



FEBRUARY 2026

# Australia Repairs: Growing Australia's Nature Economy

The Green Paper

*Growing Australia's Nature Economy acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands, waters and seas on which we live and work, and recognises their enduring connection to Country, culture, and community.*

*We pay our respects to Elders past and present, and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.*

*We recognise that for tens of thousands of years, First Nations peoples have cared for and managed Country through knowledge systems, cultural practices, and stewardship that continue to sustain Australia's landscapes today. As Australia seeks to grow and strengthen its nature economy, we acknowledge that First Nations knowledge, leadership and self-determination are essential to achieving lasting environmental, social and economic outcomes.*



## FOREWORD:

This Green Paper is the product of input from those with decades of experience and hundreds of hours of conversations, workshops, yarns and late-night debates held across Australia. It has been shaped on Country with Traditional Owners, around campfires with landholders, in shearing sheds and farm kitchens, and in boardrooms where policy, investment and science intersect. From Cape York to the Wheatbelt, from the Murray-Darling to the Tasmanian Midlands, people who care deeply about the future of Australia's landscapes came together to ask a simple question: how do we build environmental markets that repair nature at scale?

GANE (Growing Australia's Nature Economy) was formed because the people doing this work see what Australia can grasp if it chooses to lead. Environmental markets offer one of the greatest nation-building opportunities of the coming decades: rewarding land stewardship, restoring biodiversity at scale, strengthening regional economies, and positioning Australia as a global powerhouse in nature repair, agricultural productivity and First Nations self-determination. This document reflects that shared ambition. It captures the optimism of communities ready to step into a new era of land management, the practical lessons learned from projects already delivering results, and the belief that Australia can set the global benchmark for how environmental markets operate.

Our purpose is to defend Australia's environmental markets from misinformation and poor design, and to help scale them so they deliver real, measurable outcomes for nature, landholders and the nation.

Our vision is a strong nature-based economy.

Our mission is to be a positive advocate for market-based opportunities that benefit nature, climate, the economy and people.

GANE offers this paper as a starting point for a stronger, fairer and more confident future for Australia's nature economy. It is a living document that we will share and seek to discuss widely- particularly with those whose lives and livelihoods are on the land like First Nations and farmers. We strongly believe their stories and experiences need to be heard, in their voice, and it be recognised that creating value for nature, economies and people starts on country and in the paddock.

We thank the inaugural contributors to the Green Paper. With careers full of exciting experiences and from diverse cultural backgrounds they have willingly shared their passion and guided us with care and commitment in support of GANE's vision and mission.

Brendan Foran  
*Convenor, GANE*

# Executive Summary

**Australia's land, water and wildlife are under immense strain. Forests are being cleared faster than they can regrow, soils are eroding, and native species are vanishing. At the same time, our climate is changing, with hotter, drier seasons hitting farmers, First Nations communities and regional towns the hardest. Repairing nature at this scale will cost hundreds of billions of dollars, far beyond what governments or charities can afford alone.**

Environmental markets are the champion of nature repair at scale. These markets turn the services nature provides, storing carbon, cleaning water, restoring habitat, into credits that companies can buy. In practice, that means Australia's largest energy and industrial facilities pay the people doing the repair: farmers, Traditional Owners, and local communities. It's the simplest and fairest idea there is, big industry helps pay for its pollution.

Australia's carbon and biodiversity markets are world-class, with rigorous science and

independent oversight. They are channeling billions in private investment through the farm gate and back onto Country. They fund real projects, healthier soils, cultural fire programs, reforestation and cleaner catchments, that deliver measurable benefits for both people and the planet.

But these markets will only succeed if Australians trust them. That means transparency, simple rules, clear reporting, and stories that show results on the ground. It also means politicians and industry must defend them from those who demand perfection before progress.

These markets are a critical, and already wildly successful tool, that help restore Australia's landscapes and meet our international obligations.

There exists a small minority, who would prefer to pull these markets down because they find faults in a system that is still maturing, and are only prepared to accept perfect solutions. Perfect is the enemy of good. Waiting for a flawless regime does nothing but fast-track environmental damage.

Australia Repairs; Growing Australia's Nature Economy, is a national campaign to show Australians that these systems are the most practical, affordable and fair way to reach net zero, repair our environment, and strengthen rural communities.

## DID YOU KNOW?

### Nature Funding Gap

Nature repair needs \$500 billion a year globally. Australia currently spends \$500 million. Carbon markets already deliver \$1 billion in private funding annually.



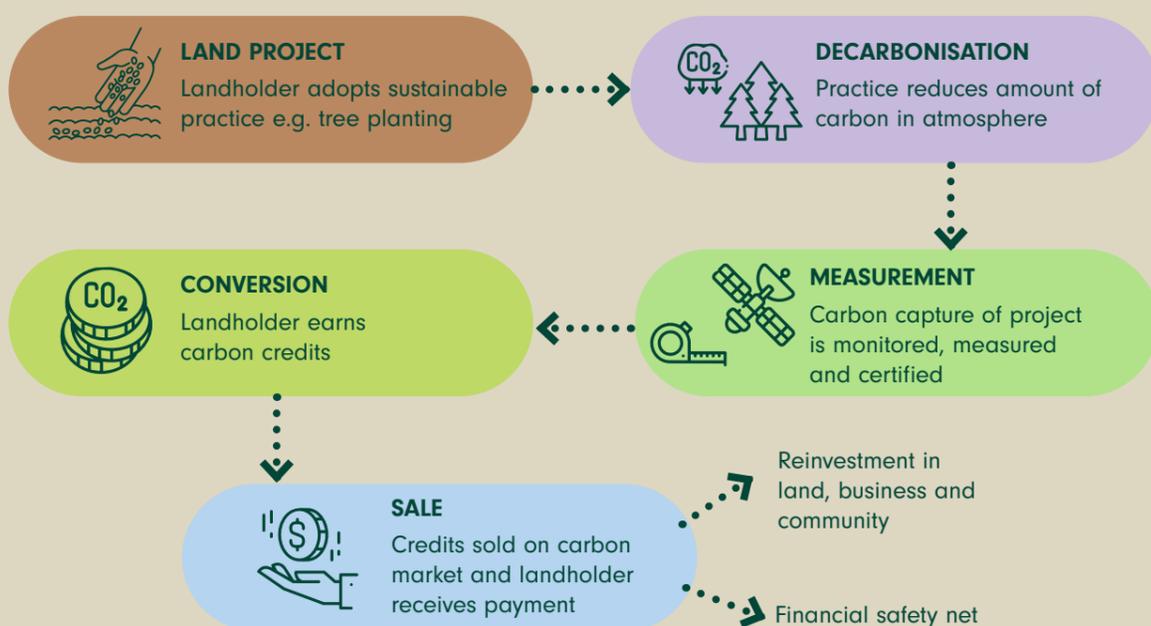
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# 1. What are Environmental Markets?

