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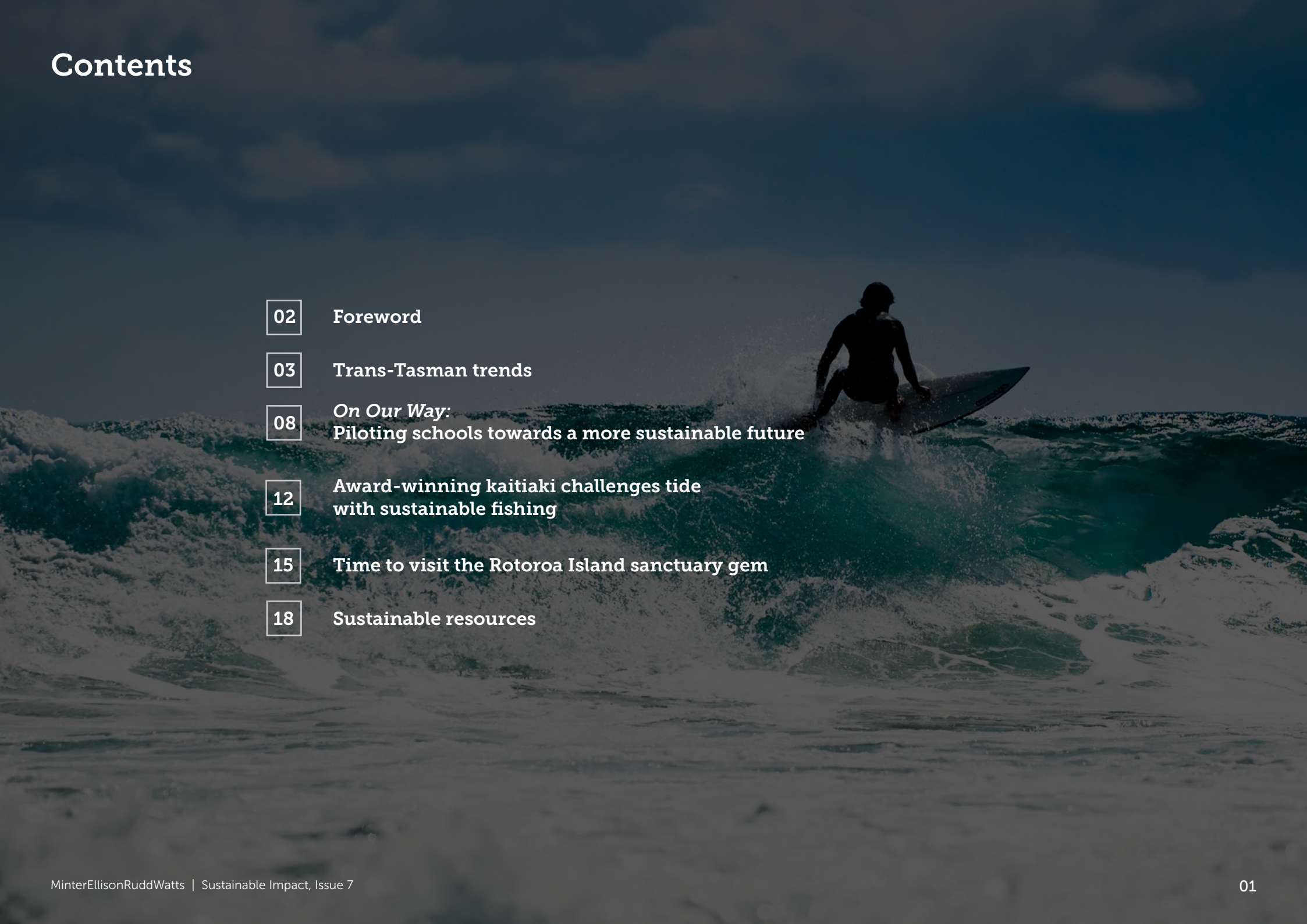
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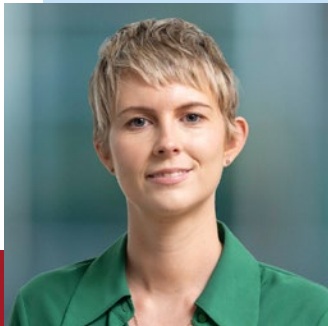
Issue 7

MinterEllisonRuddWatts.

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Kia ora
koutou



Holly Hill

Partner and Sustainability Leader
Kaiurungi me te Kaitātaki Ukauka

Welcome to the latest issue of *Sustainable Impact*, which continues to illuminate exceptional initiatives across the spectrum of social, environmental, economic and cultural sustainability in Aotearoa New Zealand, and beyond.

At a time when Australia has just enacted a mandatory climate-related financial disclosures regime, bringing it into line with countries that include New Zealand, UK, and Japan, we examine significant shifts in Australia to encourage a greater focus on sustainable outcomes across the Tasman. We ask MinterEllison Partner and specialist in risk and regulation surrounding the operationalising of ESG, Paul Schoff, about the current trends and activities under each of these three categories being seen across New Zealand's closest trading partner.


In this issue we look at the impressive *On Our Way* pilot initiated by the Ministry of Education and supported by Sport NZ. As part of New Zealand's Emission Reduction Plan (ERP), *On Our Way* aims to reduce emissions from the transport sector by 41% by 2035. *On Our Way* is already working through the gears to make school travel greener and healthier, as we learn from Tracy Finlayson, Programme Director at the Ministry of Education, and Chris Crichton, Education Manager at Sport NZ, who in partnership, support schools to implement *On Our Way*.

