

APPENDIX E: FINANCIAL REPORTING STANDARDS AND BUDGET CONCEPTS

REPORTING STANDARDS

The *Charter of Budget Honesty Act 1998* requires that the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook (MYEFO) be based on external reporting standards. Accordingly, the major external standards used in the MYEFO are the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) accrual Government Finance Statistics (GFS) framework and Australian Accounting Standards, including Australian Accounting Standard (AAS) 31 *Financial Reporting by Governments*. The major fiscal aggregates (including the fiscal and underlying cash balances) are based on the accrual GFS framework.

The Charter also requires that departures from applicable external reporting standards be identified. These are disclosed in Attachment A to Part 3, the opening text of Appendix B and Note 1 in Appendix C.

The next section provides a brief overview of the GFS framework and the AAS reporting framework. Further information can be found in *Budget Strategy and Outlook 2003-04, Statement 8: Financial Reporting Standards and Budget Concepts*.

ACCUAL GFS FRAMEWORK

The GFS reporting framework is a specialised statistical system designed to support economic analysis of the public sector. It allows comprehensive assessments to be made of the economic impact of government and is consistent with international statistical standards (the *System of National Accounts 1993* (SNA93) and the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) *Government Finance Statistics Manual 2001*).¹

The GFS framework is divided into a number of separate statements, each of which draws out analytical aggregates or balances of particular economic significance. Together, these aggregates provide for a thorough understanding of the financial position of the public sector. The GFS statements reported in the MYEFO are the operating statement, balance sheet, cash flow statement and statement of other economic flows.

1 Additional information on the Australian accrual GFS framework is available in the ABS publication *Australian System of Government Finance Statistics: Concepts, Sources and Methods*, 2003 (Cat. No. 5514.0.55.001).

All GFS data are recorded as either stocks (assets and liabilities) or flows (classified either as transactions or other economic flows).

A transaction results from a mutually agreed interaction between two economic entities. Despite their compulsory nature, taxes are transactions deemed to occur by mutual agreement between the government and the taxpayer. Transactions that increase or decrease net worth (assets minus liabilities) are reported as revenues and expenses respectively in the operating statement.²

A change to the value or volume of an asset or liability that does not result from a transaction is an other economic flow. This can include changes in values from market prices, most actuarial valuations and exchange rates and volume changes for discoveries, depletion and destruction. Other economic flows are reported in the statement of other economic flows.

Under the accrual GFS framework, flows are recorded in the period in which they occurred. As a result, prior period outcomes may be revised where information arises that could reasonably be expected to have been known in the past, is material in at least one of the effected periods and can be reliably assigned to the relevant period(s).

Operating statement

The operating statement presents details of transactions in GFS revenues, GFS expenses and the net acquisition of non-financial assets (net capital investment) for an accounting period.

GFS revenues arise from transactions that increase net worth and GFS expenses arise from transactions that decrease net worth. GFS revenues less GFS expenses gives the GFS net operating balance. The net operating balance is comparable to the National Accounts concept of government saving plus capital transfers.

The net acquisition of non-financial assets (net capital investment) measures the change in the Australian Government's stock of non-financial assets due to transactions. As such, it measures the net effect of purchases, sales and consumption (for example, depreciation of fixed assets and use of inventory) of non-financial assets during an accounting period.

Net acquisition of non-financial assets equals gross fixed capital formation, less depreciation, plus changes (investment) in inventories, plus other transactions in non-financial assets.

² Not all transactions impact on net worth. For example, transactions in financial assets and liabilities do not impact on net worth as they represent the swapping of assets and liabilities on the balance sheet.

Fiscal balance

The fiscal balance (or GFS net lending/borrowing) is the net operating balance less net capital investment. Thus fiscal balance includes the impact of net expenditure (effectively purchases less sales) on non-financial assets rather than consumption (depreciation) of non-financial assets.³

The fiscal balance measures the Australian Government's investment-saving balance. It measures in accrual terms the gap between government savings plus net capital transfers, and investment in non-financial assets. As such, it approximates the contribution of the Australian Government general government sector to the balance on the current account in the balance of payments.

