



Evangelical Fortescue head 'loves diversity'; Equal opportunity

Australian Financial Review

October 26, 2024 Saturday

Print & First Editions

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Section: COMPANIES AND MARKETS; Pg. 25

Length: 502 words

Byline: Peter Ker

Body

Fortescue Energy boss Mark Hutchinson told staff he loves diversity in the workplace despite leading a religious group that advocates for heteronormative sexual values.

Mr Hutchinson issued a message to **Fortescue** staff on Thursday to break his silence over how he juggles his leadership role at religious group Alpha International with **Fortescue's** stated support for workplace inclusivity.

Alpha is an evangelical Christian group which broadcasts video sermons that tell teenagers that Jesus wants to "guide" them in their sexuality, and tells them the Bible is clear about how sex should be practised.

"The Bible is clear about it; sex is designed for a man and a woman in the commitment of marriage," says Canadian pastor Jason Ballard in one of the videos distributed by Alpha.

Mr Hutchinson declined to comment for a fortnight when asked by The Australian Financial Review earlier this month whether his leadership role at Alpha clashed with **Fortescue's** stated support for LGBTQ employees.

But Mr Hutchinson wrote to **Fortescue** staff on Thursday after the Financial Review published details of Alpha's sermons and its mission to "re-evangelise the nations".

"Our entire global workforce come from different faiths, religions and backgrounds - and what I love is our diversity in all of its forms," he wrote.

"I love our values and our diversity. These values guide me as CEO in everything I do."

A former **Fortescue** staff member, who identifies as homosexual, said it was notable that Mr Hutchinson spoke in "generalities" in the message and did not directly mention LGBTQ staff members.

The former staff member said Mr Hutchinson's generalities were at odds with Alpha's very precise description of how sex should be practised.

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Mr Hutchinson's note to staff came on the same day that Rio Tinto struck a three-year support deal with PrideWA, the LGBTQ advocacy group that cut ties with **Fortescue** in early 2022 after a short partnership.

Rio Tinto iron ore boss Simon Trott directly named LGBTQ employees as a group he wanted to support.

"As one of Western Australia's largest employers, we deeply value our LGBTQIA+ team members and remain committed to building a safe and inclusive environment where everyone can be themselves," he said on Thursday.

Rio will have a float in Perth's Pride Parade on November 23, and Mr Trott said close to 100 employees were expected to march beside the float.

PrideWA chief Lauren Butterly said the new deal showed that Rio "values their LGBTQIA+ employees, as well as our Western Australian LGBTQIA+ community".

Fortescue revealed on Thursday that its unit costs in the West Australian iron ore division were 12 per cent higher in the three months to September than at the same time last year.

Fortescue blamed the cost surge on higher than normal movements of waste rock, and signalled unit costs should be lower in the months ahead.

Fortescue shipped 47.7 million tonnes of ore in the three months to September.

Fortescue's annual meeting of shareholders will be held in Perth on November 6.

Load-Date: October 28, 2024

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