



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 March 2022 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.

This report was prepared solely to provide assistance to the Group of 100 and the relevant Actuaries Institute of Australia subcommittee. Milliman does not intend to benefit and assumes no duty or liability to other parties who receive this report. Milliman recommends that any recipient of this report be aided by its own actuary or other qualified professional when reviewing the report. Milliman does not certify the information in this report, nor does it guarantee the accuracy, completeness, efficacy, or timeliness of such information. Use of such information is voluntary and should not be relied upon unless an independent review of its accuracy, completeness, efficacy, and timeliness has been performed. Materials may not be reproduced without the express consent of Milliman.

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	8	4,725	6.9%
AA	61	21,615	31.6%
A	92	23,649	34.5%
BBB	53	17,260	25.2%
BB	4	1,125	1.6%
Other	1	132	0.2%
Total	219	68,506	100.0%

Source: Milliman analysis based upon Bloomberg data as at 31 March 2022.

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	7	4,450	94.2%
1 AAA rating	1	275	5.8%
Total Combined AAA	8	4,725	100.0%
Combined Credit Rating of AA			
3 AA ratings	8	2,080	9.6%
2 AA ratings	45	16,760	77.5%
1 AA rating	8	2,775	12.8%
Total Combined AA	61	21,615	100.0%

Source: Milliman analysis based upon Bloomberg data as at 31 March 2022.

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 March 2022, 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 MARCH 2022

MLES Parameters		
Long-Run	b0	5.7%
Param1	λ1	158.3%
Param2	λ2	15.1%
Param3	λ3	-211.7%
Param4	λ4	61.0%
Param5	λ5	91.5%
Param6	λ6	87.8%
Param7	λ7	-45.5%
Param8	λ8	-45.7%
Param9	λ9	-10.6%