Environmental markets reward landholders, Traditional Owners and communities for protecting, restoring, or managing natural assets by paying them for the measurable services nature provides, like storing carbon, improving water quality, or restoring habitat. They turn positive environmental outcomes into money, creating a system where Australia's corporations pay the land managers to deliver exceptional results for the environment while incentivising companies to drastically cut their pollution.

## How do carbon markets work?



# Carbon Markets

**What are they?** Carbon markets are systems where landholders earn credits by adopting practices that reduce carbon in the atmosphere, including activities like growing trees and restoring vegetation that naturally absorb and store carbon, or improving soil carbon. These credits can then be sold to businesses required to meet emissions targets.

## How it works:

### Government-Regulated Carbon Market (ACCUs)

- Projects that remove carbon from the atmosphere or prevent emissions are independently measured and verified.
- These projects generate Australian Carbon Credit Units (ACCUs).
- One ACCU equals one tonne of carbon dioxide stored or avoided.
- ACCU integrity is protected by the Clean Energy Regulator, which oversees methodologies, audits, and credit issuance.
- ACCUs are used by Australia's largest emitters, who are legally required to reduce or offset emissions under the Safeguard Mechanism.
- These credits contribute directly to Australia's Net Zero goals.
- ACCUs also attract private buyers such as banks, airlines and corporations – who use them to reduce their carbon footprint.

### Voluntary Carbon Markets

- Companies and individuals can voluntarily buy carbon credits outside government requirements.
- These credits are often used for corporate climate commitments, aviation, product-based offsets, or supply chain decarbonisation.
- Voluntary credits do not count towards Australia's Net Zero obligations – but are an additional market that supports environmental and community outcomes.
- Buyers include global brands, investors and consumers wanting to go beyond legal requirements.

## DID YOU KNOW?

### Carbon Market Integrity

Carbon projects are independently audited and regularly updated to ensure emissions reductions are real, accurate and verified over time.

# Emerging Markets

**What are they?** Voluntary and compliance markets where landholders are paid for restoring or protecting ecosystems.

## How it works:

- There are a range of emerging nature markets that focus on positive actions that improve water quality and enhance biodiversity.
- Buyers include businesses such as developers, miners, and infrastructure operators who invest in environmental repair to balance the impacts of their operations. These are both a growing form of voluntary investment that helps restore nature and build community trust, as well as mandatory purchases in Australia's compliance programs.
- Australian organisations such as Accounting for Nature have committed significant resources towards strengthening and complementing carbon and emerging markets by providing world-leading tools for measuring, managing and investing in nature.
- They are an increasingly popular investment for businesses looking to build community trust, restore nature, and meet legal compliance obligations.

## DID YOU KNOW?

### Biodiversity and Trade Risk

Australia signed a global framework to protect 30% of land and sea by 2030, but funding for nature protection remains well short of what environmental groups say is needed to deliver these goals. Australia risks falling behind Europe and China on carbon accountability and green trade rules, significantly weakening our ability to trade, attract investment, and compete in a low-carbon global economy.



## DID YOU KNOW?

The Leadbeater's Possum is among 145 animals listed as 'critically endangered' under the EPBC Act, which means it is at extremely high risk of extinction in the immediate future.

## 2. The Stakes

### Nature Repair / Biodiversity Nature

Australia's natural heritage is collapsing at an unprecedented rate. Our country is home to over half a million species, many of which are found nowhere else on the planet. Independent scientific assessments, government reports, and conservation organisations all agree: biodiversity is poor and deteriorating, with multiple ecosystems on the brink of collapse. This crisis is being driven by habitat destruction, invasive species, pollution, and the accelerating impacts of climate change.

### A Global Hotspot for Extinction

Since colonisation, Australia has lost more mammal species than any other country, with at least 39 species driven to extinction. Today, 2181 species and ecological communities are listed as threatened under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, including 618 animal species, 1455 plant species and 108 ecological communities, with new listings added each year.

Scientists widely agree that human activity has triggered a sixth global mass extinction event, driven by land clearing, habitat degradation, invasive species and climate change, and that Australia is disproportionately contributing to this loss. The last extinction event of comparable scale occurred around 66 million years ago, when roughly half of all life on Earth was wiped out, including the dinosaurs. Unlike that event, the current crisis is not a natural cycle. It is human caused and therefore within our power to address.

### Habitat Loss and Degradation



Image: Wilderness Society

Habitat destruction remains the single largest driver of biodiversity loss in Australia. Between 2000 and 2017, eastern Australia experienced some of the highest rates of deforestation in the developed world. In Queensland alone, land clearing in 2018–19 destroyed over 680,000 hectares of habitat, much of it for grazing. Old-growth forests and wetlands may take centuries to recover, if they ever do.

### Desertification

Across much of inland Australia, once-productive rangelands are drying, thinning and losing their ability to sustain life. Around 70 per cent of the continent is already arid or semi-arid, and land degradation is expanding south and east. The result is declining soil fertility, reduced groundcover, and eroding resilience across landscapes that underpin agricultural productivity, biodiversity and rural economies.

