

Media Release



Fortescue CEO hands over the reins for a day

A determined, young Aboriginal woman is one step closer to realising her dream of becoming a senior executive with S&P/ASX 50 listed Fortescue Metals Group having won an opportunity to shadow Chief Executive Officer Nev Power as part of GenerationOne's CEO for a Day campaign.

Paula Hicks, a 31 year old Banyjima woman from Geraldton, Western Australia says she was born to be a leader and wants to succeed for herself, her children and for Aboriginal people across Australia.

"I want to show them that it's possible. My greatest hope is that one day a young girl working on reception looks at me, knows that I started on reception too and realises that it doesn't have to stop there – it only stops when you say so."

Having worked her way up the career ladder into middle management roles, the mother and foster carer has backed herself to take the next step on her career pathway and is now in her first year of a Bachelor of Business (BBus) in Management at Murdoch University, determined to suitably qualify herself for her dream job at the decision-making table.

"It is my dream to become Fortescue's first female Aboriginal senior executive. This is a company that is making a difference to Western Australian and Aboriginal people's lives and I want to play a major role in that," she said.

"I know I have what it takes and this opportunity has given me even more motivation to achieve my goal. Being CEO for a day under the guidance of Nev was an amazing and unforgettable experience."

Chief Executive Officer Nev Power said, "I am very proud to be involved in GenerationOne's CEO for a Day initiative. It was great to have Paula join me for the day and to share with her some of the learnings from my own career journey."

"At Fortescue we create opportunities for Aboriginal people by offering a hand up and not a hand out. It's the same principle on which GenerationOne's CEO for a Day campaign is founded, and together we're helping empower young and aspiring Aboriginal people to challenge the status quo and take positive steps towards becoming our future business leaders."

It's a cause Fortescue Chairman Andrew Forrest has long been a passionate champion of and one that he had the opportunity to reinforce when he met with Ms Hicks for a one-on-one discussion with the aspiring business leader.

"Paula's story is already one of success and she's setting her sights even higher to prove that anything is possible when you open the doors to opportunity. She embodies all that GenerationOne stands for and is a wonderful role model for young Aboriginal people," said Mr Forrest.

Ms Hicks was right at home at Fortescue where enthusiasm, determination and empowerment underpin the company's unique family culture.

Admitting her strong work ethic comes from her mother who raised seven children in total, including raising her and her sister on her own after her father passed away when she was 10, Ms Hicks said she applies her mum's philosophy to everything she does in life.

"My mum used to say you don't need money to make something of yourself, you just need to grab every opportunity that comes your way, work hard, be determined to succeed and have self-respect."

"I am the first in my family to complete year 12, the first to go to university, the first to buy a home, and I hope to be the first senior executive," she said.

"I'm going to give it my best shot."

Background:

Ms Hicks was recently successful in securing an Aboriginal cadetship through Fortescue's FIVE STAR program, which will see her undertake a paid work placement with Fortescue for 12 weeks each year over the next three years of her degree.

Ms Hicks completed the first 10 weeks of her cadetship with Fortescue's Aboriginal Engagement team prior to her first semester of university, and it was this taste of working at Fortescue that inspired her to submit an application in the 2015 CEO for a Day competition and request an opportunity to work alongside her role model, CEO Nev Power.

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