and support us. I know the Banjima people have a facility in Perth like this that they were able to build with money from mining agreements with BHP. If we had the compensation money from FMG we would build an accommodation place in Perth for those Yindjibarndi People (and their carers) who are getting treatment.
14. If the Yindjibarndi had compensation money from FMG I would have taken our kids out on country more often to learn as much as possible about our country. We need good vehicles for that.
15. Apart from making sure the community had better health facilities I would also give money to my grandchildren to go to good schools and to university. I would have taken my grandchildren out in Perth to Adventure World, Underwater World, movies, MacDonalds and lots of fun places. I will not have that chance now.

#### **FMG and the Solomon Hub Mine**

16. Everyone in the Roebourne community was happy before Andrew Forrest turned up talking up the agreement with FMG. I was at the two meetings where Andrew Forrest talked up about his deal. All the Yindjibarndi mob got along alright before he came. We were happy. We joined together for the Ngarluma and Yindjibarndi claim and



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celebrated together. We got our own joint corporation between Ngarluma and Yindjibarndi Foundation Ltd (NYFL). I enjoyed living with my family in Roebourne then. In about 2010 everything changed. First of all a man called Michael Gallagher arrived. He worked for FMG and then he started working for a group of Yindjibarndi called the Wirlu-Murra Yindjibarndi Aboriginal Corporation (Wirlu-Murra) in about 2010. He was around Roebourne all the time working with the Wirlu-Murra members. He looked after them by buying them food and tobacco. He drove them around town. He was like a minder for them. He also set up an office for Wirlu-Murra on the hill in Roebourne and he would fly in and fly out.

### **Solomon Hub Project mine visit in 2022**

17. It is important for me to say that us Yindjibarndi mob have never given Andrew Forrest and FMG permission to build the Solomon Hub Project mine.
18. I went to Ganyjingarringunha in about 2011 or 2012. Most recently I went on a trip in 2022 with a group of Yindjibarndi People with anthropologist Kingsley Palmer. We went near the Solomon Hub Project mine to Ganyjingarringunha to a site called Bangkangarra to camp for the night. Bangkangarra is an important camping, rock hole and rock art site. We told FMG we were coming and wanted to visit the mine. They wouldn't let us go into the Solomon Hub Mine Project. They said they were blasting and it would be dangerous. I was sad that I could not go in and see the country there. It was a horrible feeling to be shut out of your own country. We have sacred sites there. My son-in-law, the CEO, asked FMG for permission, and we were refused permission to our country. I have a right to go onto our *ngurra*. I shouldn't have to ask anyone's permission. They should be asking permission from us to be there. They aren't respecting us or our *ngurra*. This is our Yindjibarndi law – a *manjangu* (stranger) has to ask permission to come on to Yindjibarndi country not the other way around.
19. While we were there we heard 2 lots of blasting and my heart and my *wirrard* (my soul and my spirit) was damaged. I cried and I sang out to the old people "they are cutting up our *ngurra*". That *ngurra* that has been blasted and dug up will never be the same, ever again. I felt so bad when I heard this. My breath was taken away. The same thing happens when I look at photos of the open cut mine. It is so upsetting. When FMG wouldn't let us onto our *ngurra* part of me was relieved as well as disappointed because I thought if I saw the mine site my heart might break.



Magaret Read



20. I didn't see the mine when I went out with Kingsley Palmer, but I did see all their water bores along Kangeenarina Creek. I couldn't believe that. They are taking our water without our permission. Seeing that made me feel horrible. That water travels up to Millstream to our sacred site in the Millstream National Park. There is a water serpent there that has to be protected. The men have stories about the serpent at Millstream and Ganyjingarringunha in their mens' law business songs and stories. There are old Yindjibarndi spirits there in that country at the Solomon Hub mine. I have heard the spirits crying out on country in another place on Yindjibarndi country. They will let you know when they are troubled.
21. Middleton Cheedy told me there were little people living in the caves near the Solomon Hub mine. Now those caves have been blown up I don't know where those little people live now. The little people are spirits who are there to protect places when we are not there. They are important to Yindjibarndi People and should be looked after because they protect the country.
22. I feel so bad thinking about our *ngurra* getting shipped out to sea (taken from the mine on the train to Port Hedland and then put on the ships). I'm sad that the State gave FMG permission to build that mine. Yindjibarndi people should have been the ones to give permission and we have never done this. We would not do this because it is sacred ground and has our ancestor spirits there that look after the land, the plants and the animals. Those plants and animals are our resources for future generations.