We also meet Moana New Zealand, a Māori-owned commercial fishing business that is creating positive change and taking an award-winning lead in its sector. Demonstrating that mātauranga Māori has a profound and rightful place in sustaining

fisheries, Moana shares the important work being done to ensure the sustainability of inshore commercial fisheries for future generations.

Finally, we spotlight Rotoroa Island in the Hauraki Gulf, and the work of Rotoroa Island Trust, who have transformed the island to be a place of restoration for people and wildlife. Close enough to visit for the day from Auckland, but also large enough to reward the curiosity of anyone exploring further, the Trust is keen to encourage visitors and volunteers to explore the island, connect with nature, and gain a better understanding of conservation, as well as the island's heritage as a place of recovery and renewal.

I hope you enjoy this issue.



“There have been some significant regulatory shifts to encourage a focus on sustainable outcomes in Australia.”

Trans-Tasman trends

There have been some significant regulatory shifts to encourage a focus on sustainable outcomes in Australia.

Sustainable Impact asked MinterEllison Partner and ESG lead, Paul Schoff, and Associate, Lizzy Enright, about the current trends seen across New Zealand's closest trading partner.



Q What trends are you currently seeing across 'E' 'S' and 'G' that Australian businesses are focused on and why?

'E' – Environment

- **Mandatory climate reporting and nature as a 'fast follower' to climate:** In parallel to the introduction of the Australian [mandatory climate reporting regime \(a year after New Zealand\)](#), nature and biodiversity have been hot topics this year, with the Government developing the [Nature Repair Market](#) (incentivising and funding projects to restore and protect Australia's biodiversity) and voluntary reporting in accordance with the Taskforce for Nature-related Financial Disclosure (TNFD) on the rise.
- **Transition plans:** The credibility of transition plans is under the spotlight following Australian-founded Woodside Energy's shareholders' rejection of its Climate Transition Action Plan (CTAP), and the new mandatory climate reporting regime mandating disclosure of CTAP's if they exist. Given the required content of mandatory climate reporting it is hard to see that many companies will not end up having a

CTAP, so we expect to see a lot of work by companies to develop their transition plans over the next few years.

- **Circular economy:** There is increased recognition of circular economy solutions as a way to increase waste recovery along with economic growth, with the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) preparing a report on [Australia's comparative and competitive advantages in transitioning to a circular economy](#), commissioned by the Office of the Chief Scientist.
 - **Greenwashing scrutiny:** Regulator scrutiny of greenwashing has continued, with the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) making [47 regulatory interventions](#) during the 15 month period leading up to 30 June, and most recently the Federal Court ordering Vanguard Investments Australia to [pay a record \\$12.9 million penalty for misleading ESG claims](#).
- ### 'S' – Social
- **First Nations co-design:** There is growing momentum around corporates pursuing meaningful partnerships and co-design strategies with First Nations organisations, particularly in carbon and biodiversity markets.

- **Gender pay gap data:** For the first time, the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) published [gender pay gap data](#) for private sector employers with 100+ employees following 2023 legislation aimed at spurring employer action on gender equality. This issue is squarely on board and management radars, and corporates remain concentrated on gender equality targets within their published diversity and inclusion strategies.

'G' – Governance

- **Cyber resilience and AI:** Boards continue to be concerned about cyber resilience and are looking to up-skill when it comes to navigating the operational and ethical challenges of integrating AI solutions.
- **Directors' duties:** The recent [Hartford-Davis Bush legal opinion has clarified the foreseeability of nature-related risks](#), suggesting that directors may be held accountable for neglecting to address these risks, potentially breaching their duty of care and diligence. As a result, Australian directors will need to consider these complex risks proactively, and if they are material, manage them effectively.

Q Australia has just enacted its mandatory climate-related financial disclosures regime, bringing it into line with others, including New Zealand, the EU, UK, and Japan. What impact is this recent change creating?

[Australia passed mandatory climate-related financial disclosure legislation in August 2024](#), which has been hailed by the Chair of ASIC, Joe Longo, as the biggest change in financial reporting disclosure standards in a generation. The standards are broadly similar to those introduced a year earlier in New Zealand (both regimes are

aligned with the International Sustainability Standard Board (ISSB) requirements), but with important differences in the detail. Currently, there is no provision for mutual recognition.

The legislation takes a phased approach, starting with Australia's largest entities (referred to as Group 1 entities) from 1 January 2025. While many of these companies already disclose under the Task Force on Climate-Related Financial Disclosures (TCFD) framework (which may serve companies well as a 'dry run' given the regime is based on TCFD principles), all companies face a significant reporting uplift.

In particular, Group 1 entities are seeking support to meet the challenge of increasing the quality of systems oversight (e.g. the policies, processes and procedures which govern reporting) to meet the new standards. Likewise, directors are focused on ensuring the proper factual verification of disclosures and interrogation of forward-looking statements and judgments which underpin the disclosures. Companies who are not well-versed with climate disclosures and have adopted a 'we'll cross that bridge when we come to it' approach will need to accelerate their readiness assessments including an assessment of whether they have the right skills/knowledge at the board/management level.

