



Australian Government
Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation



The **ILSC GROUP**

PEOPLE. COUNTRY. OPPORTUNITY.

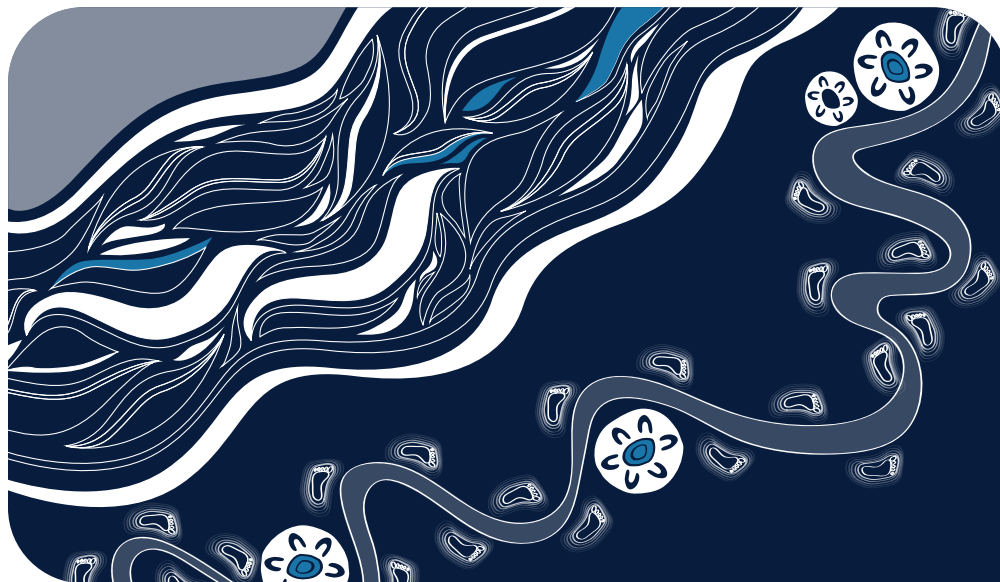
Sector Leadership

Future Industries Initiatives

A commitment of the National Indigenous
Land and Sea Strategy 2023-2028



Acknowledgement of Country



Artwork by Maisie Crawford-Owers.

In all our activities we pay our respect to the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the lands, waters and skies on which we live and work. We honour the resilience and continuing connection to Country, culture, and community of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across Australia. We recognise the decisions we make today will impact the lives of generations to come.

A note on language

The terms 'Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander', 'Aboriginal', 'Indigenous' and 'First Nations' may be used interchangeably throughout this document. Using these terminologies, we seek to acknowledge and honour diversity, shared knowledge and experiences as well as the right of individuals and communities to define their own identities. The C in Country is capitalised throughout this document as Country for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is a strong place of connection which provides the upmost significance to their people and means more than physical land. In this document, Country may refer to land, freshwater and/or seawater.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised that this publication may contain the names or images of people who have died.

The artwork elements used throughout this publication introduce the work of ILSC Communications Officer Maisie Crawford-Owers, a proud Barkindji woman from Far West NSW. Maisie shares the story of the ILSC, incorporating elements of the land, the sea, and our collective journey. Unlike her artwork style, Maisie explains that the journey is not linear. Her digital design captures the highs and lows of every journey, highlighting the partnerships made along the way, with each footprint representing a step towards the future.

Established in 1995 under the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Act*, we provide for the contemporary and future land needs of Indigenous people, particularly those unlikely to benefit from Native Title or Land Rights. We work with our Indigenous partners to grow their economic, environmental, cultural and social capital by supporting their acquisition and management of land and water. In redressing dispossession, we provide for a more prosperous and culturally centred future for Indigenous people.

The Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation is a Commonwealth entity under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*.



www.ilsc.gov.au
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Cover photo: Ngurrara Ranger
right way fire on Kiwirrkurra Indigenous Protected Area.



Contents

02 Acknowledgement of Country

04 Introduction

06 What we heard

07 Actions across sectors

10 Carbon Market

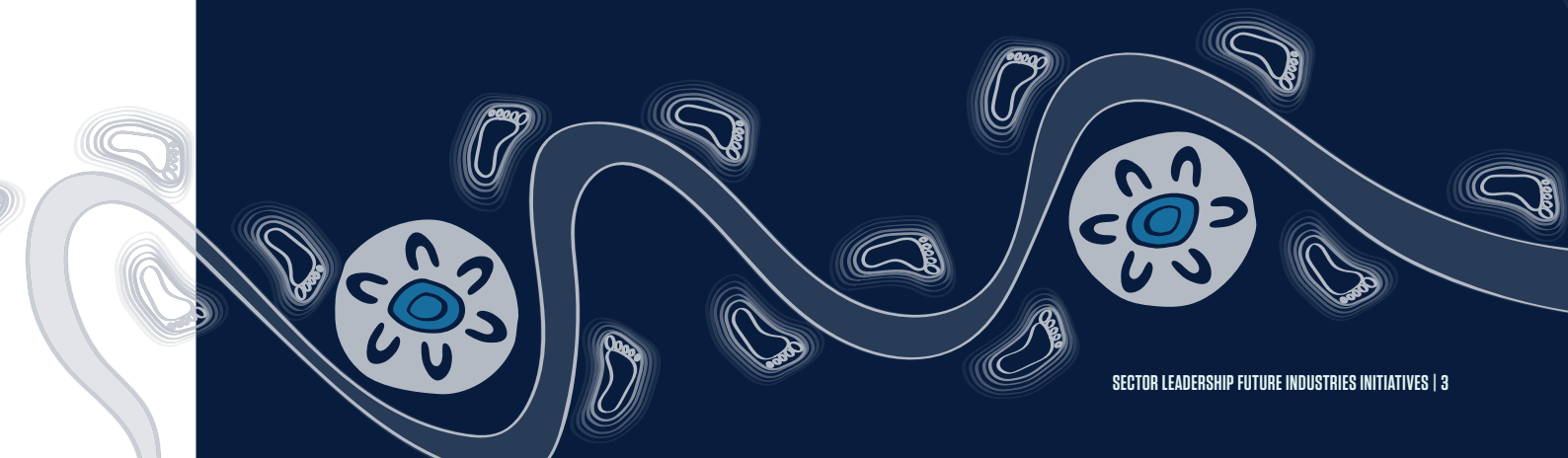
12 Environmental Markets

14 Renewables and Clean Energy

16 Inland Water

18 Fisheries and Aquaculture

20 About Us



Introduction

In 2022, the Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation (ILSC) undertook a nationwide consultation with its stakeholders. This consultation informed the development of the National Indigenous Land and Sea Strategy (NILSS) and Regional Indigenous Land and Sea Strategies (RILSSs) 2023-2028¹. The NILSS and RILSS are aligned to the Australian Government's commitment to the National Closing the Gap Agreement and the ILSC's contributions to this agreement are focussed on Outcome Area 15 – *People maintain a distinctive cultural, spiritual, physical and economic relationships with their land and waters* and the four Priority Reforms as further detailed on page 21 of this plan. This consultation identified five priority sectors, in which stakeholders wanted to see ILSC partner with First Nations to elevate influence and drive progress at scale. The priority sectors are:

- Carbon
- Environmental Markets
- Renewables and Clean Energy
- Inland Water
- Fisheries and Aquaculture

These sectors were chosen for reasons, including Indigenous competitive advantage, prioritisation of the sector during consultation, alignment with ILSC skills and resources, and /or a current window of opportunity to pursue outcomes in partnerships with Indigenous landholders.