### **Splinter Group**

23. I call the members of the Wirlu-Murra group the "splinter group". This is because they started a new corporation to stop the Yindjibarndi Aboriginal Corporation (YAC) from going ahead with the native title claim. They left YAC in about 2010 and want to be on their own and make decisions about our *ngurra* and let the FMG mine go ahead. They have caused a lot of trouble within the group. The trouble they have caused came from Andrew Forrest really. I've reached out to them many times to get them to come back to the wider group, but FMG has some kind of hold on them. The splinter group wanted to agree to an agreement that most YAC members thought was not enough compensation and was disrespectful to us and our *ngurra*. So here we are in court.

24. We could not stop the splinter group. It has been devastating. We've had lots of mediations with the splinter group. The splinter group has the Sandys and Adams families in it – Vince Adams, Michelle Adams, Ken Sandy, Allery Sandy, Aileen Sandy, Ken Sandy, John Sandy, Bruce Monadee, May Adams, Sylvia Allen, Jill Tucker, Maudie Jerrold and some others from their families. They also started Supreme Court proceedings against YAC. YAC has had to spend our money fighting the Supreme Court cases instead of putting money into important things for Yindjibarndi people like health and education.
25. FMG also funded a meeting in June 2015 to have Rodney Adams, Sylvia Allen, Maudie Jerrold, Francis Phillips, Allery Sandy, Ken Sandy and Diana Smith, elected as applicants to make the decision for the native title claim. But really, there was no meeting just a gathering of people to vote in cardboard voting booths. The people who turned up for the Wirilu-Murra to vote were each given \$400 Woolworth vouchers. That is a lot of money for a family.
26. At one stage I was feeling really good about the mediations with the splinter group. I thought we had a chance to get them to come back to us. But they didn't and they said they didn't want to do any more mediations. This was at the Mecure Inn in Karratha about 6 or 8 years ago. When it started, we shook hands and hugged. We thought we were going to get somewhere. But we didn't. That was disappointing to me.
27. Every time we have a meeting with the splinter group I always ask them, "please come back, let's all be together?" But they say nothing, not a word. They seem to be gagged. I talked to May Adams in October 2022 at the 50 Cent Hall at a meeting about RIO Tinto. She said that the old people wanted to come back together. I was walking around the meeting and she came up to me and told me that, she said it in language. She said that the old people like Bruce Monadee, Maudie Jerrold and Jill Tucker, all want to come back. I said to May, "gummwari" (which means coming together). Then nothing came of it. I have been very disappointed about this.
28. Whenever we are having our meetings at the 50 cent hall or the Ganalili Centre (in Roebourne), the splinter group come and disrupt us. The Sandy and Adams families and the Toby's interrupt all the meetings. The only meeting I can remember that they did not interrupt is the meeting that Elizabeth Gaines, FMG CEO, attended in 2021. Mostly, it is Michelle Adams and Allery Sandy and they bring people who aren't even



Margaret Lead



Yindjibarndi along with them – like Elizabeth Douglas (who is Ngarluma). They say personal insults to my sister, Judith Coppin and me and interrupt us. They say we are not Yindjibarndi. Once Elizabeth Douglas threatened to punch me. I was scared but my daughter, Lorraine Coppin stuck up for me.

