

Australian Sustainable Finance Summit 2023 Outcomes Report

Australian Sustainable
Finance Institute



November 2023

Summary

On October 24 2023, at a sold-out summit, over 350 attendees from across finance, business, government, civil society, and academia came together to unpack this year's theme; 'Driving ambition: Australia's time to lead'.

There were many rich discussions across all sessions, with attendees learning about practical examples; gaining inspiration from abroad; hearing what actions are needed to achieve a step-change across climate, natural capital and social outcomes; and uncovering how the finance sector can work collaboratively with government, universities, NGOs and others to achieve this.



Highlights

The Hon. Stephen Jones MP, Assistant Treasurer

In an exclusive welcome, the Assistant Treasurer underscored the collaborative effort needed between Government and industry to achieve our sustainable finance ambitions:

"We have a big agenda, and we can't do it alone. It has to be a collaborative effort. We know you're all committed and ambitious for what Australia can achieve, and you know that we are ambitious as well."

Steve Waygood, Chief Responsible Investment Officer at Aviva Investors

Steve Waygood of Aviva Investors delivered an inspiring keynote address:

"We all need to raise our game. Not just engage with companies, not vote at the AGM, but we need to engage with the system. We need to understand it using systems thinking and then analyse it, look at the impediments within the system and then seek to address it. A new level of thinking is possible."

Rhian-Mari Thomas, CEO of the Green Finance Institute

Rhian-Mari Thomas OBE, CEO of the Green Finance Institute (GFI), outlined the work of the GFI in bridging the 'execution gap' between the commitments and intentions of private capital, and the genuine bankable opportunities to achieve climate and social goals. She underscored the need for multi-stakeholder collaboration, and the right institutional approach.

"This is a really exciting time for financiers, not to sit and wait for standardisation and regulation to tell us what to do, but for us to do what we're best at – which is finding solutions to problems and using our financial expertise, working closely to make sure regulation and policy is supportive, fit for purpose, and actually enabling us to crowd in capital."

Ian Learmonth, CEO of the Clean Energy Finance Corporation

In a fireside chat with ASFI's Kristy Graham, Ian Learmonth discussed the role of the Clean Energy Finance Corporation in catalysing private capital into clean energy and climate mitigation in Australia.

"Deploying publicly sponsored capital through the CEFC is about creating the right risk return environment for private capital to flow... by creating a clear investment framework for the private sector, it is able to come in on its own terms."

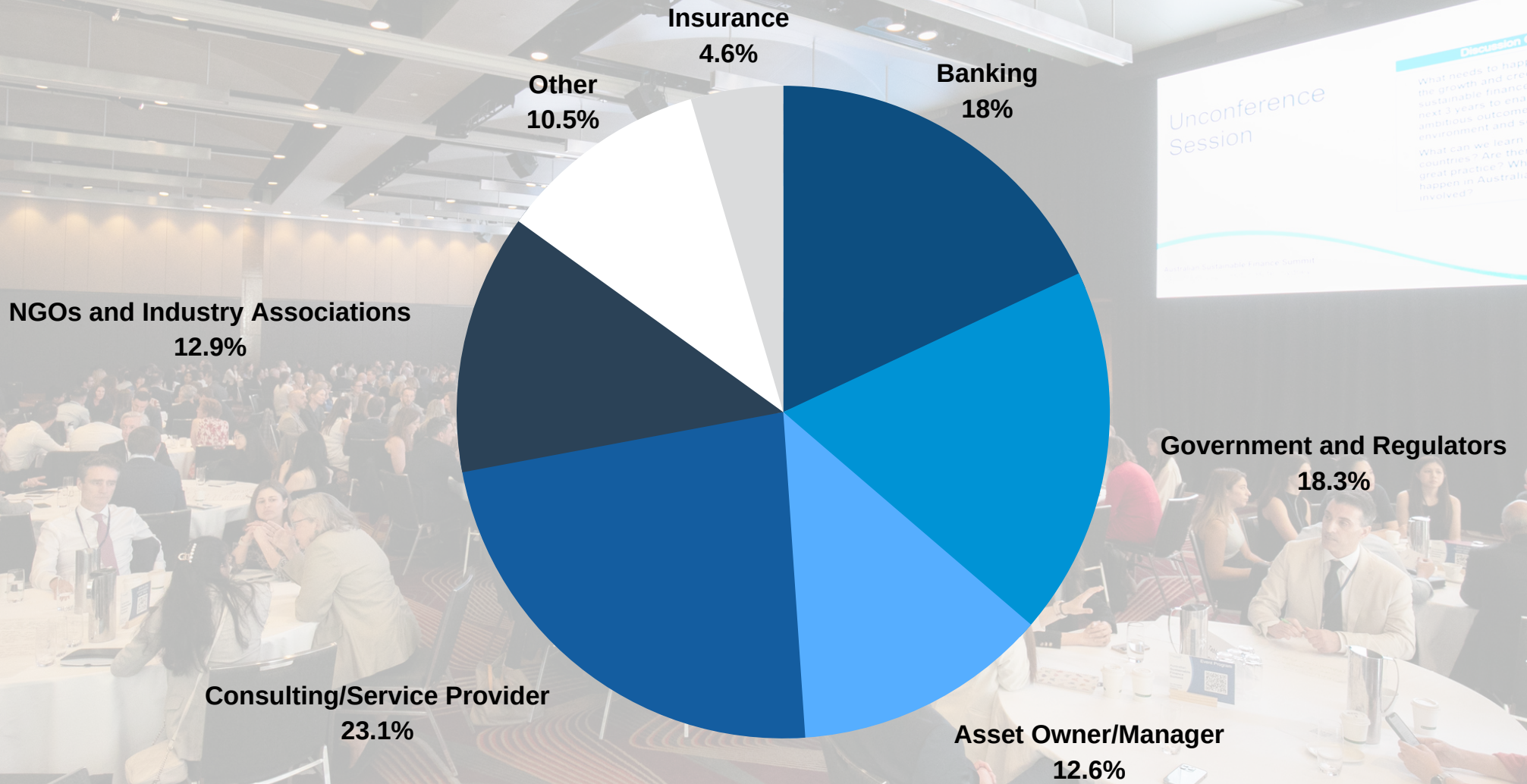
Mark Podlasly, Chief Sustainability Officer at the First Nations Major Projects Coalition

