

Basis for Conclusions on AASB 2015-6

This Basis for Conclusions accompanies, but is not part of, AASB 124. The Basis for Conclusions was originally published with AASB 2015-6 Amendments to Australian Accounting Standards – Extending Related Party Disclosures to Not-for-Profit Public Sector Entities.

Background

- BC1 This Basis for Conclusions summarises the Australian Accounting Standards Board’s considerations in deciding to extend the scope of AASB 124 *Related Party Disclosures* (December 2009) to the not-for-profit public sector. Individual Board members gave greater weight to some factors than to others.
- BC2 The first version of AASB 124, AASB 124 *Related Party Disclosures* (July 2004), applied explicitly to general purpose financial statements of companies and other for-profit entities. The December 2005 and subsequent versions of AASB 124 specifically exempt not-for-profit public sector entities from applying AASB 124. This exemption was provided on the grounds of practicability, including the number of intra-government transactions.
- BC3 The Board received representations from constituents that the disclosure of relevant related party information is a critical element of accountability in the public sector. A key example is information relating to key management personnel of public sector entities, the disclosure of which is not required under current Australian Accounting Standards.
- BC4 Following requests from its constituents to review IAS 24 *Related Party Disclosures*, the International Accounting Standards Board (IASB) made amendments to simplify the definition of ‘related party’ and, to ease concerns about practicability, provide a partial exemption from the disclosure requirements for entities that are related by virtue of being controlled, jointly controlled or significantly influenced by the same government. The Board incorporated the revised IAS 24 into AASB 124 (December 2009). The Board noted that this version of AASB 124 provides a more appropriate basis for application by not for profit public sector entities than the previous versions, as transactions between government-related entities of the same jurisdiction are exempted partially from disclosure.
- BC5 Therefore, in furtherance of its policy of promulgating transaction-neutral Standards to the extent feasible, the Board initiated a project to consider issues relating to extending the scope of AASB 124 (December 2009) to not-for-profit public sector entities. The Board issued Exposure Draft ED 214 *Extending Related Party Disclosures to the Not-for-Profit Public Sector* in July 2011. ED 214 exposed for public comment the Board’s proposal to extend the scope of AASB 124 to include not-for-profit public sector entities. The ED explained the Board’s reasons for its proposals, including its considerations as to the applicability of AASB 124 to a not-for-profit public sector context. In addition, public roundtables were conducted with public sector constituents to identify concerns and implementation issues arising from the Board’s proposals.
- BC6 In finalising its proposals that not-for-profit public sector entities be required to apply AASB 124 unamended, the Board addressed a range of issues, including consideration of:
- (a) amending the definition of ‘key management personnel’ for such entities;
 - (b) amending the requirements to provide such entities with some relief from disclosure of ministerial compensation;
 - (c) exempting such entities from disclosing certain related party transactions with Ministers;
 - (d) not requiring general government sector (GGS) financial statements to comply with AASB 124;
 - (e) adding a public sector perspective to AASB 124, for example by inserting an alternative definition for the term ‘business’ in paragraph 5 of AASB 124; and
 - (f) extending the disclosure requirements in AASB 124 for key management personnel.
- Each of these issues and the outcome of the Board’s considerations are noted below.
- BC7 In finalising its proposals, the Board also considered constituent feedback for implementation guidance to be developed to assist not-for-profit public sector entities in applying AASB 124. The Board noted that while some information about Ministerial or senior executive compensation or related party transactions may be disclosed pursuant to other legislation or directives, the requirement to apply AASB 124 will be the first time that information about a not-for-profit public sector entity’s related parties is specified by Australian Accounting Standards for inclusion in its general purpose financial statements. Consequently,

such entities may not have previously considered challenges in implementing the Standard's requirements in a not-for-profit public sector environment. The Board considered that these entities may also have difficulty in identifying and determining the extent of the information necessary to meet the objective of AASB 124, as described in paragraph 1 of the Standard. Accordingly, the Board determined that the final amendments would include implementation guidance to assist not-for-profit public sector entities with their implementation of the Standard.

