

Twiggy story just Aunty on the mining warpath

■ David Utting



The ABC has again put on display its anti-mining ideology.

The vehicle for this was a potted history of iron ore icon

Andrew "Twiggy" Forrest on Aunty's flagship current affairs show *Four Corners*, which aired on Monday.

Mr Forrest is a big bloke who can look after himself, but the mining industry was the real target of the national broadcaster. The name *Four Corners* implies that all sides of an argument will be fairly represented, but the show was blatantly one-sided when dealing with Mr Forrest.

He was portrayed quite negatively compared with how other rich business people from non-mining industries have been portrayed.

The program was just another attack on mining, using Mr Forrest as a Trojan horse.

Also in the crosshairs was WA, usually portrayed by the Eastern States ABC as a lawless, brash and uncivilised frontier.

The ABC contextualised Mr Forrest as a West Australian 1980s cowboy — a staple theme of the inner-city Sydney/Melbourne-centric ABC culture.

How long will we wait for the ABC to take a fresh look at what constitutes WA in the year 2015 rather than relying on lazy journalism and tired stereotypes?

The program greatly overcooked Mr Forrest's connections to the convicted Laurie Connell and Alan Bond (once again a common ABC trope), effectively denigrating Mr Forrest through guilt by association.

In the first two minutes of the *Four*



Profiled: Andrew Forrest



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Corners program, Mr Forrest was referred to as a "salesman" and then as a "billionaire spruiker" (there are no vaguely positive monikers), which set the agenda and infected the meaning of everything else that followed in the interview. In literary/media analysis,

it is well known that a piece of text (the body of the interview) can be made to be read in a particular way, by manipulating the introduction.

And this is the ABC's technique — a negative introduction — readily discernible to any high school media student.

Rather than "spruiker" or "salesman" — how about "mining magnate", or "entrepreneur"?

Or what about "employer" of tens of thousands of Fortescue Metals Group and flow-on workers deriving jobs from FMG?

With the introduction constructed in a suitably negative way, the program continued its character assassination.

Popping up often were pejorative statements such as "the man the regulator tried to ban".

Yes, the ABC did say in the story that Mr Forrest actually won the case brought by the regulator Australian Securities and Investment Commission, but to concentrate on the bringing of the case rather than the High Court's rejection made a mockery of our legal system and unfairly tarnished the man.

The ABC "proved" Mr Forrest's guilt by invoking "where there is smoke there is fire", rather than accepting the High Court's verdict.

Incredibly, Mr Forrest's accomplishments and motives on indigenous engagement and employment were challenged.

Also, his undeniable philanthropic contribution and anti-slavery work through Walk Free were disparaged.

Mining makes a huge contribution to Australia and for the ABC to pick off tall poppies in the industry is as abhorrent as is the structural bias against mining that resides within ideological Aunty.

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