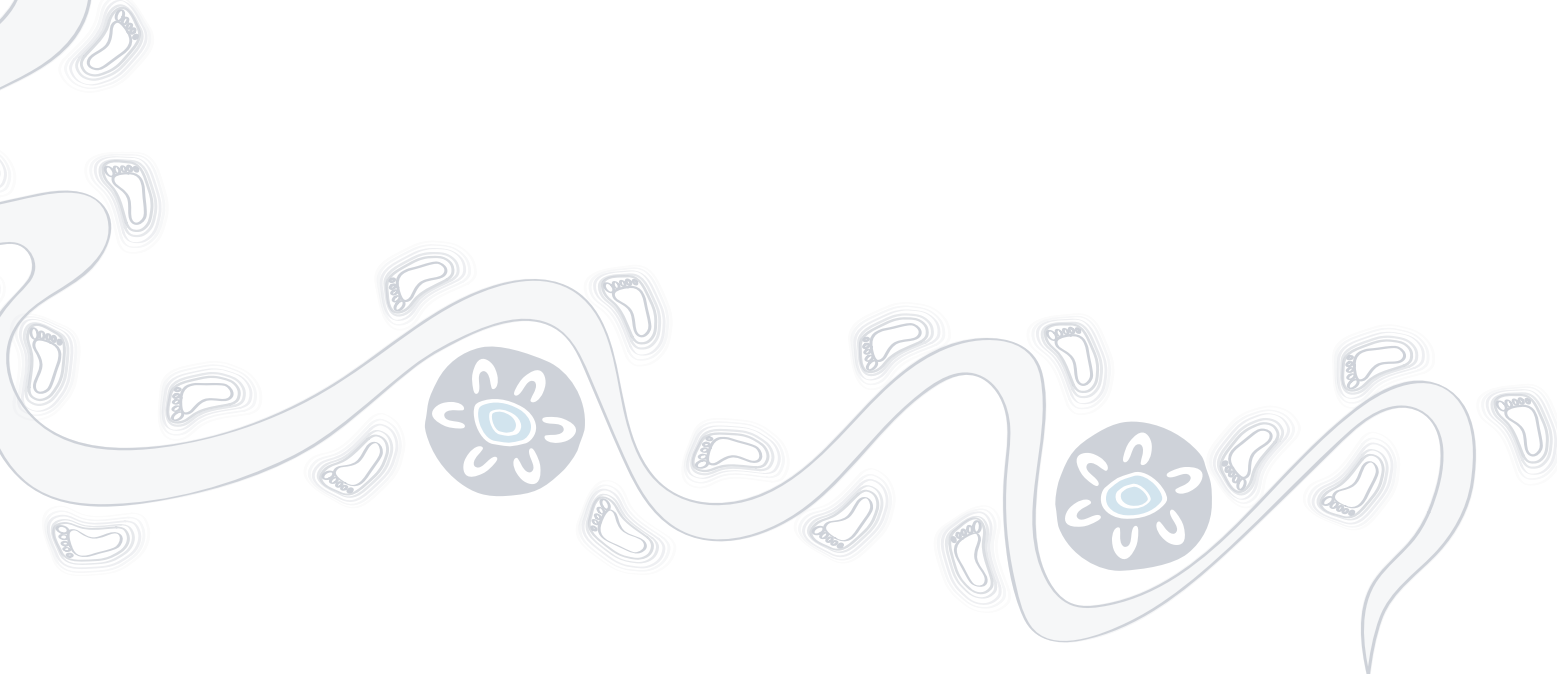
Our target sectors will be reviewed regularly to make sure our assistance is still effective or if we need to act on new opportunities. This priority's focus on targeting sectors does not limit the type of projects or sectors we will work with under the 'Returning Country' or 'Managing Country' priorities.

In 2024, we engaged with subject matter experts and key Indigenous stakeholders to inform the development of ILSC directed initiatives for each priority sector, guiding our investment and partnership development during the implementation of the NILSS.



Figure 01. The National Indigenous Land and Sea Strategy 2023-28. Country and its people are at the heart of the NILSS and the reason for the ILSC's existence. Supporting Indigenous leadership in the priority sectors is a strategic commitment under the guiding principle of self-determination.

1. [National Indigenous Land and Sea Strategy 2023-28.](#)



Rationale for sector leadership

The ILSC seeks to elevate and amplify Indigenous leadership, voices, and economic participation in the priority sectors. It focuses on:

- **Emerging markets:** Supporting First Nations engagement in rapidly developing sectors (such as carbon, environmental, and renewable markets) to ensure self-determination in land and sea management while addressing historical inequities.
- **Existing markets with growing awareness:** Enhancing Indigenous participation in the five sectors, where there is increasing political and public recognition of past exclusion from economic benefits, such as inland water and fisheries and aquaculture.

This approach aligns with broader efforts to create equitable opportunities and empower First Nations people in shaping the future of these industries.

Actions and investment

The ILSC is committed to making strategic investments, which empower First Nations people and organisations, to represent their interests in the development of the sector and where business opportunities are aligned with aspirations for Country, to actively participate in sector supply chains. This investment approach ensures that Indigenous communities are not only participants but also decision-makers in shaping the future of these industries.

Strategic timing of actions

The timing of delivery of the proposed initiatives has been carefully considered, based on both the urgency of action and the ILSC's capacity to provide support and to develop partnerships to accelerate action. Initiatives are categorised into three key timeframes:

- **Do now** - Initiatives already funded and ready for immediate implementation, ensuring rapid impact and progress.
- **Near term** - Important initiatives, for which the ILSC is working with Indigenous partners to refine the scope and next steps. Full implementation of these initiatives will depend on securing additional funding commitments from the ILSC and partners.
- **Build towards** - Larger, strategic, and potentially transformative initiatives, requiring specific funding strategies and strong partnerships. These long-term investments in First Nations leadership and economic empowerment are likely beyond the scope of the ILSC to fund and may extend beyond the life of this current strategy. The ILSC is however committed to supporting Indigenous partners to explore the options and design the solutions for these ideas. In the short term this work will result in investment prospectuses, project scoping and statements of need or similar.

Funding and collaborative partnerships

Given the scale and ambition of these initiatives, many will require co-investment and innovative partnership models for full implementation. The ILSC is engaging with sector stakeholders, both Indigenous and corporate, philanthropic - to understand how it can assist with the early scoping and design phases to attract the necessary funding and partnerships.

Commitment to rigorous planning

Each initiative will undergo further due diligence; to ensure its design, implementation, and cost structures are robust, effective, and aligned with the long-term interests of First Nations communities. The ILSC is actively pursuing leadership actions which are strategic and result in sustainable investments that drive lasting change.

What we heard

To ensure ILSC's actions effectively elevate and amplify First Nations leadership across priority sectors, expert consultants were engaged to help identify the most impactful initiatives.

A key part of this process involved re-engaging Indigenous leaders who contributed to the development of the NILSS. Insights helped refine, prioritise, and validate ideas for the development of broad-scale Indigenous leadership initiatives in each sector.

Key themes for building sector leadership

Through extensive consultation, several overarching themes emerged, shaping the design and focus of the future industries initiatives. These themes provide critical context for the ILSC's role in supporting First Nations participation at scale:

Capability development

- Strengthening commercial acumen for First Nations leaders and organisations.
- Enhancing access to education, knowledge-sharing, and business planning support.
- Providing technical, legal, and sector-specific expertise to First Nations enterprises.

Amplifying sector leadership at scale

- Supporting the establishment and growth of First Nations peak bodies and representative organisations.
- Sponsoring sector forums to foster dialogue and collaboration.

- Facilitating strategic partnerships with government, industry, research institutions, and philanthropic entities.
- Advocating for First Nations equity, access, and participation in sector development.

Acquisition and management of rights and entitlements

- Securing land for land-based sector projects.
- Acquiring quotas for fisheries projects and water entitlements for inland water projects (outside the Murray-Darling Basin).
- Strengthening First Nations control over sector-specific resources and economic opportunities.
- Supporting negotiation capacity with regards to consent rights.

Catalytic change

- Driving transformative, high-impact initiatives that create lasting change.
- Accelerating research, innovation, and new technologies within priority sectors.
- Support for large-scale, iconic projects that benefit a number of First Nations communities.
- Exploring new regions for project development, expanding opportunities for Indigenous-led initiatives.

Shaping the path forward

These themes are central to the ILSC's future industries initiatives and will guide its efforts to enhance First Nations economic participation, leadership, and self-determination in these sectors.

KEY

- Class 1 - Legal Right
- Class 2 - Eligible Interest Holder Consent
- Class 3 - Eligible Interest Holder or Agreement
- Class 4 - Management Responsibility
- Class 5 - Determined (no native title)
- Class 6 - Pending Native Title (claim)
- Class 7 - Other

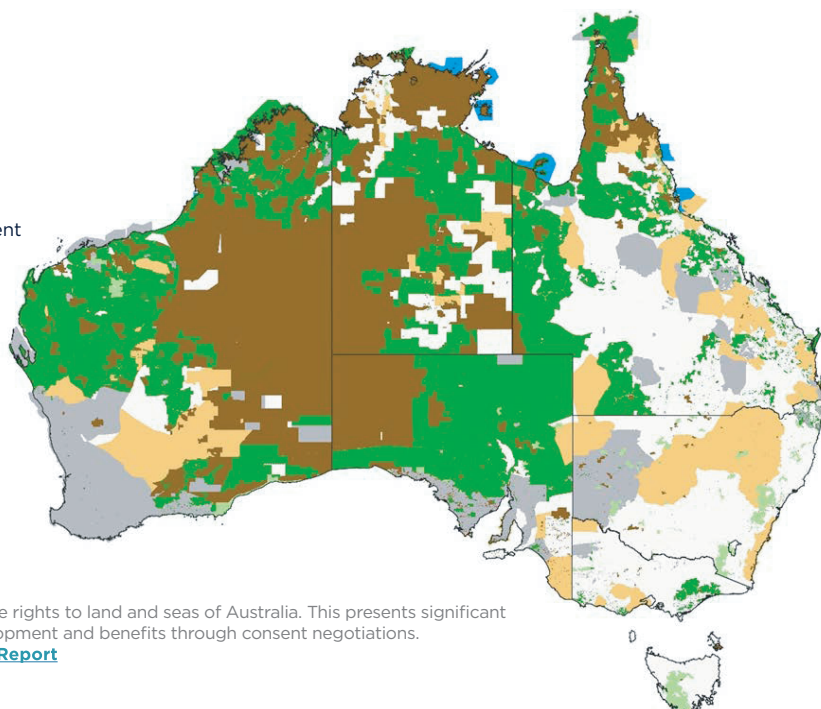


Figure 02. Indigenous people hold significant and diverse rights to land and seas of Australia. This presents significant opportunities for both leadership in sector project development and benefits through consent negotiations.