Significant issues

Definition of key management personnel

- BC8 The Board considered whether an amendment of the definition of key management personnel for the not-for-profit public sector would be necessary to facilitate a decision to remove the not-for-profit public sector exemption from AASB 124, but decided that the present definition was suitable. The AASB noted that, in a public sector context, entities should consider the facts and circumstances in assessing whether a person is a member of the key management personnel, as defined, of the entity.
- BC9 The Board considered that normally, the determination of key management personnel will be similar for entities in the public sector or the private sector. For example, a not-for-profit public sector entity will need to determine whether all, or only certain, of its senior executive service employees meet the definition of key management personnel. However, the Board acknowledged constituents' concerns that the determination of key management personnel may not be straightforward in the not-for-profit public sector given ministerial-type roles. The Board noted that it does not regard a Minister to always be a member of the key management personnel of a not-for-profit public sector entity; rather, this is dependent on the particular circumstances of the jurisdiction and of the entity. Accordingly, the Board decided to add guidance to the Standard, in the absence of a private sector analogy, to assist not-for-profit public sector entities in applying the definition of key management personnel to Ministers, as ministerial-type roles do not usually arise in a private sector context.
- BC10 The Board also noted that an entity may determine that a relevant Minister may not meet the definition of key management personnel of an entity. However, the Board observed that this did not preclude that Minister from being otherwise identified as a related party of the entity, for example, where the Minister is a member of the key management personnel of the entity's parent.

Key management personnel compensation – Ministers

- BC11 Respondents to ED 214 raised concerns that the requirements of AASB 124 pertaining to the disclosure of key management personnel compensation would be onerous if applicable to Ministers, noting also that any attribution of a Ministerial salary across entities coming under the responsibility of that Minister's portfolio would involve significant judgement.
- BC12 The Board considered whether some relief was necessary with respect to the compensation of a Minister who is a member of the key management personnel of an entity. The Board observed that Ministers are typically remunerated through Parliament via a central agency, and that a Minister's compensation, while related to their responsibilities, may not be related to services performed for any specific entity or group of entities.
- BC13 The Board noted the addition of paragraphs 17A and 18A into AASB 124 since the comment period on ED 214 closed. These paragraphs were inserted into AASB 124 by AASB 2014-1 *Amendments to Australian Accounting Standards* (June 2014) to address the disclosures that apply where members of the key management personnel are not employees of the reporting entity (see paragraphs BC51 and BC52 of IAS 24). The Board considered that these paragraphs will be of relevance to a not-for-profit public sector entity when considering the disclosure of the compensation of a Minister who has been identified as part of the key management personnel of the entity, and may alleviate the respondents' concerns noted in paragraph BC11. Accordingly, the Board decided that no amendment to AASB 124 to address the disclosure of ministerial compensation was necessary at this time. However, the Board decided to add implementation guidance to clarify the manner it considers paragraph 17A operates in relation to a Minister's compensation.

Related party transactions

- BC14 The definition of 'related party' in AASB 124 separately addresses persons and entities related to the entity preparing general purpose financial statements. The partial exemption in AASB 124 from the disclosure

requirements for government-related entities applies only in relation to those entities specified in paragraphs 25(a) and 25(b) of that Standard, and not also to persons who are related parties covered by paragraph 17 (key management personnel compensation) or paragraph 18 (transactions during the periods covered by the financial statements) of AASB 124.