Companies that have been building their capacity to meet these standards are embracing them as an opportunity to embed climate (and in some instances broader sustainability considerations) in company strategy. The disclosures require companies to articulate their approach to climate-related opportunities as well as risks, prompting some businesses to accelerate their exploration of Australian Carbon Credit Units (ACCUs) and partnerships with carbon sequestration initiatives, alongside cost-reduction strategies like adopting renewable energy and circular economy solutions. Likewise, it is an opportunity to integrate climate-risks in financial reporting and risk management



The disclosures require companies to articulate their approach to climate-related opportunities as well as risks."

Paul Schoff
Partner and ESG Lead, MinterEllison

frameworks, rather than these issues being siloed in a sustainability team. This integration is expected to facilitate the evolution of more sustainable business models over time.

Australian subsidiaries of New Zealand companies may need to prepare to comply with these standards and if already complying with New Zealand standards, identify any uplift/ modifications required to meet the Australian standards as well. Likewise, New Zealand companies that are in the supply chains of Australian companies should be expected to be asked provide information on annual basis to Australian reporting entities allow these companies to report on their scope 3 emissions.



Q What is the status of nature-based disclosures in Australia? Are many businesses adopting the TNFD framework?

Nature-based disclosures are not currently mandatory in Australia or New Zealand. Nevertheless, there is growing momentum behind the uptake of voluntary disclosures against frameworks such as those published by the TNFD. Recently, [23 Australian companies](#), including ASX 100 entities such as Telstra, QANTAS and GPT Group, have committed to publishing TNFD-aligned disclosures for 2024, or prospectively for 2025.

This shift is partly influenced by the Australian Government's 'climate first, but not only' strategy articulated in the [Sustainable Finance Roadmap](#), signalling a possible move towards mandatory nature-related financial disclosures in the future¹. The Government's substantial investment in nature-related initiatives, such as the newly established Nature Repair Market – a regulated, nationwide, voluntary biodiversity market expected to operate similarly to the current ACCU market – is also likely to encourage companies to begin assessing and disclosing their nature-related risks and opportunities².

Companies are also recognising that disclosure is a way to build trust with investors, particularly given rising investor expectations in relation to the value placed on nature and biodiversity. Many companies are already implementing nature-related screening and divestment – for example, Australian Ethical divested from Lendlease in March 2023 over development threat to endangered species in southwest Sydney, and disclosure is another powerful mechanism being deployed to meet shifting investor sentiment.

Q What role does Australia's energy transition towards renewable sources play in shaping corporate sustainability strategies across industries?

In light of the Australian Government's 2022 codification of emissions reduction commitments under the Paris Agreement, there has been a concerted push for decarbonisation. The Government's recent Sustainable Finance Roadmap emphasised the expectation for the private sector to contribute to these goals. Consequently, Australian companies are crafting strategies to reduce their carbon footprint, manage associated risks, and leverage emerging opportunities. These strategies include:

- Establishing baselines for their current emissions and setting their own targets for achieving Net Zero;
- Developing comprehensive CTAP to reach these objectives, which may involve the implementation of green technologies, internal carbon pricing and more energy-efficient practices. Treasury has flagged that it will be releasing best practice guidance on credible transition plans by the end of 2025 and is focused on improving the consistency and comparability of greenhouse gas emission data;
- Assessing the use of offsets in transition planning (the current prevailing view is that offsets should be used judiciously, only for emissions that cannot be eliminated, and should adhere to high integrity standards);
- Prioritising a just transition, especially within the energy industry, to ensure social and economic considerations are balanced with environmental objectives; and
- Investigating transition finance options, which are financial products designed to support environmentally sustainable alignment.

Q What trends are emerging in sustainable finance and investment in Australia and how are investors influencing corporate behaviour in relation to ESG criteria?

Trends in sustainable finance and investment in Australia have been influenced by the release of the Australian Government's Sustainable Finance Roadmap, which highlighted the Government's commitment to mobilising private capital in a bid to meet Australia's emissions reduction commitments under the 2015 Paris Agreement.

Notably, the Australian Federal Government issued its [inaugural AUD7 billion sovereign green bond](#), which was significantly over-subscribed, with more than AUD22 billion in bids from 105 investor institutions across Australia, Asia, Europe and North America. This echoes global trends – for example, New Zealand's inaugural sovereign green bond in 2022 was [2.5 times over-subscribed](#). The trend of green bond issuance being far more common than the issue of social and sustainability bonds is set to continue across Asia-Pacific, including in Australia. This reflects that climate considerations remain the top ESG priority.

¹ See [MinterEllison's guide on the Sustainable Finance Roadmap](#)

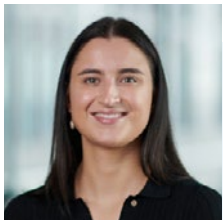
² See [MinterEllison's commentary on Australia's Nature Repair Market](#)

Trans-Tasman trends

In contrast, sustainability linked loans have been declining over the past couple of years, but this has been offset by the record issuance of green bonds. This decline may be due to the increased scrutiny on greenwashing, leading borrowers and lenders to review the integrity of ESG data and associated commitments.

