

MEDIA RELEASE



FORTESCUE CHAIRMAN ANDREW FORREST SPEAKS AT COMMONWEALTH DAY OBSERVANCE AT WESTMINSTER ABBEY ABOUT EMPLOYMENT AND THE IMPORTANCE OF ENDING HUMAN SLAVERY

Perth: March 14, 2012: Fortescue Metals Group (“Fortescue”) Chairman Andrew Forrest has addressed the Commonwealth Day Observance at Westminster Abbey in London focussing on connecting cultures through employment and careers and ending human trafficking and slavery.

The annual multi-faith service was held in the presence of HM Queen Elizabeth II who delivered her annual Commonwealth Day message to Heads of Government, High Commissioners, 200 other VIPs and more than 1,000 schoolchildren inside the Abbey. This year’s Commonwealth Day Observance took on special significance as part of the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee Celebrations.

Mr Forrest was the only Australian invited to provide a formal address at the Commonwealth Day Observance in recognition of his efforts to end indigenous disadvantage through education, training, jobs and careers – a discussion topic Mr Forrest chaired at the Commonwealth Heads of Government (CHOGM) Commonwealth Business Council Forum in October. He also used the opportunity to make an unprecedented call for action to all Commonwealth nations to do more to end slavery.

“Human slavery and trafficking – to the shock of most – is alive and well in practically every nation on earth. Only when we can truly connect our cultures and participate in a global initiative to address this blight on the very nature of humanity will we adequately address it,” Mr Forrest said.

In October, the Commonwealth Business Council’s post-meeting communiqué nominated the Australian Employment Covenant (AEC) as a model to link business-designed training with career opportunities for disadvantaged citizens across the Commonwealth.

Mr Forrest has now been appointed Commonwealth ambassador for employment and engagement with disadvantaged communities to head a leadership group of senior business leaders and Government officials to promote global best practices to create opportunities for employment using public private partnerships.

Mr Forrest said the CHOGM meeting in Perth, hosted by Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard and WA Premier Colin Barnett, continued to have a positive impact on the Commonwealth and its citizens long after the meeting concluded, and he looked forward to utilising the knowledge and experiences in Australia to assist other Commonwealth countries.

“Indigenous and non-indigenous Australians now recognise that employment is the only way to the equality of opportunity every just society craves. Globally, we know that opportunity for proper employment is the only way we can do slave traders out of work,” he said at the Commonwealth Day celebration.

“The overwhelming power of standing on your own two feet replaces despondency with pride; despair with dynamism; low expectations with the confident hope of an independent future. Health and morale improve and the individual’s thirst for further education accompanies a new hunger for greater success. Disparity becomes a memory.

“The natural fire of human endeavour and determination burns brightly in the hearts of all people.”

Ends

A copy of Mr Forrest’s speech is at the end of this document.

About Fortescue and indigenous job creation: To date Fortescue has assisted more than 1,000 indigenous Australians with job opportunities and support from its three dedicated Aboriginal employment and training centres. The company has also awarded more than \$320 million in contracts to Aboriginal contracts and has a target of \$1 billion in 2013.

About the Aboriginal Employment Covenant and indigenous job creation: The Aboriginal Employment Covenant was founded in October 2009 as an industry-led initiative aimed at securing the commitment of 50,000 sustainable jobs for Indigenous Australians. The initiative has become the largest employer collaboration in the nation’s history. Currently, the AEC has 326 employer partners who have collectively committed 61,765 job opportunities for Indigenous job seekers. So far, more than 8,000 Indigenous people have been employed in sustainable jobs with AEC employers.

About GenerationOne and indigenous job creation In March 2010 Mr Forrest and other leading business people, launched the GenerationOne movement to bring all Australians together with the aim of eliminating the disparity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in one generation through employment and careers. Two years later more than 237,000 Australians have joined this movement which has changed the national conversation about the best way to tackle the disparity and welfare dependency away from government handouts and towards employment and the pathway to a career.

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Andrew Forrest
Commonwealth Day Celebration
Westminster Abby
2012 March 12

Her Majesty and his Royal Highness, Prince Phillip graced my Australian shores recently. The Heads of Government meeting was an enormous success. Our Commonwealth family absorbed Australia's beautiful environment, scenery and friendship for which Australians have become famous. The diversity and heritage of all peoples comes richly in Australia, not just our evident superiority in cricket, rugby and most else.

Have we advanced so much . . . on more serious subjects?

Human slavery and trafficking – to the shock of most – is alive and well in practically every nation on earth. Only when we can truly connect our cultures and participate in a global initiative to address this blight on the very nature of humanity will we adequately address it.

Slavery and lack of proper employment opportunities is not a developing world problem, or a developed world problem, or a third world problem. It is our problem! It flourishes everywhere lack of employment opportunity exists, due to:

- Insufficient economy
- Paternalistic welfare driven payments; and
- Low expectations of one person to another

Lack of proper employment opportunity creates an environment for the possibility of slavery to exist. So, I implore the members of the Commonwealth and the Commonwealth itself to raise its virulent opposition to slavery to an effective level.

Closer to home, the very well meant though misguided generosity of Australians allowed welfare to grip thousands of our first Australians in an embrace of despair – disconnected from their own tradition of self-sufficiency and obstructed from connecting with the national Australian culture of “can do” and “wealth for toil.”

Indigenous and non-indigenous Australians now recognise that employment is the only way to the equality of opportunity every just society craves. Globally, we know that opportunity for proper employment is the only way we can do slave traders out of work.

At home, we are connecting cultures and aligning our expectations of one another! Employers pledged over 60,000 career opportunities to Indigenous people who had relevant training through the Australian Employment Covenant.

This created a massive, demand led solution to employ Aboriginal people as all of Australia realises that welfare and low expectations disconnected our two cultures. It hindered Australia from becoming a richer, more colourful and harmonious community. In return for this massive commitment to employ Aboriginal people, the Australian Government also entered into a covenant with the employers and Aboriginal people to provide job specific training, directed by the preference of only the future employers and not those of bureaucratic agencies.

To further the connection and alignment of our cultures and expectations, a nationwide social media movement with hundreds of thousands of members, called GenerationOne, spread across Australia with our message of equality. It encouraged Australians to think about how disparity could be eliminated without welfare.

This is cultural connection as its best – non-indigenous and Indigenous Australians reaching out together with mutual respect for each other. Over 8,000 Indigenous people have crossed over from welfare to employment in the largest single elimination of welfare driven poverty in all of Australian history. It is as simple as understanding the basics; such as:

- When work starts
- Elementary numeracy and literacy
- And, how to get a driver's licence – often one of the biggest employment impediments.

We learnt we must connect culturally before we can meaningfully connect a worker with a job.

Now we have proven that job specific training produces earnest, capable applicants who offer value on their first day of work – in just three months training!

The overwhelming power of standing on your own two feet replaces despondency with pride; despair with dynamism; low expectations with the confident hope of an independent future. Health and morale improve and the individual's thirst for further education accompanies a new hunger for greater success. Disparity becomes a memory.

The natural fire of human endeavour and determination burns brightly in the hearts of all people. So, every nation, let us

1. Connect our cultures,
2. Align expectations of each other,
3. Replace disparity with employment empowerment,
4. Meet the need for true self-respect based on economic independence.

Only then can we replace hopelessness with life's enthusiasms, and eliminate the environment where slavery can – ever - take a foothold.

Thank you.