

HUMAN RIGHTS WORKING GROUP



Responsible Investment
Association Australasia



Pre-Meeting Papers

Human Rights Working Group Meeting #3_25

Thursday 7 August 2025 | 12–1:30pm AEST / 2–3:30pm NZST

By Zoom - Those registered to attend will receive a unique login from Zoom at least 24 hours prior to the meeting – please see your email inbox.

Agenda

Time (AEST)	Item
12-12:03	1. Welcome (3 min) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Opening• Acknowledgement of Country• Minutes from last meeting• Purpose and Principles
12:03-12:38	2. Special Presentation and Q&A (35 min) – Human Rights in a shifting landscape <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Navigating U.S. Headwinds: Human Rights and DEI for ANZ Investors – Sireen Hajj, Director of Investor Outreach at US SIF (10 min)• Modern Slavery Risks in a Shifting Aid Landscape - Serena Grant, Director of Business and Human Rights at Walk Free (10 min)
12:38-12:43	3. Working Group Governance Updates (5 min) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Change of Co-Chair• Opening of EOIs
12:43-12:58	4. Subgroup Updates (15 min) <p>Digital Tech and Human Rights (10 min)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Janelle Morrison (Subgroup's point person Ausbil)) <p>Human Rights Due Diligence – insights from the UN Special Rapporteur report on corporate forces behind destruction of Palestine (5 min)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jo Saleeba
12:58-1:13	5. Industry Updates (15 min) <p>RIAA Policy and Advocacy Update (10 min)</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nayanisha Samarakoon (Head of Policy and Advocacy RIAA) <p>The Attorney-General's Department has opened consultation on proposed changes to the <i>Modern Slavery Act 2018</i>, closes on 1 September 2025: Strengthening the Modern Slavery Act 2018 (Cth) - Attorney-General's Department - Citizen Space</p> <p>Useful background documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joint submission HRWG - AGD - Review of Australia's Modern Slavery Act 2018 (2022) RIAA submission - AGD - Review of Australia's Modern Slavery Act 2018 (2022) Report of the statutory review of the Modern Slavery Act 2018 (Cth): The first three years (2023) Government response to the statutory review (2024) Modern slavery: it's time to move beyond transparency and disclosure - Blog. Mans Carlsson OAM (2024) RIAA submission to - OHCHR – Response on role of the financial sector in eradicating contemporary forms of slavery - Submission (2025) <p>StockWatch Report (5 min)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phil Sloane (Associate Director, Head of ESG Client Success APAC ISS ESG)
1:13-1:28	<p>6. Workplan updates (15 min)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workplan for 2025 progress update Workplan for 2026 development
1:28-1:30	<p>7. Closing remarks (2 min)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Next Meeting: Thursday 23 October 12-1.30pm AEST / 2pm-3.30pm NZST – Register here

If there are any questions about this meeting, please contact [Jess Rowe, RIAA's Manager of Working Groups](#).

Previous meeting's minutes

Meeting #2 – 5 June 2025

Item	Action required
<p>1. Welcome (5 min) Måns Carlsson (Chair, Ausbil)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opening Acknowledgement of Country Minutes from last meeting Purpose and Principles <p>Principle on 'Not engage in or discuss competitively sensitive information'</p> <p>- Discussions in working groups may include competitors or potential competitors. In line with competition law, members must not share or</p>	<p>Submit any amendments to the Minutes to Shelina Fernando (Working Groups Officer, RIAA)</p>

