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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**15 September 2006**

### **Appointment of Head of Mining - Mr John Blanning**

Fortescue Metals Group Ltd (Fortescue) is pleased to announce the appointment of Mr John Blanning as Head of Mining. Mr Blanning, aged 47, will report to the Executive Director of Operations Mr Graeme Rowley.

Mr Blanning is an industry leader in the management of mining operations and brings to Fortescue an internationally recognized reputation for excellence in mine management, development and performance. His experience as General Manager for a number of large mining operations has honed his effectiveness in meeting and exceeding operational production and financial targets. He has a proven ability in implementing strategies to improve key performance targets such as safety, productivity and environmental performance.

Mr Blanning has worked in the mining industry for over 20 years with the last six years as General Manager of BHP Billiton's Saraji and Blackwater coal mines in Queensland. The Blackwater mine is the largest black coal mine in Australia and as General Manager Mr Blanning led over 1,800 employees and contractors and controlled an operating budget in excess of \$A450 million over the last financial year. During this period Mr Blanning was instrumental in building strong relationships with the communities of Dysart and Blackwater.

"John's broad experience across Australia's mining industry and his commitment to ensuring that Fortescue attains the highest levels of performance will be invaluable to the company as we moves from construction into production", stated Mr Rowley.

"John will play a pivotal role within Fortescue's joint venture alliance with Roche Mining known as the Pilbara Mining Alliance, as he has a depth of expertise and bulk commodity

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knowledge that will enable the alliance group to optimise the planning and design of the Cloud Break and Christmas Creek operations”, Mr Rowley commented.

Mr Blanning will replace Fortescue’s existing Head of Mining Mr Jim Williams, who at the age of 68 is looking forward to retirement having successfully driven the company’s feasibility studies and innovative mine planning over the last 3 years.

“I am eager to join Fortescue to assist with the development of a truly world class iron ore deposit through the construction of a world class mining operation”, Mr Blanning stated. “I feel this is an exciting opportunity to be involved in a long term sustainable mining operation of significant tonnages, with the prospect of utilising innovative mining techniques in conjunction with traditional mining methods, to ensure enhanced performance in all areas.”

**ENDS**

For further information:

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