- BC15 Having regard to the partial exemption for government-related entities in AASB 124, the Board considered whether providing an exemption for the disclosure of related party transactions with Ministers or local government councillors was justified by any circumstances unique to the public sector and that may not have been considered by the IASB, whose mandate is limited to for-profit entities. The Board's consideration included the role of Ministers in a government and how onerous the disclosures required under AASB 124 might be. As part of its consideration, the Board had regard to the New Zealand Accounting Standards Board's decisions relating to disclosures of related party transactions with Ministers.
- BC16 The Board observed that Ministers who are members of the key management personnel of their government would also be related parties not only of the government but also of each controlled entity of the government. Accordingly, a subsidiary government entity will be required to disclose related party transactions with Ministers who may have no responsibility for the entity to the extent the disclosures are considered material, from the entity's perspective, for disclosure. For example, the Board noted that in Example 1 of the Illustrative Examples accompanying AASB 124, Entities 1, 2, A, B, C and D will be required to disclose in their financial statements related party transactions between a Minister who is a member of the key management personnel of Government G and the entity, even where the Minister's portfolio does not include the entity.
- BC17 The Board noted that, as is often the case with related party transactions, judgement would be required as to when transactions are material, especially when qualitative assessments are made about the nature of transactions. The Board considered situations in which key management personnel of a not-for-profit public sector entity, including Ministers or local government councillors where so identified, paid taxes, levies or other statutory charges or fees faced generally by citizens, or used public services such as state hospitals or schools. The Board does not expect, absent unusual circumstances, that the application of materiality would result in disclosure in many of these situations. In contrast, a commercial contract entered into by a Minister or local government councillor with a related public sector entity may be relevant for disclosure, similar to a commercial contract between a member of the key management personnel of a for-profit entity and the for-profit entity (for example, a contract to provide accountancy services between the entity and an entity controlled by a member of its key management personnel). Accordingly, the Board observed that a not-for-profit public sector entity would also need to apply judgement in determining the extent of information it needs to collect to meet the objective of AASB 124, as there is little value in an entity incurring significant costs to obtain data that is immaterial for disclosure. The Board noted that it would expect appropriate criteria to be identified so that information about transactions that are possibly material (for example, transactions that have occurred at a different price or volume to that applying to the general public) is captured for assessment.
- BC18 Having regard to the role of materiality, the Board decided that no specific exemption from disclosure of the related party transactions with key management personnel of a not-for-profit public sector entity, including any Ministers or local government councillors where so identified, was necessary. However, to respond to constituents' requests for clarification on the extent of disclosures required of related party transactions that occur in the not-for-profit public sector, the Board decided to add implementation guidance to AASB 124 to assist not-for-profit public sector entities in this regard.

Transactions with Ministers acting in their collective government capacity

- BC19 The Board considered whether transactions with Ministers who are related parties and who are acting in their collective government capacity would be assessed as being with the government and eligible for the partial exemption from disclosure in paragraphs 25 and 26 of AASB 124. The Board decided that such transactions were in substance transactions between the entity and the government-related entity, rather than being transactions with the Ministers in their own right, and that no clarification to the Standard was necessary in this regard (however, see also paragraphs BC20–BC22 below).

Government-related entities

- BC20 The Board noted that not-for-profit public sector entities were previously excluded from applying the Standard on grounds of practicability, including having regard to the number of intra-government transactions. In extending the Standard to apply to not-for-profit public sector entities, the Board

considered the extent of transactions for which disclosure may be necessary to comply with paragraph 26 of the Standard.

BC21 In its considerations, the Board had regard to the IASB's reasons for including the partial exemption, being to resolve concerns raised when the Standard was applied in environments where government control is pervasive. The Board noted that the IASB had indicated that it did not intend to require the entity to identify every government-related entity or to quantify in detail every transaction with such entities, as such a requirement would negate the exemption (see paragraph BC43 of IAS 24).

BC22 The Board noted that it shared the IASB's view communicated in paragraph BC45 of IAS 24. Paragraph BC45 of IAS 24 states:

- BC45 The Board noted that this requirement should not be too onerous for the reporting entity because:
- (a) individually significant transactions should be a small subset, by number, of total related party transactions;
 - (b) the reporting entity should know what those transactions are; and
 - (c) reporting such items on an exceptional basis takes into account cost-benefit considerations.

Nevertheless, the Board decided to add implementation guidance to the Standard to respond to constituent concerns about the extent of disclosure required by paragraph 26.

