

WBR ARTICLE

Gov wraps Aussie coal trip

By Staff

March 19, 2010 --

CHEYENNE — Gov. Dave Freudenthal, in the last days of his coal-focused trip to Australia, met with academics, energy industry and government officials to discuss the future of coal production, use, and global markets.

"This trip has been an opportunity for Wyoming to build the relationships we need to move forward with clean coal technologies like carbon capture and sequestration," Freudenthal said. "There are still skeptics so it's in the state's, and the country's, best interests to demonstrate it can work," he said.

The University of Wyoming's School of Energy Resources, which sponsored the trip and is represented by Director Mark Northam, has been actively searching for collaboration partners in nearly all of the governor's meetings. Northam said that UW has a relationship with the University of Queensland. Together, the two institutions have been coordinating on carbon capture and storage (CCS) and coal research.

"We're simply not going to build the U.S. or the world economy without coal," Freudenthal said. The hope is to create a CCS demonstration project at the University of Wyoming, he said, so that the technology can support coal, which currently produces 50 percent of the country's electricity and costs less than other energy sources.

"This summer UW is going to host a conference in conjunction with the Australians and the Chinese to discuss CCS," Freudenthal said. "We will be continuing our conversations about energy, the use of coal in a carbon-constrained world and future coal utilization, especially on a world scale," he said. Advanced research into carbon capture and sequestration, high-temperature coal gas cleaning, low-emission coal technology and other coal use innovations were among the issues Freudenthal discussed with scientists at a state-run facility in Brisbane, Queensland.

In a working session with the Australian National Low Emissions Coal Research and Development Centre, Freudenthal and CEO Mark Davies, a former board member of UW's School of Energy Resources, talked about the research and development efforts the Centre has undertaken for the mining, energy and manufacturing industries. Issues centered on how to increase the international competitiveness and efficiency of mineral resource industries and related businesses.

Before departing for the Canberra leg of his trip, Freudenthal also met with officials from Peabody Coal, which has mineral interests in Australia and Wyoming, and is the world's largest private-sector coal company. Advanced coal technologies were the focus.

While in the Australian capital, Freudenthal had appointments at Parliament house with Greg Hunt MP, shadow (opposition party) minister for climate action, environment and heritage, as well as with the federal minister for resources and energy and the minister for tourism, Martin Ferguson. Freudenthal had the opportunity to attend the House of Representatives and the Senate for Question Time, when members of parliament ask questions of government ministers who are obliged to answer.

The governor, first lady Nancy Freudenthal, Northam and the governor's energy advisor, Rob Hurlless, are scheduled to return to the U.S. on Saturday.