

Roy Morgan

— Research —

The Roy Morgan Research Centre Pty. Limited
A.C.N. 004 433 265
Quality System Certified to AS/NZS ISO 9001 : 94 Cert. No.6669

Now there's Democracy in Russia - **Australia must be next**

- Address by -

Gary C. Morgan
Managing Director

The Roy Morgan Research Centre Pty. Ltd.
411 Collins Street, Melbourne

- To -

The National Press Club
Canberra

July 11, 1990

(originally to be presented June 20, 1990)

X:\ADMIN\EXECUTIVE\LTRCMP\RUSSIA.DOC

411 Collins Street, Melbourne, Victoria 3000, G.P.O. Box 2282U, Melbourne, Victoria 3001, Australia
Tel: (03) 9629 6888 Fax: (03) 9629 1250 (03) 9622 8399 Email: melrmr@roymorgan.com

Website: www.roymorgan.com

Offices also in: Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth, Canberra & Auckland

Now there's Democracy in Russia - Australia must be next

It is not generally known that, in the last few years, Gordon Heald of Gallup London and some of our other Gallup International affiliates, have conducted public opinion research in Russia, the Eastern Bloc, and mainland China. (See Appendix A).

These public opinion surveys meant Mikhail Gorbachev and his fellow leaders in the Eastern Bloc were able, for the first time, to really know how their people felt. Awareness of this public opinion knowledge enabled (or forced) them to bring about the changes we are seeing today, which has led them to democracy.

In an interview with Sally McMillan, for The Australian, before the recent Federal election, I said "Now there's democracy in Russia, Australia should be next".

Her article in the February 26 Australian, did not include my quote. However, there is little doubt it still applies except it should read "Australia **must** be next".

Opinion polls and freedom of information are as essential a part of a democratic system as the freedom of speech.

Of course as with any freedom, freedom of information carries with it responsibilities:

- responsibility on the part of the **pollster** to conduct and report the research findings **honestly** and **accurately**;
- responsibility on the part of the **journalists** to report the research **correctly**, in context, and **even-handedly**; and
- responsibility of **political parties** and the **Government** to use this information **properly**, (not for agenda setting by alluding to private poll results which are never authenticated, and not misusing the information in polls).

Today I have several critical points to make about the misuse and abuse of public opinion polling in Australia and about its role within the democratic process.

However, before making those points let me say we, The Roy Morgan Research Centre take our responsibility very seriously. As well as the moral and ethical issues involved, our reputation depends on it.

Using public opinion polls to predict election results is the main way the accuracy of market research companies can be assessed. In this regard, The Roy Morgan Research Centre's Morgan Gallup Poll has an **unrivalled record of accuracy**.

The documentation attached (See Appendix B) shows clearly that the Morgan Gallup Poll was the most accurate in predicting the 1987 and 1990 Federal elections, and the last NSW, Victorian, South Australian and Queensland elections.

Of course The Roy Morgan Research Centre does not only conduct the Morgan Gallup Poll, we are the largest Australian market research company.

We have, since 1972, conducted the industry standard **readership survey**. With our joint venture partner Dun and Bradstreet, A.C. Nielsen (Australia) Pty. Limited is now establishing in every mainland capital city **daily TV ratings** based on TV meters.

In the last 12 months we have sold survey data to the four major political parties and during the recent Federal election the Liberal Party and the Australian Democrats commissioned political surveys from us.

It is a concern that intelligent people such as Alan Ramsey (SMH-November 25, 1989), Jennifer Beacham (Press release-March 18, 1990), Bob Hogg (AM-March 22, 1990 and National Press Club-April 11, 1990) and Leonie Kramer (The Australian, April 30, 1990) would **question the accuracy** of the Morgan Gallup Poll. While I'd suggest that Leonie Kramer's comments are more along the line of devil's advocate, Bob Hogg's comments, when considered in the context of his behaviour over many years as Secretary to Victorian ALP and Federal ALP, clearly had political overtones, as did Alan Ramsey's and Jennifer Beacham's.

It would not be unreasonable for the average voter to ask why Bob Hogg spends so much of his time criticising Gary Morgan and the Morgan Gallup Poll. (Jennifer Beacham and Alan Ramsey should be put in the same category as Bob Hogg).