Balance sheet

The balance sheet shows stocks of assets, liabilities and GFS net worth. Net debt is also reported in the balance sheet.

Net debt

Net debt is the sum of selected financial liabilities (deposits held, advances received, government securities, loans, and other borrowing) minus the sum of selected financial assets (cash and deposits; advances paid; and investments, loans and placements). Net debt does not include superannuation or superannuation related liabilities. Net debt is a common measure of the strength of a government's financial position. High levels of net debt impose a call on future revenue flows to service that debt.

Net worth

The net worth of the general government sector is defined as assets less liabilities. For the public financial corporations and public non-financial corporations sectors, net worth is defined as assets less liabilities less shares and other contributed capital. Net worth is an economic measure of wealth, reflecting the contribution of the Australian Government to the wealth of Australia.

Cash flow statement

The cash flow statement identifies how cash is generated and applied in a single accounting period. The cash flow statement reflects a cash basis of recording (rather than an accrual basis) where information is derived indirectly from underlying accrual transactions and movements in balances. This, in effect, means that transactions are captured when cash is received or when cash payments are made. Cash transactions

3 The net operating balance includes consumption of non-financial assets, as depreciation is a GFS expense. Depreciation also forms part of net capital investment, which (in the calculation of fiscal balance) offsets the inclusion of depreciation in the net operating balance.

are specifically identified because cash management is considered an integral function of accrual budgeting.

Underlying cash balance

The underlying cash balance (GFS surplus/deficit) is the cash counterpart of the fiscal balance, reflecting the Australian Government's cash investment-saving balance. The underlying cash balance measure is conceptually equivalent under the current accrual framework and the previous cash framework. For the general government sector, the underlying cash balance is calculated as shown below.

Net cash flows from operating activities

plus

Net cash flows from investments in non-financial assets

less

Net acquisitions of assets acquired under finance leases and similar arrangements⁴

equals

Underlying cash balance

Headline cash balance

The headline cash balance is calculated by adding cash flows from investments in financial assets for policy purposes to the underlying cash balance.

Cash flows from investments in financial assets for policy purposes include equity transactions and net advances.⁵ Equity transactions include equity injections into controlled businesses and privatisations of government businesses. Net advances include net loans to the States, net loans to students under the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS), and contributions to international organisations that increase the Australian Government's financial assets.

4 The underlying cash balance treats the acquisition and disposal of non-financial assets in the same manner regardless of whether they occur by purchase/sale or finance lease – acquisitions reduce the underlying cash balance and disposals increase the underlying cash balance. However, finance leases do not generate cash flows at the time of acquisition or disposal equivalent to the value of the asset. As such, net acquisitions of assets under finance leases are not shown in the body of the cash flow statement but are reported as a supplementary item for the calculation of the underlying cash balance.

5 Cash flows from investments in financial assets for policy purposes were called net advances under the cash budgeting framework.