In terms of sustainable investment products, the Government is developing (in conjunction with the Australian Sustainable Finance Initiative), a [sustainable finance taxonomy](#) to bolster investor confidence and reduce greenwashing (there are similar developments in New Zealand with Toitū Tahua – The Centre for Sustainable Finance beginning work on a New Zealand taxonomy in agriculture and forestry). While ESG related investment products are

facing additional regulatory scrutiny in relation to greenwashing, the appetite for ESG-oriented funds has continued in Australia (despite anti-ESG sentiment in other jurisdictions such as North America). Likewise, fund managers are continuing to embed ESG considerations throughout the investment life-cycle (e.g. negative screening and exclusion policies, minimum due diligence requirements, building out standalone ESG due diligence processes, annual reporting and vendor due diligence at exit). As noted above, there is a growing awareness of nature not only as a risk and dependency for traditional asset classes but also as a separate asset class, with increased demand for funds that develop nature-based solutions and monetise bio-diversity credits.



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Lizzy Enright
Associate, MinterEllison



Q How do Australian businesses successfully embed long-term sustainability and ESG commitments, particularly when faced with ESG scepticism?

- **Educating and engaging stakeholders about risks and opportunities:** While ESG commitments are often geared towards managing risk, they also can be a means to capitalise on short-term and long-term opportunities. There are immediate cost-savings from moving towards renewable and circular economy solutions, and fulfilling ESG KPIs can create opportunities to reduce the cost of capital. ESG commitments can also lead to tangible long-term financial benefits by driving innovation (which in turn attracts and retains talent), increasing operational efficiency and building trust with customers and other stakeholders.
- **Bring ESG out of the silo:** ESG and broader sustainability targets only work long-term when they are embedded within core company strategy, and not treated as a discrete issue for sustainability teams to manage.
- **Striking a balance between ambition and commercial reality:** Companies need to ensure that ESG considerations are being discussed at board level and integrated into existing financial reporting and risk management frameworks and systems. Companies need to balance the desire to set ambitious Net Zero or nature positive targets with commercial reality. Don't let 'perfect' be the enemy of 'good' - the most important thing is to start putting a plan in place and take stakeholders along on the journey.
- **Embrace re-evaluating targets:** It's integral to closely monitor and regularly re-evaluate targets and associated timeframes (even if targets have to be rolled back or postponed) to ensure that targets are feasible, based on the best available science and take into account new factors (e.g. technological developments, changes to business strategy).

“Picture a future where every step, pedal or wheel makes a positive impact. *On Our Way* focuses on transport as one of the largest emissions sources for schools. It introduces a path, through climate literacy, to help prepare our student ākonga for a low-carbon future and a changed climate.”



On Our Way: Piloting schools towards a more sustainable future

At MinterEllisonRuddWatts we are passionate about helping to shape a positive, sustainable future for Aotearoa New Zealand. Alongside our work to build partnerships with organisations that are committed to having a positive, sustainable impact on our planet, we like to support initiatives that make a tangible difference.

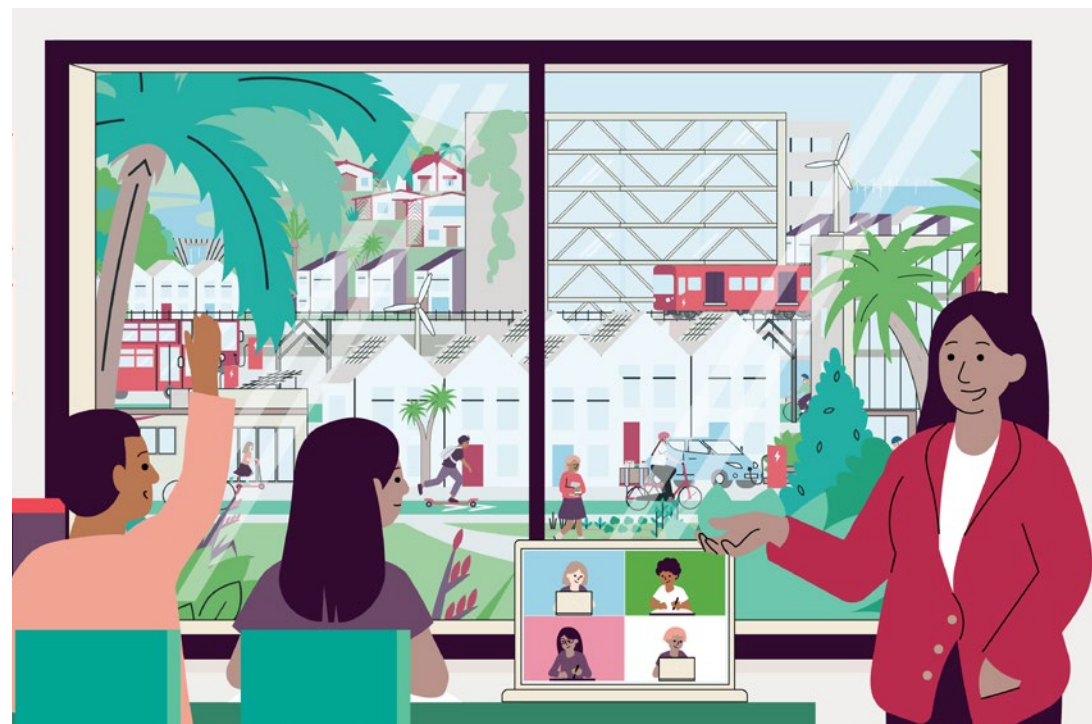
One initiative that has impressed us recently is the Ministry of Education's *On Our Way* programme, which is designed to make school travel greener and healthier. The Ministry is working with Sport NZ in a joint action under Aotearoa New Zealand's Emission Reduction Plan (ERP) to reduce emissions from the transport sector by 41% by 2035. There is a real need to do so.

