



Advanced Human Rights Due Diligence Working Group



Terms of Reference | April 2026 – June 2027

SUMMARY

What: The Advanced Human Rights Due Diligence (HRDD) Working Group will support practical, advanced-level peer learning for up to 15 UNGCNA business participants working at the leading edge of human rights risk management in Australia. This working group is not open to professional services firms.

When: The working group will operate for an initial 15-month period (April 2026 – June 2027).

Commitment: All participants will be expected to participate actively in:

- 1 x 45-minute 1-1 planning call with the UNGCNA team to inform session design and planning.
- 5 x 90-minute peer learning sessions, which will be convened quarterly online.

Participants may also be invited to co-chair a session, lead a discussion or present during a session, and may accept or decline such invitations at their own discretion.

Benefits of participation: A human rights team that is better equipped to anticipate and navigate complex and emerging risks and to position the organisation to meet regulatory and other expectations through:

- Closed-door, frank and candid exchange with peers on more challenging aspects of human rights (beyond modern slavery) risk management, grounded in real-life business practice.
- A community of peers across diverse sectors who are tackling shared challenges with a high level of maturity and experience.
- Flexibility to bring relevant colleagues from different teams to specific sessions to maximise opportunities for learning and exchange.
- Confidential practical written output from each session for working group participants, capturing anonymous insights and takeaways, as well as relevant practical resources.
- Opportunities to contribute to inspiring ambition and action among Australian businesses through public dissemination of anonymised insights and takeaways via the UNGCNA's social media.

Cost: AUD \$990.00 per organisation for an initial 15-month period. This cost reflects that participation will be limited to a small group of UN Global Compact Network Australia (UNGCNA) participants and ensures that facilitation of this group can be appropriately resourced.

Confidentiality: All sessions will be held under the Chatham House Rule and in line with the UNGCNA's [Competition Law Policy](#). Insights will not be attributed to participants without prior written consent.

1. About this document

This document sets out the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the UN Global Compact Network Australia (UNGCNA)'s Advanced Human Rights Due Diligence (HRDD) Working Group.

It addresses:

- Why the UNGCNA is launching this working group
- The purpose of the working group
- The benefits of joining the working group
- Participation in the working group
- Expectations of working group participants
- Confidentiality

An overview of proposed working group activities, including information about how to apply to join the working group, is annexed to this ToR.

2. Why the UNGCNA is launching this working group

The UNGCNA is launching the Advanced HRDD Working Group to establish **a new peer learning forum for business practitioners working at the leading edge of human rights risk management** in Australia.

Experienced human rights practitioners in Australia consistently share the same observation: most peer learning forums don't go deep enough or create space to discuss the real challenges facing businesses that have mature human rights risk management systems in place and are working to strengthen their approach. Discussions too-often remain focused on what international standards expect and rely on external presenters; the most experienced practitioners lack opportunities to learn and level-up their own programs, and to explore ways to address a broad range of human rights challenges (going beyond a narrow focus on modern slavery).

The Advanced HRDD Working Group has been designed to address this gap.

This working group is for organisations that are leaning into more challenging questions and nascent or emerging areas of practice in relation to human rights risk management. It will provide a space for honest and open exchange among peers who bring deep experience managing human rights risks and working to achieve meaningful positive outcomes for affected groups.

The working group's approach will be grounded in the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) and other relevant international standards. Familiarity and comfort working with these standards will be assumed, creating opportunities for deeper and more advanced-level discussion.

3. Purpose of the working group

The purpose of the Advanced HRDD Working Group is to provide a trusted, practitioner-led platform for UNGCNA participants with mature human rights programs to:

- Work together to continue to strengthen their organisation's approach to human rights, building on established HRDD frameworks and systems and diving more deeply into emerging challenges.
- Build a community of practitioners across different sectors and contexts, who are working at a similar level of maturity to strengthen their organisation's approach to human rights.

- Contribute to the broader advancement of business and human rights practice in Australia through the wider dissemination of anonymised insights and key takeaways.