As vegetation is lost and soils are left exposed, degraded landscapes absorb and release heat differently, intensifying regional warming and drying trends. At the same time, climate change creates a dangerous feedback loop that accelerates both processes.

Environmental markets are essential tools for keeping rural Australia productive and habitable, channeling investment into rehydrating and revegetating degraded lands and halting the spread of desertification.

### Freshwater Ecosystems in Crisis

Freshwater habitats are losing species faster than any other environment, and Australia is no exception. Native fish populations in the Murray Darling Basin have declined by around 90 percent over the past 150 years, reflecting sustained pressure on river systems across the country. Recent research indicates that around 37 percent of Australia's freshwater fish species are now at risk of extinction.

This decline is being driven by altered river flows, the over extraction of water, invasive species such as carp, and pollution from agriculture and mining.

### Coastal and Marine Declines

Australia's marine environments are also under pressure. In Tasmania, giant kelp forests, a critical habitat for fish, have declined by more than 95% since the 1940s due to warming waters and invasive species. Coral reefs, including the Great Barrier Reef, are suffering mass bleaching events at increasing frequency and severity, driven by marine heatwaves. These events have devastating impacts on biodiversity, fisheries, and tourism.

## Bushfires and Climate Change

The 2019–20 Black Summer bushfires burned more than 24 million hectares across Australia, equivalent to the size of the United Kingdom. An estimated three billion animals were killed or displaced, making it one of the worst bushfire disasters in modern history. Climate change is compounding all other threats, intensifying droughts, heatwaves, floods, and storms, while shifting species' ranges and disrupting breeding cycles.

## Net Zero and the Role of Land-Based Sequestration

Australia has committed to achieving Net Zero by 2050, but not every tonne of emissions can be eliminated through technology or fuel switching alone. Heavy industries such as aviation, freight, cement, and agriculture will continue to generate hard-to-abate emissions for decades. Australia's high quality carbon offsets are the answer to that, and we are producing them right now.

For example, soils store carbon by turning plant matter into organic material underground. The healthier the soil, the more carbon it locks away, and the better it grows food. It gets it out of the atmosphere and into the earth, providing the most practical and lowest-cost way of balancing the books on emissions. Trees do the same above ground, they absorb carbon dioxide from the air and store it in their trunks, branches and roots as they grow.

These carbon storage projects are funded by major industrial emitters and create a steady flow of private investment into nature repair and climate action. Landholders are paid for activities that absorb and store carbon, such as restoring vegetation or improving soil carbon, and generate verified carbon credits. In 2024 alone, major industrial emitters paid landholders more than a billion dollars for their carbon credits, funding nature restoration at a scale that would otherwise have been out of reach.

For taxpayers, this is a critical advantage. Every dollar that is spent by Australian companies on verified carbon removal is a dollar that does not need to come from public budgets. Rather than governments shouldering the impossible cost of repairing nature at national scale, well-functioning markets ensure the solutions are funded.

## 3. The Cost of Nature Repair

**Fixing Australia's degrading environment is not a cheap endeavour. According to the Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists, sustained investment of around \$7.3 billion a year could avoid most extinctions, recover almost all threatened species, repair the productive base of agricultural soils and fix over allocated and fragmented river systems.**

To put it in perspective, \$7.3 billion a year is around \$2 billion more than the entire annual budget of the NSW Police Force. Let that sink in. Governments would be required to find more funding for nature repair each year than they spend on policing across the largest state in the country.

We have to be honest, even funding a conservative national repair program comes with eye watering costs. So where would that money realistically come from?

Government budgets cannot stretch that far nor will Australians will not tolerate the prospect of schools shrinking or hospitals hobbling so that land repair can be funded. Cutting health, education or policing to pay for environmental repair is politically impossible.

Philanthropy does important work in Australia's environmental space, seeding new ideas, funding innovation and supporting communities long before markets or governments step in. In 2021 alone, Australians gave around \$270 million to climate and environmental causes. That generosity matters, but it operates at a fraction of what is required each year. Philanthropy can help start change, but it cannot carry the national burden.

This is why environmental markets matter. To make a meaningful dent in this challenge, we need market-based solutions where the private sector pays for nature repair as part of its obligations. This protects taxpayers from carrying the full cost and reflects the reality that large scale environmental repair will only happen if private capital is mobilised through mechanisms such as ACCUs.

### Measured, Verified, Audited

Soil carbon projects use lab-tested core samples before and after changes in land management. Audits are mandatory, and the regulator can strip credits if standards aren't met.

## 4. The Cost of Net Zero

Getting Australia to net zero will be one of the biggest economic transformations in our history. Independent modelling makes clear the scale of investment required: BloombergNEF estimates around \$3 trillion between now and 2050 – over \$100 billion a year. The Commonwealth Bank says similar levels will be needed to decarbonise energy and transport, while the Australian Industry Energy Transitions Initiative projects at least \$625 billion to decarbonise five key industrial sectors, with far more if we choose to lead in green hydrogen and critical minerals.

Those numbers may be large, but the cost of inaction is far greater. Deloitte estimates Australia's economy could shrink by three per cent every year for the next fifty years if we fail to act. Treasury has shown that even a one degree rise in global temperatures beyond two degrees would wipe \$155 billion from our economy in today's dollars. Doing nothing is the riskiest, most expensive option available.

The question, then, is how we pay for the transition. The answer is clear: government cannot do it alone. Taxpayers should not – and will not – carry the full cost. Markets help make the transition affordable and fair. Markets create value for the economy by efficiently directing private capital into productive activity, turning costs into investment and driving innovation, jobs and long-term growth. They spread the bill across the private sector, unlock corporate capital, and channel investment into projects the public purse could never fully fund. They turn pollution into investment, reduce pressure on the budget, and deliver visible outcomes: healthier soils, restored ecosystems, stronger regions and new jobs.

### DID YOU KNOW?

#### Missed Emissions Cuts

If the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme hadn't been blocked in 2009, Australia would've avoided 81 million tonnes of emissions by 2020 – more than all coal and gas fugitive emissions combined.