Other issues

Applicability to the general government sector

BC23 Respondents to the Exposure Draft sought clarification as to whether related party disclosures would be required in general purpose financial statements of entities in the general government sector (GGS). The Board noted the requirements in AASB 1049 *Whole of Government and General Government Sector Financial Reporting* for GGS and whole of government financial statements to be made available at the same time and, if presented separately, to be cross-referenced to each other. The Board also noted that there may be considerable overlap between the related party disclosures for the GGS and whole of government financial statements, and that exempting GGS entities from the scope of the Standard may reduce complexity and duplication of disclosures.

BC24 The Board noted that the issue of related party disclosures by subsidiary entities is also relevant to for-profit entities, and considered that related party disclosures for the GGS entity need not be the same as the disclosures for the whole-of-government or other public sector entities. Accordingly, the Board decided that GGS financial statements should not be exempt from complying with the Standard.

Public sector perspective

BC25 The Board considered whether amendment was necessary to AASB 124, for example, to paragraphs 5 and 27, to add a public sector perspective to the Standard. The Board decided that amendment was not necessary in this regard and that the addition of limited implementation guidance in respect of not-for-profit public sector entities would provide a sufficient public sector perspective to the Standard.

BC26 For example, the Board considered whether an alternative definition (to that in Appendix A of AASB 3 *Business Combinations*) for the term 'business' in paragraph 5 of AASB 124 was necessary. The Board decided that an alternative definition is not required, which is consistent with its decision when it reissued AASB 3 in March 2008. In the Board's view, the term 'business' can be read broadly. In particular, the phrase "lower costs or other economic benefits directly to investors or other owners, members or participants" in the definition of 'business' in AASB 3 is broad and can be applied by not-for-profit public sector entities.

Extending the disclosures of key management personnel of public sector entities

BC27 In finalising the amendments, the Board considered requests from some public sector constituents for additional disclosures (such as salary banding disclosures) for key management personnel in the public sector. Some constituents also queried whether additional disclosures similar to those required by section 300A of the *Corporations Act 2001* of key management personnel of listed companies should be required in respect of key management personnel of government business enterprises, based on the view

that for-profit government business enterprises should be regarded as at least as publicly accountable as such entities.

- BC28 The Board follows a policy of transaction neutrality in the requirements in Standards. Therefore, the Board decided not to require any compensation or other related party disclosures for key management personnel of public sector entities in addition to those specified of key management personnel of private sector entities, including in instances where a not for profit public sector entity has availed itself of the relief in paragraph 17A of AASB 124. The Board was not convinced that there was a not for profit sector specific reason to impose disclosures that exceed the requirements for for-profit entities.

Reduced disclosure requirements

- BC29 The Board considered whether amendment was required to the reduced disclosure requirements specified in paragraph Aus1.11 for application by not-for-profit public sector entities, and decided that no amendment was necessary in this regard. Accordingly, the reduced disclosure requirements set out in AASB 124 that apply to Tier 2 not-for-profit public sector entities are the same as those applying to other Tier 2 entities.

Application date and transitional provisions

- BC30 The Board considered the application date and transitional provisions of the amendments to extend the scope of AASB 124 to include not for profit public sector entities. The Board acknowledged constituent concerns about the ability of existing systems, processes and controls to capture the information required, and requests for a lengthy transition period prior to mandatory application of the amendments.
- BC31 The Board was disinclined to unnecessarily further extend the period to which these amendments are on issue before mandatory application, having made its key decisions on the amendments in 2012, and as the finalised amendments are largely as were exposed. Further, the Board noted that Australian Implementation Guidance to AASB 10 *Consolidated Financial Statements* relating to the application of control by not-for-profit entities had been issued by the Board in October 2013. The Board also noted that the forthcoming issue of an amending standard extending the scope of AASB 124 to not-for-profit public sector entities has been signalled in its publicly available work program. Accordingly, the Board decided that the amendments should apply to annual reporting periods beginning on or after 1 July 2016.
- BC32 However, having regard to constituent concerns, the Board decided not to require comparative related party disclosures to be presented in the period of initial application of the amendments.