<p>discuss competitively sensitive, non-public information such as pricing, sensitive financial data, strategic plans, tender or negotiation details, and voting intentions related to takeovers</p>	
<p>2. Special Presentation and Q&A (35 min)</p> <p>Topic: Navigating the Future of Supply Chain Sustainability: Insights on ESG Regulation, Transparency, and Technology</p> <p>Alexander Walrut, Head of Office JANZ, Sedex</p> <p>Introduction to Sedex:</p> <p>Sedex is a global membership data exchange platform focused on responsible sourcing and ethical trade.</p> <p>Emerging ESG trends and compliance fatigue:</p> <p>A global shift in ESG momentum was noted, especially in the U.S., where there is increasing concern about unfair competition from countries using unethical labour practices. This has resulted in a partial retreat from ambitious ESG commitments, compounded by internal fragmentation. Many companies are scaling back ESG targets amid accusations of greenwashing and shrinking budgets, often leaving ESG compliance in the hands of already-stretched roles.</p> <p>Regional context - Australia and New Zealand:</p> <p>Australian firms engaging in global markets are facing compliance pressure but showing limited engagement on the living wage due to rising local cost-of-living pressures. In New Zealand, modern slavery framework and compliance expectations are generating both international interest and operational tensions.</p> <p>Practical barriers to due diligence:</p> <p>Several implementation gaps were highlighted, including the lack of maintained supplier lists and the operational difficulty of translating policies into action. Many organisations rely heavily on codes of conduct with limited validation mechanisms. Internal silos – such as policy experts without operational expertise or communicators without technical understanding – create misalignment. Even without legislative progression, compliance expectations are escalating due to export and investor pressures.</p> <p>Audit activity and key findings:</p> <p>In Australia, audit activity grew notably in 2024, with over 1000 audits resulting in more than 8000 findings, across sectors old and new. Health and safety, wage compliance, and hygiene were the most cited issues. Business-critical issues included systemic underpayment, misclassification of workers, and inadequate or misleading contract terms (e.g. unclear PPE responsibilities). Globally, similar issues are widespread, particularly in China, where excessive working hours and low wages are persistent. While not illegal under local law, working more than 60 hours per week is flagged as non-compliance by Sedex. In New Zealand, unpaid overtime remains the topic compliance concern.</p>	<p>To access the meeting papers, go on the RIAA website and select;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. “Membership” (<i>top bar</i>), 2. “Working Groups” (<i>bottom of drop-down menu</i>), 3. “Human Rights Working Group” 4. “ <p>HRWG 2025 Meeting #2 - Navigating the Future of Supply Chain Sustainability ” (Scroll down to ‘<i>Past meeting papers and presentations</i>’)</p> <p>If you require any assistance, please contact Shelina Fernando (RIAA’s Working Groups Officer)</p> <p>For more information on the work Sedex does, please contact Alexander Walrut (Head of Officer - Australia)</p>

<p>Corrective Action Requirements (CARs) and remediation models:</p> <p>CARs remain central to Sedex's audit and improvement process, especially for systemic violations like recruitment fees or lack of living wage planning. A major challenge is that these issues are often not time-bound or quantifiable, leading to prolonged non-closure. Alex emphasized that CARs should serve as tools for continuous improvement and relationship-building, not just compliance enforcement. Collaborative resolution and time-bound targets are critical. In sectors like horticulture, CARs are being used to facilitate broader conversations about commercial goals and worker protection. The emphasis is shifting toward improvement exercises that engage all stakeholders – including financial planners – given the potentially large cost impacts (e.g. 60% increase for wage adjustments).</p>	
<p>3. Human Rights Working Group new Co-Chair appointment (10 min)</p> <p>Motion to appoint Co-Chair – Estelle Parker, Co-CEO of RIAA</p> <p>Estelle thanked Måns for his contributions and leadership. Måns will remain as co-chair until the next co-chair is nominated.</p> <p>Estelle announced the motion to nominate Antonia Parkes as the new co-chair of the Human Rights Working Group.</p> <p>Julia Leske from ISS ESG Stoxs seconded the motion.</p> <p>Antonia will commence her term as the co-chair of the Human Rights Working Group from the third HRWG meeting onwards alongside Måns.</p>	<p>For any questions regarding the governance process of the working groups, please contact Jess Rowe (Manager of Working Groups)</p>
<p>4. Subgroup Updates (20 min)</p> <p>Human Rights and Value Chains Toolkit (10 min)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Timothy Stamp (Co-lead of the HR in GVC toolkit Mercer) <p>The third edition of the Investor toolkit: Human rights in global value chains was launched in the RIAA conference last week which is aimed at providing practical, up-to-date guidance for both companies and investors. This edition includes new examples of best practices and emphasizes the interconnectedness of ESG-related issues across global supply chains. The toolkit is designed to support informed decision-making by offering structured approaches to risk identification, traceability, and supplier engagement.</p> <p>A formal thank-you was extended to all contributors, including members of the working group and external experts, for their time, intellectual property, and subject matter expertise.</p> <p>The toolkit is organized into four main sections with each section following a consistent structure to evaluate relevance and application. It includes practical tools such as engagement questionnaires and examples tailored for both investors and investees. These resources help users assess their current practices and identify areas for improvement.</p>	<p>Access the toolkit here - Investor Toolkit: Human Rights in Global Value Chains</p> <p>Recording of the 'From investment risk to investor responsibility: Moving beyond transparency in value chain' panel at the RIAA AU Conference 2025</p>

