



GROUP OF 100 DISCOUNT RATE

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1 BACKGROUND

Objectives and scope

The Group of 100 has commissioned Milliman to generate a standardised set of discount rates to be made publicly available for the purpose of discounting employee benefit liabilities under Australian Accounting Standard 119 (AASB 119). The scope of the work is limited to Australian employee benefit schemes, and excludes any schemes of foreign subsidiaries of domestic entities which are denominated in foreign currency.

This report provides the Australian corporate bond discount rate curve as at the end of August 2015 produced under the methodology and assumptions described in the 'Discount Rates for Australian Employee Benefit Liability Valuation' report.

Reliance and limitations

In producing this report, we have relied upon the following information:

- Capital market data as sourced from Bloomberg. Should this data be incorrect, it could materially affect the analysis and conclusions drawn from it.

Users of this report should also be aware that it is subject to the following limitations:

- Current debt market conditions. Issuance of corporate bonds is subject to change over time, which may impact upon whether the accounting standard requirements of a deep market are met.
- Current capital market conditions, in particular the liquidity and credit ratings of corporate bond markets, which can change rapidly. The asset calibration set could change very rapidly under stressed market conditions.
- Reassessments of the suitability of the asset calibration set would be needed if the AAA and/or AA corporate bond market thins, which would require a prospective change to the assets selected for AASB 119 calibration purposes.

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2 METHODOLOGY AND ASSUMPTIONS

Summary of the asset calibration set

The set of assets to be used to calibrate the discount rate curve is defined by those securities that meet the following conditions:

1. Individual bonds must have the following characteristics:
 - a. Physical bonds, with no embedded derivatives (e.g., callable, puttable, convertible, extendible, variable/floating coupon, index-linked)
 - b. High-quality corporate bonds issued by both domestic and foreign entities
 - c. Payments denominated in Australian dollars (AUD)
 - d. Pay fixed (or zero) coupons, non-inflation-linked
 - e. Maturity terms of greater than one month and less than 10 years
 - f. Minimum amount outstanding on an individual security of \$100 million
 - g. Securitised bonds are included

2. A deep market for these bonds must exist, as characterised by the ready availability of observable prices and current trades.

What is meant by high quality?

Figure 1 defines the credit ratings by each agency that map to each of these broad categories. This forms the basis for the asset calibration set used in this report.

Figure 1: Definition of AAA and AA Credit Ratings by Agency

Category	AAA	AA
S&P	AAA	AA+, AA, AA-
Fitch	AAA	AA+, AA, AA-
Moody's	Aaa	Aa1, Aa2, Aa3

Where there is disagreement between credit rating agencies on particular securities, we use the following conditions:

- If a security has at least two AAA ratings, then it is classified as a AAA security
- If a security has at least two AA ratings, then it is classified as a AA security
- If a security has only been rated by two agencies with different ratings, then the lower rating is used
- If a security has only been rated by one agency, then that rating becomes the sole reference

Hereafter, all references to credit ratings refer to those that meet the above conditions. For the purposes of this paper, we refer to this as the combined credit rating.

Corporate bond universe

The table in Figure 2 shows the decomposition of the market by the combined credit rating satisfying all but the 'high quality' characteristic.

Figure 2: Australian Corporate Bond Market Outstanding Debt by Combined Credit Rating (\$ millions)

Combined Rating	Number of Securities	Outstanding (\$ Millions)	% of Total
AAA	15	11,650	10.2%
AA	124	34,225	30.1%
A	178	49,265	43.3%
BBB	69	16,840	14.8%
BB	3	950	0.8%
Other	5	875	0.8%
Total	394	113,805	100.0%

Source: Milliman analysis based upon Bloomberg data as at 31 Aug 2015.

The table in Figure 3 shows the universe of AAA and AA bonds used in the asset calibration set broken down into the composition of their respective S&P, Moody's and Fitch ratings.

