First, I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we are gathered, the Wadjuk people of the Noongar nation and I pay my respects to their elders both past and present.

I would also like to acknowledge Eltje Brill Meijer, Joanne Silver, Shirley King, Elizabeth McGlew, Rosemary Syme, Members of the Executive of the IALC.

I am delighted to join you at the 32nd Congress of the International Association of Lyceum Clubs in Perth; and on what I believe is such an important theme: Unique Australia: Ancient Land, Contemporary Culture.

I’d like to introduce myself to you all – I am Joanne Farrell, born and raised in country WA. My family were not miners – far from it; they were pastoralists and farmers and owners and managers of meatworks, which is somewhat fitting given recent Rio Tinto initiatives I’ll tell you about. I’ve worked in the mining industry for 31 years, both in Australia and overseas and I’ve seen it grow – and I’ve seen it change... a lot. I’ve worked for both BHP Billiton (for 6 of those years) and Rio Tinto for the remainder, the last 7 of which in in the iron ore business.

I was initially perplexed when we were asked to speak at your congress, questioning the relevance of Mining to your agenda. I quickly realised it as an opportunity to share with you the relevance of the industry to Australia’s past, present and future.

I’m proud to be Australian and I’m equally proud to work for Rio Tinto.

I believe our business remains strong by utilising our unique Australian strengths in the contemporary environment. It’s about keeping what works well, finding new ways to do things better – and remaining open to change.

Rio Tinto is a leading international mining group headquartered in the UK, combining Rio Tinto plc, a London and New York Stock Exchange listed company, and Rio Tinto Limited, which is listed on the Australian Securities Exchange.

Rio Tinto’s business is finding, mining, and processing mineral resources. We produce metals and minerals – aluminium, copper, diamonds, thermal and metallurgical coal, uranium, gold, industrial minerals (borax, titanium dioxide and salt) and iron ore – that help fulfil vital consumer needs and improve living standards.
Everything we produce is useful.

We operate in more than 40 countries and employ about 71,000 people whose health and safety is paramount.

The nature of our business means that a mine or smelter may operate for many decades. We therefore make long-term commitments to our operations and to the people and land that are impacted by our activities. This commitment continues long after a mine has produced its last tonne of ore, or a smelter has produced its last tonne of metal.

The locations of our mines are driven by the locations of good ore bodies. This often means we have to overcome the challenges of remote, undeveloped locations and construct significant infrastructure to get our minerals and metals to our customers. As well as the railways, mining camps and warehouses that we need to run our operations, we often build roads, ports, power stations, water treatment plants, schools, sporting complexes and hospitals that are of wider benefit to local people and national economies.
Turning to Australia, where we began in 1905, today over 200,000 Australians own shares in Rio Tinto. We paid $4 billion in salaries and allowances to over 23,000 Australians directly employed by us in 2012 and our operations create significant indirect employment through our contractors and suppliers working at more than 30 operating sites and offices across Australia. Last year we paid Australian Governments (both State and Federal) $9 billion in taxes (of 11.6 billion worldwide) and we spent $100 million in Australia on community programmes (of $292 million worldwide).
We are the second largest iron ore producer in the world and most of our production occurs right here in Western Australia. In the Pilbara we have 14 mines, three port facilities and a 1,500 km rail network. The operations are in the middle of a significant growth phase, with the largest integrated mining project ever undertaken in Australian history. In about three years our Iron Ore business in Western Australia alone will be able to mine close to 1 million tonnes of ore each day, every day of the year. Not bad for an operation that started in 1962 with the goal to ship 5 million tonnes of ore per annum!

The mining industry has been a significant participant in many of Australia’s historical stories, whether it is the gold rush of the 1850s, which provided a major source of employment for Australians and formative foundations for its culture such as the Eureka stockade. Or the shift in the economic focus during the 1960’s where we saw growth in coal, gas and iron ore industries as Japan’s economy exploded – driving mass industrialisation, significant immigration and Australia going “global” in terms of its trade outlook. In 2004 we again saw an economic shift in our industry, this time driven by the rapid growth and industrialisation occurring in China, that not only saw significant growth in the industry, but also a resultant revaluation of our currency and a strong Australian dollar, which has had economic impacts on other industries and consumer spending power.

Economic downturns from our industry have also impacted our economy back in the early 1980s, in the early 2000s and again more recently during the Global Financial Crisis of 2008, along with the recent crisis in Europe driving a saw-tooth demand for our products or for the products that use our minerals or metals. The industry’s current challenges include declining productivity and rising costs coinciding with declining market prices. I expect you would have all seen press coverage that all mining companies are focussing on reducing costs.
One of the things that define Australia for many is our landscape and climate, and that is definitely a factor to consider when reviewing the Mining Industry. Today the unique beauty of these regions creates immense pride among locals, it generates impressive wealth for our nation through the vast quantity and quality of the resource reserves found here and it attracts many many tourists for the unique and natural beauty on offer.