[Indigenous Carbon Industry Network - Blue Carbon Report](#)

Actions across sectors

Through impact analysis, we identified scalable actions for significant sector-wide impact. At the same time, sector-specific recommendations align with the different role's the ILSC can perform in supporting Indigenous entities to take up opportunities in the priority sectors.

Through engagement in the development of the initiatives, the ILSC's role as a convenor, funder, educator, advisor and enabler of project development and piloting were highlighted as appropriate functions according to our legislative mandate and national reach.

ACTION	
Sector Leadership Future Industries Grant Program	
THEME	Capability development
INVESTMENT	Establish a grant program that supports Indigenous groups to procure financial, legal, and technical advice needed for the investigation and development of priority sector projects on their Country. Services may include opportunity scoping, risk assessment, project feasibility, Country planning, negotiation support, and method development for sector projects. The program will include optional access to a list of relevant service providers that have been vetted by the ILSC.
WHY	Consultation highlighted the widespread need in Indigenous organisations and communities for capacity to investigate sector opportunities for Country. Many First Nations groups cannot afford the specialised advice required and have concerns about maintaining self-determination during project investigation and development processes.
TIMING	Do now: The ILSC will launch the Future Industries Grant Program in May 2025 with two rounds of applications open to Indigenous entities, providing support for grants of up to \$50,000 for targeted sector project planning and technical advice.

ACTION	
Establish an online knowledge hub	
THEME	Capability development
INVESTMENT	Partner with Indigenous sector leaders, government departments, and data custodians to develop new and link existing online knowledge resources about sector projects. This may involve creating a central knowledge hub with links to external resources and supporting the expansion of Indigenous-led platforms.
WHY	To support First Nations communities, businesses, and individuals in understanding sector opportunities aligned with their Country and aspirations. Information about sector opportunities, and relevant government programs, regulations, and commercial developments is spread across multiple datasets and custodians, with significant variation across Australia. This complexity creates barriers to self-determination and partnership development. As a result, First Nations groups face considerable challenges in accessing relevant information and identifying the right contacts for further guidance.
TIMING	Near term: The ILSC has commenced scoping of the establishment of the Knowledge Hub and is scheduling delivery for late 2025. Partnerships with existing organisations to share resources and link information is critical to the timeliness and relevance of the information made available.

ACTION	
Support the coordination of advocacy groups and peak bodies	
THEME	Amplifying sector leadership at scale
INVESTMENT	Support First Nations groups and organisations leading in priority sectors to coordinate thought leaders and sector participants. The ILSC will invest in forums, events and coordinated approaches to issues impacting sector leadership.
WHY	First Nations collective identification and response to common issues in the sectors is hampered by limited or patchy national collaboration. Supporting Indigenous leaders in the sectors to connect with people facing similar challenges from across Australia may help to address this.
TIMING	Do Now: The ILSC provides direct operational funding to peak industry groups in the carbon sector via the Indigenous Carbon Industry Network and renewables and clean energy via the First Nations Clean Energy Network. The ILSC has commenced sponsorship for national Indigenous-led forums in freshwater and fisheries. Work to explore representative models in inland water, environmental markets and fisheries has commenced.

Actions across sectors



ACTION	Sector aligned Our Country our Future Funding
THEME	Acquisition and management of rights and entitlements
INVESTMENT	The ILSC's flagship Management and Acquisition program 'Our Country Our Future' (OCOF) will be adapted to better prioritise and support projects that advance Indigenous communities' sector ambitions. This will include promotional campaigns for land acquisition and management grants for sector projects, as well as water licence and fisheries quota acquisitions to enhance Indigenous benefits from sector opportunities.
WHY	A key message from engagement with First Nations peoples included the need for greater access to strategic funding to support project development and larger investments.
TIMING	Do now: The OCOF program has adopted new assessment criteria to prioritise projects that support Indigenous leadership in the priority sectors. Further work is ongoing to promote this shift in focus and determine whether specific funding targets should be adopted.

ACTION	Investigate delivery models for expansion of Indigenous land and sea rights and access through sector projects
THEME	Acquisition and management of rights and entitlements
INVESTMENT	Exploring new business models can help Indigenous people raise capital, strengthen their capacity, and activate their rights more effectively for greater sector participation benefits. This includes enabling Indigenous project proponents to establish and operate projects on non-exclusive Native Title lands, non-Indigenous freehold, and State-managed areas. For example, a Ranger group could expand their operations to include a neighbouring property.
WHY	Many Traditional Owners have limited direct rights to develop projects on their Country, as much of it falls under non-exclusive native title or freehold. Additionally, many groups are unaware of their potential to leverage benefits and business engagement opportunities in sector developments that require their consent.
TIMING	Near term: Raise awareness of ILSC capacity to support business models that expand access to Country through sector projects. The ILSC will publish and promote examples where ILSC funding of projects in the priority sectors have enabled or expanded access to Country. In 2025, the ILSC will explore common negotiation approaches and business models for such expansion of rights and access and publish a discussion paper outlining such opportunities.

ACTION	Explore new funding partnerships and investment models for sector projects at scale
THEME	Catalytic Change
INVESTMENT	Support the establishment of partnerships with government, industry, and philanthropists to attract and manage investment in Indigenous led projects in the sectors. Facilitate, resource and screen co-investors, enabling large-scale funding for Indigenous projects and businesses.
WHY	Access to capital and large-scale funding remains a critical barrier to expanding Indigenous participation in key sectors. Socially minded investors are eager to support Indigenous-led projects, such as carbon initiatives, but require trusted partners to facilitate investment and ensure funds are effectively deployed.
TIMING	Build toward: we will explore options for blended finance models with key partners, such as IBA and NIAA, Indigenous businesses, Universities, NGO's and other potential commercial partners. This will be informed by ILSC partnerships to date. A discussion paper will be released in 2025.



Carbon Market

Opportunity statement

Australia is committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 43 percent (from 2005 levels) by 2030 and achieving net-zero emissions by 2050 under the Paris Agreement. With 467 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions recorded at the end of June 2023, Australia must decarbonise at an average rate of 17 million tonnes per year to meet its 2030 targets. 1.2 million tonnes of the 17 million tonnes of annual abatement required to meet Paris Agreement targets is currently being delivered by Indigenous groups through their savanna fire management carbon projects.

High-emitting businesses, subject to the Safeguard Mechanism, will need to reduce net emissions by over 200 million tonnes by 2030. This will drive increased demand for Australian Carbon Credit Units (ACCUs), leading to a tighter carbon market and presenting a major economic opportunity for carbon offset businesses – including those led by Indigenous Australians.

Indigenous participation in the carbon sector

The carbon sector provides a unique economic empowerment opportunity for Indigenous Australians, aligning closely with Caring for Country aspirations. Many Indigenous groups, across the northern savannas, have successfully engaged in savanna fire management carbon abatement projects, where over 35 projects have generated over 10 million ACCUs to date, representing over 70 percent of all the credits earned from savanna projects. There are also five Indigenous-owned projects utilising vegetation regeneration carbon methods. These projects provide a significant boost to caring for Country activities and support broader community-driven aspirations.

However, the sector is evolving:

- The new savanna fire management methodology introduces both risks and opportunities for existing projects.
- Indigenous people hold rights to close to 70 percent of Australia's land and coastal seas. Native title holders with non-exclusive possession hold eligible interests in land for the purposes of the

ACCU Scheme, which means that groups have opportunities to negotiate with carbon developers for financial and other benefits arising from carbon projects.

- Emerging methodologies, such as blue carbon and other landscape regeneration, could unlock further economic and environmental benefits for Indigenous interest holders.

Flow of benefits from carbon projects

When Indigenous groups have full control over carbon projects, they provide:

- Self-determination in land and environmental management.
- An independent revenue stream for communities.
- Cultural renewal, strengthening traditional practices and knowledge.
- Employment and skills development in land management and conservation.

Target outcome

Indigenous people are active across the carbon supply chain, managing land and sea projects aligned with their self-determination goals and engaging in carbon trading, policy development, and regulation. By having a stake in these initiatives, they leverage their rights and interests in ancestral lands to gain meaningful benefits.