If we look at the issue in perspective, in its true context, the "politicking" is obvious. The attacks (and they were coherent, well documented, thoroughly researched although wrong!) on the accuracy of the Morgan Gallup Poll came in the last few days in the run-up to the Federal election - at the time when the nightly Morgan Gallup Polls provided strong evidence that the Multi-Function Polis issue (kept alive by the ALP no doubt on the advice of Bob Hogg and Rod Cameron) had backfired and was costing the ALP significant support.

Because of ALP propaganda, people are led to believe it was the Victorian State ALP that nearly cost Mr Hawke his job.

"Of the two sentiments expressed, both of which I heartily applaud, one was reflected in the votes in Queensland and northern New South Wales, by the reaction to corruption in public life when exposed. The other, expressed most strongly to our cost in Victoria, was that at some point Government, in this case the State Government, must accept the political responsibility for their perceived or real failings. To duck that responsibility guarantees a rebound on the party." (Bob Hogg's address to the National Press Club - April 11, 1990)

However it was, in fact, the Federal ALP's handling of the MFP issue which almost cost the ALP Government.

Clearly there is no doubt Andrew Peacock raised the MFP issue. It began as an attack on the ALP. Most business leaders, academics and politicians would be in favor of greater international exchange of technical knowhow from overseas, although not if such an exchange involved a Japanese "enclave".

The issue was kept alive by Laurie Oakes when he spent the first 5 minutes of his March 18 "Sunday" interview with Andrew Peacock on the MFP. The attack on the ALP's support for the MFP would have finished then if either Senator Button or Prime Minister Hawke had referred to the Federal Government's specific rejection in 1987 of any prospect of a Japanese "enclave".

It seemed strange at the time that Senator Button didn't make this point and clear the air. He had in fact said there would be no Japanese enclave on February 14, 1990 at a Committee for Melbourne meeting which included members of the Victorian State Cabinet and Victorian business leaders.

From Andrew Peacock and the Liberal Party's point of view, Peacock's initial attack on the MFP did not help politically - criticism was levelled at them for being racist. The Liberal Party would no doubt have preferred to let the issue die a natural death.

However, Rod Cameron (who has recently **resigned yet again** as ALP's pollster) and Bob Hogg had no intention of letting the MFP issue go away. They made the strategic political decision to use the MFP issue to show division within the ranks of the Liberal Party, ie. that John Elliott and Andrew Peacock were divided. (It is ironic that John Cain made available to the press the John Elliott to him letter dated August 29, 1989 approving of the MFP.)

The MFP issue continued in Monday's Australian with Paul Kelly's article "Peacock a 'danger in the Lodge' " and Monday night's ABC TV news lead with John Elliott, Hugh Morgan, Nobby Clark and Brian Loton (all members of the Committee for Melbourne) being shown to be against Andrew Peacock's stand on the MFP. Rod Cameron was well aware of the ABC TV news story before it went to air. (Is it democracy at work when the chief advisor to the ALP election campaign is made aware of details of the ABC TV lead news story hours before it goes to air?). In fact, Rod Cameron had been busy on the telephone on the Monday afternoon (before the ABC TV news story) preparing the way for the "ALP launch of the MFP issue".

Unfortunately for the ALP by Tuesday the issue wasn't the MFP, it was **immigration*** and the ALP was losing support. The Morgan Gallup Poll conducted on Tuesday night had the Liberals in front for the first time. It was obvious to us that the **immigration issue** was the issue which put the L-NP in front in the last week.

***Note:** During 1989 both the ALP and Liberal Party purchased the results of the continuous Roy Morgan Political Issues Surveys. Both parties were well aware of the September 1989 result that 18% of electors believed **reducing the number of migrants** to be one of the three most important Federal political issues. On February 18, a month before the election, the Melbourne Sunday Herald released the February Roy Morgan Political Issues results showing the immigrant issue **rated equal third** with reducing personal income tax, and after reducing interest rates, and protecting the environment. This Political Issues poll was taken before there was any mention in the media by either political party that immigration was an issue.

In the May 13, 1990 issue of the Melbourne Sunday Sun we released the results of a poll conducted on May 10 which clearly showed Australians against the MFP (52% said it was a bad idea, only 27% a good idea, with 21% undecided). The poll also showed Australians were strongly in favor of reducing or stopping the number of migrants from anywhere (69% favored reducing or stopping immigration, 27% opposed reductions, with 4% undecided). Greatest opposition to the MFP was from Victorians where 59% said the MFP was a bad idea (in the Federal election the ALP suffered most losses in Victoria).