The Ministry has estimated that around 835,000 students (ākongā) and staff commute to school every day, and mostly in private vehicles. This represents more than 30% of the education sector's total emissions, so the Ministry has identified a way to reduce emissions and offer schools the chance to build students' climate literacy by getting involved in examining the role of transport in their school lives, and how transport might look in the future.

Piloted this year, the plan for 2025 is for Sport NZ to support schools to implement *On Our Way*.

Tracy Finlayson, Programme Director at the Ministry, and Chris Crichton, Manager – Education at Sport NZ, sat down with *Sustainable Impact* to help us learn about this forward-thinking programme.

Tracy starts by saying that *On Our Way* is about taking the opportunity to empower change through transport.



"Picture a future where every step, pedal or wheel makes a positive impact. *On Our Way* focuses on transport as one of the largest emissions sources for schools. It introduces a path, through climate literacy, to help prepare our student ākongā for a low-carbon future and a changed climate."

Helping ākongā to look backwards, at the present and into the future, Tracy adds that *On Our Way* is also about living the well-known whakatauki (proverb) 'I walk

backwards into the future with my eyes fixed on my past'.

"*On Our Way* is designed to help individual schools to uncover, assess, and respond to their own transport story. It looks at how we used to travel to school 100 years ago, how we get to school now, and how we might get to school in 2050 and beyond.

835,000
students and staff commute
to school every day,
mostly in private vehicles*

↓

More than
30%
sector emissions

*Estimate by Ministry of Education

On Our Way: Piloting schools towards a more sustainable future

“We believe that the future is up to us, and there are many pathways on a climate literacy journey; *On Our Way* is one of them – a unique all-of-school opportunity to build and develop climate literacy skills for ākonga, kaiako (teacher) and communities alike.”

What does *On Our Way* involve?

The programme uses the same process businesses, councils, governments, and international bodies undertake to measure, predict, and respond to climate change, says Tracy.

“Schools explore and participate in discovering their transport environment, how it has changed over time, what they use it for, the climate impact of that use, what choices are currently available, and what that transport could look like in the future.

“Work starts with understanding a school’s carbon footprint, carrying out data collection and analysis, and teaching that provides a climate literacy view of transport across the components of your school curriculum.”

In practice, schools and students can get involved in the programme in several ways. First, schools commit to a whole-school approach to teaching the curriculum material, ensuring kaiako are supported and prepared to do so.

Each participating school aims to understand its carbon footprint by collecting and analysing data. This involves collecting and recording the mode of transport for all ākonga a minimum of three times during a term-long period, utilising the tools and guidance provided, to enable accurate emissions calculations. Each time they collect transport information over a week-long period.

Then ākonga are engaged through the school curriculum to examine a climate literacy view of transport. This involves taking a closer look at the data that underpins their carbon footprint allowing them to test, improve and respond to their footprint.

“To bring data collection to life, *On Our Way* includes reporting and analysis that allows students to see and visually share detailed data about their school – helping them, their teachers, and school community to understand and respond to their school’s transport emissions,” says Tracy.



On Our Way is designed to help individual schools to uncover, assess, and respond to their own transport story. It looks at how we used to travel to school 100 years ago, how we get to school now, and how we might get to school in 2050 and beyond.”

Tracy Finlayson
Programme Director



On Our Way: Piloting schools towards a more sustainable future

“Collecting their own transport data enables each school to apply climate science principles to test the accuracy of the assumptions that underpin their footprint and set realistic emission reduction targets and track change over time.

“*On Our Way* encourages schools to teach these units in a cohesive and co-ordinated manner, ensuring lead kaiako and ākonga are provided the best opportunity to connect their learning across subjects and year levels, and to view the school’s transport environment through different perspectives, improving each school’s climate literacy outcomes.”



On Our Way will encourage students to get active while traveling to and from school. The initiative will build on the successes of Healthy Active Learning, which boosts students’ enjoyment and confidence in physical activity.”

Chris Crichton
Manager – Education, Sport NZ

Supported by Sport NZ

On Our Way is supported by Sport NZ in partnership with the Ministry of Education. Ministry of Education and Sport NZ are committed to Aotearoa’s Emission Reduction Plan and this includes greener and healthier school travel. Chris Crichton says: “Sport NZ is focused on supporting active learning environments in schools and kura. *On Our Way* will encourage students to get active while traveling to and from school. The initiative will build on the successes of Healthy Active Learning, which boosts students’ enjoyment and confidence in physical activity, while also strengthening community connections.”

Pilots leading the way

On Our Way has already enjoyed some great successes around Aotearoa New Zealand, engaging students and teachers alike.

Jarod Summers, Deputy Principal of Birchville School describes the *On Our Way* programme as well aligned with their school’s strategic plan, to ensure their students are future focused and know what is happening in the world. He said the resources are thoughtfully designed for teaching and very practical, providing the real-life experiences that kids need. Feedback from parents has also been positive, as students demonstrate their learning by taking the conversation home on how we all move around and what choices we have.