The working group is a peer learning and exchange forum. It is not a decision-making body and does not represent the views or positions of its members or of the UNGCNA.

4. Benefits of joining the working group

The Advanced HRDD Working Group has been designed to support Australian businesses with a high level of human rights maturity to engage with a small group of peers on shared challenges in a trusting space that makes harder and more sensitive conversations possible.

Participants will benefit from:

- Conversations that don't happen in larger forums – sharing what hasn't worked (as well as what has), exploring practical ways to solve shared challenges and advance nascent areas of practice.
- Direct peer insights across different sectors about how organisations are navigating specific challenges in practice, with deep consideration of the operational and organisational realities.
- Intentional session design and structured discussion facilitated by the UNGCNA's Business and Human Rights team in collaboration with working group members.
- Deeper relationships with a network of leading practitioners from diverse sectors, enabling ad hoc peer-to-peer connection between sessions on specific topics or challenges.
- Concise, practical session outputs capturing key insights and takeaways – for working group participant organisations' use only.
- Contribution to anonymised, higher-level insights shared with the broader Australian business community, inspiring and supporting stronger practices at a national level.

For organisations, the practical return on investment is direct: a human rights team that is better equipped to anticipate and navigate complex and emerging risks, more informed about how peer organisations are responding to the shared challenges and better positioned to strengthen the organisation's approach in line with regulatory and stakeholder expectations. For human rights practitioners, access to a high-quality, sustained peer network can also be a meaningful form of professional development.

5. Participation in the working group

Key information about participation

Participation in the Advanced HRDD Working Group is open to up to 15 UNGCNA business participants with mature existing human rights risk management systems in place.

- **Size:** The 15-organisation limit is intended to support community- and trust-building among participants to enable a frank and open discussions within a peer learning forum.
- **Duration:** Participation is for an initial period of approximately 15 months, between April 2026 and June 2027. The UNGCNA is open to evolving this working group into an ongoing offering, subject to participant interest and resources. Towards the end of the initial phase, the UNGCNA will invite feedback on the value proposition of working group and options for continuing/evolving this offering.
- **Cost:** The cost of participating in the working group during the initial 15-month period will be AUD\$990.00 per organisation. This contribution ensures the UNGCNA is able to dedicate adequate, senior-level internal time and expertise to design and facilitate high-quality sessions and to develop

session outputs for participants. It also recognises that participation in this working group is restricted to a subset of UNGCNA participants.

Note: The Advanced HRDD Working Group is not open to consulting, legal or other professional advisory firms, or non-business participants of the UNGCNA. This restriction aims to support the working group to offer a space in which business practitioners feel confident engaging in honest and open peer exchange.

Expected maturity level of participants

The Advanced HRDD Working Group is for UNGCNA business participants that are ready to engage in practical discussions about human rights risk management at an advanced level.

The Working Group is best suited to UNGCNA business participants that:

- Have a mature human rights risk management system in place, including policies, human rights due diligence systems and grievance mechanisms.
- Are proactively managing a broad range of human rights risks and impacts, going beyond a narrow focus on modern slavery to undertake more comprehensive human rights due diligence.
- Have human rights specialists that bring deep knowledge of and are confident working with the UNGPs, OECD Guidelines and other relevant international standards.
- Have gained limited value from participating in other peer learning forums where the average maturity level of participants has been lower.
- Have a strong commitment to continuous improvement, are keen to level-up their approach and are willing to engage actively in peer learning and exchange.

This working group is designed for organisations that are well beyond the foundational stages of their human rights journey. Discussions will be facilitated at an advanced level and assume that participants bring a high level of human rights expertise and confidence working with key standards. Organisations and teams that are at an earlier stage of building their expertise and maturing their human rights approach may find that other UNGCNA offerings, such as Introductory Series on Human Rights Due Diligence, the Business and Human Rights Accelerator or the Modern Slavery Community of Practice, better meet their current needs.