# 5. Australia's National Climate Risk Assessment

**Australia's 2025 National Climate Risk Assessment demonstrates that climate change is no longer a distant threat but an escalating national problem of significance happening to our country right now.**

The assessment identifies 63 national risks, with 11 rated as priority, cutting across people, infrastructure, finance, food, ecosystems and culture. In practice, that means hotter suburbs where heatwaves drive up hospital admissions and put pressure on power grids; fragile food systems where prolonged droughts, floods and biosecurity risks make groceries more expensive; coastal towns facing inundation from sea-level rise and storm surges that wash away homes and roads; insurers withdrawing cover as disasters become too costly; and cultural heritage at risk, from First Nations sacred sites damaged by fire to the Great Barrier Reef losing entire ecosystems.

The costs of inaction are staggering. By 2050, climate-driven disasters such as bushfires, floods, cyclones and coastal erosion could carry an annual price tag exceeding \$40 billion, while Commonwealth disaster spending alone multiplies five- to seven-fold.

Millions of Australians will be living in zones of high or very high risk, particularly in low-lying coastal regions. Insurance costs are already spiking, with whole communities facing the prospect of becoming uninsurable.

What the assessment also underlines is that nature is not just a victim of climate change, it is our first line of defence. Healthy forests, wetlands, soils and reefs lock away carbon, regulate water and buffer extreme weather. Land-based carbon sequestration, habitat restoration and Indigenous land management are all proven ways to cut risk while also cutting emissions. These natural systems must be mobilised at scale if Australia is to adapt to a hotter, harsher climate.

This requires investment at a scale no government budget could bear, and is where our nation's proven and wildly successful environmental market system is a critical tool to fight back. Billions in private capital can be channeled into land restoration, cultural fire management, soil carbon projects and reef protection. The National Climate Risk Assessment spells out the incredible upside of continuing to scale up our well-functioning environmental markets, to ensure Australians do not foot the bill for escalating disasters through taxes, premiums and lost livelihoods.

# 6. Agriculture and Land Sector Plan: the foundation of net zero

**The Commonwealth's Agriculture and Land Sector Plan makes it clear that farming will always have some emissions, but the land sector is also Australia's single biggest natural carbon engine. The plan shows that land-based carbon removals, like soil carbon, reforestation, savanna fire management and blue carbon, will do a huge share of the heavy lifting by 2050, because they are affordable, scalable and already producing incredible results.**

## DID YOU KNOW?

### Business Impact

Companies buying voluntary carbon credits cut their own emissions faster and invest more in sustainability than those that don't - Ecosystem Marketplace.

Australia’s agriculture, fisheries and forestry sector is expected to reach a record \$101.6 billion in production value in 2025-26. By tapping into environmental markets—such as carbon farming, biodiversity credits and nature-based services—the sector could grow that value by around 10 % over the next 5-10 years, unlocking an additional \$10 billion for farmers, landowners and regional economies.

Australia has a once-in-a-generation economic and environmental opportunity to use our land to remove carbon from the atmosphere, fund nature repair and stimulate regional growth. No other climate solution delivers as many wins in one move. Carbon projects don’t come at the expense of agricultural productivity, instead they’re designed to sit alongside existing operations or make use of less productive parts of a farm.

On Bokhara Plains near Brewarrina in north-west NSW, Graham and Cathy Finlayson have transformed once-degraded claypan country using rotational grazing and regenerative practices. Their stocking capacity has increased by nearly 80%, thanks to healthier soils and more resilient pastures. In the New England region, Tim Wright of Lana near Uralla has more than doubled the carrying capacity of his family’s grazing operation over time, while improving lambing and calving rates, all by managing livestock in line with natural soil and plant cycles.

For mixed farmers such as Colin Seis of Winona near Boorowa, incorporating soil carbon practices has enabled him to maintain grain yields while cutting over \$100,000 a year in synthetic fertiliser and chemical costs. Trials by the Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) show that improving soil structure and organic matter in cropping systems can add 10–15% to yields.

Even in a low-emissions future, Treasury’s modelling shows Australia will still need to remove hundreds of millions of tonnes of carbon. The smartest, fastest and fairest way to do that is through land-based carbon markets and this is already happening. More than 160 million Australian Carbon Credit Units have been issued so far, generating billions in earned income for farmers, Indigenous rangers and landholders repairing Country. As demand rises under the Safeguard Mechanism, that flow of investment will only grow. Add the Nature Repair Market, and the same projects can stack carbon and biodiversity credits, doubling value while restoring habitat at scale.

### Grazing boost:

At Bokhara Plains (NSW), regenerative practices increased stocking capacity by almost 80%, turning poor claypan country into productive pasture.

# Australia’s Global Opportunity

**Australia is on the cusp of becoming a global powerhouse in carbon and nature markets. Few countries can match our combination of large scale land assets, stable legal frameworks, deep environmental expertise and trusted institutions. These strengths are already attracting some of the world’s largest pools of capital.**

The Taskforce on Nature Markets estimates that global carbon and biodiversity credit markets are channelling around \$9.8 billion dollars each year into nature based climate solutions. This is a fast growing pool of investment, and one that Australia is well placed to help lead and supply.

One of the largest pension funds on the planet, the Ontario Teachers’ Pension Plan, bought a major stake in Australian GreenCollar, a leading Australian environmental market business, signaling that Australia’s markets are investable at institutional scale. By 2035, voluntary carbon credits, carbon removal, and biodiversity credits combined could be worth around \$430–440 billion AUD a year globally, making nature-linked

markets one of the fastest-growing investment classes in the world, and placing Australia in a prime position to become a leading supplier.

Across the region, Singapore’s financial sector is gearing up for the same future. Its Monetary Authority has funded carbon market infrastructure, while senior officials are calling for deeper Australia–Singapore cooperation to create a regional hub for environmental markets under both voluntary and UN Article 6 mechanisms. Market analysts already place Australia and Singapore at the heart of Asia-Pacific’s fast-growing decarbonisation economy, with strong demand signals for credits that stack carbon, biodiversity, and social co-benefits.