For Bob Hogg and his colleagues to defend themselves by arguing that the late swing against the ALP (particularly in Victoria) was not due to their own tactical error in playing up the MFP issue, but rather a spurious poll result, ("the Morgan swing") is understandable - but ridiculous.

To suggest that the Cain State Government was the cause of the swing against the ALP in Victoria is equally ridiculous.

Before Bob Hogg's onslaught on the Cain Government, the Morgan Gallup Poll found the Victorian ALP had recovered support. No doubt this was due to the Cain Government's handling of the transport dispute, which achieved a major change in work practices. (John Halfpenny believes poor management of public transport is a key reason for the Cain Government's decline in popularity - See The Australian, June 20). The Morgan Gallup Poll showing an improved vote for the Victorian State ALP (and therefore proving Cain and the State ALP were not responsible for ALP Federal loss of support) was vigorously attacked by Bob Hogg as being inaccurate.

There is little doubt that the Cain Government's later fall in popularity, and Mr Cain's fall in personal approval, can be attributed to the **internal bickering started by Bob Hogg and his colleagues after the Federal election.**

It's ironical that John Cain has, in the past, fought so hard to protect details of nearly \$1 million worth of polling data supplied to his Government (see page 10) by Rod Cameron's ANOP when Cameron and Hogg were involved in the handling of the MFP issue which nearly cost the ALP the Federal election.

There is no doubt that there are very real and potential dangers in the misuse and abuse of political polls. However, before getting involved in that area it's worth making clear exactly why public opinion polls are an essential part of a democracy.

I'd like to quote what my father said just before he died in 1985, when asked about founding public opinion polls in Australia in 1941*.

"Why was measuring public opinion important?"

"Firstly, to stop journalists from claiming to be able to write 'The public demands, etc.' when they don't know what public opinion is on that particular subject.

* Interview David Jones had with Roy Morgan just before he died. From manuscript: "Roy Morgan, The Gallup Poll Man".

Secondly, Socrates stated the central 'core' of a problem as a question. This forces people to face the problem. Public opinion polls not only do this, but also make sure that (by publication) the public and journalists know the problem and the public's attitudes towards the issue (as percentages). This forces our leaders and the public to recognise the real problem and hopefully consider it.

Thirdly, publishing several times a year reasonably accurate percentages for voting intentions creates a continuous 'election atmosphere' rather than, a phoney atmosphere created by so called 'leaders and journalists'".

Although my father's references were to political polling in the 1940's, his thoughts are just as relevant today when measuring public opinions. He, of course, had not then experienced political parties playing the same games as journalists and claiming knowledge of the public demands, etc., and alluding to polls which no-one could check.

Just before my father died he said he was concerned that political parties were beginning to learn how to use results from public opinion polls to help them **quickly change the political agenda** during election campaigns.

There is little doubt that the leaders of the Queensland National Party believed the Morgan Gallup Poll, published 11 days before the November 1986 election, which showed a large decline in their support. This information was the catalyst for the significant changes in the National Party's campaign strategy. This was not the first time poll results were the catalyst for such changes.

In 1975 Don Dunstan (then the Premier of South Australia) used polls, unfavourable to the ALP, as the excuse for attacking the then unpopular ALP Whitlam Government only days before the South Australian election. The ALP Dunstan Government was returned.

During the 1980 Federal election the Liberal and National Parties completely changed their campaign when all polls showed the ALP well in front. A telephone poll conducted by the Morgan Gallup Poll on the Wednesday before the election was the only poll to predict accurately the election result of a Liberal-National Party win.

Until the November 1986 Queensland election, the Morgan Gallup Poll had, since 1946, correctly predicted the winning party for each election surveyed. The Queensland election remains probably the best example of how a political party can, after seeing results of a political poll, change their complete strategy and successfully turn around what seemed to everyone to be inevitable failure. (In 1986 the Morgan Gallup Poll did not survey in Queensland during the week before the election.)

When a political party believes that the unfavourable results of a public opinion poll are accurate, then not changing their campaign strategy would be committing political suicide.

Of course it is not acceptable if polls are the only input into policy and/or strategy. There are situations where public opinion must be ignored. For instance, if a political party has a strong commitment to a publicly unpopular policy or strategy (eg. fixing the economy by improving productivity through changes in work practices such as penalty rates, working on Sunday, working on rostered days off, etc.) it is essential the party maintains its stance (true to its belief).