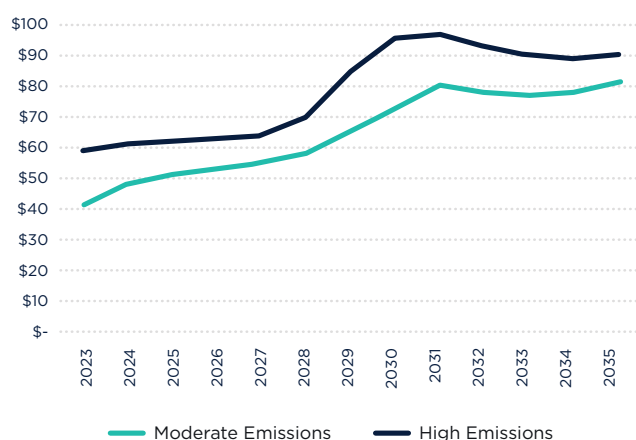
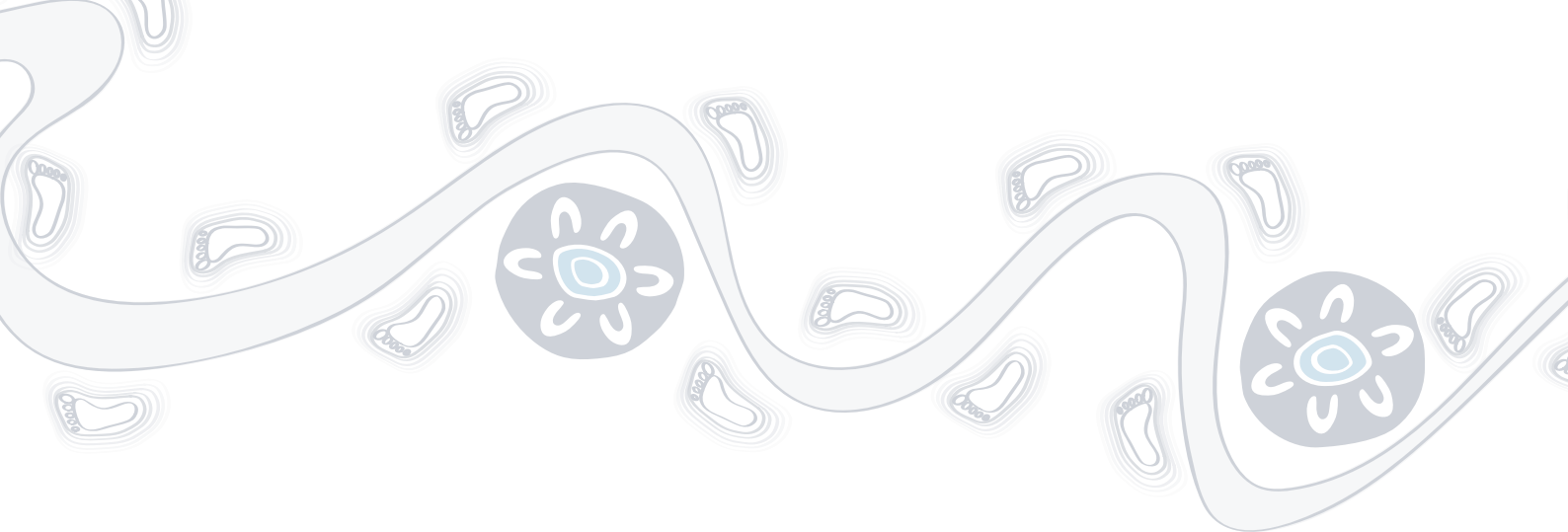


Figure 03. Price forecast of Australian Carbon Credit Units to 2035.²

2. Reputex (2023) *Australian Carbon Credit Unit Market Analysis*.



ACTION	
Carbon project agreement-making resources	
THEME	Capability development
INVESTMENT	In partnership with Indigenous Carbon Industry Network (ICIN), fund the development of Indigenous project and agreement-making resources. The material will build on the foundational guide created by ICIN (Best Practice Guide to Seeking the Free, Prior and Informed Consent of Indigenous Communities). It will include a guide to typical contract clauses and options to support self-determination, Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property protections and benefit sharing from projects. The guidance will support Indigenous interest holders and others working with Indigenous interest holders in the negotiation of consent agreements, Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs), and other carbon project-related negotiations.
WHY	Native Title authorities often lack the resources and expertise to effectively engage with carbon project proposals and consent requests impacting native title. Also, First Nations project participants and potential beneficiaries may not be aware of the options to protect their interests in project agreements. Providing targeted resources for relevant staff will support more equitable decision-making and help communities better assess opportunities for benefit and participation.
TIMING	Do now: This project is in development now and set to be completed in 2025 for release via the ICIN website.

ACTION	
Consult and share carbon project economic models	
THEME	Capability development
INVESTMENT	Engage with the sector to explore mechanisms that enhance awareness and transparency around carbon project credit flows, credit sales processes, markets, and income management. This will assist communities to strengthen their awareness of the carbon market, the value of credits, trader processes and costs. Reasonable expectations about these matters will support fairer negotiations and informed decision-making about the value of projects and credits.
WHY	There is currently limited transparency about commercial negotiations for carbon projects on land with Indigenous rights. Additionally, project developers and others may present limited information about the likely value of credits and administration costs. Greater visibility into project terms, carbon pricing and market forces is needed to ensure fair negotiations and strong outcomes for Indigenous groups.
TIMING	Near term: We will work with Indigenous carbon project operators, ICIN and relevant bodies, such as ASIC and the Clean Energy Regulator to publish an options paper, with a view to expanding the future visibility of carbon pricing and economic models.

ACTION	
Carbon methodology development	
THEME	Catalytic change
INVESTMENT	Collaborate with ICIN and Indigenous interest holders to identify and invest in opportunities for Indigenous land and sea managers to lead the development of carbon project methodologies for activities and regions not covered under existing frameworks. Support research and transition efforts to establish new, Indigenous-led carbon methods.
WHY	Beyond the fire-prone tropical savannas, existing carbon methodologies do not align well with Indigenous land management practices, leaving vast arid and coastal areas with Indigenous rights and interests without suitable options. Developing methodologies that reflect Indigenous approaches to managing Country is essential to expanding participation in carbon markets.
TIMING	Near term: During 2025 and 2026 we will work with Indigenous leaders and ICIN to identify opportunities to support FN-led methodology development work and pilots through ILSC grant functions.

Environmental Markets

Opportunity statement

For many Indigenous communities, Caring for Country is the foundation of identity, livelihoods, and cultural continuity. It is built on the belief that if you look after Country, it will look after you. For thousands of years, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have managed land and water sustainably.

Global initiatives, such as reporting frameworks led by the Taskforce for Nature-Related Financial Disclosures (TNFD) and increasing accountability requirements on board directors are raising the stakes for corporate accountability for environmental impacts.

Broader Australian society is now recognising the importance of Caring for Country, and systems are being established to scientifically quantify environmental maintenance and restoration outcomes and recognise the value of this through a marketplace.

The expertise of First Nations people is increasingly recognised as a critical component of Country management as these systems emerge. As a result, participating Indigenous Country managers could generate an income from their efforts, strengthening and expanding land and water management enterprises and ranger programs.

Emerging environmental markets and Indigenous opportunity

Environmental markets are rapidly evolving in Australia, presenting new economic and environmental opportunities for Indigenous Australians. One of the most notable developments is the Australian biodiversity market, known as the Nature Repair Market Scheme³.

- Nature Repair Act 2023 (effective from 15 December 2023) establishes the world's first legislated, national voluntary biodiversity market.
- The Clean Energy Regulator is set to open the market in 2025, providing incentives for nature-positive land management.

If structured to respect and integrate Indigenous knowledge, these schemes could offer a sustainable revenue stream for Indigenous-led environmental projects and expand ongoing initiatives.

Private sector and global markets

In addition to government-led initiatives, private sector-led biodiversity markets are expanding in Australia and internationally, with varying levels of First Nations engagement.

