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Human rights and corporate responsibility in the shift to a green economy

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* The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations.

1. Introduction

Amidst a pivotal shift towards a green economy, the transition poses unique challenges and opportunities, especially for Indigenous communities. While asserting the centrality of Indigenous Knowledges and rights in the transition to a green economy, this paper explores human rights and corporate responsibility in the shift to a green economy, focussing on two key considerations.

1. Safeguarding the right to self-determination

Foundational rights must be substantively reflected in economic, social, and political systems. This ensures economic systems are consistently evaluated and recalibrated, maintaining a firm commitment to Indigenous rights, such as self-determination. If properly integrated and normalised, this will steward project, financing, and policy outcomes, where challenges have been historically experienced.

2. Embracing economic opportunities of Indigenous leadership

Beyond safeguarding rights, this paper advocates for economic development as a vehicle for rights expansion, particularly through green economy initiatives. Indigenous Peoples are economically significant leaders within the green economy, and vital for achieving sustainable outcomes. This angle underscores the importance of self-determination, economic influence, and culturally aligned development, suggesting that with adequate capacity and resourcing, Indigenous communities can steer the green economy towards realizing values-aligned economic growth and stronger social outcomes.

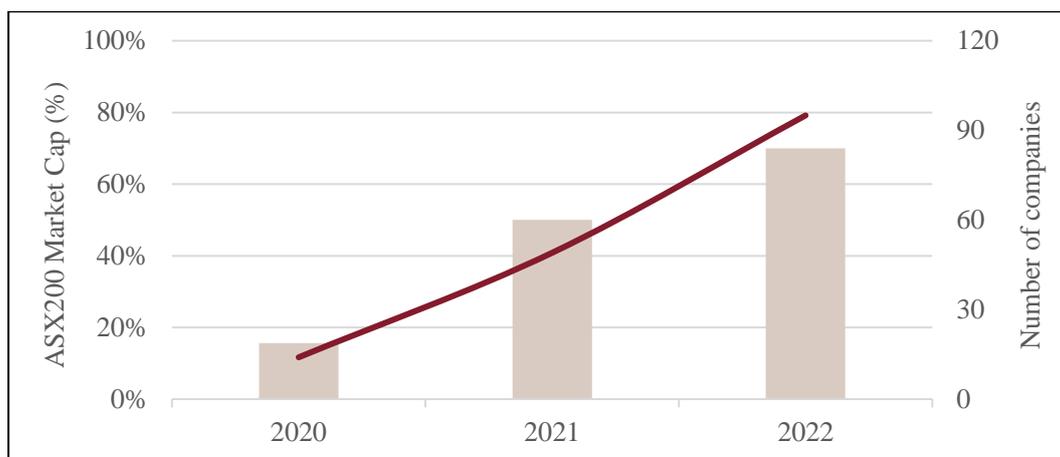
While this paper provides informed perspectives on CSR and its intersection with human rights within the green economy, the author does not claim expertise in human rights law. Moreover, the analysis presented should be viewed as an overarching assessment of green economic trends rather than specific financial guidance. Caleb Adams is a proud murun (Aboriginal man) from Wulli-Wulli nyilung (Country) located in Southeast Queensland. Caleb grew up in Meanjin (Brisbane), now residing in Narm (Melbourne), with family connections to the broader Cherbourg community. His expertise spans sustainable investment strategies and corporate sustainability, underpinned by an academic foundation in Development Studies and Environmental Engineering. His experience in ESG and investment roles offers a grounded perspective on how Indigenous Peoples can contribute to the emerging green economy.

2. An Inevitable Economic Transition

The green economic transition is escalating and shaping our global economy. The transformation is marked by the commitments of policymakers, investors, and the evolving expectations of customers, all of whom are championing sustainable practices. The long-term business case remains clear as businesses and investors, highly attuned to the high standards of stakeholders, agree that companies with commitments to sustainable policies will outlast competitors.