Figure 3: Australian AAA/AA Corporate Bond Market Outstanding Debt (\$ millions)

Credit Rating Composition	Number of Securities	Outstanding (\$ Millions)	% of Total
Combined Credit Rating of AAA			
3 AAA ratings	0	0	0.0%
2 AAA ratings	12	10,875	93.3%
1 AAA rating	3	775	6.7%
Total Combined AAA	15	11,650	100.0%
Combined Credit Rating of AA			
3 AA ratings	43	14,045	41.0%
2 AA ratings	69	17,500	51.1%
1 AA rating	12	2,680	7.8%
Total Combined AA	124	34,225	100.0%

Source: Milliman analysis based upon Bloomberg data as at 31 Aug 2015.

Interpolation methodology

For fitting the discount curve to the asset calibration set, the Merrill Lynch Exponential Spline (MLES) method with nine exponential basis functions was used calibrated to yield data as at 31 Aug 2015, weighting each issue by the inverse duration of the issue. The results of the calibrated MLES parameters are shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4: MLES-Calibrated Parameters as at 31 Aug 2015

MLES Parameters		
Long-Run	b0	5.7%
Param1	λ1	115.1%
Param2	λ2	32.3%
Param3	λ3	-73.9%
Param4	λ4	37.2%
Param5	λ5	34.7%
Param6	λ6	-1.4%
Param7	λ7	-78.0%
Param8	λ8	-12.2%
Param9	λ9	46.2%

For the calibration of the MLES basis functions, an adjusted R-squared statistical goodness-of-fit measure was applied to the difference between modelled and actual bond prices.

An adjusted R-squared statistic value close to 100% indicates a very good fit, whilst lower values (closer to 0%) indicate poor fits. Figure 5 shows the results of the interpolation analysis used.

Figure 5: Adjusted R-Squared Statistic as at 31 Aug 2015

Regression Statistic	
Adjusted R-Squared	95.8%

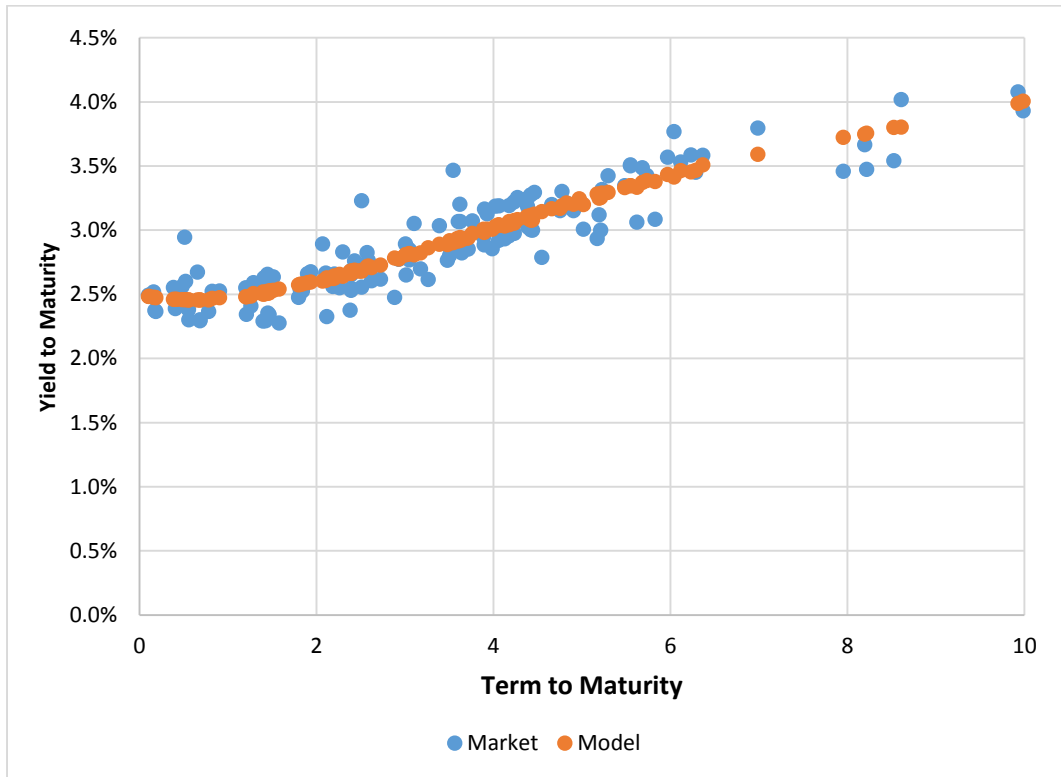
Extrapolation methodology

For rates beyond 10-year maturities, the fitted yield curve has been extrapolated by assuming that 1-year forward rates remain constant for all subsequent maturities. This is based on the 1-year forward rate between 9- and 10-year maturities, based on the fitted MLES model.