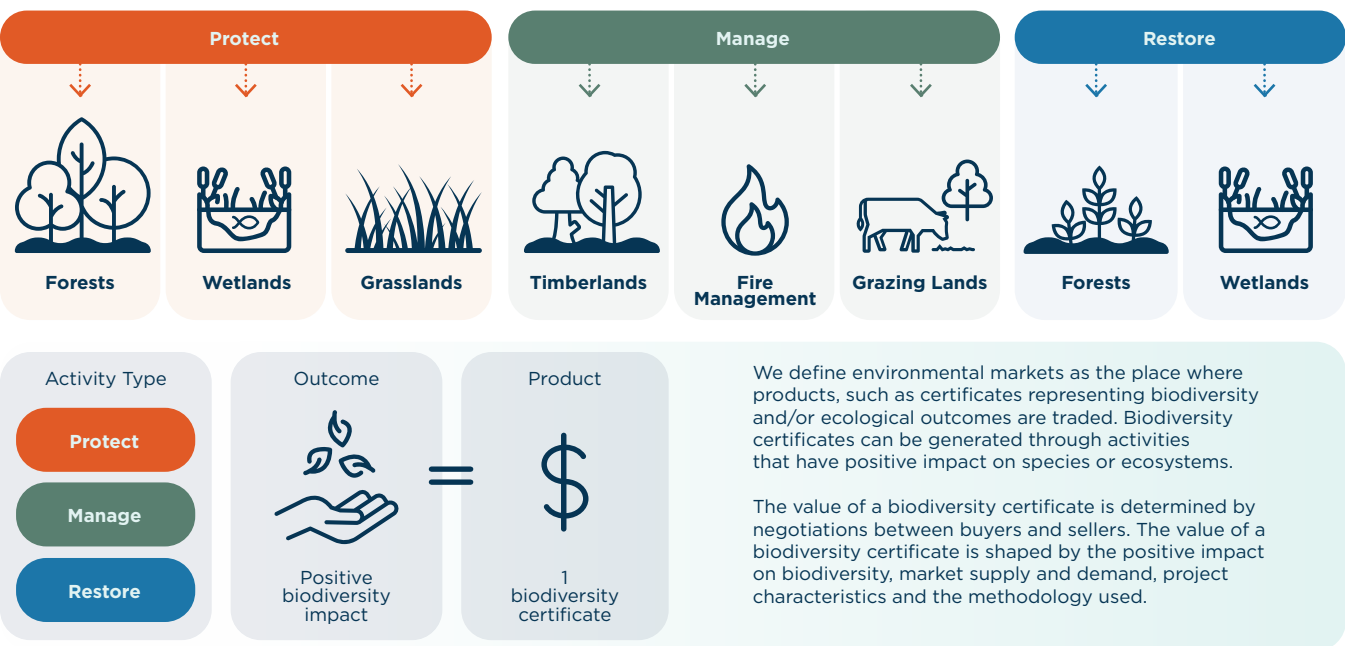


Figure 04. Unlike carbon credits, one biodiversity credit is created by improving the biodiversity condition of a project area.

3. [Nature Repair Market Scheme.](#)

First Nations organisations have been innovators in this space, for example creating the Cultural Fire Credit program that establishes a mechanism to fund and monitor the outcomes of cultural fire delivery, and the Core Benefits⁴ framework that assesses the cultural outcomes achieved in projects. The trading platform ‘Catalyst Markets’ has been established to sell these Indigenous-led project outputs. Programs like NaturePlus⁵ and Wilderlands⁶ take different approaches, the level of Indigenous involvement in the development of these projects and benefits from participating vary.

- Influence the design of biodiversity markets to recognise Indigenous knowledge and Country management practices.
- Expand ranger programs and Caring for Country enterprises, increasing employment and capacity.
- Advocate for stronger Indigenous partnerships and leadership in environmental market development.
- Ensure these markets recognise, respect, and fairly compensate Indigenous Caring for Country expertise, they can become a powerful tool for self-determination, economic independence, and environmental sustainability.

Pathway to Indigenous led success

For Indigenous communities, engagement with the development of and participation in these markets presents the opportunity to:

- Generate sustainable income, while maintaining and strengthening cultural land and water management practices.

Target Outcome:

Indigenous leaders are shaping the Nature Repair market and other environmental opportunities to align with their Caring for Country goals. Meanwhile, Indigenous Country managers are piloting innovative restoration methods, gaining market insights, and preparing for emerging commercial opportunities.

ACTION	Support Indigenous leaders to come together
THEME	Amplifying sector leadership at scale
INVESTMENT	Support the development and resourcing of an Indigenous-led environmental markets peak body in collaboration with Indigenous leaders to ensure stronger governance, advocacy, and participation in emerging markets.
WHY	Indigenous ranger organisations are well-positioned to leverage their expertise in Country management to create environmental market projects. Timely and coordinated action will enable Indigenous leaders to engage with policymakers, investors, and philanthropists, highlighting the significance of these opportunities and securing the necessary support.
TIMING	Near term: The ILSC commenced assisting Indigenous leaders to meet and respond to Nature Repair market consultations in late 2024. We will continue engagement in 2025 to assess the appetite to formalise such a group, this may include ILSC support for scoping operating models and potential funding sources.

ACTION	Indigenous-led Country Management Industry technical skills development
THEME	Amplifying sector leadership at scale
INVESTMENT	Investigate opportunities to accelerate Indigenous-led Country management industry technical skills and knowledge-sharing, such as through a dedicated program, developed in collaboration with key partners. This initiative would enhance skills in leadership, employment, and engagement with sector opportunities on Country and across sector value chains.
WHY	Many Indigenous ranger groups, environmental SMEs and communities are not yet equipped to fully seize employment, business development, and leadership opportunities in emerging and ongoing environmental market sector projects. However, many successful Indigenous partnerships and self-determined outcomes exist across land and water management projects. By leveraging the knowledge and experience of these successful projects, alongside targeted technical and financial training, Indigenous leadership in the environmental sector can be strengthened nationwide.
TIMING	Near term: Over the next two years the ILSC will investigate partnership opportunities with Indigenous entities and education providers to develop tailored programs that support technical skills development in land management.

4. catalystmarkets.com.au/core-benefits-verification-framework.

5. naturepluscredits.com.

6. wilderlands.earth.

Renewables and Clean Energy

Opportunity statement

Australia's transition to renewable energy is accelerating, with 39.47 percent of electricity generated from renewable sources in 2023. By 2030, at least 52GW of additional renewable energy capacity is projected to be installed, representing a \$15–30 billion investment.

While this transition is inevitable, the extent to which it will deliver generational benefits for Indigenous communities remains uncertain. However, First Nations groups are key rights holders in this energy transition.

First Nations Land & Renewable Energy Infrastructure

- According to Net Zero Australia modelling, 43 percent of Australia's renewable energy infrastructure must be located on recognised First Nations land to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050.
- These projects represent over \$20.9 billion in capital investment and an estimated 700,000 direct jobs.
- Ensuring First Nations participation, leadership, and benefit-sharing is essential to delivering lasting economic and social outcomes.

Government support and technology priorities

The Australian Government, through agencies such as ARENA (Australian Renewable Energy Agency) and the Clean Energy Finance Corporation, has developed a Technology Investment Roadmap (2021) prioritising key renewable energy initiatives, including:

- **Hydrogen** – for industry, electricity generation, and storage.
- **Low-emissions materials** – innovation in sustainable building and manufacturing.
- **Soil carbon industries** – boosting carbon sequestration in agricultural land.
- **Energy storage technologies** – improving grid reliability and renewable energy integration.
- **30/30/30 Ultra-Low-Cost Solar Initiative** – aiming for 30 per cent efficiency at 30 cents per installed watt by 2030.

These priorities align with Australia's COP26 commitment (2021), which includes a \$40 million ARENA investment in low-cost solar research as part of a broader \$1.6 billion clean energy funding package.

Pathway to First Nations leadership and participation

With nearly half of Australia's renewable energy infrastructure expected to be developed on Indigenous land, there is a critical opportunity to ensure First Nations communities are key beneficiaries of this transition. This includes:

- **Equitable participation in renewable energy projects** – ensuring fair compensation, ownership models, and benefit sharing.
- **Capacity-building for First Nations businesses** – developing expertise in renewable energy project management, contracting, and service provision.
- **Strategic partnerships with industry and government** – securing investment and co-designing policies that embed Indigenous leadership.
- **Employment & training pathways** – equipping First Nations people with the skills needed to participate in the renewable energy workforce.

By prioritising First Nations inclusion, decision-making, and equity, Australia's clean energy future can drive economic empowerment, self-determination, and long-term prosperity for Indigenous communities.

First Nations Clean Energy Strategy

The Australian Government's First Nations Clean Energy Strategy⁸ aims to empower Indigenous communities in the transition to renewable energy while ensuring their rights and interests are respected. This strategy recognises the unique cultural, social, and economic perspectives of First Nations people and seeks to incorporate these elements into energy planning and delivery.

Key priorities of the strategy include promoting Indigenous leadership in clean energy projects, enhancing access to renewable energy technologies, and supporting capacity building within communities. The government aims to foster partnerships between

7. [Clean Energy Council.](#)

8. [First Nations Clean Energy Strategy.](#)

Indigenous groups and the renewable energy sector, ensuring that First Nations people can participate equitably in the energy transition.

Targets under the strategy focus on achieving significant increases in renewable energy generation in areas with high Indigenous populations. This includes a commitment to facilitate the development of community-led energy projects and to ensure that at least 20 percent of renewable energy projects include Indigenous participation by 2030. Additionally, the strategy emphasises the importance of respecting land rights and cultural heritage in all energy projects, ensuring that First Nations communities benefit economically and socially from the clean energy transition.