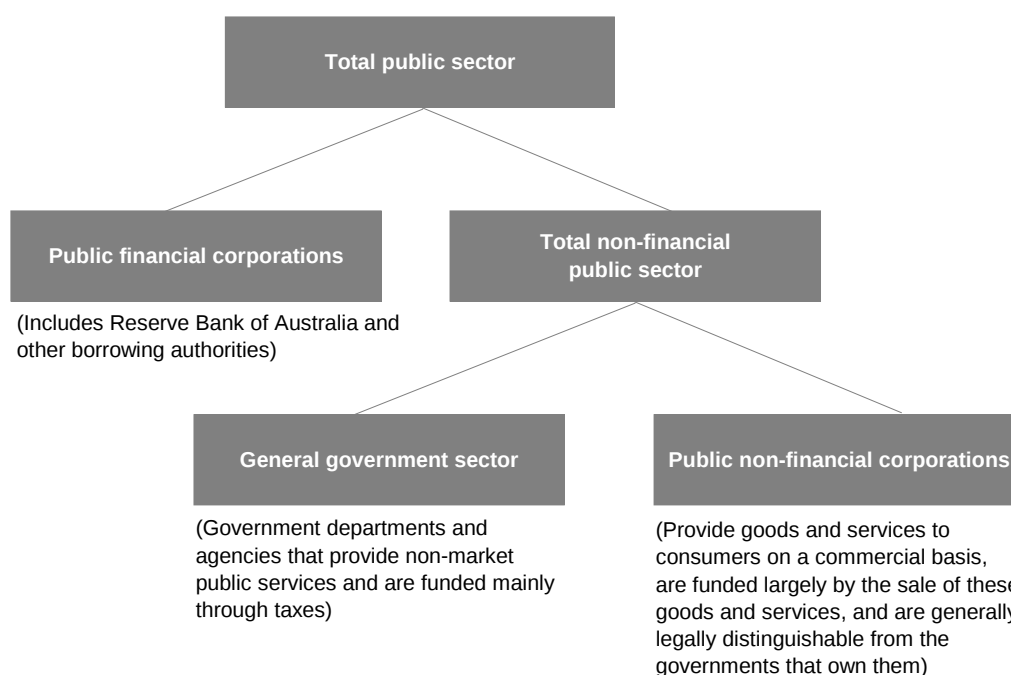
Statement of other economic flows (reconciliation of net worth)

The statement of other economic flows outlines changes in net worth driven by economic flows other than GFS revenues and GFS expenses. GFS revenues, GFS expenses and other economic flows sum to the total change in net worth during a period. The majority of other economic flows for the Australian Government general government sector arise from price movements in its assets and liabilities.

Sectoral classifications

To assist in analysing the public sector, GFS data are presented by institutional sector. GFS distinguishes between the general government sector, the public non-financial corporations sector and the public financial corporations sector, as shown in Figure E1.

Figure E1: Institutional structure of the public sector



Budget reporting focuses on the general government sector. The general government sector provides public services that are mainly non-market in nature, and for the collective consumption of the community, or involve the transfer or redistribution of income. These services are largely financed through taxes and other compulsory levies, although user charging and external funding have increased in recent years. This sector comprises all government departments, offices and some other bodies.

In preparing financial statements for the sectors all material transactions and balances between entities within the sectors are eliminated.

AUSTRALIAN ACCOUNTING STANDARD REPORTING FRAMEWORK, INCLUDING AAS 31

AAS 31 *Financial Reporting by Governments* requires accrual-based general purpose financial reports, showing the assets, liabilities, revenues, expenses and cash flows, for each Government and the entities it controls. Reporting under this framework is intended to provide a consolidated overview of the financial performance and financial position of the Government.

AAS 31 provides a general framework for reporting by Government. It also requires, with some stated exceptions, compliance with all other applicable Australian Accounting Standards.

There are three main financial statements required by AAS 31. These are:

- a statement of financial performance, which includes an operating result;
- a statement of financial position, which shows net assets; and
- a statement of cash flows, which includes the net increase/decrease in cash held.

In addition to these financial statements, notes to the financial statements are required. These notes include a summary of accounting policies, disaggregated information and other disclosures required by Australian Accounting Standards.

A full set of financial statements for the general government sector, with notes showing disaggregated information, can be found in Appendix C.

RECONCILIATION OF GFS AND AAS31 AGGREGATES

There is a general consistency of treatment of the elements of financial statements between GFS and AAS. Both frameworks are based on the concept of economic events that give rise to stocks and flows. As a result, the definitions of stocks are broadly similar under the two frameworks and relate to the control of economic benefits, while flows are defined with reference to changes in stocks.