3 FITTED YIELD CURVE

Figure 6 shows the modelled yield-to-maturity for each bond in the asset calibration set, compared with the actual yield-to-maturity, using the MLES method with inverse duration weightings. Note that these are the same bonds as those discussed and analysed in Section 2 above.

Figure 6: Modelled vs. Market Yields to Maturity for Asset Calibration Set Using the MLES Method with Inverse Duration Weightings



Figures 7 and 8 show the resulting spot and forward yield curves of one to 50 years for the calibration set using the MLES method and extrapolated with the constant forward rate extrapolation method. Spot rates shown are quoted as annually compounded rates on zero coupon bonds with maturities of the specified term, forward rates shown are 1-year forward rates ending at the specified term.

Figure 7: Spot and Forward Rate Curves for Asset Calibration Set Using an MLES Interpolation and Constant Forward Rate Extrapolation Method

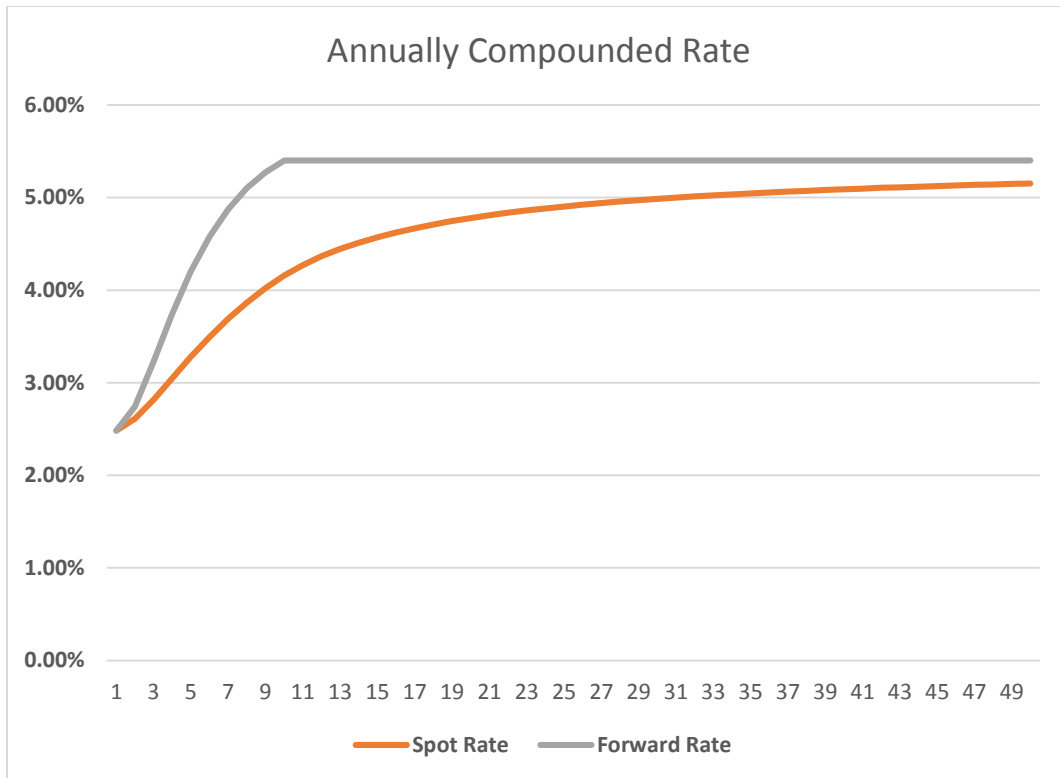


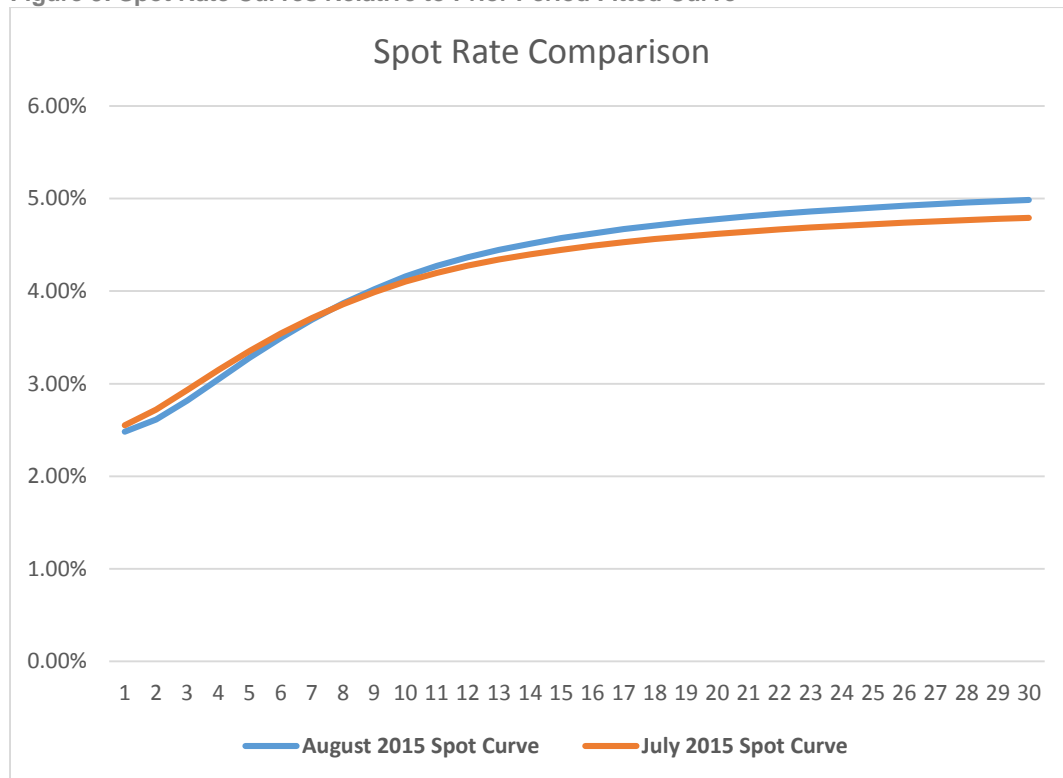
Figure 8: Spot and Forward Rate Curves for Asset Calibration Set Using an MLES Interpolation and Constant Forward Rate Extrapolation Method