Target outcome

Indigenous leaders are active in renewable energy policy, programs, and projects at both national and local levels, advocating for economic and employment opportunities and ensuring fair access to transition benefits for all Indigenous communities.



Figure 05. First Nations Clean Energy Network.

ACTION	Clean energy project feasibility
THEME	Catalytic Change
INVESTMENT	Investigate the opportunity for a dedicated grant program for feasibility studies to attract investment and power supply partners for large-scale renewable projects. This program would support initiatives ranging from utility-scale developments to community energy systems and energy efficiency programs, enabling greater Indigenous participation in the renewable energy sector.
WHY	Limited access to feasibility funding, due to financial and human resource constraints, remains a major barrier for Indigenous-led renewable projects. Community microgrids, while not inherently profitable without commercial supply agreements, provide critical benefits such as lower living costs, improved energy reliability, reduced carbon emissions, and better air quality. For large scale developments, securing development rights is a key challenge, but it also offers Indigenous landholders a powerful tool to negotiate favourable terms. Aligning the national energy transition with the Indigenous estate presents a transformative opportunity, enabling communities to actively participate in and benefit from major projects, creating lasting generational impact.
TIMING	Near term: During 2025 the ILSC will work with the FNCEN and other key partners such as DCCEEW and ARENA to explore a range of feasibility support mechanisms that achieve Indigenous leadership outcomes in Renewable and Clean energy projects.

ACTION	Improved alignment with needs and coordination of government support for First Nations in the net-zero transition
THEME	Catalytic Change
INVESTMENT	The ILSC will commission an options and scoping study to explore and make recommendations about opportunities for greater coordination of government agencies and industry energy sector development programs, and their alignment with the ambitions of First Nations communities and businesses. The study will include consideration of an improved 'Front Door' to government, and opportunities to utilise projects for wider business uplift in communities.
WHY	Indigenous-held land and interests encompass vast landscapes critical to renewable energy projects. Establishing strong governance structures that ensure equity for First Nations interests and uphold Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) as a core principle in project development is essential for sustainable and inclusive sector growth.
TIMING	Near term: The ILSC will work with relevant government departments and authorities and the FNCEN to explore appetite and delivery models for improved coordination of government, industry with the ambitions of Indigenous corporations and communities. Resulting work to be released as a discussion paper in 2026.

Inland Water

“For First People, water is a sacred source of life. The natural flow of water sustains aquatic ecosystems that are central to our spirituality, our social and cultural economy and wellbeing. The rivers are the veins of Country, carrying water to sustain all parts of our sacred landscape. The wetlands are the kidneys, filtering the water as it passes through the land. First Nations Peoples have rights and a moral obligation to care for water under their law and customs. These obligations connect across communities and language groups, extending to downstream communities, throughout catchments and over connected aquifer and groundwater systems.”⁹

Opportunity statement

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples currently hold just 0.2 percent of inland water entitlements across Australia—an inequitable reality that underscores the urgent need for greater access, rights, and economic participation in the inland water sector.

Australia’s inland water markets, policies, and regulatory frameworks are highly complex, particularly in the face of increasing environmental and climatic challenges. The intersection of Federal and State policies, regulations, and market mechanisms creates significant barriers for First Nations peoples to:

- access and gain legal rights to inland water.
- exercise cultural responsibilities to care for water under First Nations law and customs.
- participate in and benefit from the inland water economy.

National policy momentum and reform

In 2024, the Productivity Commission completed its first review of progress against the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, concluding that fundamental changes are required to deliver on the agreement’s commitments. In response, the Commonwealth Government developed a Closing the Gap Implementation Plan, which included the establishment of a new inland water target (Target 15c)—a key milestone aimed at accelerating progress towards securing Aboriginal legal rights and interests in inland water bodies across state and territory water rights regimes.

At the State and Territory level, water reform efforts continue, with governments setting local targets to increase First Nations’ water access. These reforms present a critical window of opportunity for First Nations communities to assert and expand their rights in the inland water sector.

ILSC’s role in advancing First Nations participation

With major water reform initiatives and management programs underway across Australia, the ILSC is committed to supporting First Nations people to gain access to water rights and boost their participation and leadership in management of the sector. The ILSC will achieve this by:

- Leveraging the Our Country Our Future program to enhance First Nations sector participation and leadership.
- Assisting First Nations to engage with national policy reform, including:
 - The renewal of the National Water Initiative.
 - Collaboration with Commonwealth, State, and Territory Governments on new water rights and economic opportunities.
- Collaborating with other government programs to support First Nations access and participation:
 - The Murray-Darling Basin Aboriginal Water Entitlements Program.
 - New funding streams and investment programs aimed at expanding First Nations’ access to water.
- Exploring and fostering strategic partnerships with government agencies, the private sector, and Indigenous organisations to drive systemic change in water rights and management.

Pathway to transformation

By championing equitable access to inland water, advocating for First Nations water rights, and supporting Indigenous-led water enterprises, the ILSC is committed to supporting First Nations communities to boost their involvement in the water sector as leaders, decision makers, and economic participants.

9. [A Pathway to Cultural Flows in Australia.](#)

Target outcome

Indigenous people and their organisations are empowered to manage, care for, and utilise inland water in alignment with their cultural values and aspirations. This includes all aspects of water use, from ownership in allocated markets for economic development, such as fisheries and agriculture, to ensuring the quality of potable water in homeland communities.

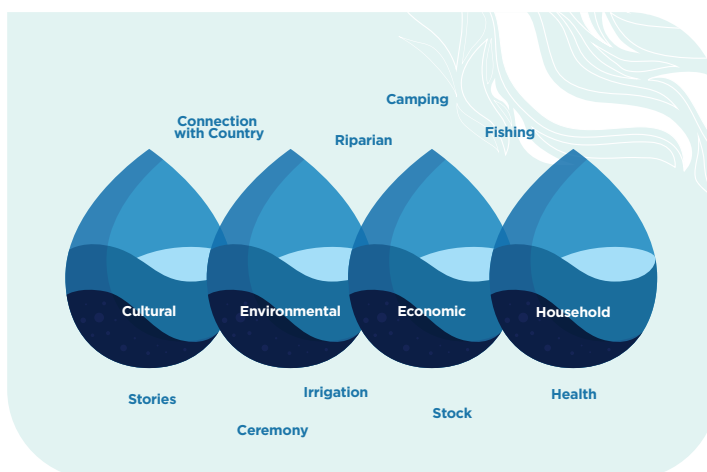


Figure 06. Opportunities for first Nations leadership in the inland water sector.

ACTION	Inland water professional development program
THEME	Capability development
INVESTMENT	In partnership with First Nations organisations, investigate the opportunity for a capability and capacity-building program to support project planning, initiation, and the expansion of Indigenous economic participation in the inland water sector. This initiative will strengthen skills, enhance opportunities, and ensure sustainable engagement in water-related industries.
WHY	Water literacy and professional skills are critical to increasing Indigenous participation and leadership in the inland water sector. Limited knowledge and capacity hinder both those seeking to acquire rights and those already holding them from fully benefiting in the water market. Strengthening these capabilities is essential for maximising opportunities and ensuring meaningful engagement.
TIMING	Near term: Work with Indigenous leaders and relevant agencies and authorities to identify skills and knowledge needs for greater engagement with freshwater rights and management. Investigate options for ILSC to assist with the delivery of a program to address gaps and provide further details on program development in 2026.

ACTION	Investigate and enhance First Nations' access to water rights
THEME	Acquisition of rights and entitlements
INVESTMENT	Develop a four-year water rights acquisition plan for completion by 2028, outlining strategic priorities and pathways for increasing Indigenous water ownership. The plan will include an analysis and recommendations about funding options, such as government partnership or capital-raising initiatives.
WHY	Indigenous people currently hold just 0.2 percent of inland water rights in Australia, highlighting the need for significant investment to expand access. The plan will allocate funding to specific Indigenous organisations for purchasing water rights and entitlements while also exploring mechanisms for the ILSC to hold water rights in trust. This approach will provide future transfer options for organisations not yet ready to acquire them. The plan will aim to drive access to water rights for a range of uses, including cultural flows, environmental conservation, and economic development.
TIMING	Near term: In 2025 we will commence the preparation of a water rights acquisition plan in collaboration with Indigenous leaders and relevant authorities, with the view for release of the plan by 2026.

ACTION	Increase Indigenous representation in the inland water market
THEME	Acquisition of rights and entitlements
INVESTMENT	Directly invest in increasing Aboriginal representation in the inland water market by co-investing in government projects. This approach will enhance Indigenous participation, ownership, and influence in water management and economic opportunities.
WHY	Co-contribution and delivery partnerships with major water sector projects and programs could enhance Indigenous access, management, and economic opportunities in the sector. Collaborations can boost Indigenous groups participation and benefit from key initiatives.
TIMING	Build toward: Investigate options to collaborate with other government and agency funding programs to boost Indigenous outcomes in key water infrastructure projects.