The GFS and AAS definitions of the scope of the public sector agree in almost all cases, with AAS31 recommending the same segmentation of the public sector into general government, public non-financial corporations and public financial corporations sectors.

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Transactions are generally treated in a similar manner by GFS and accounting standards; however, where GFS is a framework designed to facilitate macro-economic analysis, AAS is designed for general purpose financial reporting. The different objectives of the two systems lead to some variation in the treatment of certain items. This differing treatment relates predominantly to the definitions of revenues and expenses under the two frameworks.

In particular, revaluations of assets and liabilities are classified differently under the AAS and GFS standards. Major revaluations include writedowns of bad and doubtful debts (excluding those that are mutually agreed), changes in the valuation of superannuation liabilities, and gains and losses due to changes in foreign exchange rates and interest rates.

Under AAS reporting, valuation changes may affect revenues or expenses and therefore the operating result. However, under GFS reporting, revaluations are not considered to be transactions (that is, they are considered to be other economic flows) and accordingly do not form part of revenues or expenses. Therefore, most revaluations are not taken into account in the calculation of the GFS net operating balance or fiscal balance. However, revaluations still impact on GFS assets and liabilities, as can be seen in the statement of other economic flows.

Some of the major differences between the GFS and AAS treatments of transactions are outlined in Table E1. Further information on the differences between the two systems is provided in the ABS publication *Australian System of Government Finance Statistics: Concepts, Sources and Methods, 2003* (Cat. No. 5514.0.55.001).

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Table E1: Selected differences between AAS and GFS reporting standards

Issue	AAS treatment	GFS treatment
Asset writedowns	Treated as part of operating expenses.	Treated as revaluations (other economic flows), except for mutually agreed writedowns, and therefore removed from expenses.
Gains and losses on assets	Treated as part of operating revenues/expenses.	Treated as revaluations (other economic flows) and therefore removed from revenues/expenses.
Provisions for bad and doubtful debts	Treated as part of operating expenses and included in the balance sheet as an offset to assets.	Act of creating provisions is not considered an economic event and is therefore not considered an expense or included in the balance sheet. The Australian Government departs from this latter requirement (see Attachment A to Part 3).
Interest flows related to swaps and other financial derivatives	Treated as operating revenues and expenses.	Treated as other economic flows and so not included in revenues and expenses.
Acquisition of defence weapons platforms	Treated as capital expenditure. Defence weapons platforms appear as an asset on the balance sheet. Depreciation expense on assets is recorded in the operating statement.	Treated as an expense. Defence weapons platforms do not appear as an asset on the balance sheet and no depreciation is recorded in the operating statement.
Valuation of assets and liabilities	Classes of assets and liabilities are measured using a range of methods. The predominant methods for valuing different asset classes include historic cost and market value.	Individual assets and liabilities are measured at current market value based on current market prices or a suitable proxy where market prices are not available.
Finance leases	Treats finance leases as if an asset were purchased from borrowings. That is, the lease payment is split into an interest component (which is shown as an operating expense) and a principal component. The asset and the liability are recorded on the balance sheet. This convention does not apply to the cash flow statement, which does not record the acquisition of the asset or the liability.	As per the accounting standard, except that the GFS cash flow statement includes the acquisition of the asset as a supplementary item for the calculation of the surplus/deficit (underlying cash balance).

Following the broad strategic direction of the Financial Reporting Council, the Australian Accounting Standards Board is currently pursuing harmonisation of GFS and AAS. A converged financial reporting framework will reduce confusion associated with the publication of two sets of financial statements and improve the readability of government budget and outcome reports.

Table E2 reconciles GFS revenue and expenses with their AAS counterparts.