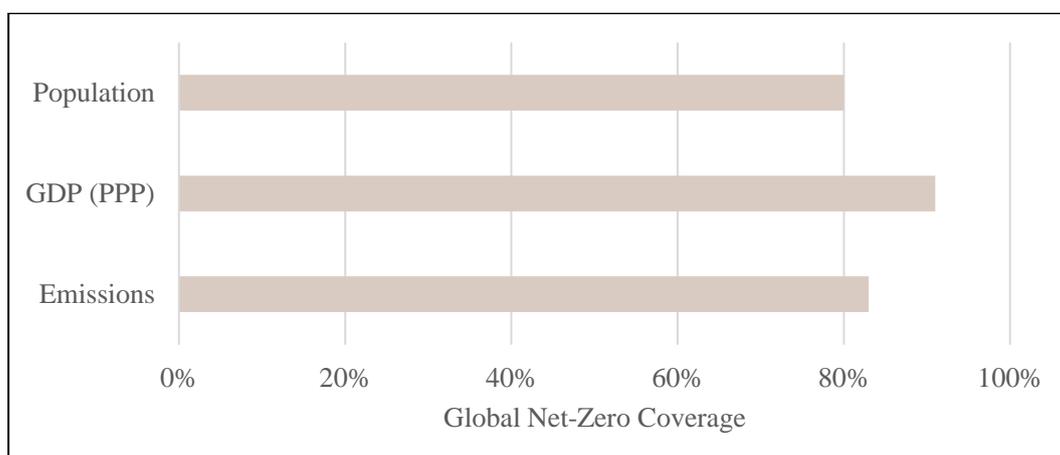
In Australia, this shift sees significant and growing pledges from major businesses to reduce their carbon footprint. The convergence of these efforts reflects a broad consensus on the urgency of climate action.

Figure 1: S&P/ASX200 net-zero commitments [1]



From a global perspective, the most recent United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of the Parties (COP28) was labelled a milestone in global climate policy, particularly through the first global stocktake. While commitments did not reflect the ambition of all constituencies, agreeing to phase down unabated coal and transition away from fossil fuels on designated timelines is still a step forward. Such steps are consistent with a broader economic outlook, showing that most of the world (based on population, emissions and economic output) is already subject to net zero targets, including large emissions-intensive countries [2]. This signals the unmistakable momentum of climate policy and the inevitability of a decarbonised future.

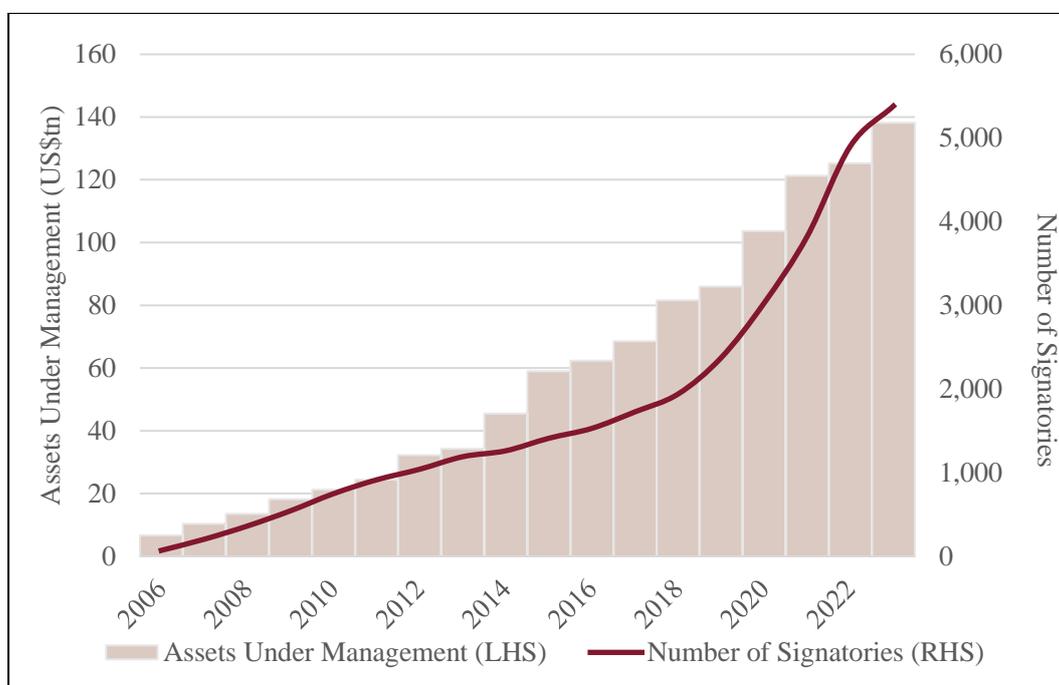
Figure 2: Global net-zero target coverage [2]



Customers expect more of companies, meaning alignment to a green transition can meaningfully impact an organisation's reputation and brand, an increasingly important part of company value. Consumers want businesses to address sustainability issues beyond minimum regulatory obligations and are prepared to reward brands that act accordingly. These stakeholder expectations are also increasingly reflected in corporate procurement programs, simultaneously influencing business-to-business dynamics.