Mark Podlasly brought his experience as a member of the Nlaka'pamux Nation and Chief Sustainability Officer at the First Nations Major Projects Coalition to provide insights and experiences from Canada:

"The road to net zero runs through Indigenous lands."



Attendees



2023 Progress Tracker

ASFI's Policy and Sustainable Finance lead, Purdie Bowden, presented key findings from ASFI's 2023 [Sustainable Finance Progress Tracker](#). ASFI's third report on implementation of the Australian Sustainable Finance Roadmap found that Australia is heading in the right direction on sustainable finance but needs to accelerate progress.

"We have seen another step-change in Australian sustainable finance over the past 12 months, this time driven by the Australian Government. But there is more to do."

The 2023 Progress Tracker again demonstrates those areas where industry, government, regulators and civil society still need to drive faster, stronger progress towards ASFI's vision of a sustainable, resilient and inclusive financial system. This means more courageous leadership, more investment in capability, more collaboration, and better coordination."



The [2023 Australian Sustainable Finance Progress Tracker](#) shows Australia is heading in the right direction on sustainable finance policy, driven by a step change in leadership from the Australian Government.

The third annual Sustainable Finance Progress Tracker demonstrates progress against a broad range of Australian Sustainable Finance Roadmap recommendations. There is now an average score above a pass (2.6 out of 5) across the 37 recommendations, a rise of 0.6 from the 2022 average.

Australia is moving rapidly from laggard to 'early follower' on sustainable finance – advancing a world-leading sustainable finance taxonomy, moving to introduce mandatory climate disclosure for Australian firms from 1 July 2024, and developing a framework for Australia's first sovereign green bond issuance.

These fundamental pillars of sustainable finance policy will help mainstream climate within Australian financial institutions; allow sustainability-related claims to be substantiated (or debunked); and position Australia to influence the development of international sustainable finance frameworks.

But Progress Tracker results also underscore the task ahead to translate targets and policy into on the ground impact to decarbonise the economy, restore Australia's natural capital and support greater levels of wellbeing across Australian society. Over the next 12 months, bedding down and supporting implementation of existing reforms will be important. At the same time, the urgency and magnitude of the sustainability challenge demands additional action.





Panel Sessions

The State of Sustainable Finance in Australia

The first panel session brought panellists from across the finance sector to assess how Australia is tracking on sustainable finance, and take stock of progress over the past 12 months.

Panellists Adam Davids, Jacqui Fox, Alison Chan, Jeff Brunton, Sean Carmody, and James Fitzpatrick shared their perspectives on trends and developments in sustainable finance. As Australia moves rapidly from laggard to early follower on sustainable finance policy and regulation, panellists also identified how Australia can play a leadership role.

Embracing Innovation

Our panel session “Embracing Innovation” built on key insights from Rhian-Mari Thomas and Ian Learmonth, with panellists Arj Dibley, Kirsty Moore, Ben Broché, Lee McDougall, Alexander Austin and moderator Tessa Dann contributing to an insightful discussion.