Term (Years)	Spot Rate	Discount Factor
1	2.48%	0.975777
2	2.61%	0.949743
3	2.82%	0.920006
4	3.05%	0.886774
5	3.28%	0.850992
6	3.50%	0.813725
7	3.69%	0.775902
8	3.87%	0.738244
9	4.02%	0.701270
10	4.16%	0.665330
11	4.27%	0.631233
12	4.36%	0.598882
13	4.44%	0.568190
14	4.51%	0.539071
15	4.57%	0.511444
16	4.62%	0.485233
17	4.67%	0.460365
18	4.71%	0.436772
19	4.75%	0.414387
20	4.78%	0.393150
21	4.81%	0.373002
22	4.83%	0.353886
23	4.86%	0.335749
24	4.88%	0.318542
25	4.90%	0.302217

Term (Years)	Spot Rate	Discount Factor
26	4.92%	0.286729
27	4.94%	0.272034
28	4.96%	0.258093
29	4.97%	0.244866
30	4.99%	0.232316
31	5.00%	0.220410
32	5.01%	0.209114
33	5.02%	0.198398
34	5.03%	0.188230
35	5.05%	0.178583
36	5.06%	0.169431
37	5.06%	0.160748
38	5.07%	0.152509
39	5.08%	0.144693
40	5.09%	0.137278
41	5.10%	0.130243
42	5.10%	0.123568
43	5.11%	0.117235
44	5.12%	0.111227
45	5.12%	0.105527
46	5.13%	0.100118
47	5.14%	0.094987
48	5.14%	0.090119
49	5.15%	0.085501
50	5.15%	0.081119

Figure 9 shows the resulting spot rate curve of one to 30 years relative to the prior period fitted curve.

Figure 9: Spot Rate Curves Relative to Prior Period Fitted Curve





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