The direction of travel is unmistakable: international capital is chasing nature-based climate solutions. With the Commonwealth’s Nature Repair Market now enabling biodiversity credits alongside carbon, Australia can offer international investors diversified, measurable, globally-aligned products backed by systems already tested on the ground that are achieving significant results. Combined with the firepower of Australia’s clean finance institutions, there is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to position Australia as the preferred destination for this investment, unlocking billions for First Nations partnerships, regional economies and nature restoration.

### Real Results

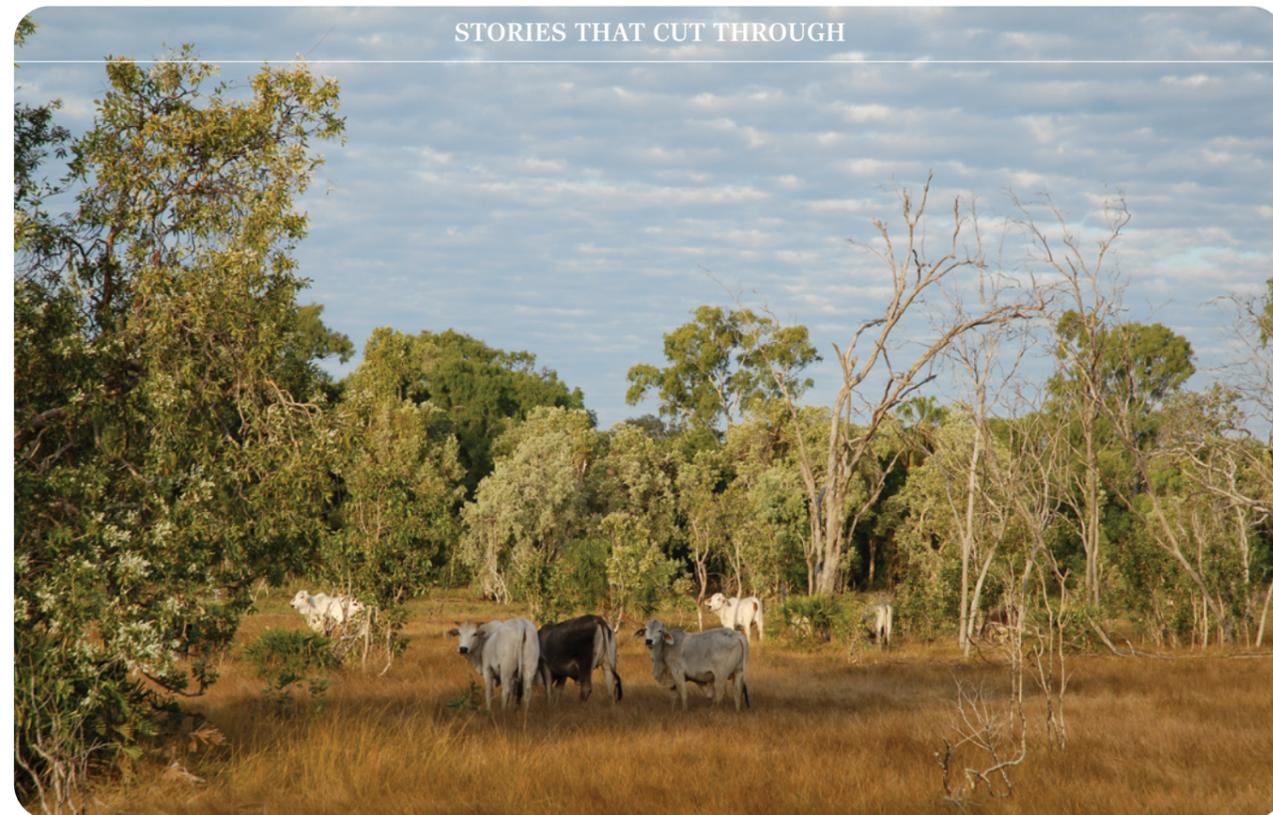
Carbon projects must prove actual change. Credits are only issued for mapped carbon estimation areas — not whole farms — and only after showing that past land use prevented regrowth.

# 7. Stories That Cut Through

## From Land Up: How Farmers, Rangers and Regional Projects Do the Heavy Lifting

### Input savings:

On Winona (near Boorowa NSW), soil carbon farming allowed Colin Seis to maintain grain yields while saving over \$100,000 each year in fertiliser and chemical costs.



## Rexton Goondiwindi, Queensland

When Tom and Antoinette Archer took over Rexton near Goondiwindi in the late 1990s, the property had been heavily grazed for many years. Ground cover was poor, water ran quickly off paddocks, and dry seasons brought high feed costs and constant pressure on cash flow. Like many farming families, the Archers wanted a more reliable and resilient way to run their business.

They began changing how they grazed stock and investing in new fencing and water points, and the land gradually responded. Early early soil tests showed carbon levels were rising as their pastures improved, and in 2016 the Archers joined one of the country's first soil carbon projects. Deep soil cores were taken, their management practices were assessed, and the results were independently audited. In 2023, they were issued around 66,000 carbon credits for the carbon stored in their soils.

For the Archer family, this created a new layer of income alongside livestock production. It helped smooth out the highs and lows that come with drought, floods and cattle price swings. It also reinforced that the work they had been doing for years – improving ground cover, managing grazing pressure and building healthier soils – had measurable value beyond the farm gate.

Today, their properties carry more feed, hold more water and support more diverse pasture than in the past. Researchers now monitor their land using specialist equipment to track carbon moving in and out of the soil, creating one of Australia's most detailed long-term soil carbon datasets. The Archers believe this data could also open doors to future biodiversity markets.