But what about the real dangers of polls, and the suggestion that they should be banned, (In the March 25 Sunday Age it was reported that Rod Cameron "believes opinion polls are a disgrace and serve only to increase the cynicism of the electorate". He was quoted as saying "I don't like

banning things, but it's sorely tempting to act as dictator and ban opinion polls") or the suggestion from a question at Bob Hogg's Press Club address on April 11 that opinion polls be subject to monitoring or auditing by the Australian Electoral Commission.

There are any number of real life examples of abuses of public opinion polls.

1) In December 1982, the leaking of Cameron's ANOP poll results on Hawke versus Hayden was undoubtedly the catalyst which instigated the move to have Hayden stand down as the Opposition leader. No actual evidence (eg. computer sheets) of this ANOP poll result has ever been made available. In hindsight, an approval rating of 38% (as found by the Morgan Gallup Poll for Hayden in December 1982 and January 1983) is not especially low for an Opposition leader.

2) In the run-up to the 1988 NSW State election Cameron's ANOP research was reported in the Sydney Morning Herald as showing that Mrs Greiner's drink driving charge was a major reason why people would vote against the Liberals. This was clearly a blatant manipulation of the truth, and an abuse of Cameron's position of authority as an unbiased pollster. Understandably, Barry Unsworth and Steven Loosley were outraged when they found ANOP's misinformation obtained more publicity than the Premier's policy launch!

There is little doubt that Steven Loosley is well aware of Cameron's history of providing misleading information based on fictitious poll data.

3) In 1988 in Victoria it is obvious that, contrary to what Rod Cameron claimed, the ALP called the Victorian State election when they believed they had a large lead in the polls.

When the election was announced the Morgan Gallup Poll showed ALP support at 51%, Liberal Party at 32%, National Party at 8% and 9% for others. (See Appendix C)

4) Also in the 1988 Victorian State election, given the ALP's carefully targeted campaigning in marginal seats, the swing against the ALP was remarkably consistent across Victoria (with a few exceptions such as the most marginal seat of Bentleigh). ALP propaganda released by Rod Cameron and reported widely in the press on the Monday immediately after the Victorian election (eg. Age-October 3, Herald-October 3), claimed the ALP **gained** support in the marginal seats. An assessment of the electoral office's polling data shows the ALP actually **lost** support in the marginal seats (except Bentleigh) as they did everywhere else. (See Appendix D)

5) Cameron and the ALP are, of course, not the only offenders. In the recent Federal election campaign Andrew Peacock and Tony Eggleton continually claimed their private polls showed the L-NP ahead in the key marginal seats, and that the L-NP would win by 16 seats. It is interesting that this Liberal claim was not criticised by Cameron or the ALP. Strategically, it seems, such propaganda suited the ALP. (The ALP preferred public image coming up to an election seems to be "slightly behind the Opposition").

Because most electors believed the ALP would win the Federal election, Peacock's widely publicised claims of a 16 seat lead in private Liberal Party polling only seemed to further diminish his already poor credibility.

6) In the May 5 Age Norman Abjorensen in his front page story on John Elliott made the following reference to Liberal Party research:

"Early in 1989 private Liberal Party research began to identify Mr Elliott as a liability. It showed repeatedly that he was regarded as being the strident voice of big business, of representing, at a time of declining living standards, interests already more than well-heeled."

Norman Abjorensen gave no source to verify his statement. Indeed in early 1989 John Elliott's standing as the Liberal Party President was near its highest! (See Morgan Gallup Poll Finding 1836)

- 7) And it's not only politicians and party strategists who abuse public opinion poll data. Westpac and the Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research at the University of Melbourne have since the beginning of this year made spurious comparisons between their new **telephone** survey which purports to measure Consumer Confidence and the long running series of data collected by The Roy Morgan Research Centre by **door-to-door** interviewing - resulting in misleading claims that Australians' Consumer Confidence is at an all time low. (See Appendix E)

The Roy Morgan Research Centre's results, which are strictly comparable with the historical series of 17 years, has for the last three months shown Consumer Confidence **higher** than June to July last year. As released in the June 15 BRW the June Roy Morgan Consumer Confidence Index is 83.1. Consumer Confidence **will drop** if people like Westpac/Melbourne Institute continue to release **wrong** information. (See Appendix F)

This wrong information was given credibility by being quoted on June 4 in the London Financial Times as "a record low in the respected Westpac-Melbourne Institute index of consumer sentiment, which fell 2.7 points in May to 70.6".