This is augmented by a rise in sustainable investing. Recognising significant societal impacts, investors and companies are increasingly incorporating Environmental, Social, Governance (ESG) factors as core to their risk management and strategic planning. As of June 2023, ESG integration had been embraced by over 5,370 asset managers and financial institutions as signatories of the United Nations Principles of Responsible Investment (PRI), overseeing more than US\$121 trillion in assets [3]. Major institutional groups are making climate a priority for company engagement, underscoring the financial sector's recognition of its role in promoting a decarbonized economy.

Figure 3: PRI signatories and assets under management (US\$ trillions) (2006-2023) [3]



Climate considerations are now deeply embedded in mainstream approaches, shifting the focus to leveraging society's full potential to accelerate climate action in the forthcoming critical decade. The scale of economic change accompanying the green economy is unprecedented, presenting vast opportunities for economic and social development, particularly for Indigenous communities. The transition must not repeat oversights and injustices of the past. Yet, vast economic and industrial changes also present opportunities to actively assert Indigenous interests and rights.

One of the most significant threads that connects Indigenous Peoples and a green economy is Country (or place). To this end, Indigenous Peoples' connection with land and natural capital is of relevance to rights-based consideration, a repository of cultural science and an enabler of economic influence.

3. Country Grounds Indigenous Peoples in a Green Economy

Indigenous Peoples' connection to traditional lands and associated natural environment is pivotal in the context of a green economy. It is central to the expression and experience of Indigenous rights, and further underpins many avenues for Indigenous economic influence and entrepreneurship. In Australia, this relationship is often referred to as 'Connection to Country'.

Globally, many Indigenous communities maintain a profound, multifaceted bond with their ancestral lands – a connection that transcends material resource dependence. For many Indigenous Peoples, land represents not merely a physical space but a living, breathing entity entwined in a complex web of relationships and stories. It encompasses deep spiritual, cultural, and ecological dimensions that continue to be integral to Indigenous identities and practices since time immemorial. Indigenous Peoples are often a component of this web, engaging in a symbiotic exchange of care and respect, manifesting in traditions of sustainable resource management that promote states of mutual well-being.

The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) reinforces Indigenous rights to ancestral lands, territories and resources. However, many communities often face challenges in maintaining and accessing traditional lands due to colonialism, forcible land seizures, dispossession, and aggressive natural resource depletion [4]. These actions have impacted rights, well-being, and the ability to maintain traditional ways of living. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge many such challenges faced by Indigenous communities around the globe.

While these experiences do not reflect all Indigenous experiences, it is extremely concerning and important to recognise. This report does not intend to contradict or invalidate these experiences. Rather, the intent is to highlight the criticality of foundational human rights in all aspects of our society and economy and, in the context of an inevitable transition, explore opportunities to uplift Indigenous economic interests. If done properly, examples indicate that these do not need to be mutually exclusive.

It is understood that Indigenous Peoples manage and protect about a quarter of the world's terrestrial surface, concentrated among 80% of the globe's remaining areas of critical ecological diversity [5]. In Australia, research concerning Indigenous land tenure reveals that Indigenous Australians manage approximately 26% of the country's landmass through various legal frameworks, predominantly within the Northern Territory and South Australia [6]. This figure expands to about 54% when considering broader forms of ownership, such as non-exclusive Native Title [6].

Although legal land tenure does not sufficiently represent the deep connection of Indigenous Peoples to ancestral lands, it highlights substantial political and economic leverage. Many green sectors also have emphases on place-based considerations. The geographic spread of technology-enabling mineral reserves, like lithium and cobalt, places Traditional Owners at the forefront of proposed mining projects. Equally, the dispersed and decentralised nature of renewable energy generation opens opportunities for community-led projects and enhanced stewardship over exposed territories. Over half of global economic output is also estimated to be highly or moderately dependent on natural capital [7], placing renewed weight in a field with extensive Indigenous expertise and direct custodianship.

Indigenous Peoples represent around 6% of the global populace [7] and 4% of Australia's population [8], meaning that while the status of Indigenous land ownership may still be inadequate, our Connection to Country remains a resounding point of strength. It grounds us, sustains communities and preserves culture, while enabling strategic economic interests through disproportionate influence over the management and safeguarding of the world's natural environments.

4. Case Study 1: Lessons from Australian Mining and Resources

Mining and resources have long been a major industry in Australia, posing historical and contemporary patterns of systemic challenges and reforms that can inform future improvements across all sectors. The Australian mining sector has been a source of employment, economic activity and technological advancement, a significant global exporter with a diverse range of resources including iron ore, coal, oil and gas, gold, and increasingly, rare earth elements critical for modern technologies.