Nominated representatives to the working group

Each participating organisation is asked to nominate:

- **One primary representative**, who should endeavour to participate in each session and:
 - > Have direct responsibility for, or significant involvement in driving, the organisation's human rights risk management program.
 - > Have the availability and bandwidth to participate actively in working group sessions and to contribute to peer discussion.
 - > Be willing to share their organisation's experiences, approaches and challenges openly and constructively with the group.
- **Up to two additional representatives** who may change from session to session, enabling participating organisations to maximise engagement across relevant functions.

Primary representatives are encouraged to support the continuity of engagement across the program. Where a nominated primary representative is unable to attend a specific session, they may nominate a colleague to join in their place, though it is expected that such situations will be rare.

6. Expectations of working group participants

Between April 2026 and June 2027, each working group participant is expected to participate in:

- 1 x 45-minute planning call with the UNGCNA team to inform session design and planning.
- 5 x 90-minute peer learning sessions, which will be convened quarterly online.

The working group's value is grounded in the willingness of every participant to contribute as well as to learn from peers. This is not a forum where some participants present and others listen. Each organisation is expected to contribute actively to discussions: not by sharing polished case studies, but by bringing work-in-progress examples of practice, insights and lessons learned, challenges, setbacks and unresolved questions.

Participants who join primarily to observe rather than contribute will be gently encouraged to engage more actively. Persistent passive participation may be raised directly with the relevant organisation by the UNGCNA.

7. Confidentiality

All working group sessions will be held under the Chatham House Rule. Participants are expected to respect this rule and refrain from attributing insights or information shared to an individual or organisation.

The UNGCNA may take notes or make other records of sessions for internal purposes and to develop session outputs (including anonymised insights and key takeaways for distribution to participants). Examples and discussion points will not be attributed to any individual or organisation without prior written consent. Session outputs for participants – including written summaries and key takeaways – will be shared with working group participants only and will not be shared more widely without the agreement of the group.

Higher-level, anonymised insights from working group discussions may be shared by the UNGCNA with a broader audience (for example, through UNGCNA social media and other communications channels) to support the wider advancement of business and human rights practice in Australia.

All Working Group activities will be conducted in accordance with the UNGCNA's [Competition Law Policy](#).

Participants are not entitled to speak, act or represent on behalf of the working group outside of sessions unless prior written consent has been obtained from the UNGCNA.

8. Complaints

Any complaints or concerns regarding any aspect of the working group should be directed in the first instance in writing to secretariat@unglobalcompact.org.au.

ANNEXURE

APPLICATION PROCESS, ACTIVITIES AND TIMEFRAMES (APRIL 2026 – JUNE 2027)

1. Overview

This document provides an overview of the application process and key activities and timeframes for the initial 15-month phase of the UNGCNA's new Advanced Human Rights Due Diligence (HRDD) Working Group.

It addresses:

- How to apply to join the Advanced HRDD Working Group
- Session planning and 1-1 calls
- Proposed peer learning sessions
- Session modalities and outputs

Any questions may be directed to the UNGCNA's Business and Human Rights team, who may be contacted directly or via secretariat@unglobalcompact.org.au.

2. How to join the Advanced HRDD Working Group

Participation in the Advanced HRDD Working Group will be determined via an application process.

This process will enable the UNGCNA to oversee the alignment, fit and composition of the working group to ensure complementary and diverse sector representation, and advance the working group's purpose of providing a trusted, practitioner-led platform for UNGCNA participants with mature human rights programs.

To apply, please complete this application form no later than **15 May 2026**:

<https://forms.gle/JZDb2eskycFJQ5KG7>

Applications will be considered on a rolling basis, and early application is strongly encouraged. All applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application no later than 22 May 2026.



If you would like to discuss whether the Advanced HRDD Working Group is a good fit for your organisation before applying, we warmly encourage you to reach out to the UNGCNA's Business and Human Rights team directly or via secretariat@unglobalcompact.org.au.

