
Soil Carbon Industry Group
Chairs report to the 2023 Annual General Meeting
17 October 2023

In 2023 the value proposition for the Soil Carbon Industry Group has never been more material. A voice for soil as a carbon removal technology is required in climate conversations across the world. Australia currently leads the world through an effective crediting policy environment for soil carbon that has bipartisan support. Australia's leadership position, however, cannot be taken for granted.

This year saw the first issuance of Australian Carbon Credit Units under the 2021 Soil Carbon Method. SCIG member CarbonLink had three projects that received 245,978 ACCUs, while SCIG member AgriProve also had three projects issued with 7,031 ACCUs (taking its total to 8,935 ACCUs). This represents a major inflection point for soil as a climate solution. With four years of learning after the first credit issuance under the 2014 Soil Carbon Method in 2019, the system is now set to scale.

These issuances were timely for SCIG. They occurred just before the 2023 inaugural Soil Carbon Summit hosted in collaboration with Carbon Farmers of Australia on 17 July 2023. The Summit in Brisbane formed the first day of the inaugural Nature Based Solutions Conference. This conference builds on the success of previous National Carbon Farming Conferences that have been a key focus for SCIG member activity.

I thank those involved in bringing the conference together. SCIG member Precision Pastures was the principal sponsor with an array of other sponsors made the conference possible. Presenters shared valuable analysis and expertise with attendees. Attendees in turn shared their insights via Slido. Of course, I must acknowledge the tireless work and leadership of my Co-Chair Louisa Kiely. With a special vote of thanks to Duncan Farquhar and Imogen Hickey from AgriProve in their role of providing Executive Officer support to SCIG, for going above and beyond the call of duty, especially with regard to coordinating proceedings from the conference.

Proceedings from the 2023 inaugural Soil Carbon Summit are available at scig.org.au. These proceedings provide a strong reference base to build upon for future conferences. They also serve as an asset in our mission to enable the development and diffusion of best practice tools, guidance, methodologies, processes, research, and training resources. SCIG as a publishing house, is an important new capability for our company. Members and stakeholders are encouraged to reference and use this resource.

This past year has also seen much work related to climate policy advocacy. The Australian Carbon Credit Unit (ACCU) scheme was established in 2011 by the passing of Carbon Credits (Carbon Farming Initiative) Act 2011 (CFI Act). Twelve years after CFI Act enactment, the Australian Government commissioned a review led by Australia's former Chief Scientist Professor Ian Chubb. A SCIG submission to this review drew out the importance of soil as a climate solution. A key conclusion from Professor Chubb was that "...the ACCU Scheme arrangements are essentially sound."

Soil Carbon Industry Group (SCIG) members agree with and support this conclusion. In the implementation of the Chubb Review recommendations, SCIG is working to ensure we encourage project uptake and not impede progress with any unintended consequences that could delay action in achieving Australia's climate targets.

While ACCU issuance declined temporarily during the review, public scrutiny of the integrity of Australia's ACCU Scheme has strengthened our system for the longer term.

The SCIG submission to the National Soils Strategy consultation emphasised that market-based mechanisms will be the most significant driver of increasing soil health throughout the life of the Strategy. Research and other stakeholders can align with this new direction to focus efforts with soils across the country.

At an international level SCIG contributed as a reviewer of the Land Sector and Removals Guidance for the Greenhouse Gas Protocol. This four-year effort is due to be reported in early 2024 and will focus large international corporations decarbonization action agenda within their value chains. SCIG's contribution focused attention on action with soil carbon.

SCIG has enjoyed a strong partnership with Australia's Carbon Market Institute (CMI) through their Soil Carbon Taskforce. With the release of the 2021 Soil Carbon Method a significant body of work for this cooperation came to an end. We recognise the contributions of Lewis Dean and Daniel Livine with thanks. This taskforce is now in recess. SCIG members continue to cooperate with CMI through various other interactions such as through participation in the Integrated Method taskforce.

The policy environment for soil carbon is complex. Policy needs the skills and expertise of SCIG and our members to get the settings right to accelerate action. We must anticipate where we need to be as an organisation to represent soil as a scalable carbon removal technology. It is heartening to see new members joining us, and very capable members too.

Assembling resources to map Australia's path forward for soil carbon is a challenge for our organisation. The coordination challenge, however, will not stop there. We need to grow as an organisation so we can deliver what is required from a peak body at this important time.

Thank you to my fellow Directors. Co-Chair Louisa Kiely, Dean Belfield with the Treasury, Phil Ireland who took over from Phil Mulvey as Company Secretary, Ben Sawley and Chris McCosker who both made great contributions as a program committee for the Summit. Ignatius Verbeek resigned as a director early this year after making significant contributions to SCIG, particularly around technical components of the soil carbon method, and the Board wishes him well. We are a strong team, busy in our own businesses, yet also committed to making effective contributions to the ongoing evolution of the Australian soil carbon industry – where everyone's contributions are meaningful and significant.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matthew Warnken".

Matthew Warnken
Co-chair Soil Carbon Industry Group