The Australian resources industry has a complex relationship with Indigenous rights, as it often operates on or near lands that are culturally significant to Indigenous peoples. The history of mining has been marred by instances of displacement, inadequate consultation, and a lack of equitable benefit-sharing, leading to long-standing disputes and grievances. However, there has been a gradual shift towards more inclusive practices. Landmark legislation and court decisions, such as the Native Title Act and the Mabo case, have paved the way for greater recognition of Indigenous land rights and interests [10]. In contemporary settings, the mining sector increasingly engages with Indigenous communities through agreements that aim to ensure consent, protect cultural heritage, and provide economic opportunities, such as employment, education, and business development. These agreements are meant to offer a framework for partnership and collaboration, although their effectiveness and the degree of community involvement can vary.

Nevertheless, Australia has also seen many examples of poor outcomes for Indigenous rights. One such topical example is the Barossa gas project, led by Santos Ltd., which poses risks to sacred Indigenous sites and marine life, raising environmental and cultural concerns among Indigenous communities. Despite the potential economic benefits for some and recent Federal Court dismissal of the Indigenous heritage claim against Santos gas pipeline [11], the threat to traditional lands and ways of life has led to opposition and legal challenges, highlighting inadequacies in the consultation process and the need for Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC). The controversy has prompted project delays, legal scrutiny, and an intensified call for stronger FPIC laws – requiring genuine engagement with Indigenous communities in resource development decisions. The unresolved status of the Barossa project underscores the broader struggle by Indigenous Australians to protect Indigenous rights against major resource extraction projects.

Similarly, Juukan Gorge's destruction in 2020 by Rio Tinto, during an iron ore mine expansion, highlighted another conflict between mining operations and Indigenous heritage protection in Australia. The 46,000-year-old site, significant to the Puutu Kunti Kurrama People for its rock art, sacred sites and as Country, became a national symbol of the tension between resource development and cultural preservation [12]. The incident questioned the adequacy of Australia's heritage protection laws and sparked public outcry, parliamentary inquiries, and calls for reform.

The Barossa gas project and the Juukan Gorge incident are not isolated events but represent a pattern within resource development that often overlooks Indigenous rights and environmental stewardship. Such events have spurred efforts to ensure better legal protections for Indigenous heritage and a stronger voice for Indigenous communities in protecting sacred sites. Importantly, the need for robust safeguards is not unique to the mining industry – it is a core necessity across all aspects of a green economy. Key characteristics such as impacts on access to land, irreversible damage to cultural heritage and a lack of FPIC are also real risks in green industries if lessons from past wrong-doings are not applied.

In response to these events and the demand for a higher standard for all listed companies, investors have developed frameworks designed to safeguard Indigenous rights at scale. These interventions recalibrate economic systems, ensuring the minimum standards are upheld and corporate practices are transparent.

The Responsible Investment Association of Australasia (RIAA) recently released draft Investor and Business Guides, through the *Dhawura Ngilan (Remembering Country) Initiative*. These guides aim to embed FPIC within corporate operations to protect Indigenous cultural heritage. The guide's release marks a shift from theory to practice, urging investors to apply these principles actively. These guidelines serve as a tool for investors to consider cultural heritage in investment decisions, outlining the associated risks, including legal, reputational, and operational repercussions. The guides also articulate frameworks for corporate governance and investment decisions, thus integrating a commitment to Indigenous rights into the fabric of responsible and sustainable investment practices. The push for their integration stems from high-profile incidents like Juukan Gorge, which underscored the urgent need to respect Indigenous rights in business practices.

Concurrently, The Australian Sustainable Finance Institute (ASFI) is addressing the enhancement of corporate transparency regarding the impacts on Indigenous through improved disclosures and advocating for the incorporation of Indigenous perspectives in the sustainable finance [13]. These efforts are part of a broader movement within the financial sector to recognise the value of Indigenous input on decisions affecting land and cultural heritage, which may influence future financial and regulatory frameworks in Australia. This coincides with ASFI's major projects, in developing a Sustainable Finance Taxonomy in partnership with the Australian government. This initiative seeks to align investment with Australia's green transition goals and consider Indigenous rights. The successful implementation of such a framework is likely to have wide-reaching implications, potentially driving transformative change across the broader Australian economy by embedding Indigenous rights within the fabric of economic decision-making.

The finance industry's shift to incorporate Indigenous rights and cultural heritage considerations into investment frameworks is significant with potential for scalable outcomes. The sector is working to build a financial system that not only safeguards but also values Indigenous heritage as an integral part of society, business practices and Australia's economic future.