29. This splinter group is so upsetting for me. I see them all get their Christmas money and food vouchers from Wirlu-Murra. I know this because I read what the splinter group say on Facebook. We don't get any of those things because YAC hasn't got any money from the mine and has to spend a lot on funding the court cases. I believe the money the splinter group is getting is coming from FMG. They say it is for joint ventures and other business related agreements but I don't see any money coming into the Roebourne community. No one seems to be better off for the FMG agreements with Wirlu-Murra. It makes no sense to me that the Wirlu-Murra have agreements but no money for the members apart from Woolworths vouchers. To me the splinter group is devastating. The whole Yindjibarndi group should be getting vouchers from FMG, not just the splinter group. I get so angry too because, although I'm frustrated with the splinter group, but I know we should not be fighting the splinter group. I know we're really fighting FMG and Andrew Forrest.
30. There is physical fighting on the streets of Roebourne now between the young people of the splinter group and other Yindjibarndi families like the Woodleys. I have seen videos of these fights. They happen around Lockyer Way and Sherlock Street, and they are never ending. None of these fights happened before FMG turned up. I am not sure the rift will ever heal.
31. Our elders like Cheedy Ned died of a broken heart over this fighting and the splinter group. They couldn't believe their own families were splitting from them. Cheedy Ned was our elder but the splinter group did not listen to him.
32. The splinter group is also affecting our relations with white people. Recently, I was out at Mt Florance, on Yindjibarndi country, with my sister Judith Coppin. We went to the homestead and asked the lady there if we could pay her \$5 for a shower. She asked us "who are you with?" and we told her "I'm a YAC member" and she said, "Well no, you can't have a shower here". The Sandy's ancestor, Sandy Andrews, came from Mt Florance.





### **Nyinyaard in the Yindjibarndi community**

33. I was always taught to share with all Yindjibarndi People. Yindjibarndi People share *mula* (meat) like kangaroo or emu if someone has gone hunting. We ask each other for *muramura* (money) for cards or food, that is *nyinyaard* (show generosity when people are in need), we always do that, it is an Yindjibarndi rule to share and help each other out. Everyone has got to be looking after each other. Now *nyinyaard* is not being followed by the splinter group people, they keep money and food vouchers to themselves.

### **Wirlu-Murra formation**

34. When I came back from Perth to Roebourne in about 1993 everyone was happy about the native title arrangements and there was no division in the community. About 2010 some of Sandy and Adams families formed the Wirlu-Murra Yindjibarndi Aboriginal Corporation splinter group, while the rest of us in YAC wanted everyone to stay together and stand up together to stop the mine. And if we couldn't do that we needed to get a fair deal from FMG. Wirlu-Murra members such as Allery Sandy and John Sandy wanted YAC to sign the agreed offer of \$500,000 signing payment, \$3 million plus \$1 million as an elders payment. There were many meetings about it and arguments amongst the Yindjibarndi People. I didn't think the offer was fair. I was devastated by the split and the arguments.

### **Galharra system**

35. I am related to the Wirlu-Murra group through our the Galharra system. For example, through the Galharra my brothers and sisters are Allery, Aileen, John and Ken Sandy. Others are my cousins through the Galharra like May Adams. All members of the Wirlu-Murra group are kin through the Galharra. If I meet the splinter group in the Supermarket I greet them, saying '*wanthiwa thurdu*' ('hello, how are you, older sister?') or '*wanthiwa gaja*' ('hello, how are you, older brother?'). When there is a funeral, we set aside our differences. 'Sorry business' is about grieving together.
36. I read negative posts on Facebook from younger people and it hurts me. There is hatred in the younger generations. Those young people have grown up with hatred and violence since the splinter group started in 2010. The older people display their aggression toward YAC members and the children and grandchildren follow them. It



makes me so sad to see our community acting like this. The Old People wanted the younger generations to protect country for them but all they could see was the fighting at the meetings.

37. At the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies conference in Broome on 6 June 2018 I presented and talked about the sorrow, tears and heartache that old Cheedy Ned and other senior Yindjibarndi people suffered because of the break with the splinter group. I have felt helpless not being able to protect the elders from the distress the rift has been caused the community. Annexed hereto and marked **MRR-2** is a true copy of a photo of me presenting in Broome with my sister Judith Coppin and the lawyers for the Yindjibarndi native title case.