## Wanaaring, New South Wales

Wanaaring, a red-dirt region two hours west of Bourke, was where the Rosser family bore the brunt of the millennial drought. With ageing fences, virtually no water infrastructure, and goats and Dorper sheep eating the scrub bare, the land was under severe pressure. Margins were thin, and without a new approach, the country couldn't sustain the business. Instead of pushing harder, the Rossers decided to change the way they ran stock. They laid more than 80 kilometres of poly pipe and fenced every water point. Goats were trapped out of the system, and paddocks were rotated so pasture and native forest had time to rest and regenerate. Animals always had grass in front of them, which not only protected the land but improved livestock performance, with better feed conversion and more weight turned off for market.

Through Australia's carbon farming framework, those changes were independently measured and rewarded. From 2014, the Rossers began generating Australian Carbon Credit Units

(ACCUs), and by 2015 had their first abatement contract in place. It unlocked millions of dollars. It was investment that brought the property forward by 15 years and created a revenue stream that has been a lifeline through dry times, covering costs when income from livestock almost disappeared. It also meant the family could make better management decisions, like destocking early, keeping staff employed, and investing in local communities.

The results reach beyond the property gate. With carbon revenue, the Rossers have expanded into mixed farming around Forbes, growing lucerne, hay and grain alongside livestock. They've also helped level the playing field for local farmers, allowing Australians – not just foreign investors – to compete when land comes up for sale. The lesson is clear: carbon income made it possible to build resilience, strengthen the family business, and secure a future that balances productivity with sustainability.



## Arnhem Land, Northern Territory

In Arnhem Land, the smoke that rises early in the dry season tells a story of culture, science, and carbon markets working together. For thousands of years, Traditional Owners managed Country through patchwork burning, using cool fires to protect landscapes and reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfires. Colonial disruption broke this pattern, and with it came destructive late-season infernos.

Through ALFA NT (Arnhem Land Fire Abatement), Indigenous ranger groups have revived these practices, supported by carbon markets that recognise the measurable emissions reductions from early dry-season

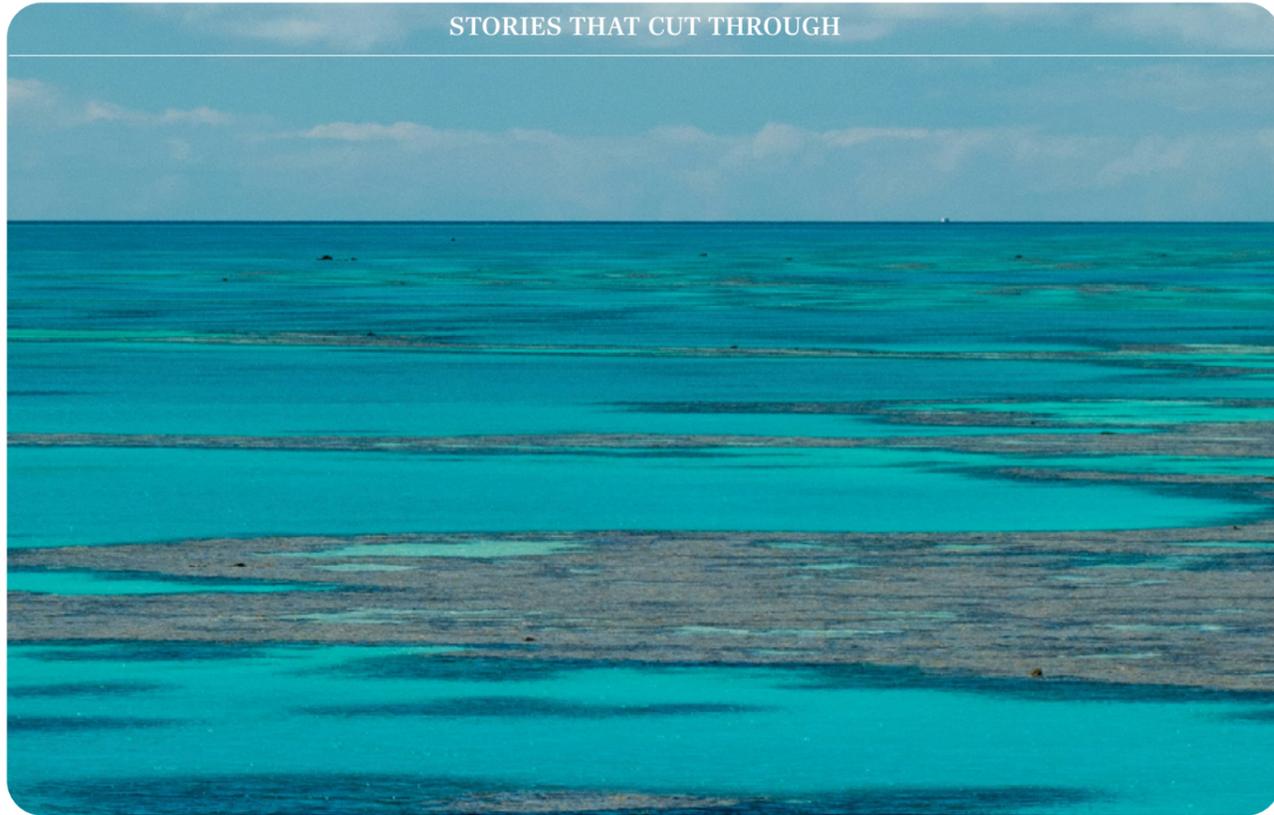
burning. The results are extraordinary. Across more than 80,000 square kilometres, carbon credits have flowed from cooler burns and healthier Country, with revenues reinvested into ranger programs, cultural heritage protection, women's ranger groups, and even on-Country schools like the Nawarddeken Academy.

The projects cut greenhouse gases, support jobs, keep young people connected to culture, and provide long-term economic independence. They show that environmental markets can be engines of self-determination, and polluters fund the entire thing.

### DID YOU KNOW?

#### Farmland

Carbon projects don't take prime agricultural land out of production, they are almost always on degraded or unused parcels of a farming property. In the case of soil carbon, they improve the health of the soil and boost productivity for farmers.