<p>Conflict (5 min)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Andrea Masselos (Responsible Investment Analyst First Senter Investors) <p>There was a lunch hosted by First Sentier Investors last week prior to the RIAA Conference. The lunch explored the evolving conflict landscape and its impact on responsible investment strategies. The Heartland Initiative presented data identifying 60-70 countries classified as high-risk, with intensifying factors such as political instability, regulatory enforcement gaps, trade control issues, and weakened ESG standards. The discussion emphasised how increasing global demand can perpetuate abuses in these regions and how the ‘ESG culture war’ has contributed to data downgrading and risk misinterpretation.</p> <p>High-risk geographies were assessed as presenting material risks, including regulatory enforcement, trade constraints, and judicial liabilities. The conversation highlighted that divestment considered a last resort among responsible investors. Instead, best practice involves active due diligence and engagement. Notably, investors are adopting country-based risk assessments and enhanced scrutiny where infrastructure projects intersect with human rights risks. Some investors have fully integrated human rights due diligence into project-level decision making processes.</p> <p>The Heartland Initiative has published a report outlining both positive and problematic case studies, offering examples of where human rights alignment has succeeded or failed.</p> <p>Modern Slavery (5 min)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Måns Carlsson (Chair RIAA’s Human Rights Working Group) <p>The panel at the RIAA conference on ‘From investment risk to investor responsibility: Moving beyond transparency in value chains’ moderated by Måns Carlsson emphasised that while modern slavery is often seen as a Southeast Asian issue, it remains a significant and present problem within Australia. Moe Turaga shared his lived experiences and called for a world where profit does not come at the cost of human freedom. Mabel Wong from Coles Group represented the corporate perspective, while Chris Evans, Australia’s Anti-Slavery Commissioner outlined the regulatory landscape and governmental challenges.</p> <p>Chris highlighted the political hesitance in Australia’s response to modern slavery, noting that many policymakers fear corporate disengagement in the face of anti-slavery, i.e. that corporates would see further regulation as too onerous. However, he stressed the need for sustained engagement and investor accountability to push for reform.</p> <p>During the Q&A in another conference session, the solar industry was flagged as a critical area of concern, particularly in relation to failing costs and supply</p>	<p>For more information regarding the Subgroups, please contact, Jess Rowe (Manager of Working Groups)</p> <p>To submit NZ-related case studies, please contact, RIAA’s Policy and Advocacy team</p>
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<p>chain risks. The intersection of geopolitics and modern slavery remains acute in the renewable energy sector, where forced labour allegations persist.</p> <p>Updates were shared on the regulatory front, though activity has been limited since the last meeting. Key developments include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The EU's Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD) • Australia's post-federal election regulatory direction • Implications of former U.S. President Trump's executive orders affecting global supply chains <p>Nayanisha Samarakoon, RIAA's Head of Policy and Advocacy spoke on Rachel Tinkler's ongoing role in New Zealand's modern slavery efforts, including the work done in the ACWG's workstream on aligning industry and government action that Jorge Waayman, Bella Sigley and Alex Safran are contributing to. While additional regulatory requirements were anticipated, the government bill has stalled. A call was made for investor to reach out to the RIAA policy team with NZ-based case studies to make the statement to the government.</p> <p>The Omnibus proposal in the EU means, if implemented, that the EU CSDDD is water down somewhat. For instance, it would mean companies would move from annual to five-year risk reviews and companies would no longer be bound to terminate supplier relationships despite major breaches.</p> <p>Import bans based on forced labour are already active in countries such as Mexico, Canada, and the U.S. Måns opined that without similar legislation, Australia could become a 'dumping ground' for goods produced with forced labour. The Australian Labor Party (ANP) has previously stated that if re-elected, they would consider an import ban.</p> <p>Trump-era executive order was discussed, including punitive measures under Trump's first term, e.g. targeting countries like Malaysia for labour violations. Cuts to U.S. aid are affecting NGOs financially with long-standing field expertise, potentially reducing visibility and monitoring capacity. The discussion was on how companies often depend on these NGOs for credible due diligence, particularly beyond direct suppliers.</p>	
<p>2. Industry Updates (15 min)</p> <p>RIAA Policy and Advocacy Update (10 min)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nayanisha Samarakoon (Head of Policy and Advocacy RIAA) <p>A recent roundtable convened by the Australian Anti-Slavery Commissioner provided a well-rounded discussion, extending beyond investment-related concerns to broader policy development. The focus was on strengthening the intersection between business practices and national anti-slavery policies, emphasising the need for more robust policy frameworks to support corporate accountability.</p> <p>The roundtable included updates on the Attorney-General's Action Plan on Modern Slavery, with particular attention to the anticipated reform of the Modern Slavery Act.</p>	<p>For more information on RIAA's Policy and Advocacy, please contact, Nayanisha Samarakoon (RIAA's Head of Policy and Advocacy)</p>