Fisheries and Aquaculture

Opportunity statement

Fisheries is a well-established primary industry in Australia, contributing \$3.4 billion to the national economy in 2022. However, despite the deep cultural significance and sustainability of Indigenous fishing practices, First Nations businesses have been historically excluded from commercial participation due to dispossession from Sea Country, financial barriers, and restrictive regulations.

Overcoming barriers to participation

Indigenous fishers have faced legal prosecution for traditional fish harvesting practices involving regulated species such as abalone and rock lobster. In many areas, there is an opportunity for regulatory reform to provide Traditional Owners with a fair share of access and economic benefit from fishing in their Sea Country.

Additionally, many commercial fisheries operate under a quota system, where access is controlled by expensive licenses and high operational costs associated with onshore and offshore infrastructure. For Indigenous participation to grow, a dual approach is required:

- **Regulatory reform** – advocating for an equitable allocation of fishing quotas to Traditional Owners.
- **Financial and operational support** – enabling Indigenous businesses to enter and sustain operations in the sector.

Opportunities for growth and expansion

In some regions, particularly in northern Australia, Indigenous groups have been able to assert rights to fishing stocks and participate in the sector both commercially and through traditional fishing practices. There is a strong opportunity to expand and professionalise Indigenous fisheries enterprises, while raising national awareness of the benefits of First Nations participation.

Many Indigenous communities and businesses with Sea Country interests have found ways to engage in and benefit from the fishing sector through:

- employment in fisheries operations
- participation in the fisheries supply chain
- accessing and managing commercial fishing quotas and licenses.

Expanding Indigenous participation will not only drive economic growth but also ensure sustainable and culturally appropriate fisheries management that aligns with Indigenous knowledge and practices.

ILSC's role in driving Indigenous participation

To establish clear and sustainable pathways for First Nations engagement in fisheries and aquaculture, the ILSC will:

- Support the creation and growth of Indigenous fishing and aquaculture enterprises.
- Improve community awareness of economic opportunities in the sector.
- Advocate for First Nations participation in legal and regulatory frameworks and processes.
- Help communities navigate ownership models (private vs. communal benefit structures).
- Promote market differentiation for First Nations fishing and aquaculture products, creating a unique and high-value Indigenous brand in the industry.

By championing First Nations leadership, economic equity, and cultural continuity in the fisheries and aquaculture sector, the ILSC aims to ensure Indigenous people can sustainably benefit from their Sea Country while strengthening their cultural and economic future.

Target outcome

Indigenous leaders and organisations receive support to access the economic, social, and cultural benefits of Australian fisheries. Indigenous people are also empowered to identify opportunities and aspirations related to fisheries on Country and advocate for their interests at regional and national forums.

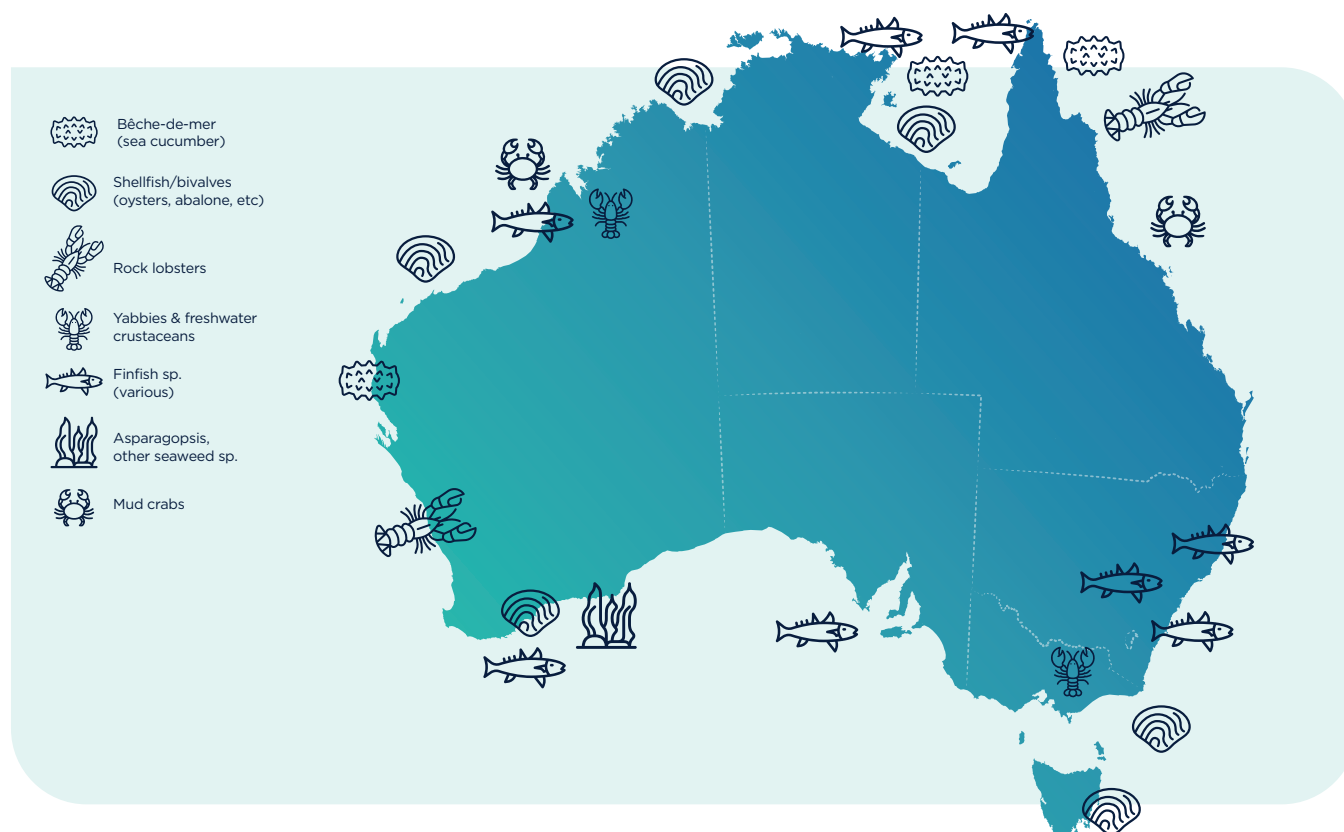


Figure 07. Indicative species distribution of First Nation fisheries and aquaculture.

ACTION		Support Indigenous leaders advocate for Indigenous fisheries
THEME	Amplifying sector leadership at scale	
INVESTMENT	Support the capacity of First Nations leaders and communities to respond to common issues and opportunities for participation in the fishing sector. This may include supporting the establishment of a First Nations fishery peak body and greater participation by First Nations in resource management.	
WHY	Across Australia there is significant advocacy work required to advance the creation of clear and viable pathways to boost First Nations participation in fisheries and aquaculture.	
TIMING	Near term: In late 2024, the ILSC provided funding assistance for the Aboriginal Sea Country conference in Darwin. In 2025 we will further explore opportunities for the formalising of sector representation at regional and national levels.	
ACTION		Establish cooperative structures and incentives
THEME	Amplifying sector leadership at scale	
INVESTMENT	Investigate and develop business models applicable to First Nations rights and communal ownership approaches to fisheries. This could include new business structures and incentives for cooperation over fisheries access, including frameworks for sub-leasing of rights of First Nations people and organisations.	
WHY	Enterprise creation and profit motive are typically facets of individual effort, or at least effort of a small subsection of a larger community. First Nations concepts of ownership are often communal in nature, which has implications for the economic activation of those rights.	
TIMING	Build toward: Through sector partnership development, we will investigate the range of business models that can straddle traditional and commercial needs of fisheries businesses. The results will be shared on the ILSC website.	
ACTION		Traditional practice innovation (production systems and efficiency)
THEME	Catalytic change	
INVESTMENT	Support innovation in traditional fishing and aquaculture practices that maintain customary and cultural attributes but improves efficiency as production systems. This could include investigating the commercial development of currently non-commercial species.	
WHY	Traditional tools and practices may contribute value to an enterprise, but not fit well within existing regulatory paradigms. Work to better align these and meet the requirements of both communities and fisheries regulators could smooth the entry pathway for First Nations fishers wishing to maintain traditional/customary practices.	
TIMING	Build toward: Review existing information about traditional fisheries and scope for expansion in key areas, promoting outcomes via the ILSC website and sector forums.	

About Us



The **ILSC GROUP**

The ILSC is a corporate Commonwealth entity that was established in 1995 to address the historic dispossession of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We were previously known as the Indigenous Land Corporation and became the ILSC in 2019 when our scope was expanded to include salt and freshwater interests.