**My *wirrard***

38. I developed my *wirrard* when I was a kid and living with the old people in the Old Reserve. My *wirrard* and my country go together because they both come from my parents. My old people taught me that I must never hurt a tree because trees are our companions and they breath for us. Going out on country I get a feeling for healing and I know it comes from the spirits of our ancestor. A spiritual hole has been made in our country by the mine. Part of my home is lost.
39. We go back to *ngurra* because it relates to and revives our *wirrard*. When you are out on country, you talk to the spirits and you tell them that we are back and they have a sense of knowing that we are there and we are part of their country. If you can't go to the country it is cut off from you severely, there is a sense of loss. We can't go out on our own country. It is devastating like we've lost a child. People can't recover from the mine because when the old people passed away they knew the damage that was done and they will never see compensation or see the group back together. We can never get that back.
40. It makes me feel no good because I can't help my people in the compensation claim. I feel very sad that the old people missed out on getting compensation. No matter how much money we get there is still that sense of loss. They died of broken hearts like Patricia and Mavis Pat, Woodley King and Cheedy Ned (old story teller) and the others who passed away. Vince Adams said disrespectful things to Cheedy Ned at a meeting and said that he would not listen to him. This was the worst thing to watch and it was





disrespectful to our most senior elder. It made everybody at the meeting sad. This is how the splinter group members spoke to the YAC elders.

### **Destroying sites**

41. The mine has many spirits and lots of artifacts. People see spirits around the mine all the time. We could feel it in my body and soul. The mine has made the spirits restless, and they can't understand what's happening.
42. The spirits are homeless and have been frightened off country. The spirits have now moved into the accommodation units and they are tormenting the mine workers. We hear about the problems and other Aboriginal people who work the like Ngoongars are worried.
43. The splinter group did heritage survey some years ago. They sent the tests off to get dated and we were told that the cave dated to 25,000 years ago. I feel that there is no respect for our old people and the spirits that look after the caves there. The splinter group who do the heritage surveys agree to their destruction and the rest of the Yindjibarndi have no say. It is humiliating.
44. Camping places and caves are significant to us because they tell us where our Yindjibarndi ancestors have been in the country. We were able to walk in their footsteps but now they have been destroyed we have nothing. Most cultures from around the world can't say where their ancestors have been walking, camping and getting food but Yindjibarndi people can.

### **Andrew Forrest ABC article**

45. I feel emotionally damaged by comments made by Andrew Forrest to the ABC in a press conference about FMG's latest earnings release. The people in Alice Springs are different to Yindjibarndi People. We do not know them they are from another country. At Xmas and Easter some Yindjibarndi get together and have a drink. He is putting us down. I feel like he is saying we are worthless and he thinks that we are like animals and should be caged. He is comparing us to rubbish going on in Alice Springs. There is value to our country and we think highly of our country. To be compared to Alice Springs and the crime there is insulting.
46. When Andrew Forrest was asked about paying the Yindjibarndi compensation he said it was an era of "cash for nothing" and compared the Yindjibarndi People to things that





have been happening in Alice Springs and to “alcohol disasters”. He is painting a picture of us and our lifestyle that is not true. They make us out to be uneducated dirty people. My daughter Kelly was crying when she was talking about what Andrew Forrest said. FMG is not paying the Yindjibarndi compensation and then its executive chairman says such hurtful things it just makes me and my family feel like dirt. We still have no compensation and we get insulted. It is too much for me to bear. Annexed hereto and marked **MRR-3** is a true copy of a story about Andrew Forrest in a ABC report on 15 February 2023.

Sworn by the deponent )

at Roebourne )

in Western Australia )

on 23 February 2023 )

Before me: )

*Margaret Read*  
Signature of deponent

*Burgess*  
Signature of witness

SHUNW

/s/ Sean Burgess

Justice of the Peace

#1147

Form 59

Rule 29.02(1)

**Affidavit**

No. WAD37 of 2022

Federal Court of Australia

District Registry: Western Australia

Division: General

**YINDJIBARNDI NGURRA ABORIGINAL CORPORATION RNTBC (ICN 8721)**

Applicant

**STATE OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

Respondent

Affidavit of: **Margaret Roslyn Read**

Address: 29 Lockyer Way, Roebourne, Western Australia,

Occupation: Pensioner

Date: 23 February 2023

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**Annexure 'MRR-1'**

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Margaret Read

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Rule 29.02(1)