Looking forward, critical minerals like lithium and cobalt are the building blocks of renewable energy technologies and are in high demand as the world transitions to a green economy. The geographic spread of critical mineral reserves means that many Indigenous territories are at the forefront of proposed mining projects. Their extraction offers economic potential but raises environmental concerns, particularly for Indigenous communities. The mining of these minerals must be managed to protect local ecosystems and respect the cultural and spiritual values of Indigenous lands. This also presents an opportunity for Indigenous communities to lead in sustainable practices and to have a say in the development that affects their lands. Ensuring that Indigenous Peoples are central to the conversation about resource development is essential to avoid repeating historical patterns of exploitation. Mining operations must proceed with rigorous environmental safeguards and genuine community engagement. This involves not just consent but active participation in the planning and benefits derived from mineral extraction.

To this end, the world's first Indigenous-owned and run bauxite mine, Gulkula, embodies the aspirations of the Yolngu people of north-east Arnhem Land, to blend traditional stewardship with contemporary development [14]. While Bauxite mining has occurred on their land for over 40 years, operations at the Gulkula mine commenced in late 2017. Gulkula empowers local Yolngu People to make decisions that impact their land and people, through mining operations, employment, skilling and profit benefitting. For millennia, the Yolngu have maintained a deep bond with their land, engaging in early international trade and advocating for Aboriginal land rights. Gulkula represents this legacy by directing the management of natural resources to foster Yolngu's economic and social advancement, grounded in the community's enduring values and responsibilities. As well as exercising control over the impact on their land, and maintaining responsibility for active rehabilitation, the Yolngu people now sell Bauxite (aluminium) to Rio Tinto. This stands as an example, encouraging other Indigenous landowner groups to consider entrepreneurial models, where self-determination, cultural values and economic outcomes are strategically aligned.

5. Case Study 2: Opportunities in First Nations Clean Energy

Renewable energy generation and distribution is a major decarbonisation-led growth area. Led by wind and solar, renewable energy is now shouldering 80% of new power demand, suggesting a potential peak in power emissions. The future energy landscape will not only demand increased renewable power generation, but also the development of extensive new power lines and storage solutions as the world moves towards electrification in transportation, industry, and heating.

Despite this growth, the transition to a fully renewable grid is complex. The dispersed and decentralised nature of renewable energy sources stands in contrast to traditional fossil fuels. Renewable energy must be harvested in a wide variety of locations. For Indigenous Peoples, it opens opportunities for community-led energy projects and enhanced stewardship over territories and necessitates careful management to ensure that the development of renewable energy projects is aligned with Indigenous values and rights.

The renewable energy sector's integration of Indigenous participation is gaining new ground, as evidenced by the First Nations Clean Energy Network's project tracker record of 14 significant clean energy announcements and Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) that involve substantial equity participation or benefit-sharing with Indigenous groups in Australia [15]. These projects span a range of technologies, including mid-to-large-scale solar and wind, hydro, green hydrogen, battery storage, and microgrids. However, while these projects are promising, they are not yet operational, with six in the feasibility stage.

This development is set against a contrasting backdrop in Canada, where Indigenous Peoples are significant asset owners in the clean energy sector, boasting nearly 200 noteworthy clean energy projects in various stages of operation, planning, or construction. In 2022, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit entities were partners or beneficiaries in nearly 20% of Canada's existing electricity-generating infrastructure, most of which produces renewable energy [16].

Energy projects owned by Indigenous groups offer more than economic benefits; they also address crucial needs in underserved communities. Research shows that Australian electricity protections are lacking in remote and Indigenous areas, risking the neglect of energy needs. With 20% of Australians missing key protections life support disconnection and the right to install solar PV, Indigenous and remote communities are disproportionately affected. Policy reforms and increased self-reliance in energy could prevent widening these disparities.

Australia's nascent clean energy projects underscore a pivotal moment. There is an emerging trend of Indigenous communities seeking equity ownership in projects on their lands, recognising that such involvement not only enhances commercial outcomes but also supports community empowerment and sustainable development. There is a clear demand for a transformative approach to energy projects on Indigenous lands. Indigenous groups are advocating for active participation in the governance and economic benefits of these projects, seeking terms of development that ensure respect for Indigenous rights and provide tangible benefits such as preferential contracting opportunities, co-ownership, equity, and revenue sharing.

Indigenous communities are moving from being passive hosts to protagonists, with a significant say in the projects affecting their lands. This is not only a matter of fairness but also a strategic move that de-risks projects and cultivates local employment and intergenerational wealth. Projects not only forecast the creation of jobs and capacity-building but also promise sustained revenue streams for Indigenous communities, marking a step towards a more equitable and inclusive green economy that honours Indigenous rights and contributions.