Our establishment formed part of the government's response to the historic Mabo judgement, which recognised that Indigenous ownership of land existed before colonisation and instigated the Native Title Act 1993. Acknowledging that many Indigenous people would be unable to regain control of their land under this Act, our role was, and still is, to complement native title laws and assist dispossessed Indigenous people to acquire and manage Country.

Through enabling access and management of Country, we aim to generate economic, environmental, social, or cultural benefits for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This remains at the heart of what we do now and what we will continue to do.

Each year the ILSC receives funding from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Land and Sea Future Fund (the Fund) to run its operations and provide funding to Indigenous people. The Fund was initially established through a government endowment of more than \$1 billion and, through investment and management, is now worth over \$2 billion. The Fund enables the ILSC to be financially self-sufficient and, in 2023 - 2024, we received \$62.2 million to carry out our activities. This money is thought of as Indigenous people's money, so it is very important that the way the ILSC spends it is aligned with the aspirations and priorities of Indigenous people for Country.

Our Vision

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people enjoy the rightful entitlements, opportunities and benefits that the return and management of Country brings.

Our Purpose

We assist Indigenous people to acquire and manage land and water to provide economic, environmental, social or cultural benefits.

Pathways of Change

Our four 'pathways of change' are a series of outcomes (or changes) that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are expected to accrue as a result of involvement in our activities.

- Maintaining and growing the value and productivity of Country
- Owning and managing Country sustainably
- Influencing policy and opportunity for Country
- Strengthening culture through reconnection to Country

Contributing to Closing the Gap

The National Agreement on Closing the Gap aims to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and governments to work together to overcome the inequality experienced by First Nations people and achieve life outcomes equal to all Australians.

Self-determination is the foundation of Closing the Gap and a guiding principle of the NILSS.



An initial review of the NILSS against the National Agreement shows our work aligns with all four priority reforms and one of the 17 outcome areas. We will continue to work closely with our colleagues at the National Indigenous Australians Agency to deepen our connection to Closing the Gap and explore how we can contribute to national reporting.

Priority Reform

- *Priority Reform 1 – Formal Partnerships and Shared Decision Making*
- *Priority Reform 2 – Building the Community Controlled Sector*
- *Priority Reform 3 – Transforming Government Organisations*
- *Priority Reform 4 – Shared Access to Data and Information at a Regional Level*

Outcome Area

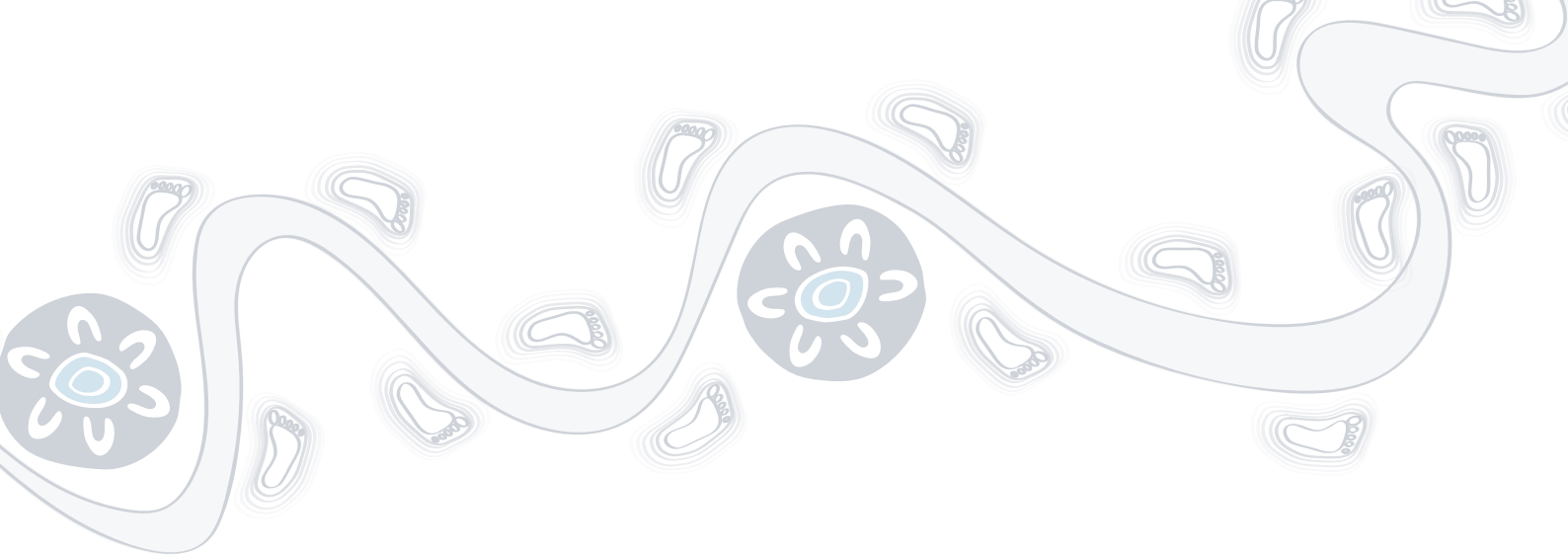
Outcome 15 – People maintain a distinctive cultural, spiritual, physical and economic relationships with their land and waters.

- *Target 15a: By 2030, a 15 percent increase in Australia's land mass subject to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's legal rights or interests*
- *Target 15b: By 2030, a 15 percent increase in areas covered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's legal rights or interests in the sea*
- *The details of an additional target relating to inland waters are still being determined nationally.*

The strategic commitment to Sector Leadership aligns with the Priority Reform 2 and 3 and Clause 59c of the National Agreement which commits to 'Delivering services in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, communities and people'.

About Us





Stronger when we work together

Supporting Indigenous people to own and manage Country is strengthened when we work with likeminded partners and build on existing initiatives. It is important we know what these other initiatives are and work closely with our partners to maximise our efforts and resources.

In arriving at the Sector Leadership Future Industries Initiatives, Industries Initiatives, we worked with key partners to understand the opportunities and challenges related to the priority sectors. To assist in this task, we appointed subject matter experts as follows:

- **Pollination Group** for the Carbon and Environmental Markets sectors.
- **Barratt Mollison Consultant Group (BMCG)** for the Inland Water sector.
- **Indigenous Energy Australia (IEA)** for the Renewables and Clean Energy sector.
- **Australian Venture Consultants (AVC)** for the Fisheries and Aquaculture sector.

Throughout April and May 2024, together with the experts, the ILSC held workshops or facilitated discussions with a range of First Nation's people and entities. Engagement included online interactive workshops; face to face interviews and facilitated workshops at industry forums.

Engagement with policy makers, regulators and other government agencies also formed an important part of the sector leadership strategy development. Over 19 interviews with this category of stakeholder were undertaken in the fishing and aquaculture sector alone.

The ILSC has developed key partnerships with sector leadership entities and peak bodies. Key partners in the development and delivery of the Future Industries Initiatives include:

- Indigenous Carbon Industry Network
- First Nation Clean Energy Network
- Aboriginal Sea Company

Monitoring and Reporting on our progress

Being accountable and transparent is important to us. It is something Indigenous people have asked us to improve on. Saying we plan to achieve all these initiatives is great, but we must back this up with action and be honest about what we have achieved and how we achieved it.

We will monitor and report on our progress in implementing the Sector Leadership Future Industries Initiatives using the NILSS Framework. Each August a NILSS Yearly Action Plan will be released. It will set out what we plan to do that year and provide the opportunity to fine tune our direction between larger reviews.

In the first year of the NILSS we developed a measurement approach and Indigenous Impact Framework to track our progress against the NILSS and to place Indigenous knowledge, perspectives and priorities at the centre to track how we are delivering on the aspirations we have heard.

We will review the NILSS, including the Future Industries Initiatives, in 2026 and 2028 to determine if we need to make any changes. We may add new priorities or remove those that are no longer relevant. Any changes we make will be led by the views and perspectives of Indigenous people and organisations.

Each year, we will formally report our progress through our compliance report – the Annual Report – and through our friendly, story-based Returning and managing Country publication, as well as providing regular updates on our activities through our social media and newsletter channels.

Aligned to our Excellent Service priority, we will celebrate our efforts, be open about where we have not reached our goals and share what we learn along the way.



Australian Government
Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation



The **ILSC GROUP**

PEOPLE. COUNTRY. OPPORTUNITY.



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Established in 1995 under the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Act*, we provide for the contemporary and future land needs of Indigenous people, particularly those unlikely to benefit from Native Title or Land Rights.

We work with our Indigenous partners to grow their economic, environmental, cultural and social capital by supporting their acquisition and management of land and water. In redressing dispossession, we provide for a more prosperous and culturally centred future for Indigenous people.

The Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation is a Commonwealth entity under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*.



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