## Great Barrier Reef Catchment

The survival of the Great Barrier Reef depends in part on what happens upstream. Sediment and nitrogen runoff from cane farms and grazing properties choke waterways and damage coral. The Reef Credit Program gives landholders a reason to change this story. By reducing fertiliser use, improving water management, and cutting sediment loads, farmers generate tradable “reef credits”, a verified unit of cleaner water flowing toward the Reef.

These credits are recognition and reward for farmers who choose to care for their land differently. In return, they unlock funds from companies to offset their own pollution by backing real, measurable change on the Great Barrier Reef.

### DID YOU KNOW?

#### Land Degradation Reality

Western NSW and Western QLD are among the three most degraded landscapes on Earth, according to the World Bank. Nature repair funding is critical.



## Bringing Life Back to the Land

When a rainforest is cleared and turned into pasture, trees fall, soils lose their strength, and the land that once pulsed with life becomes brittle and exhausted. But in North Queensland, farmers and scientists showed that when the right support is in place this decline is not inevitable.

In former rainforest country near Ingham and Tully, researchers worked with landholders to test whether degraded pastures could be brought back to life. They planted a mix of native rainforest species across old paddocks, species chosen for their ability to rebuild canopy cover, feed soil microbes, and reconnect wildlife corridors. The results were striking. Within just a

few years, soils began to recover, pulling carbon back underground, while young trees captured more of it in their trunks and roots. Across the sites, reforestation restored an average of 59 tonnes of carbon per hectare, more than a fifth of what had been lost when the forest was first cleared.

This was funded by Australian Carbon Credit Units (ACCUs). Heavy industry bought those credits to pay for their own pollution and the proceeds flowed back to people doing the work of restoration. The result was a cycle of accountability: those who emit pay, those who steward the land deliver, and the nation benefits.

### Stronger Health on Country

Living on Country delivers real health benefits for Indigenous Australians. Research led by Dr Christopher Burgess in Arnhem Land found that caring for country is strongly associated with better health outcomes, including lower rates of diabetes, cardiovascular disease and kidney disease, as well as improved physical and mental wellbeing.

## 8. What's Broken?

Australia leads the world in environmental markets. They are regulated by the government through the Clean Energy Regulator, built on the highest standards of integrity, underpinned by clear methodologies, and backed by transparent accounting.

Through the Safeguard Mechanism, Australia has a compliance market that ensures the nation's corporations pay for the excess pollution they create and can't easily do away with. Too many academics and critics demand perfection, when the opportunities this world class system presents for our country are truly uncapped.

### First Nations & Country

First Nations people are frontline stewards of nature and climate. Environmental markets are now creating real income to support cultural and ecological leadership on Country.

## Pursuit of Perfect Frustrating Progress

There are differing views on how best to deliver climate and nature outcomes – and that's healthy in any democracy. But insisting on perfection before allowing progress shuts the door on real-world solutions that are working right now. Carbon and nature markets are evolving, accountable and delivering benefits. Unfortunately there are organisations that vilify participants in these markets, while dismissing real progress in the real world and offer no serious alternative.

No scheme is beyond improvement, but when nothing counts unless it is perfect then nothing counts. Critics rarely say what should replace the funding that markets provide, or how the

government alone would pay for repair at national scale without cutting the budgets of schools and hospitals. They assume a world of unlimited public money and unlimited time, which is not the world Australians live in.

Australians also understand a plain truth about our transition to Net Zero, fossil fuels will not vanish overnight. Heavy industry, freight, air travel, minerals processing and agriculture cannot decarbonise in a single leap.

The job is to cut emissions as fast as possible and, in parallel, remove and store carbon to cover what cannot yet be eliminated. Environmental markets are the bridge between today's hard reality and tomorrow's cleaner system. The existence of imperfections is not an argument to abandon the model that is already financing repair at scale. It is an argument to keep tightening the rules while scaling what works. The choice is between continuing visible repair funded by Australia's big businesses, and slow decline funded by no one.

### DID YOU KNOW?

#### Backlash Consequences

Misleading attacks on carbon markets by activist groups have discouraged participation and slowed climate action, according to global financial analysts MSCI.

## Anti-Net Zero

**Opposition to Net Zero remains a diminishing but persistent issue that continues to stall progress among some conservative constituencies in Australia. Elements of the political debate have framed climate policy, including the Safeguard Mechanism, as an economic burden, with calls to weaken or abandon existing frameworks altogether.**

This is politics presented as economics. These arguments do not seriously address how Australia would meet its domestic or international commitments if major corporations stepped away from their climate responsibilities. Nor do they reflect the reality that many Australian businesses are active and willing participants in climate and carbon markets because they see a clear commercial rationale for decarbonisation and emissions management.

The Business Council of Australia has consistently argued that Australia's future prosperity depends on attracting low emissions investment in a global economy that is already moving. It supports the Paris Agreement, legislated climate targets and Net Zero, describing it as central to Australia's economic transformation. The reasons are clear. New export industries are emerging at scale, capital is flowing toward economies with credible decarbonisation pathways, and companies that act early are reducing long term costs and protecting access to global markets. The real economic risk lies in falling behind.

Carbon and nature markets provide a practical mechanism to align climate responsibility with investment, supporting pollution management while directing private capital into regional Australia.

### Returning to Country

Carbon and biodiversity projects are bringing people back to Country for good. They fund ranger jobs, cultural burning, housing and language revival through long-term income streams, not just short-term grants.

## The Communications and Advocacy Problem

**The way Australia's environmental markets have been explained to the public, government and even the landholders who stand to benefit has been a barrier in itself. The concepts are technical, precise, and while they are necessary inside the system, to the broader public they are jargon.**

This language gap has meant ordinary Australians have not been provided with information about the extraordinary achievements of these markets, and their untapped potential. The advocacy from existing industry bodies has compounded the problem. Too often their approach has been defensive, technical, and focused on convincing regulators rather than persuading the public. Reports and

press releases have leaned heavily on modelling and market mechanics, but have failed to tell the story of real outcomes.

