Appendix 1: Sources of information

Information and professional perspectives for this publication were obtained from a range of sources:

- a desktop literature survey. This avenue yielded only a limited amount of directly relevant material on the topic of harmonisation of CBA values and methodologies
- manuals and guidelines published by government agencies and industry bodies, such as Austroads
- semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with government agencies responsible for the health, environment and transport sectors, as well as central agencies such as Treasury, Finance, premiers' departments or equivalent. Interviews were conducted in Wellington, Canberra, Melbourne, Brisbane, Hobart, Sydney, Adelaide, Perth, London and Paris. It was not possible to conduct interviews in the Northern Territory
- a survey of members of the Economic Society of Australia and the New Zealand Government Economics Network
- feedback was obtained on an exposure paper on harmonisation presented to the annual conference of the American Society for Benefit Cost Analysis in Washington in March 2015.

Manuals and guidelines published by portfolio agencies provided an important source of information regarding CBA practice. They did not, however, always provide a complete picture of the information sought. In some cases — for example the Queensland Treasury — the guidelines at the time of interviews were non-prescriptive and did not contain any CBA input variable values, whereas those of some other jurisdictions do. In some cases, agencies stated that the guidelines were being updated, so that they could not validly be used as an accurate record of current practice. Some guidelines — for example, those of the NSW Treasury — contained instructions to consult the Treasury on particular issues, such as application of real options.

Information collected during semi-structured interviews was not always as complete or productive as might have been hoped. Larger groups of interlocutors often made it difficult to keep the focus of the group on the questions of immediate interest to this publication because participants were often keen to tell their own stories and to ensure that they were part of the conversation. Combined with time limits, acquisition of relevant data and information was therefore occasionally rather limited. Discussion notes were compiled as soon as possible after interviews, and were sent to interlocutors to afford them the opportunity to confirm or amend the record of discussion.

On the other hand, the broad nature of a portfolio like health meant that it was possible sometimes to only obtain information about one area. For example, the interlocutor available at an agency may have been from the clinical evaluation side, or from the pharmaceutical evaluation side. While they occasionally commented on studies conducted in other areas, they were often able only to provide detailed explanations of practice in their own field.

The problem of arranging interviews with the most informed officials within agencies was compounded on occasion by the absence on leave of relevant interlocutors, a fact that sometimes only became known at the last minute, and despite prior arrangements. In some cases, agencies responded to requests for interviews by stating that CBA expertise was not available. In one or two cases, agencies failed to respond to requests for interviews, despite multiple approaches by phone and email.

Ideally, all government portfolios would have been included in the interview process, but this was not possible with the resources available. Time and logistics limited interviews to three target sectors: transport, health and environment. By interviewing Treasury and Finance officials as well, more general information was obtained, but time constraints on both sides again precluded more than an hour's discussion at most. Further attempts to fill in gaps were made by initiating discussions with research agencies such as the National

Health and Medical Research Council, the Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics, and some interested public servants from portfolios outside the three target sectors.

The results of interviews with agency personnel have not been tabulated because of requests by a number of interlocutors to maintain confidentiality. The results of the surveys of members of the New Zealand Government Economics Network and the Economic Society of Australia are reported in Chapter 2.

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