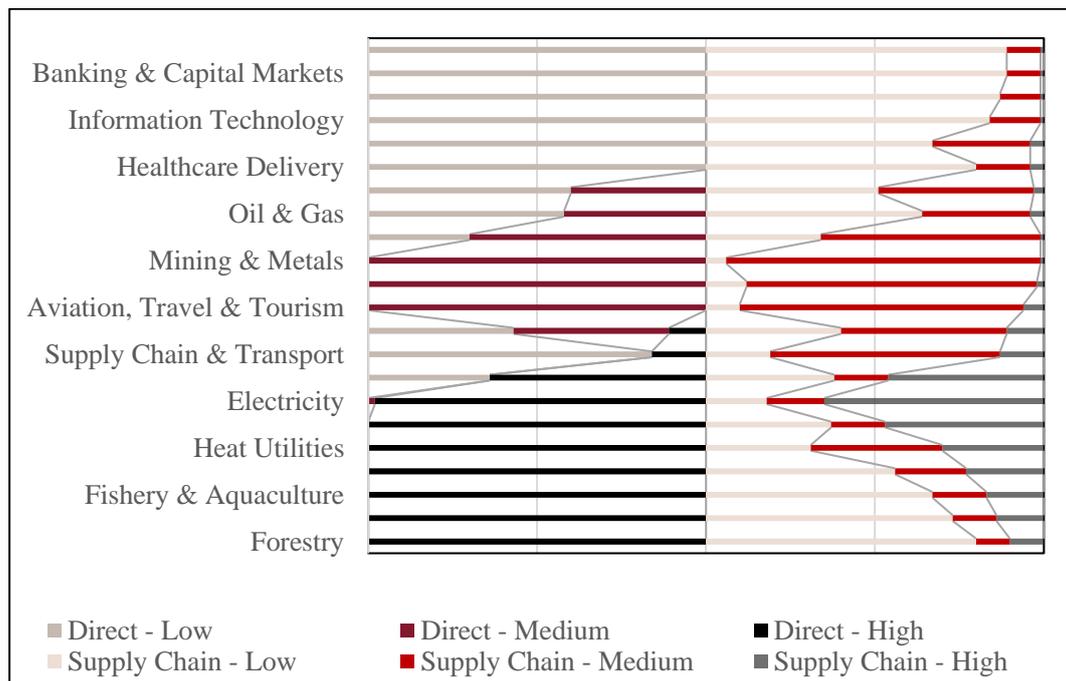
6. Case Study 3: Natural Capital Knowledge & Governance

Protecting the 'environment' is more than simply managing greenhouse gas emissions. The environment (or natural capital) is the world's stock of natural resources, including aspects such as soil, air, water and biodiversity. It is estimated that US\$44 trillion in global economic output (half the world's total) is either highly or moderately dependent on natural capital [7]. Different industries are exposed to nature to varying (and often underappreciated) degrees.

For example, biodiversity plays a major role in both the current and future development of pharmaceutical products, with approximately 11% of the drugs classified as 'basic' and 'essential' by the World Health Organization (WHO) originating from flowering plants [17]. Some of the largest selling drugs globally were also originally derived and synthesised from nature-based products (e.g., aspirin, Morphine and Taxol) [17]. Further, 25% of modern drugs originate from rainforest plants [18], yet only 15% of an estimated 300,000 plant species have been assessed for their medical potential [19]. Some estimates suggest society is already losing a major drug every two years due to biodiversity loss [20].

Natural capital also provides a safeguard against the physical risks of climate change and is important to areas such as agriculture and insurance. Natural defences such as mangrove swamps are estimated to provide an annual \$65 billion worth of flood protection to over 15 million people [21]. Similarly, it is estimated that around 30% of global croplands are at risk of soil erosion with adequate biodiversity key in maintaining the productivity of agricultural lands [5].

Figure 4: Economic dependence on biodiversity [7]