North East Valley Normal School became the first school in Ōtepoti to take up the *On Our Way* programme. Theresa Bowen, Teacher, says the breadth of the transport insights astonishes her. The overall framework for climate education, the data and the teaching resources have totally hit the spot, she adds: “We’ve all been waiting for this. It’s just mind-blowing.”



Tracy says that these are just two of many pilots underway that are providing great opportunities for ākonga and kaiako. And it is far from exclusive, as she says. In fact, it’s quite the opposite.

“Come join us and find out what this pathway has to offer. Let’s get *On Our Way* together.”

To find out more about *On Our Way*, email emissions.reduction@education.govt.nz



Award-winning kaitiaki challenges tide with sustainable fishing

The world of commercial fishing is complicated, fragmented by stories on sustainability issues, the impacts from climate change and denigration for not doing enough.

However, one commercial fishing business has been deliberately implementing positive changes to its operations for some time and is now receiving recognition. Moana New Zealand, the country's largest 100% Iwi-owned fishing company, has hooked the Kaitiaki Business Award at the Aotearoa Māori Business Leaders Awards: Ngā Tohu Kaiārahi Pakihi Māori o Aotearoa for its work to ensure the sustainability of inshore commercial fisheries for future generations.

The awards were established by The University of Auckland in 2003 to acknowledge the academic success of Māori studying business, and to honour and celebrate the success and achievements of Māori business leaders. MinterEllisonRuddWatts is proud to

sponsor the Kaitiaki Business Award, which recognises organisations that uphold Māori values to promote and achieve environmentally sustainable outcomes.

Rachel Taulelei (Ngāti Raukawa ki te Tonga, Ngāti Rārua), Chair of the Moana New Zealand Board, filled us in on what it means for Moana New Zealand to win the award:

"We're incredibly excited and humbled by this recognition," she says. "To receive this award, especially in our industry, is truly special. I'm so proud of the Moana New Zealand team, who actively contribute and improve the wellbeing of not just the moana, but the people and te ao.

"

Award-winning kaitiaki to challenge the tide with indigenous-led sustainable fishing approach

The award is proof that Māori can lead in this sector through applying our values. It shows that mātauranga Māori has a place in sustaining fisheries. It also gives us an opportunity to shed some light on the climate headwinds our industry faces and the important work our team has been doing to meet those challenges.

“This year is particularly special for Moana New Zealand as we celebrate 20 years since our establishment. I want to thank our Iwi owners for their steadfast guidance and support over the past 20 years as a 100% Iwi-owned business in the fisheries sector. Iwi are the true guardians of the world’s most pristine and sustainably managed

fisheries. At Moana we feel a deep sense of responsibility to all people, respect for kaimoana and kai ora, and we are dedicated to the wellbeing of future generations.”

How does the award shine a light on the need for sustainable fisheries in Aotearoa?

There is no doubt that there are some pressing issues confronting fisheries in our country, she says.

“The most pressing issue is two-fold, and both parts are challenging to address. First, climate change is the most urgent issue confronting our world. Much like the



farmers on land, our fishers and kaimoana growers are impacted by warming waters and turbulent storms, which are having a significant impact on the migration and growth of fin fish, shellfish and seagrass species.”

Adding to this she says are other man-made stressors on land that result in pollution and run-off, both contributing to the deteriorating health of Aotearoa New Zealand’s coastal waters.

“What happens on land has considerable repercussions in the ocean. This is why it’s so important for us to not only be custodians on the water, but on the whenua in the places where we operate.”

The award therefore highlights the opportunity presented by a te ao Māori view of the interconnectedness of everything.

“As a values-based, Māori-owned business, we work each day to understand and improve on our connection to the environment – for the people are intrinsically tied to both the whenua and moana. The award gives us a chance to show that human wellbeing and livelihoods are dependent on healthy and resilient land and fisheries.

“It also enables us to highlight that we can’t do it alone. We believe in the power of kotahitanga, working collaboratively and in partnership with other organisations that share our values of whakapapa, manaakitanga, whakatipuranga and kaitiakitanga. It’s a collective kaupapa that everyone needs to be on board for its success. With our mokopuna in mind, we honour them – and each successive generation after them – with our actions today.”



The award is proof that Māori can lead in this sector through applying our values.”

Rachel Taulelei

(Ngāti Raukawa ki te Tonga, Ngāti Rārua)
Chair of the Moana New Zealand Board

Award-winning kaitiaki to challenge the tide with indigenous-led sustainable fishing approach

What is the work that the Moana team has done – and is doing – to make progress?

The Moana New Zealand journey began with a passionate working group of kaimahi who recognised the importance of addressing the big environmental challenges that Aotearoa, and the world, is facing.



“Where it makes sense, we also support the voluntary shelving of quota to support the recovery of quota species,” Rachel adds.

“We are looking at building resilience in our farmed Pacific oysters to safeguard against disease and the changing environment through a selective breeding programme at Kirikiritātangi, our state-of-the-art oyster hatchery in Nelson.”

On land, Moana New Zealand has also built a shared roadmap to reduce its carbon emissions, minimise the use of freshwater across operations, and investigate ways in which they can reduce the use of plastics packaging and fossil fuel use across sites. “We also rely on partnerships with organisations that share in our values and work, wherever possible, to bring them on board.”

What’s next?

Having gathered baseline carbon data over recent years and set targets to be carbon net zero by 2040, Moana has refreshed its sustainability strategy with measurable goalposts. These, says Rachel, include a decarbonisation roadmap to guide the path forward.