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**Annexure 'MRR-2'**

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Margaret Read

*[Signature]*



District Registry: Western Australia

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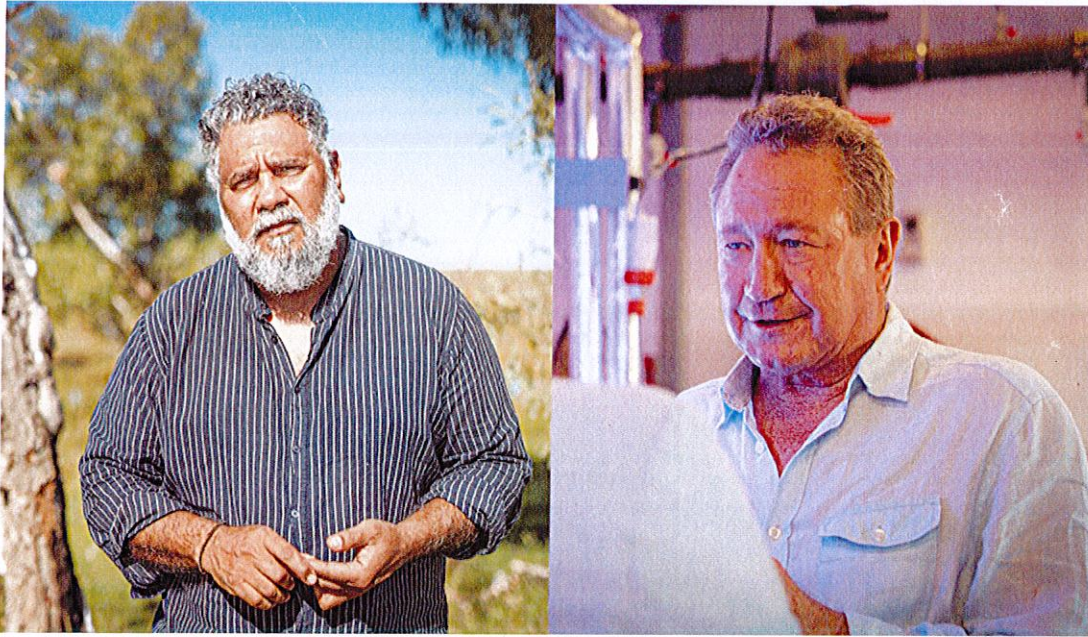
**Annexure 'MRR-3'**

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## Andrew Forrest says signing Yindjibarndi royalty agreement will lead to Alice Springs style chaos

By [Sue Lannin](#) and [Tom Robinson](#)

Posted Wed 15 Feb 2023 at 7:37pm, updated Wed 15 Feb 2023 at 9:35pm



Michael Woodley (left) is leading the fight for compensation from FMG, led by billionaire Andrew Forrest. (ABC Pilbara: Amelia Searson)

Mining magnate Andrew "Twiggy" Forrest has defended not signing a native title compensation agreement with Yindjibarndi traditional owners in the Pilbara, saying it could lead to an Alice Springs style "alcohol disaster".

The Yindjibarndi people were awarded native title with exclusive possession by the Federal Court in 2017, and then beat an appeal against the decision by Fortescue Metals Group, which was founded by Mr Forrest.

The iron ore miner tried to appeal to the High Court, but it refused to grant leave to FMG to appeal in 2020.

However, negotiations over an Indigenous Land Use agreement fell through in 2021, and the Yindjibarndi

### Key points:

- Andrew Forrest has defended his company's dealings with the Yindjibarndi people
- In a wide-ranging call, he claimed welfare and mining royalties create "alcohol disasters"
- Mr Forrest also said climate change denying politicians should "f\*\*\* off"

*Margaret Reek\* Read*  
*Bryce*



have [launched a native title compensation case](#) in the Federal Court to force FMG to pay royalties for mining on their country.

## Royalties create 'alcohol disasters'

Mr Forrest on Wednesday defended the company's failure to come to a compensation agreement with the Yindjibarndi, and said welfare payments as well as mining royalties had contributed to "alcohol disasters" in towns like Alice Springs.



The dispute has centred on FMG's Solomon mine hub in the middle of the Pilbara. (AAP: Will Russell)

"Ending the Indigenous disparity is not done with cash," Fortescue's executive chairman said on a Wednesday conference call with journalists and analysts.

"We're not going to exacerbate opportunity without responsibility, which has caused the deep social harms, which we are witnessing today."

Alcohol-fuelled crime and anti social behaviour in Alice Springs [captured national attention](#) in recent weeks, with Prime Minister Anthony Albanese visiting the Northern Territory town to meet stakeholders and work on solutions.