3. Session planning and 1-1 calls

Successful applicants will be invited to join a 45-minute 1-1 planning call with the UNGCNA team.

These calls will help ensure session design and planning responds to participants' priorities and leverages the know-how and experience within the group. Planning calls will take place during late April – mid May.

Following the completion of all planning calls, session focus and design will be refined. As part of this process, the UNGCNA will liaise with participants on opportunities to Co-Chair or make other substantive presentations/contributions to particular sessions.

4. Proposed peer learning sessions

The program from April 2026 to June 2027 will consist of 5 x 90-minute online peer learning sessions.

The proposed session topics set out below reflect priorities shared by representatives of UNGCNA participants who have been actively involved in business and human rights workstream activities over the past year and who are operating at the leading edge of human rights practice in Australia. They also seek to complement planned focus areas across the UNGCNA's business and human rights workstream in 2026.

Session topics and session design will be refined and finalised following the 1-1 planning calls.

ADVANCED HRDD WORKING GROUP PROPOSED SESSIONS	
<p>Session 1 Online Tuesday 23 June 2026 1.00 – 2.30pm AEST</p>	<p>Doing business in conflict-affected and high-risk areas: Implementing heightened human rights due diligence in practice</p> <p>Businesses operating in or sourcing from conflict-affected and high-risk areas (CAHRAs) face heightened human rights risks that demand a different approach to due diligence – and a harder set of decisions. As we have seen during the recent conflict between the US-Israel and Iran, the potential operational, financial, human rights and environmental implications can extend far beyond the CAHRA itself.</p> <p>During this session, we will go beyond the superficial question of what heightened HRDD requires to explore what its implementation actually looks like in practice. We will also explore how to make the case for deeper human rights risk assessments to executive teams and Boards when the commercial stakes are high, and ways to navigate decisions about whether to stay in a high-risk market or exit.</p> <p>We will also consider how the concept of CAHRAs is evolving in practice – recognising that what it means for businesses whose exposure is through their financial relationships or supply chains may be different to what it means for businesses that have land-based assets or operations in CAHRAs.</p>
<p>Session 2 Online Tuesday 18 August 2026 1.00 – 2.30pm AEST</p>	<p>AI and human rights: Unpacking roles, risks, opportunities and responsibilities</p> <p>The rapidly growing presence of AI is shifting the human rights risk landscape for businesses in Australia and around the world.</p> <p>During this session, we will work together to disentangle the different ways in which AI intersects with human rights risks and their management. We will unpack emerging practical approaches to identifying and addressing AI-related human rights risks in an organisation's own operations and across its value chain. We will also consider what credible and meaningful opportunities are emerging for AI to support human rights risk identification – as well as areas where the use of AI may be unhelpful or counterproductive.</p> <p>We will consider how an organisation's HRDD systems (including governance frameworks and contractual arrangements) may need to adapt to ensure effective risk management, clarity and accountability.</p> <p>Across these questions, we will reflect on the respective roles of systems and relationships in human rights risk management. In light of the growing role of AI in HRDD, participants will be encouraged to reflect on which aspects of HRDD depend on meaningful human-to-human engagement with colleagues, business partners, affected groups and other stakeholders.</p>

