

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release – Friday 7 May 2021



‘S’ in ESG comes to fore in ESG research in Australia

Modern slavery and human rights showed increased dominance in environmental, social and governance (ESG) research aimed at informing and driving more responsible investment in Australia over the last year, following the far-reaching local and global impacts of COVID-19.

At the 11th Annual ESG Research Australia Awards held today at the RI Australia 2021 conference from the Responsible Investment Association Australasia (RIAA), Citi, Bank of America Merrill Lynch and Credit Suisse took out awards for excellence in ESG research by a broker. An additional award from RIAA was also presented to the Australasian Centre for Corporate Responsibility for new ESG research by a non-broker.

The winners of this year’s ESG Research Australia Awards are:

- **Best Piece of New ESG Research:**

Nothing to lose but chains - A modern take on slavery for investors, by Zoe Whitton and Edward McKinnon, Citi

- **Best Piece of Ongoing ESG Research:**

CEO incentives and analyst expectations, by Sameer Chopra et al., Bank of America Merrill Lynch

- **Best ESG Broking Firm:** Credit Suisse

The winner of RIAA’s ESG Research Award recognising excellence in investor relevant ESG research by a non-broking firm is:

- **Best Piece of Investor Relevant ESG Research (non-broking firm):**

Labour Hire & Contracting Across the ASX100, by Dr Katie Hepworth, Australasian Centre for Corporate Responsibility

The ESG RA Awards, attended by Australia’s leading superannuation funds, fund managers and broking firms, recognise excellence in ESG research published by broking firms.

The nominated research covered each of the environmental, social and governance areas, with the largest portion and biggest increase on last year representing climate change, with social-focused topics closely following behind, including cultural heritage research pieces on the back of the destruction of Juukan Gorge in May last year.

“We saw a significant increase in the number of pieces of research nominated this year, reflecting the ever-increasing focus on ESG from brokers and investors alike,” said Simon O’Connor, CEO of the Responsible Investment Association Australasia and Chair of ESG Research Australia.

“The uptick in research focused on issues surrounding modern slavery, human and labour rights, and First Nations peoples’ rights mirrors prominent events that have taken place over the last 12 months like the destruction of Juukan Gorge, the first reports under the Modern Slavery Act, and of course COVID-19.”

“As 2021 continues to throw new challenges, the need for high quality ESG research in turbulent times to ground our investment decisions has never been greater.”

Emma Pringle, Chair of the ESG RA Research Evaluation Committee commended Credit Suisse’s approach to research. “From a high quality field of ESG brokerage in Australia, the Credit Suisse ESG team stood out for their timely and relevant research pieces and outstanding client service. This is the second year running that Credit Suisse have won this award, a testament to their insight, responsiveness and accessibility.

“In a year that started with drought, floods and fires, and will ultimately be defined by a global pandemic, the need for insightful research that integrates these environmental and social factors into investment impacts has never been clearer.”

Supported by the Responsible Investment Association Australasia, ESG Research Australia is an Australian initiative comprising superannuation funds, fund managers and asset consultants with the single objective of increasing the quantity and quality of ESG broker research in Australia.

ESG RA membership currently represents over 50 institutions managing well in excess of \$1 trillion in assets under management, and includes some of Australia’s largest superannuation funds, fund managers and asset consultants.

For further information or to arrange an interview with Simon O’Connor, CEO of RIAA and Chair of ESG Research Australia or Emma Pringle, Chair of the ESG RA Research Evaluation Committee, please contact:

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