On a conference call with journalists and analysts to discuss to the iron ore miner's latest earnings release, Mr Forrest slammed what he called "an era of cash for nothing."

"I believe in real, practical action to end the savage disparity, which has grown and grown, over the period that I have been alive," he said.



"I know why it has, I know why you get Alice Springs alcohol disasters.

"It's because people are without work and cash welfare without work and cash welfare without work has obvious, typical, predictable results all over the world."

### **'Disingenuous' claim**

Many Yindjibarndi people live in the town of Roebourne, which has seen debates about alcohol related harms similar to the Alice Springs situation.



Michael Woodley dismissed Mr Forrest's position. (ABC Pilbara: Amelia Searson)

However, Yindjibarndi Aboriginal Corporation chief executive Michael Woodley said Mr Forrest's position was "disingenuous" and said his people deserve compensation.

He said social problems were linked to disadvantage due to the ongoing effects of colonisation, not mining royalties and welfare payments.

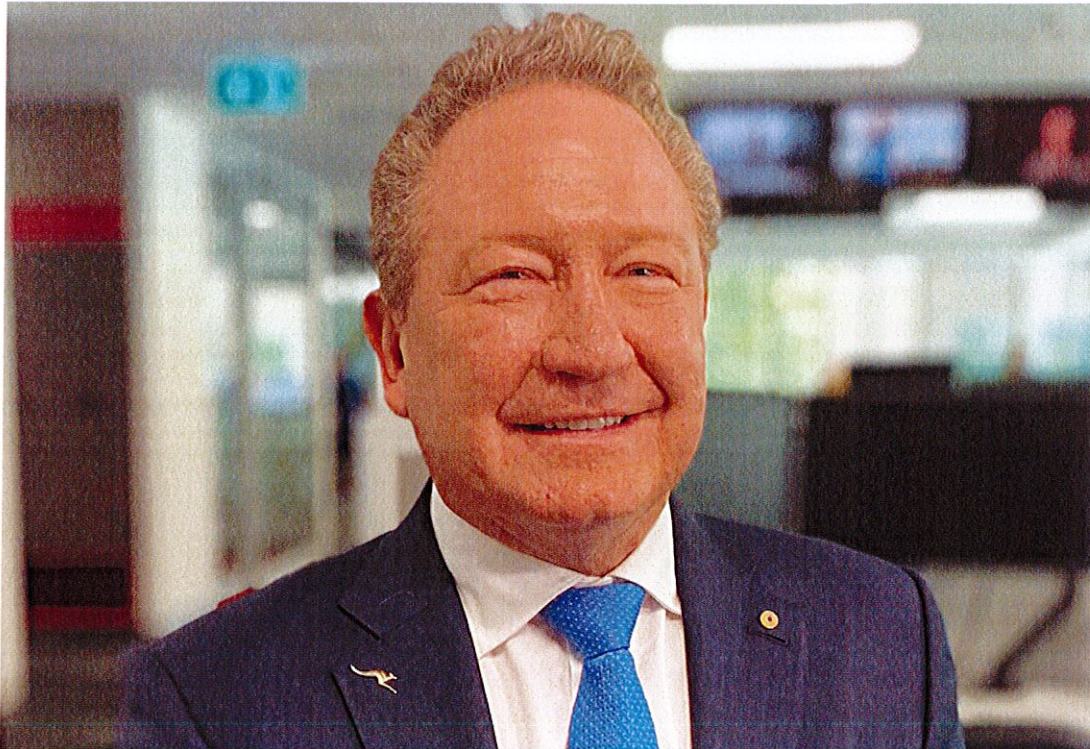
"There's a trend with what's happened historically to Aboriginal people, we've had a lack of opportunity and equality," he said.

"Having the right to live a happy and equal, balanced life ... has nothing to do with money and nothing to do with mining companies.



"I think that's disingenuous by Andrew Forrest to even mention, or try to compare the situations."

The case is before the court, which has approved some hearings to be heard on country.



Mr Forrest addressed the Yindjibarndi issue during a Wednesday morning conference call. (ABC News: Sue Lannin)

Mr Woodley said hearings had been scheduled for the remote Pilbara in August.