ADVANCED HRDD WORKING GROUP | PROPOSED SESSIONS

<p>Session 3 Online</p> <p>Tuesday 10 November 2026 1.00 – 2.30pm AEST</p>	<p>Getting more from social audits and overcoming their limitations</p> <p>Social audits remain one of the most widely used tools in human rights risk management across supply chains – and one of the most contested.</p> <p>For organisations with mature human rights risks management systems in place, the question is no longer whether audits have limitations; it is how to make the most of this widely used tool while also exploring complementary approaches to address their limitations. We will consider which potential benefits of social audits are most straightforward to achieve and what is harder to get right, as well as opportunities to uplift or redesign audit programs to enhance their contribution to human rights due diligence systems.</p> <p>We will also consider the limitations of social audits and explore complementary approaches (sometimes termed 'beyond audit approaches') that can support businesses to partners with suppliers to address shared challenges.</p> <p>Throughout this discussion, participants will be encouraged to reflect critically on ways in which social audits can create a strong foundation for meaningful engagement with business partners, and the aspects of their supply chain risk management that deliver the greatest tangible value.</p>
<p>Session 4 Online</p> <p>March 2027 (date TBC) 1.00 – 2.30pm AEDT</p>	<p>Practical pathways towards living wages and living incomes</p> <p>Efforts to ensure a living wage (or living income) is growing rapidly, and increasingly reflected in legislative requirements, investor expectations and benchmarking standards.</p> <p>For businesses, action to improve wages offers a key opportunity to tackle rising levels of inequality and poverty around the world and raise the living standards of the most vulnerable workers and their families. In turn, living wages contribute to fulfilling a range of other human rights, such as the rights to food, water and sanitation, working hours, adequate housing and access to education.</p> <p>During this session we will explore why some Australian businesses are making formal commitments to achieve a living wage for their own workforce and across their supply chains. We will also consider the practical challenges that confront businesses working to meet such commitments – including the difficulties of identifying or developing credible benchmarks or methodologies to determine what constitutes a living wage or income.</p> <p>Throughout this discussion, we will reflect on the relationship between an organisation's purchasing practices and pricing, the relationships it has built with suppliers and other business partners, and wage-levels across its operations and supply chain, and discuss ways to navigate deeper systemic factors that drive low wages (which individual companies may not be able to address acting alone).</p>
<p>Session 5 Online</p> <p>June 2027 (date TBC) 1.00 – 2.30pm AEST</p>	<p>Building and using leverage – and knowing when (and how) to walk away</p> <p>When a business identifies human rights risks or harms in its value chain, the question of leverage – how to build it, and when and how to use it – will be central to an effective response.</p> <p>Used well, leverage can enable businesses – alone or acting collaboratively – to drive better outcomes for affected or at-risk groups, and solve complex systemic challenges. But leverage can also have real limits, and the decision about whether to continue a relationship, scale it back or end it entirely carries its own human rights implications that are rarely straightforward.</p>

ADVANCED HRDD WORKING GROUP | PROPOSED SESSIONS

This session will explore different practical approaches to building and using leverage – both in their direct relationships with business partners and when working with peers and other stakeholders to address shared human rights challenges. We will discuss how practitioners navigate conversations about leverage with commercial and legal teams who may have very different priorities – as well as with external stakeholders, who may bring different expectations of the business’ response.

We will also examine the human rights dimensions of responsible exit, termination and divestment, drawing on OECD guidance. We will discuss the (for some, increasingly uncomfortable) gap between what those guidelines envision and what may be commercially and politically feasible in particular situations. What differentiates difficult decisions that we feel comfortable with – and those that we wish had been made differently?

4. Session modalities and outputs

Each session of the Advanced HRDD Working Group will be designed to support in-depth and practical peer learning on a specific topic or area of practice – with a focus on genuine engagement with challenging areas of practice.

Participants can expect that:

- Session design will prioritise participant-led discussion and peer exchange over external speakers and expertise. An external speaker from an overseas business may be invited to join a specific session, to contribute insights and approaches adopted by businesses outside Australia.
- Session design may draw on a range of formats (for example, in-depth peer presentations, facilitated discussion, scenario-based work, small-group discussion and so forth), with a view to ensuring that the format of each session is able to support effective learning and exchange.
- Every effort will be made to distribute session agendas and any pre-reading material at least two weeks before each session to support participants’ preparation. Session co-chairs and presenters will be provided with a longer lead-time to support their preparation.

A short, practical output capturing anonymised insights and takeaways will be circulated to all working group participants following each session. Higher-level insights may be disseminated with a broader audience (for example, via the UNGCNA’s social media accounts) to inspire action and ambition on human rights among other businesses in Australia.