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 MARCH 2022

Regression Statistic	
Adjusted R-Squared	98.4%

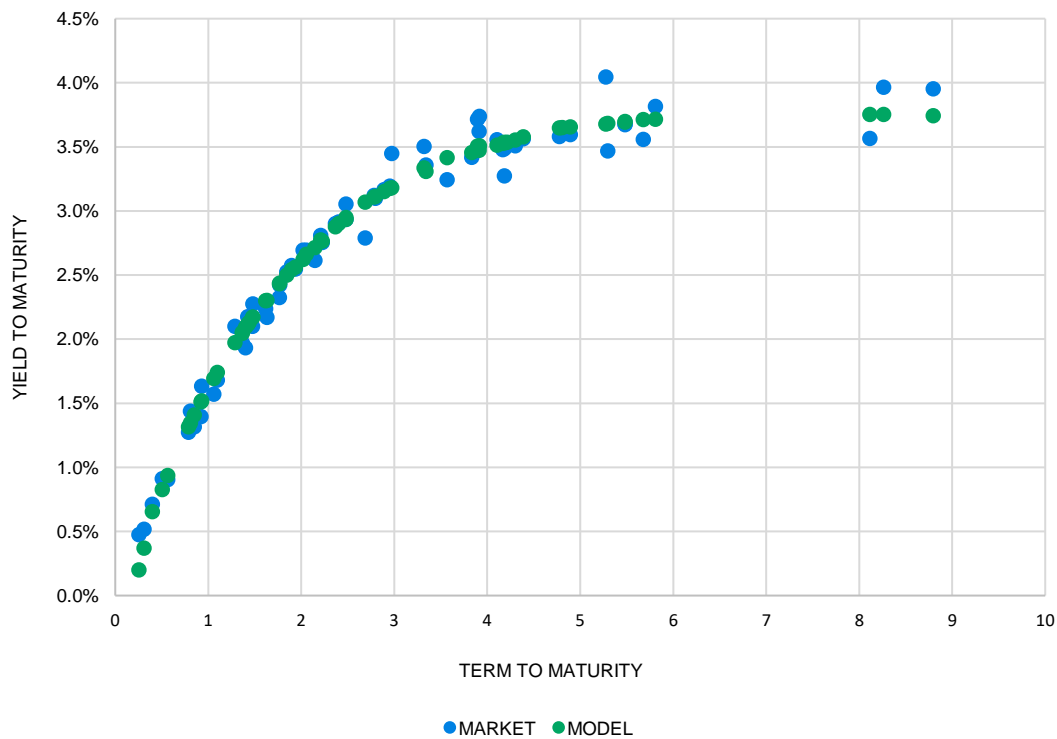
EXTRAPOLATION METHODOLOGY

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

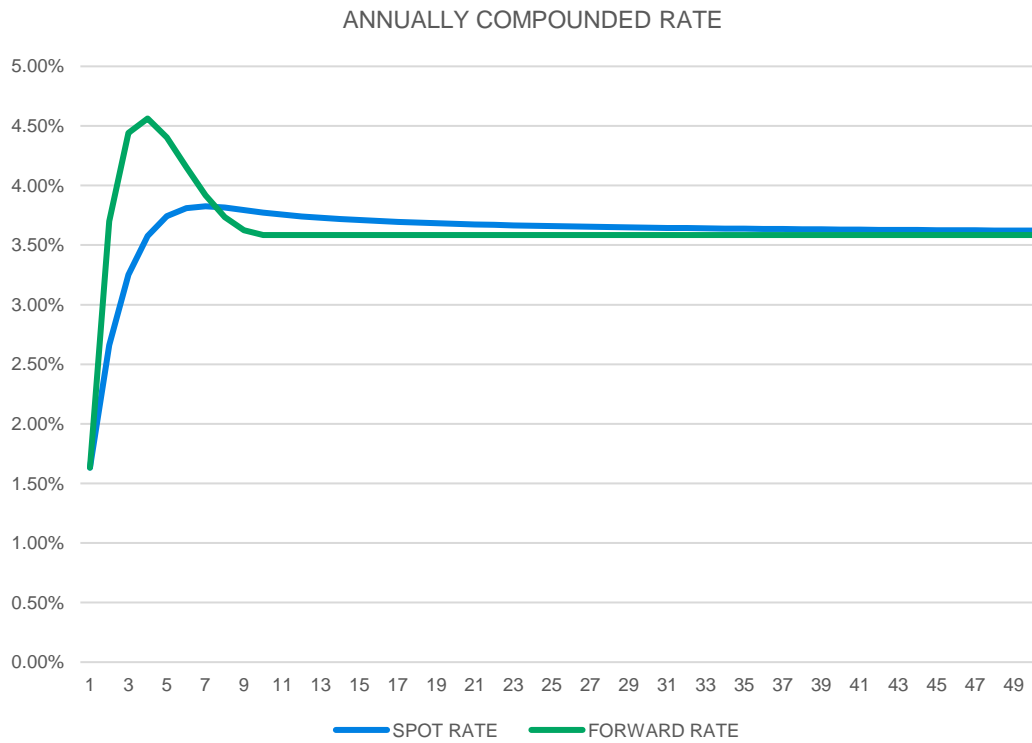
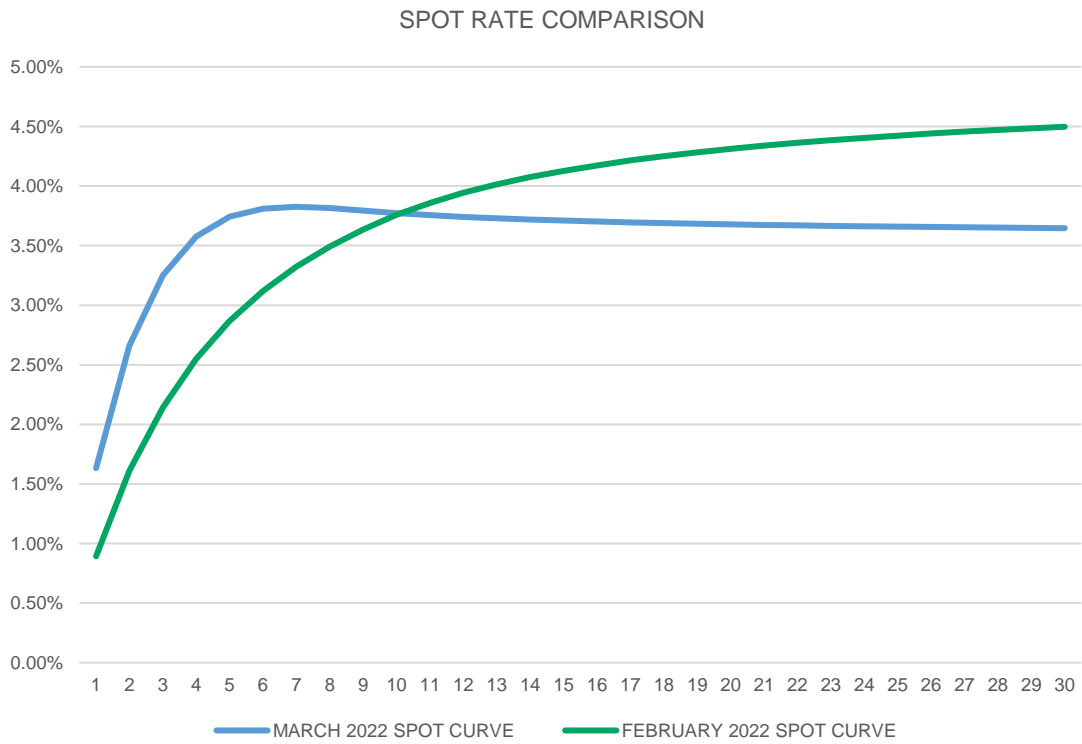


FIGURE 8: SPOT AND FORWARD RATE CURVES FOR ASSET CALIBRATION SET USING AN MLES INTERPOLATION AND CONSTANT FORWARD RATE EXTRAPOLATION METHOD

Term (Years)	Spot Rate	Discount Factor	Term (Years)	Spot Rate	Discount Factor
1	1.63%	0.983940	26	3.66%	0.393112
2	2.66%	0.948832	27	3.65%	0.379511
3	3.25%	0.908485	28	3.65%	0.366381
4	3.58%	0.868845	29	3.65%	0.353706
5	3.74%	0.832200	30	3.65%	0.341469
6	3.81%	0.799004	31	3.64%	0.329655
7	3.83%	0.768888	32	3.64%	0.318250
8	3.81%	0.741200	33	3.64%	0.307239
9	3.79%	0.715268	34	3.64%	0.296610
10	3.77%	0.690522	35	3.64%	0.286348
11	3.76%	0.666632	36	3.64%	0.276441
12	3.74%	0.643568	37	3.63%	0.266877
13	3.73%	0.621303	38	3.63%	0.257644
14	3.72%	0.599808	39	3.63%	0.248730
15	3.71%	0.579056	40	3.63%	0.240125
16	3.70%	0.559023	41	3.63%	0.231817
17	3.69%	0.539682	42	3.63%	0.223797
18	3.69%	0.521011	43	3.63%	0.216055
19	3.68%	0.502985	44	3.63%	0.208580
20	3.68%	0.485584	45	3.63%	0.201363
21	3.67%	0.468784	46	3.62%	0.194397
22	3.67%	0.452565	47	3.62%	0.187671
23	3.67%	0.436908	48	3.62%	0.181179
24	3.66%	0.421792	49	3.62%	0.174910
25	3.66%	0.407200	50	3.62%	0.168859

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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