“Our approach is evidence-based, aligns with the best-available climate science, and is driven by a substantive set of emissions data that we have collated over the past five years to ensure our lofty goals are viable.

“Most importantly, we want to create positive change in the world of commercial fishing and for Iwi to be proud of what we do. The biggest opportunity for Aotearoa in regard to making the right kind of change is in the confidence that mātauranga Māori can bring scalable change to the world.

“What we face in Aotearoa is no different to many other fisheries around the world. However, wouldn’t it be exciting for Aotearoa if we were able to improve the way everyone fishes through our indigenous-led approach? There is no limit to what we can do if we work collectively.”



Time to visit the Rotoroa Island sanctuary gem

Nestled behind the south eastern coast of Waiheke Island is a tiny gem of an island that feels like – and is – another world.

At just 80 hectares, Rotoroa Island is small enough to visit for the day, but also large enough to reward the curiosity of anyone exploring further – and extraordinary taonga await those that do: endangered species protected in their natural habitat through exceptional conservation work, an award-winning museum, and a fascinating history.

Rotoroa Island is managed by the Rotoroa Island Trust, which was established in 2008. It has a 99-year lease from The Salvation Army which enabled it to transform the island from a place of restoration solely for people to one that is now for wildlife and recreation. The funding is enabled by gifts from Neal and Annette Plowman, who also established the NEXT Foundation.

Before opening the island to the public in 2011, more than 20,000 pine trees were felled to make room for 400,000 native plants, holiday homes were restored to

encourage people to stay and experience the island overnight, and the trust undertook a major programme to make the island predator-free. Since then, a 5-year partnership with Auckland Zoo has also helped to develop a wildlife sanctuary for endangered species in need of care including takahē, tīeke (saddleback), kiwi, skinks and pateke (brown teal).

Today, say the Trust's Operations Manager, Jo Ritchie, and Marketing Manager, Angela Bishop, visitors are welcomed to this private island sanctuary. There they can connect with nature and gain a better understanding of conservation, as well as the island's heritage as a place of recovery and renewal.

Jo and Angela sat down with Sustainable Impact to share the work of the trust and the legacy they are working so hard to build.

Time to visit the Rotoroa Island sanctuary gem

What's the primary mission of Rotoroa Island Trust, and how did it come about?

"This is an island of restoration, and that's for people and wildlife," says Jo Ritchie.

"It follows directly on from the 100 years of Salvation Army ownership of the island to restore people recovering from addiction. We've just slightly modified that restoration principle, and when people who were former clients come back here, they're blown away by the new legacy of restoration that is now taking place under the trust. There's a lovely link there."

Jo adds that a key restoration project that volunteers including MinterEllisonRuddWatts have been involved with to date is planting, although this programme is largely finished now.

"We have a group of regular volunteers who now come and do anything from operating our information kiosk to weed control and guided walks, helping us out with our biosecurity to keep the island pest free, and helping us maintain our tracks. Our corporate volunteers come and do things like track construction and vegetation clearing, as well as providing pro bono support, especially with health and safety, and the commercially astute legal advice and support that MinterEllisonRuddWatts provides. It's all really valuable to us because it enables us to get more work done in a shorter period of time and supports our goal to be financially sustainable".

At pains to say that the key to everything taking place at Rotoroa is collective effort and impact, Jo says that the trust welcomes anyone who wants to lend a hand.



"We really want to grow our volunteer base, looking for more and more regular volunteers and groups."

Jo Ritchie
Operations Manager

"Anyone who comes to the island and helps us out makes a difference because there's more work than just our two island rangers can do. They look after many of the tasks that help make the island the welcoming for visitors.

"Our regular volunteers can come and stay the night, and they often bring their partners, who then become volunteers for us as well. So, it's really nice for a couple to come to the island and help us out. And even if people just come for a day, they might just do a bit of weeding, but when a lot of people do that throughout the year it makes a really big, collective difference to the island."

The next big challenges on the island

This is all about managing weeds, dogs and rats, says Jo.

"Our volunteers are helping with the weeds, but probably a bigger threat to the island are the rats that swim over from nearby islands, and people bringing dogs.

"In summer it can be really problematic when boaties bring dogs ashore. A number of people become quite aggressive when they do it. They won't accept why they're not allowed to bring their dogs ashore. Only today a kiwi catching team here caught two birds right on the beach at Pakatoa Point, which just goes to show that kiwi are right



on our beaches here. I don't think any dog owner would want their dog to kill a kiwi, so I find it really frustrating that we deal with it every summer with people and often the same people we told last year."

Angela turns the focus towards inspiring visitors, noting that it's often referred to as Auckland's best kept secret.

Admitting that it is a challenge to get people to visit a new destination at an end of the gulf that they are not particularly familiar with, she says a key priority she says is to build visitor, volunteer and supporter numbers up, to support the island's sustainability.

"This is a great place to visit – jump on Explore ferry in downtown Auckland, enjoy a 75 min journey through the Hauraki Gulf to the sanctuary that was once off limits to public.

"We get about 10,000 visitors a year, which sounds like a lot. However, even at summer's peak there might be 100 people coming daily – they arrive ready to explore and they dissipate quickly as they begin discovering the trails.