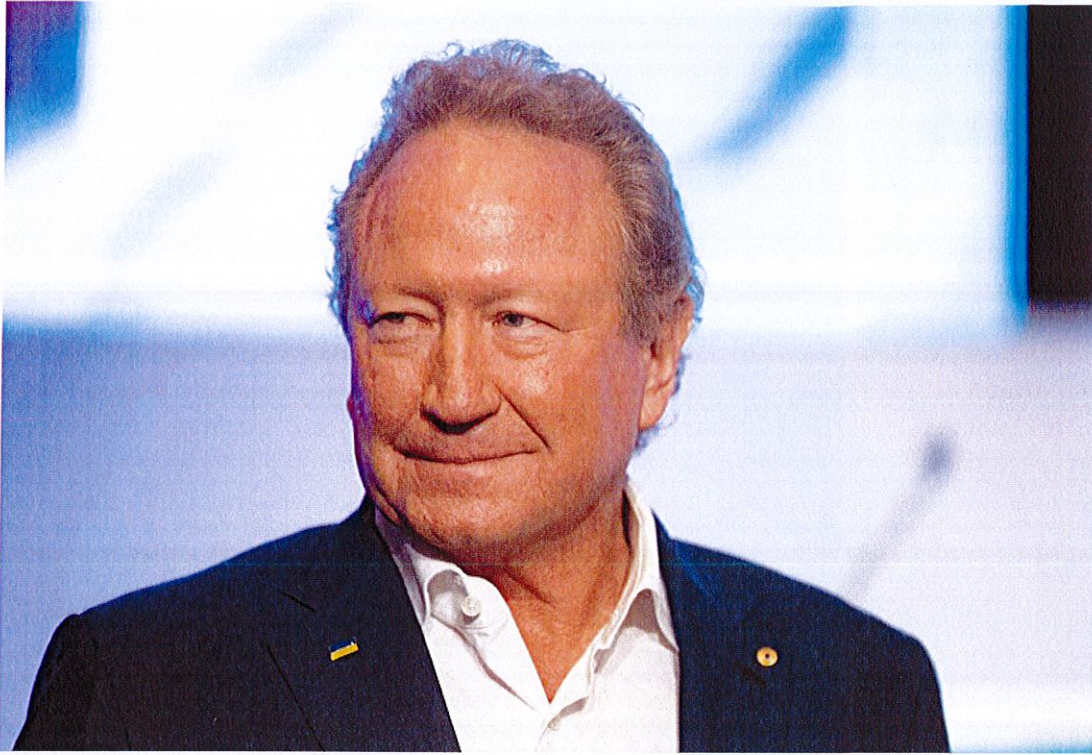
Fortescue said it has seven other native title agreements with other traditional owner groups which are working well.

### **Climate deniers 'f\*\*\* off'**

Mr Forrest also pulled no punches on what he thought about climate change denying politicians.

The billionaire was expanding FMG into a renewable energy firm, developing projects in areas including green hydrogen, solar power, geothermal, wind and hydropower.





Mr Forrest held a wide-ranging call with journalists on Wednesday morning. (AAP: Matt Jelonek)

While discussing FMG's half-year profit results on the conference call, Mr Forrest had choice words for politicians who didn't believe in global warming.

"People who do not understand the grave risk of climate change should not be in any position of influence, and if they exploit those who are trying to work against climate change, then history will judge them very, very badly," he said.

"If they don't believe the science, then they can just f\*\*\* off, right.

"They should be nowhere near having any responsibility whatsoever."

The comments were in response to a question from Australian Financial Review mining reporter Peter Ker about the Federal Greens threatening to block Labor's safeguard mechanism reform legislation, which is aimed at reducing carbon emissions from heavy industry and the resources sector.

Mr Forrest went on to say it was crucial for governments to do more to mitigate global warming.

"Every legislator in the world should bring themselves up to speed on the science and act accordingly," he said.

"And I'm urging governments all over the world, wherever I go.



"There are solutions, they do not have to wipe out our planet."

Rising costs and a fall in iron ore prices saw FMG's after tax profit tumble over the last six months of 2022.

Net profit fell 15 per cent, to \$US2.37 billion (3.42 billion) amid lower prices, a rising wage bills, and higher materials and energy costs.

That was despite record shipments of iron ore of 96.9 millions tonnes for the half year.