<p>There is renewed momentum around advocacy across multiple issues, with a reinvigorated approach aligned to both Australian developments and New Zealand's legislative process.</p> <p>The proposed modern slavery bill in New Zealand has support from 62 Members of Parliament. However, progress now hinges on the Australian Attorney-General's Department advancing its work. The discussion highlighted the importance of aligning disclosure requirements with investor needs, ensuring the legislation serves both regulatory and market transparency objectives.</p> <p>StockWatch Report (5 min)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phil Sloane (Associate Director, Head of ESG Client Success APAC ISS ESG) <p>Phil Solane was an apology for the meeting but the recent human rights controversies he intended on sharing was can be read in the full StockWatch Report which will be attached to the post-meeting papers.</p>	<p>For more information regarding the Stock Watch Report, please contact, Phil Sloane (ISS ESG)</p>
<p>7. Closing remarks (5 min)</p> <p>Måns Carlsson (Ausbil)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thursday August 7 12-1.30pm AEST / 2pm-3.30pm NZST – Register here 	<p>Register here for the next HRWG meeting.</p>

Action Register

Last Updated: Thursday, 5 June 2025

Ref.	Action	Delegation	Status
<i>Previous</i>			
14/25	Register for the next meeting on Thursday August 7 12-1.30pm AEST / 2pm-3.30pm NZST – Register here .	All	Ongoing
13/25	Submit any amendments to the Minutes to Shelina Fernando (Working Groups Officer, RIAA)	All	Ongoing
12/25	For more information regarding the Stock Watch Report, please contact Phil Sloane (ISS ESG)	All	Ongoing
11/25	For more information on RIAA's policy and advocacy work, please contact Nayanisha Samarakoon (Head of Advocacy and Policy)	All	Ongoing
10/25	For more information regarding the Modern Slavery Subgroup, please contact Jess Rowe (Manager of Working Groups)	All	Ongoing
9/25	Register for the next meeting on Wednesday June 5 (12-1.30pm AEDT / 2pm-3.30pm NZDT) - Register here	All	Ongoing

8/25	Submit any amendments to the Minutes to Shelina Fernando (Working Groups Officer, RIAA)	All	Ongoing
7/25	EOI form here , or contact Jess Rowe (RIAA) or Mans Carlsson (AusBil) if you have any questions on becoming Co-Chair	All	Ongoing
6/25	For more information regarding the Stock Watch Report, please contact Phil Sloane (ISS ESG)	All	Ongoing
5/25	For more information on RIAA's policy and advocacy work, please contact Nayanisha Samarakoon (Head of Advocacy and Policy)	All	Ongoing
4/25	For more information regarding the Modern Slavery Subgroup, please contact Jess Rowe (Manager of Working Groups)	All	Ongoing
3/25	For more information regarding the Digital Tech Subgroup, please contact Janelle Morrison (AusBil)	All	Ongoing
2/25	Form to volunteer for any aspects of the Working Group Plan is available here .	All	Ongoing
1/25	Form to indicate your interest for contributions to updating the Human Rights toolkit is available here .	All	Ongoing