Time to visit the Rotoroa Island sanctuary gem



“There are so many options here: Rotoroa’s small enough to explore in a day, and to find your own spot – be it a seat where to quietly observe our resident takahē a place to grab a picnic, or choose from four easy swimming beaches depending on whether you’re looking for social or solitude. Visitors walking the southern loop track can also experience the stunning Chris Booth sculpture commissioned in honour of Jack Plowman. That’s the uniqueness of the island.”

Jo adds that the amount of wildlife everywhere on the island in the Spring makes it a really beautiful time on the island.

“There’s pohutukawa and kowhai flowering in September, tui all over the island, and

saddlebacks outside our window in the morning. I had tui and saddlebacks all around me, and our kiwi team caught two birds this morning. We went down to pick them up and there was no one else there.

“Staying in our accommodation (either our holiday homes or boutique hostel) at this time of the year, you’d get a beautifully warm, well-appointed house with something for everyone - stunning safe swimming beaches, rare birds, walking trails, fascinating history, and even some art: a true place to restore in nature. It’s a rare chance to stay on a working wildlife sanctuary.”

How can you get involved with the Trust’s work?

Angela says that there are a number of different ways.

“Come and visit - experience our sanctuary and you’ll see why it’s known as the island of restoration. You’ll find all the details on our website, and can follow our social platforms for the latest wildlife updates. Spread the word. And consider becoming a volunteer.”

Jo adds that she is also keen to see whether people will be prepared to adopt a garden for the accommodation houses.

“They’re pretty basic gardens, but we’d value any help to keep them mown and weed-free. We’ve also got work to do on our tracks, and we need help with our biosecurity devices. There are all sorts of projects that people could do for us if they’re interested.

“What I’m saying is that if people would like to come and volunteer on the island, either as an individual or a group, we can always find something for them to do that they’ll enjoy and will be beneficial for the island.

“We really want to grow our volunteer base, looking for more and more regular



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Jo Ritchie
Operations Manager

volunteers and more volunteer groups. And we’re also looking for relieving Rangers: practical, pragmatic people we would pay to come out for two to four days at a time and relieve our staff out here.

“This island is a true gem. We encourage people to come and experience this special place for themselves!”

For more information, please visit:

- rotoroa.org.nz/rotoroa-trust
- rotoroa.org.nz/conservation
- facebook.com/RotoroaislandNZ
- instagram.com/rotoroaislandnz
- [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/)

Sustainability resources

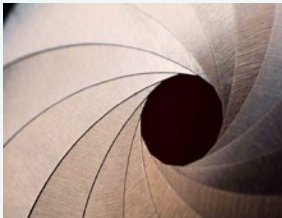
Sustainability is more important than ever as we strive to protect our planet and ensure a better future for generations to come. Below you will find a collection of weblinks to some of MinterEllisonRuddWatts' recent thought leadership discussing sustainability in all its forms.



[Nature-positive infrastructure](#)

Recent changes in global discourse have highlighted the biodiversity crisis and the urgent need to reverse the loss of nature.

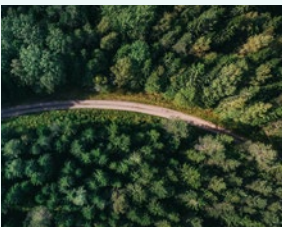
We partnered with [Arup](#), a global collective of designers, consultants and experts committed to creating a sustainable future, to create a comprehensive series of articles on the concept of nature-positive infrastructure. The articles draw on Arup's extensive experience in sustainable development and large-scale infrastructure solutions and MinterEllisonRuddWatts' expertise in navigating complex regulation and contracts to deliver world-class infrastructure projects.



[Zero In](#)

Achieving Aotearoa New Zealand's ambitious net-zero targets will require a collective effort and collaboration is key.

MinterEllisonRuddWatts is sitting down with Aotearoa New Zealand's leading organisations to zero in on the opportunities and challenges they are encountering and overcoming on their (and country's) decarbonisation and sustainability journey.



[Ensuring compliance with ESG regulations and contractual requirements](#)

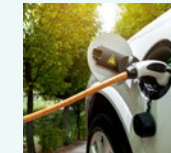
In the last decade, there has been a proliferation of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) laws in the European Union, the United Kingdom and the United States, which are presenting significant opportunities and challenges for New Zealand suppliers. At the same time, large retailers and corporate buyers in these countries are increasingly imposing strict ESG requirements through their supply agreements, which sometimes go materially beyond the regulatory requirements that apply in their markets.

MinterEllisonRuddWatts explores these trends, considers their implications for Aotearoa New Zealand suppliers, and presents strategies to help suppliers ensure that the ESG obligations they sign-up to are fair, reasonable and capable of being met.

Other articles

[Climate Change Series](#)

Addressing where we are in our climate adaption journey, the evolving climate adaption policy settings, and the actions required at the local level to establish and implement adaption plans.



[Second life battery applications](#)



[How New Zealand will manage peak demand](#)

Sustainable Impact [Issue 6](#)





MinterEllisonRuddWatts is taking an active role in Aotearoa New Zealand's sustainability journey.

We are passionate about helping to shape Aotearoa New Zealand's future, and we believe in using our collective skills, time and resources to make a positive impact for our people, our clients, our communities and our planet.

Sustainable Impact is a collection of articles highlighting Aotearoa New Zealand's progress towards a sustainable future, curated by our firm. To discuss any of the themes or topics in this issue, please get in touch.

Holly Hill

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