

Media Release



Fortescue's VTEC program provides life-changing opportunity for local mother

Port Hedland, 13 November 2015: On Wednesday, 6 November a class of 12 trainees from Fortescue's Vocational Training and Employment Centre (VTEC) for local Aboriginal people celebrated their graduation and prepared to join Fortescue's operations workforce at Christmas Creek and Herb Elliott Port.

Among the graduates was single mother, Valma Papertalk, a Hedland local who tragically lost her partner, a valued Fortescue employee and the father of her three children, late last year.

Ms Papertalk credits Fortescue with guiding her along her journey to being in a position to support her family.

"I remember worrying about what I would do, as I had never worked before. Fortescue provided me with an opportunity to gain work experience and earn an income through VTEC's landscaping business, VTEC Services, and also helped me to seek counselling for my grief."

"I saw that I had two choices – to go to Centrelink and apply for financial support or to work and be a good role model for my kids and give them a brighter future. I chose to work and it's one of the best things I've done," she said.

A keen learner and motivated to succeed, Ms Papertalk applied the skills and experience she gained with VTEC Services to completing VTEC's 12 week course. She has now commenced full time employment at Fortescue's Herb Elliott Port in a Civil Operator role and sees this as just the beginning of her career, excited for what the future holds.

"I would never have thought that a leadership position with Fortescue would be possible, but now I definitely believe I can achieve that one day. I want to tell my story to others and prove that anything is possible if you put your mind to it and work hard," she said.

"It means so much to me to be part of the Fortescue family. I look at the company's values and think that all families should live by these. The VTEC team were there for me in my darkest hour, and along with my mum and sister, helped me get to where I am today."

Chief Executive Officer Nev Power said he is proud of Ms Papertalk and all of her graduating classmates, commending them on taking a major step towards changing their lives.

"At Fortescue we value our unique culture and our people's determination to never, ever give up. Every VTEC graduation is a testament to the hard work and determination of our trainees and our long-standing belief that the best way to end Aboriginal disadvantage is by providing opportunity through training and employment," Mr Power said.

On site the graduates will continue to receive mentoring and support from Fortescue's Aboriginal Development Coordinators, dedicated to helping the graduates succeed and progress their careers.

Fortescue's VTEC program provides guaranteed jobs for Aboriginal people and the training and support to succeed in those jobs; a model that is putting an end to training for training's sake. The success of the program can be measured by the 1000 Aboriginal people working at Fortescue's operations and the personal success stories of the program's graduates.



Group Manager Fortescue People Linda O'Farrell with VTEC graduate Valma Papertalk and General Manager Port Fernando Pereira

Media Contact:

Jasmin Sleeman
Fortescue Metals Group
Mobile: 0439 754 679
Email: jsleeman@fmgl.com.au