Table E2: Reconciliation of GFS and AAS revenue and expenses

	Estimates		Projections	
	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
	\$m	\$m	\$m	\$m
GFS revenue (Appendix B)	235,483	245,417	257,660	271,631
<i>less</i> GST revenue for states and territories	36,040	37,920	40,090	42,290
GFS revenue (Parts 1 and 3)	199,443	207,497	217,570	229,341
<i>plus</i> asset revenue recognised for the first time	624	125	91	58
<i>plus</i> foreign exchange gains	0	0	0	0
<i>plus</i> other economic revaluations	29	0	0	0
<i>plus</i> proceeds from the sale of assets	849	759	11,854	11,854
<i>plus</i> swap interest revenue	2,161	2,282	2,138	1,814
AAS31 revenue (Appendix C)	203,106	210,663	231,653	243,067
GFS expenses (Appendix B)	229,118	240,786	251,635	264,263
<i>less</i> GST grants to states and territories	35,270	37,160	39,230	41,330
<i>less</i> GST interest on overpayments	0	0	0	0
<i>less</i> GST mutually agreed writedowns	40	41	42	43
GFS expenses (Parts 1 and 3)	193,808	203,585	212,363	222,890
<i>plus</i> actuarial revaluations	799	0	0	0
<i>plus</i> net writedown of assets/bad and doubtful debts	2,351	1,830	1,904	1,927
<i>plus</i> foreign exchange losses	329	0	0	0
<i>plus</i> other economic adjustments	44	0	0	0
<i>plus</i> value of assets sold	756	723	2,214	2,206
<i>plus</i> swap interest expense	1,954	2,055	1,923	1,630
<i>plus</i> defence weapons platforms depreciation	2,517	2,132	2,166	2,234
<i>less</i> defence weapons platforms investment	2,914	3,057	3,338	3,691
<i>plus</i> AusAid IDA/ADF expenses	534	0	0	265
AAS expenses (Appendix C)	200,177	207,269	217,233	227,461

Table E3 reconciles the accounting operating result to the GFS net operating balance and the fiscal balance (GFS net lending).

The AAS net operating result is equal to AAS revenues less expenses. Similarly, GFS revenues less expenses calculate the GFS net operating balance. Consequently, the reconciliation between the AAS operating result before extraordinary items and the GFS net operating balance relates directly to differences in the definitions of revenues and expenses which are shown in Table E2.

The second part of the Table E3 reconciliation shows the adjustment for net capital investment required to derive the fiscal balance from the GFS net operating balance.

As discussed previously, the fiscal balance is calculated as the net operating balance less net capital investment. This is a useful economic indicator as it represents the gap between government saving (less capital transfers) and investment, and so is included at the end of the GFS operating statement. In AAS there is no equivalent measure to

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the fiscal balance. That is, the AAS statement of financial performance stops at the operating result and includes no information on net capital investment.

Table E3: Reconciliation of AAS net operating result and fiscal balance

	Estimates		Projections	
	2004-05 \$m	2005-06 \$m	2006-07 \$m	2007-08 \$m
AAS operating result before extraordinary items (Appendix C)	2,928	3,395	14,420	15,606
Net differences from revenue and expense definitions	3,436	1,236	-8,395	-8,238
GFS net operating balance (Appendix B)	6,364	4,631	6,025	7,368
less purchase of property, plant and equipment and intangibles	6,068	6,047	5,978	6,236
less assets acquired under finance leases	7	4	23	5
less other non-financial assets	45	162	56	-32
less increase in inventories	174	63	214	131
plus defence weapons platforms investment	2,914	3,057	3,338	3,691
plus proceeds from sales of property, plant and equipment and intangibles	743	660	486	486
plus depreciation and amortisation	4,449	4,277	4,390	4,523
less weapons depreciation	2,517	2,132	2,166	2,234
Fiscal balance (GFS net lending) (Appendix B)(a)	5,659	4,216	5,802	7,494
Impact of GST	-730	-719	-818	-917
Fiscal balance (GFS net lending) (Part 3)(a)	4,929	3,497	4,984	6,577

(a) The fiscal balance and net operating balance estimates in Appendix B are higher than those presented in Part 3, as explained in the introduction to Appendix B.