Still, the location and climate of these regions do present their own challenges. They are often dry, prone to cyclones or other dramatic weather events such as floods and they are also isolated. (In fact no major ore body has ever been discovered in a capital city in Australia!) Towns are not developed in the way many cosmopolitan citizens have come to expect and it can be difficult for our employees and their families to adapt and for Mining Companies therefore to attract the right people.

That said, residents of the regional towns that have developed or expanded around mine sites or processing plants, such as Karratha, here in the West, Gladstone in Queensland or North Parkes in New South Wales regard them as a safe and happy place to live and work, and as a positive lifestyle choice for families. They are typically characterised by numerous recreation opportunities, robust economies and low unemployment.
However for those not prepared to live in a regional location, (often due to children’s schooling, dual careers, elder care or just absence from familiar networks and family connection) the industry has created fly-in/fly-out or drive-in/drive-out options, providing more opportunity for people to participate in the industry and in a classic case of enlightened self-interest, increasing the talent pool.

Camps today more resemble hotels and holiday parks. They often have swimming pools; as well as tennis, soccer and volleyball courts; lawn bowls and gymnasiums; plenty of different sport and recreational facilities. They have their own air-conditioned units, equipped with en-suite bathrooms, televisions, telephones and internet connections — the latter proving a boon to keeping in touch with those back home.

Hot and cold meals are provided in mess or cafeteria-style facilities, with healthy and low-fat options available. Today, working a fly-in, fly-out roster has become a lifestyle choice for many. Rio Tinto worked hard to get the Busselton airport re-opened. You can now live in the Margaret River region, have your children go to a decent school, and work 8 days on 6 days off. Hundreds do now, and who could blame them?

Speaking about talent pools, the growth in the resources sector has also see innovation and change in terms of attracting previously “ignored” groups – women and aborigines.

I joined the mining industry in 1981, when it was quite uncommon for women to be employed in any roles other than administrative, accounting or “personnel”. The industry average of women’s representation at that time, was about 3-5 per cent women, with some of the more historical operations like underground coal mining being less than 0.25 (a quarter of a) per cent.
In the 1960’s it was common for jobs to only go to “Only fully qualified and experienced men will be considered.” in jobs usually up to 45 years and they would be paid $1.27 per hour. It was a common profile for all Companies at the time. In part driven by societal trends and traditions, and to some extent by the nature of the work environment; hot dusty and heavy work, at remote sites with basic accommodation, often designed for single men, with shared bathrooms and facilities. It was not considered suitable or attractive to women.

When a colleague of mine (who is now retired) took on vacation employment at a mine in the 1960s she was accommodated at the local police station to ensure “her personal safety”! In the case of underground mining the lack of women employees was also driven by myth and taboos, such as it was unlucky to have a women work underground, or on a vessel such as an offshore oil rig. If any of you have seen the movie Red Dog you would be familiar with both the work environment and living conditions of the Pilbara in the 1970s and understand what I am describing.
Today, however with modern amenities, technological advances as well as a change in societal norms (including about what girls should study at school or university), resource companies have actively sought to attract and retain women in their workforce. Today Rio Tinto’s Australian workforce is made up of 22% women (more than the national industry average of 13%), with 16% of its senior roles filled by women.

Today in our advertising we look for motivated people, men and women, looking to go places. In fact in the last ten years we have seen female participation in our workforce increase by 35%.

Women work at all levels and in all roles: from truck driver to engineer: human resources specialist to mine general manager - or in my own case, as Rio Tinto’s Global Head of Health, Safety, Environment and Communities.
Then

So one might say we have seen our business move from this picture
We took this photograph last year at an event in Yandicoogina, one of our operating sites in the Pilbara. And yes that is a pink haul truck – your eyes are not playing tricks on you! We welcomed a group of 150 Western Australian women from a variety of backgrounds with limited to no exposure to our industry, to spend two days on our site.

We are committed to building a diverse workforce and this includes more than just gender diversity, we are also very keen to employ people from other nationalities and very importantly to employ aboriginal Australians. Our focus on supporting aboriginal students and employees over the past 15 or so years has resulted in great success and we are now the largest private sector employer of aboriginal people in Australia, with just over 2,000 aboriginal employees working for us directly (and over 1,000 of those here in Western Australia).

Initiatives we have put in place to encourage and develop aboriginal employees include working with Educational Support organisations such as the Polly Farmer Foundations, the David Wirrapanda Foundation, the Clontarf Foundation and Jarwun to name a few.

A story I like to share regarding the impact of these programmes is a young aboriginal man, Clinton Walker, who was the first aboriginal to complete year 12 in Tom Price, over 13 years ago as a participant in the Polly Farmer educational support programme operating there at the time. He went on to do an apprenticeship, worked as a tradesman for both ourselves and Woodside Petroleum and then last year set up his own business – so at a personal level a great success. But the really impactful aspect of his story is that during that time he married and had 2 children, last year his children took out the academic prize for their respective school year at Karratha primary school, confirming the inter-generational impact education and employment can have.