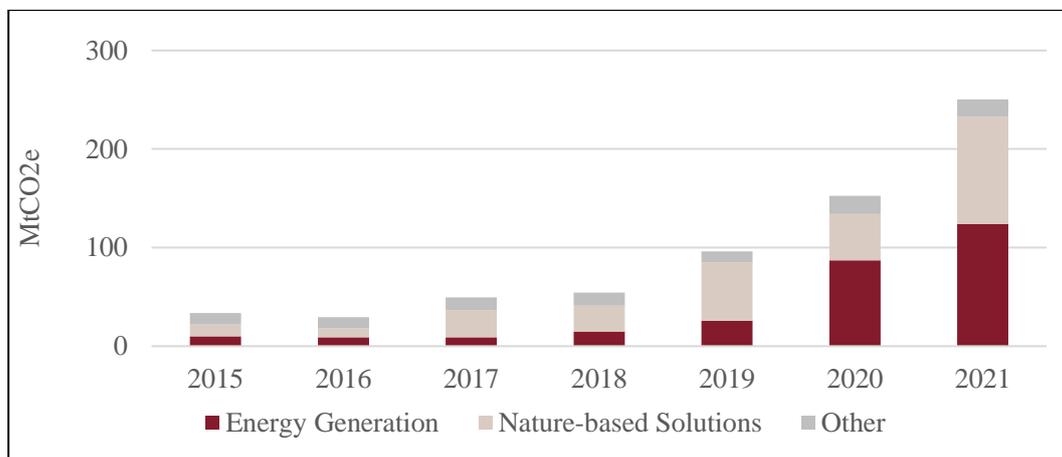


While nature underpins our economy and society, it is chronically underappreciated. However, the sector is expected to mature quickly with growing attention on resource management, dependence and maturing financial market engagement. This will likely see multilateral commitments, standardised reporting and investor stewardship, all leading to companies having to measure, mitigate, and price the related risks. Biodiversity may become one of the largest and most important 'ESG' issues of the next decade, and Indigenous Peoples are uniquely placed to lead as the sector forms.

For example, Indigenous People are favourably placed to exhibit technical and commercial leadership in carbon markets, which will play an important role in a green economy as reducing net emissions is becoming a significant priority for large, publicly listed, companies. This is particularly true for interim targets (2030) where capex and operational changes will take time to implement, and hard to abate sectors such with limited alternative technology available at scale.

The largest supply source of carbon credits has traditionally come from energy-based projects in emerging economies. However, changes in carbon standards and increasing scrutiny are placing this source at risk. The second significant source of supply has historically come from nature-based projects and solutions. This includes avoiding deforestation, soil sequestration and afforestation. While removal-based credits are relatively straightforward, particularly in the nature-based market (regrowing and restoring nature to remove carbon), avoidance and reduction credits are less so. High-quality carbon credits (most notably nature-based removal credits) are most commonly viewed as a legitimate tool in decarbonisation efforts. Removal-based credits (as opposed to avoidance) have several favourable attributes including physical supply constraints amid competition for land use, industry scrutiny and arrears issuances imposing growth constraints.

Figure 5: Carbon offset issuance by sector [22]



These developments point to a future with narrower definitions, higher standards, and potential regulatory oversight. High-quality carbon credits will likely remain an important tool in decarbonisation efforts and should increase the premium for high-integrity credits that Indigenous people are well placed to deliver.

Models such as the Aboriginal Carbon Foundation Core Benefits Verification Framework exemplify leadership and the expression of self-determination through commercial pursuits [23]. This presents carbon credit revenue as a co-benefit and Indigenous outcomes as a core benefit representing a paradigm shift in environmental and social program verification by placing Indigenous ownership at its heart. The framework integrates best practices from international development for a robust, culturally sensitive approach. Through this approach, Indigenous communities gain both the skills and the agency to manage their development assessments, paving the way for more accurate, meaningful, and self-determined evaluations of environmental, social, and cultural projects.

This is an extension of the regulated Australian ACCU scheme, which incorporates Indigenous methodologies for savanna fire management, addressing the intense fires of the late dry season that lead to high GHG emissions [24]. By applying traditional ecological knowledge, these methods aim to preemptively manage fires under cooler, early dry season conditions. This practice not only curbs emissions but also upholds Indigenous-led environmental stewardship. Bolstering applied traditional knowledge into fit-

for-purpose and locally controlled verification frameworks promotes higher credit quality and elevates Indigenous rights throughout the process.

The Kullilli people in far southwest Queensland, in partnership with impact investment managers, have also delivered an innovative transaction model enabling the reclamation of their ancestral lands. The transaction focuses on a pathway to acquire the land, underpinned by the deployment of sustainable land management techniques to rejuvenate native forests and restore healthy Country.

As the carbon market evolves, there is a growing recognition of the need for carbon credits that come from projects with real, measurable, and long-term benefits. Indigenous-led projects often exceed these requirements, providing a model for integrity and effectiveness in carbon offsetting. The integral role of Indigenous communities in carbon markets, with effective land management and deep ecological knowledge, is crucial for generating quality carbon credits and safeguarding biodiversity. However, as demand for nature-based credits grows, there is a significant risk of unjust outcomes if market mechanisms and regulated markets fail to safeguard Indigenous rights and interests. Ensuring equity in carbon markets means embedding Indigenous consent, benefit-sharing and ownership in project designs, to protect Indigenous custodians.

Water governance also offers insight into Indigenous rights concerning natural capital management. Indigenous science and economics present value to contemporary industry at a technical level [25]. Indigenous Australians are renowned for their custodianship and care for country [26], and sustainable solutions [27]. A result of Indigenous culture and connection to country, is the ability to integrate human activity within a local ecosystem; interlocking natural indicators or signals to the way human activity is managed [26] [29] [30]. The use of a natural control system to adjust the way humans interact with an environment offers significant value to the contemporary water industry.