They pointed to solutions currently being used to channel capital towards climate and sustainability, whilst also underscoring the need to look at ways to channel capital away from harmful assets. Panellists also stressed how blended finance can act as a crucial tool to ensure finance flows to climate solutions. And Kirsty Moore highlighted the innovative leading work of Indigenous Business Australia in lending for First Nations Australians.

Economic Reconciliation: How the finance sector can support economic self-determination for First Nations Australians

In a timely discussion, Rebecca Blurton, Ben Ainsworth, Mark Podlasly and Janice Morris joined us to discuss how the finance sector can support economic self-determination for First Nations Australians.

Panellists dived into the economic opportunities that land rights can provide to First Nations communities, opportunities to improve Reconciliation Action Plans to deliver on-ground outcomes, and lessons from abroad on what needs to happen to achieve a step change in economic reconciliation.

“We should all aim for partnership. In partnerships, both parties are equal, we’re looking out for each other, we’re looking to collaborate and move forward together.”

– Rebecca Blurton





Stewards of the Land

This session unpacked how we can integrate natural capital into economic decision making and incentivise an uplift in our natural environment.

The session opened with a fireside chat between Dr Sue Ogilvy, program director of Macdoch Foundation's Farming For The Future, and Joshua Gilbert, who discussed how the integration of scientific evidence and research, coupled with First Nations' knowledge and understanding of Country, can help to accelerate our understanding of the relationship between natural capital and economic performance, and ensure healthy resilience landscapes into the future.

Josh and Sue were joined by panellists Heechung Sung, Andrew Saunders, Christina Tonkin and Arianna Cowling who discussed what financial institutions are doing to drive improved natural capital outcomes, opportunities for better integration of nature into financial decision making, initiatives in the nature space by the Australian Government, and the practical steps that can be taken to incorporate First Nations' cultural knowledge and practices into the rapidly developing scientific evidence base, linking natural capital to greater farm performance.

Talking Taxonomies and Driving Transition

There was a fantastic turnout at our highly anticipated final panel session 'Talking Taxonomies and Driving Transition', which featured Matteo Bigoni, Warren Tease, Jo Kelly, Zachary May, Charles Davis, Emma Garlett, Brian Cahill and moderator Nicole Yazbek-Martin.

Panellists spoke to how an Australian sustainable finance taxonomy could help financial institutions allocate capital to credible and necessary transition activities to achieve our net-zero emissions ambitions in line with the Paris Agreement goals. They also discussed how the principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent can be embedded into a taxonomy; lessons learned from other jurisdictions, ongoing continued collaboration with our international peers, including New Zealand; and where a taxonomy fits in Australia's broader sustainable finance architecture.

"The key theme is one of transparency. We need to improve the quality of information that markets have and ensure it is credible, comparable and easy for investors and regulators to use. That's really where the taxonomy comes in: it's about providing better quality information on climate and broader sustainability objectives."

– Warren Tease

You can learn more about the development of an Australian sustainable finance taxonomy [here](#).



The Great Debate

In this riveting close to our 2023 Australian Sustainable Finance Summit, Guy Debele, Katerina Kimmorley, Alix Pearce, Simon O'Connor, Nathan Fabian and Robynne Quiggin debated whether a 'hard and fast' or a more 'measured and achievable' approach will deliver greater ambition.

Ultimately, both teams agreed on the need to go hard and fast, but to do that in a way which has integrity, brings all of the community along and maximises the social benefits of transition, particularly for First Nations Australians.

A great session where we were joined by some of the greatest minds in sustainable finance grappling with the trickiest questions.



Unconference Session

In this interactive in-person unconference session, attendees had the opportunity to discuss the topics of most interest to them, with an overall focus on the Summit theme of 'ambition'.

Session topics, which were sourced from attendees, included natural capital, sustainability reporting, First Nations and finance, social issues, international engagement, capability, transition finance, policy and regulation, and innovation.

Attendees worked together to explore what needs to happen to accelerate the growth and credibility of sustainable finance in Australia in the next 3 years; and what we can learn from other countries, examples of great practice, what more needs to happen in Australia, and who needs to be involved.



Table 11
First Nations
and Indigenous

Table 8
Sustainability
reporting

Event Program

win
viral note

2023 Sponsors

Diamond Sponsors



Platinum Sponsors

MOODY'S

QIC



Coffee Cart Sponsor



Gold Sponsors



Exhibitors



MOODY'S

Media Partners

KangaNews

Investment Magazine

^{FS} Sustainability