Beyond schooling assistance we also have structured “work ready” programmes, some participants in which are 45-year-old men and women who have never held a steady job in their lives. The programme runs for 6 weeks and covers basic hand tools, getting used to working 12 hour shifts, safety and health at work and how to manage personal budgets when you are receiving a monthly income. They can then go into formal traineeships that lead to a Certificate 3 or 4 in mining or process operations or clerical skills.

In addition to all of these we also actively seek to encourage aboriginal people into either mainstream apprenticeships or adult apprenticeships and in university scholarships and graduate employment.

Our support of aboriginal people also extends to encouraging them into commercial enterprises and our Iron Ore business alone invested $1.8 billion in construction, supply and service contracts for Aboriginal business over the past three years.

I was hoping to challenge your expectation or understanding of the resources industry in my address today and I think a perfect “unexpected activity” of mining is our Iron Ore business’ hay growing project. Yes, we are farmers – we have up to 25,000 head of cattle running across 1.5 million hectares. And we need that land access to mine and process our deposits.
A classic example of how we are responding to challenges in the industry and the way we need to operate in the future is our management of surplus water, the result of accessing deposits that sit below the water table and through dewatering prior to mining.

For most of the year the Pilbara is famously dry – but only on the surface. We have come up with an integrated, innovative and strategic approach to manage this surplus water. The Hamersley Agricultural Project is the first of its kind in the Pilbara and irrigates around 850 hectares of land, using very large centre pivots, each able to cover an area of 40 - 50 hectares.

The majority of irrigated land will be used for hay production and several hectares have also been set aside to optimise native vegetation growth, with the aim of producing seed for mine-site rehabilitation.
We are a business with a long term strategy and we operate with a long term vision. We have mine plans that look forward 10, 20, 30 years - and sometimes far longer. We are going to be operating for a long time to come so we need to use our resources effectively and manage the impact we are having on the community, the environment and the economy.
Our business is committed to investing in next-generation technology and actively promotes innovative thinking to achieve a true revolution in the way mining is conducted and how value is extracted from resources. It’s also an important part of our strategy, providing long-term solutions to our productivity challenge.

A quantum leap from how mining has been conducted over the last 100 years, today a high-tech Operations Centre powered by a range of skilled professionals in Perth, manage our integrated mining network. It is the mission control for our Pilbara Operations, so to speak, operating 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days of the year.

Our Mine of the Future includes driverless haul trucks, remote train loading, and we have remotely operated drill and blast activities; as well as a project to move us to automated train systems.

Innovation is not only seen and pursued in our operations and processes, or how we overcome challenges like excess water, but also in other aspects of our business such as training.
By 2030 underground mines will contribute 60 per cent of Rio Tinto’s Copper Group’s revenue. Our challenge is in sourcing, training and retaining people with the professional, technical and operational competence required to operate these mines. In response we have developed a $13 million dollar Block Cave Knowledge Centre on site at our Northparkes mine in NSW. State of the art training with dedicated training rooms, a simulator and 360° immersion theatre means our employees have an opportunity to really experience block cave mining, and to develop their skills and knowledge, before they even step foot on a mine site.

It’s not just another training programme – it’s preparing our Copper business for the future.

I would like to close today’s address with outlining how we ensure we are an active part of our communities and to the artistic, cultural, health and education of Australia.
Partnering to support the community

Firstly our employees play an active role in their local communities with a large number of them embracing events and fundraising activities, collectively raising significant funds and committing significant hours to a diverse range of charities and community groups. Activities, such as Movember, Shave for a Cure, Ride to Conquer Cancer, the HBF run for a Reason or the Million Paws walk. In WA alone through our employees in the community programme 6,820 employees volunteered over 23,000 hours; and Rio Tinto and our employees contributed more than $740,000 to the community.

Rio Tinto has also formed significant funding partnerships with many community organisations around Australia, supporting education, health and safety, literacy, the environment, culture and more. The shortlist is behind me – there are many more and unfortunately today I do not have time to talk to you about them all. There are two sponsorships that I am particularly proud of and I would like to highlight for you today for their valuable contribution to improving medical access for individuals in rural communities.

The first is the Rio Tinto Life Flight partnership in Western Australia. We joined forces with the Royal Flying Doctor Service in 2008 to establish this service, with an $11 million partnership. The jet is a flying intensive-care unit and assists those living in the remotest parts of Australia to get the best available medical care, free of charge. Since the jet commenced operation in 2009 more than 515 people have been saved, it has flown 2115 hours, evacuated 867 patients, the majority (73.9%) from the more distant Kimberley and Pilbara regions.

Another valuable sponsorship, worth $10 million over 10 years, in Queensland supports EMQ Rescue Helicopter Service to conduct countless search and rescue activities and transfers each year and enhances state-wide community safety.
Yes, we produce a lot of useful things. But in so doing we are, I believe, undoubtedly a force for good. Rio Tinto is a major Global Company, with a large Australian presence, making a significant contribution and with a long successful future ahead of it.

Thank you.