Yet, research highlights the stark inequities in water rights for Indigenous People in New South Wales (NSW), revealing systemic exclusion from Australia's water economy [30]. Indigenous organisations in the NSW Murray Darling Basin (MDB) hold a mere 0.2% of surface water rights, despite making up nearly 10% of the area's population. This disproportionality extends to economic value, with Indigenous holdings representing only 0.1% of the MDB's AUD\$16.5 billion water market. The lasting impacts of colonial policies, which historically deprived Indigenous people of land and, consequently, water licenses, remain unresolved. Research also shows a 17% decline in Indigenous-held water entitlements over the past decade, often due to forced sales from the liquidation of Indigenous enterprises.

Many basins, such as the Murray-Darling and Murrumbidgee have begun to incorporate initiatives to foster Indigenous participation in water management [15]. These strive for the integration of cultural water needs, embedding traditional ecological knowledge and cultural practices in sustainable water governance. One practical example is the development of cultural water plans, identifying the water needs of Indigenous communities for traditional and cultural purposes, such as watering sacred sites and practicing cultural ceremonies [16] through the formal Basin Plan water allocations.

However, without sound governance models, the governance structure to deliver environmental water does not sufficiently include Indigenous knowledge, values, rights and interests. Cultural flows may be limited in their embodiment of ecological, socioeconomic, health and wellbeing outcomes. With prescribed use cases and varied reliability, building self-determined water management capacity within Indigenous organisations can be limited.

7. Self-determination in a Green Economy

The case studies exemplify the need for a multifaceted understanding and pursuit of Indigenous rights. The right to self-determination and the principle of free prior and informed consent are critical across all observed angles of angles. Rights-based frameworks should be consistent but not prescriptive; with appropriate levels of flexibility empowering localised expressions of rights. For example, system-wide approaches should not stipulate whether green sectors are ‘good’ or ‘bad’. Rather, they should seek to strengthen capacity to be self-determining. All three angles below are an expression of Indigenous rights, as they support basic needs, strengthen participatory approaches, and empower agency. Therefore, programs striving to support such rights should maintain a multifaceted and interdisciplinary approach. Understanding meaningful local engagement and frameworks for scaled application across the economy is critical to the realisation of this.

1. Safeguard Indigenous rights via minimum standards in policy and stakeholder expectations.
2. Elevate Indigenous voices and knowledge in industry and related domains.
3. Support technical, financial and professional capacity for greater Indigenous ownership.

However, it is not enough to continue discussing established understandings of Indigenous rights; dialogue must now address specific means to safeguard, and express these rights at scale. The United Nations has a key role in articulating the need for improved Indigenous influence and ownership within a green economy as a rights-based consideration, and therefore a matter of heightened importance for party states and industry.

While policy architecture is addressed from the top down, ground-up approaches are also required with particular attention towards Indigenous capacity building. These programs must expand on the successes of existing networks (primarily Indigenous-to-Indigenous) and now include industry and investment to catalyse Indigenous-led outcomes. The framework below articulates three key focus areas required for enhanced Indigenous capacity within a green economy. Additionally, a list of objectives is provided that highlights some of the immediate priorities that intersect with this capacity-building framework.

Empower Capable Citizens:	Foster Confident Communities:	Connect Catalytic Capital:
Equip future Indigenous leaders to navigate both traditional and contemporary societies, through targeted technical, cultural and personal development.	Build confident and informed communities, leveraging existing community-to-community trust to scale successes, knowledge and commercial opportunities.	Bridge gaps between communities and financial markets, to enable participation in capital markets and access to quality financial services.

- Drive corporate investment towards Indigenous-led projects and capacity building, ensuring Indigenous communities are primary decision makers in initiatives that affect them;
- Amplify support for Indigenous-led environmental initiatives through dedicated funding and robust policy frameworks, including valuing traditional knowledge and practices;
- Champion Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs that not only meet compliance but set industry-leading examples, encouraging a ‘race to the top’ in environmental and social governance;
- Promote education and skill development in STEM, commerce, economics; and
- Promote education in traditional knowledge for Indigenous youth, to prepare future leaders who can navigate and influence both traditional and contemporary economic systems.

Leaders must recognise Indigenous communities' unique contributions and perspectives as integral to the overall success of the green economy. Indigenous economic contributions not only address historical injustices but also unlock new pathways for innovation, resilience and advancement. Indigenous Peoples must be empowered to shape the economic landscapes that affect our lands, futures and rights.

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