Meanwhile, critics have been free to set the narrative in sharper, more accessible language. Language that may always be framed in the negative, but easy to understand. The damage from poor advocacy directly undermines the ability of governments and policymakers to support and scale the system. Ministers and officials need to be able to clearly explain how the system works. In effect, the communication gap handcuffs political leaders, leaving them unable to make bold decisions.

If the sector wants to build social licence, it must abandon the assumption that the facts will speak for themselves. It needs to meet Australians where they are, in plain English, with clear evidence and stories that show the benefits in ways people can see and touch.

### Climate Resilience

Indigenous communities face the harshest climate impacts — from Torres Strait sea level rise to hotter savannas. Environmental markets are resourcing adaptation grounded in Indigenous knowledge, like cool burning and water management.

# 9. What Australians Think

A new national RedBridge survey of 2,015 Australians shows strong support for net zero by 2050, with 66 per cent backing the goal. But only one in five believes the country is on track. That gap between ambition and confidence is the opportunity: Australians want climate action that works.

The survey reveals environmental markets are widely supported in principle, with 59 per cent of Australians in favour of these schemes. As cost of living dominates public concern, carbon and biodiversity markets stand out as one of the most affordable and scalable climate solutions available. They don't rely on taxpayers to foot the bill – they channel private capital into public good, paying farmers, First Nations communities and regional landholders to restore nature, regenerate land and cut emissions. These markets are unlocking billions in investment every year and can be scaled up to turn the climate ambition Australians clearly have into real progress.

## Survey Results

Concern about climate change: 58% concerned, including 14% extremely concerned

Not concerned about climate change: 27%, including 11% not at all concerned

74%

Familiar with the term "net zero"

16%

Not familiar with the term "net zero"

10%

Unsure what "net zero" means

45%

Defined net zero as carbon reduction or zero emissions

Defined it as balancing emissions: 6%

Defined it as environmental/climate goals: 4%

Defined it as transition to renewable energy: 3%

Defined it as waste of money or opposition: 9%

Say achieving net zero by 2050 is important: 66%, including 32% very important

Say it is not important: 30%, including 14% not at all important

Say Australia is on track to achieve net zero by 2050: 20% Of those, "definitely on track": 1%

Support use of carbon offsets/credits: 59% Have ever bought/used carbon offsets or credits: 17%

2%

Believe consumers most responsible for reducing emissions

24%

Confident companies will use offsets properly

28%

Confident federal government will ensure offsets are effective

2%

Very confident in companies or government

Aware Clean Energy Regulator oversees offsets: 20%

# 10. How You Can Help



## Government and policymakers

- Publicly back carbon credits and environmental markets as a fair and practical way to direct private money into restoring nature rather than charging the taxpayer.
- Commit to a long-term roadmap so the rules survive election cycles.



## Farmers

- Be the voice for what's working. Show how carbon and nature projects make farms stronger. Open your gates, share the story, and bring neighbours, media and MPs to see the results for themselves.



## Investors

- Use your voice as investors and shareholders, call on the companies you own to invest in credible environmental markets and prove their impact.
- Don't just talk about sustainability, invest in it. Back the companies, funds and projects proving that carbon and nature repair markets deliver real returns for people and the planet.
- Put your money where your mouth is—invest in the future you want to see.



## The Industry

- Don't be shy about championing this work—it delivers real results and deserves backing. Say it plainly and meet criticism head-on.
- Show your receipts: simple public pages with photos, before-and-after evidence, and a one-page scorecard for every project.
- Invite scrutiny, not jargon: explain what counted, what didn't, and why—in clear English.
- When something needs fixing, fix it fast and say so. Publishing improvements builds trust and proves the system is working.



## Young people

- Create paid trainee roles with ranger groups, farms and councils.
- Tell short, visual stories that show results—trees planted, clearer water, healthier soils—rather than technical talk.
- Run school and vocational challenges that connect local ideas to real projects.
- Put young voices out front as trusted messengers.



## Conservation groups

- Champion credible projects that restore habitat and species, say clearly that this work delivers real gains for nature and deserves support.
- Be the trusted explainer: front community briefings, publish plain-English notes on why a project helps nature, and call out myths when you see them.
- Lead on transparency: help monitor results (camera traps, bird counts, water testing) and share the data openly so the public can see progress.
- Hold the line on standards while backing scale, demand strong safeguards, but don't let "perfect" block good projects that repair land now.



## First Nations communities

- Grow Country-led project pipelines with strong governance, clear consent and fair benefit-sharing.
- Record cultural outcomes alongside environmental results and publish them with community approval.



## Media

- Be curious, go and see these projects firsthand. They are full of stories that matter to readers and viewers.
- Tell the human story behind the markets: the farmers, rangers, scientists and families restoring land and culture.
- Keep the focus on results – what's growing, what's being repaired, and who's leading the change.
- Don't always listen to the loudest voice – just because someone is the fiercest critic, doesn't mean they're the only view or that they're right.



# 11. Conclusion

**Changing the way Australia talks about carbon and nature repair will take work, persistence, and resources. That is why this campaign exists: to give credibility a voice, to show policymakers that the system can be trusted, and to back the communities already proving it on the ground. But none of it can be done without support.**

Every major shift in Australia's history, from Medicare, to gun reform, to marriage equality, has required a movement behind it. Building integrity and public trust in environmental markets is no different. The media needs stories

to tell. Politicians need the confidence that voters back them when they act. Farmers, Traditional Owners, scientists and business leaders need a platform that amplifies their results. That is what this campaign provides: coordination, narrative, and the power to influence opinion with fact, story and legitimacy.

We are asking you to join us. Whether you are a citizen who wants to see your children grow up with thriving rivers and healthier landscape, or a CEO who understands that your licence to operate depends on trust, there is a place for you here. Contributions, financial, professional, and personal, are what will fuel this effort.

This is how Australians win, cleaner land and water, stronger regions, lower costs, and a credible path to net zero, funded by markets, measured by results, and owned by communities.

**Get in touch: [hello@gane.info](mailto:hello@gane.info)**

Image supplied by Macdoch