"Lies, damn lies, and statistics" has been a catch cry for many years now. But it hasn't caused us to stop people counting, or to outlaw numbers, or to take any other such draconian, anti-democratic action.

Control of abuses of public opinion polls needs to follow a scientific model - with guidelines for **quality**, and **openness** to inspection of results and methods (with of course provision for the maintenance of commercial and intellectual confidentiality rights), rather than a model of State control - with an official poll, whether it be monitored or regulated by the Electoral Commission, the Australian Bureau of Statistics or the Government of the day.

Two separate letters written by me and published in the March 1988 Times on Sunday and November 1989 Bulletin set out very clearly the issues of responsibility which need to be considered in relation to the use of polls for setting the political agenda. (See Appendix G)

No value can be placed on public opinion poll results unless the reliability of the data is beyond dispute. No reference should be made to such public opinion poll results unless backed up with specific details of:

- When the survey was conducted,
- Where the survey was conducted,
- How the survey was conducted,
- Actual questions asked, and answers given,
- Sample size, and
- Who paid for the survey (it seems that in some instances political surveys have been paid for by Governments).

It's understandable that political parties try to present poll results in the best possible light.

It is up to the journalists not to simply publish "propaganda", but to check and publish the important details, and the actual facts.

A **self-regulatory** system whereby pollsters and journalists (and perhaps even politicians) behave responsibly in relation to this important issue of freedom of information may be hard to manage, but is infinitely preferable to State control.

We already have enough control - Australia is too much the country of big business, big Government, and big unions. We **don't need** a big official, bureaucratic **polling regulatory body**, which authoritatively reports the public's opinion (with the "public" having little or no knowledge of the results nor recourse to contradict, question or check that "reported opinion").

Nor do we need Government paid, regulated and controlled **political advertising**.

However, I want to be clear, I'm not saying smaller Government is all we need. **Competition in all areas of business** (Government, companies/businesses, and workers) **is the single most important ingredient**. Unfortunately there is no political party in Australia today who will face up to this fact.

In a recent survey of 1,000 British academics, business and Government economists, few believed in the efficiency of privatisation as such: 80% believed privatisation would not raise cost efficiency unless **coupled with measures to increase competition**.

Bob Hogg's recent suggestion of the Government paying for political advertising is of course another attempt to curtail the future of our democratic system - a system which requires freedom of information, communication and therefore advertising. While Bob Hogg is flying this agenda it should be remembered that a High Court challenge was needed to stop the Hawke Government increasing Government's funding on politicians' postage. The postage allowance is used for political promotion paid for by the Government. However there are no controls on telephones being used by Members of Parliament (both State and Federal) for party purposes. It is well-known that this practice occurs. State and Federal Governments should release details on the amount each Member of Parliament spends on the telephone. Electors would be astonished if the political parties released figures on how much they spend using direct mail to communicate with electors in the marginal seats.

So much for the moral and ethical issues - the suggestion of Government paid political advertising raises another very real question. Who pays for all this? Of course it's us - the taxpayer.

When the market forces are working correctly - public opinion research is undertaken when it is believed that the **benefit** of **knowing the results** of the research **outweighs the cost**, and the benefits of a particular methodology, considered in conjunction with the cost, represents value for money.

The market forces **don't work naturally in Government** - and if decisions about public opinion research (or any Government expenditure) are not based on a correct assessment of the real benefit-cost ratio the public pays too much.

It has, until recent years, been very difficult for research companies, other than Cameron's ANOP, to win contracts from many Government Departments (many research companies were not even invited to tender).

Canberra today seems to be becoming more professional with the principle of **lowest tender price being accepted**. However, there are still many Statutory Authorities and Corporations, heavy spenders of taxpayers' money, who don't have to adhere to this principle.

In a recent Telecom contract for \$11,700,000 The Roy Morgan Research Centre was advised the following by Telecom on the suggestion that the lowest tender hadn't been accepted:

"It is not Telecom policy to disclose accepted prices or the difference in price between that accepted and that of the unsuccessful tenderer. I am therefore unable to provide any additional information in this respect."

In a democratic society it is essential that such information be available - and open to public scrutiny. Apart from the fundamental issue of freedom of information - not making such information available creates suspicion that, in this case, either Telecom didn't accept the lowest tender or Telecom changed the tender specifications and didn't in fact call tenders on the new specifications. In either case, the existing contract must be cancelled.

I won't go into this in more detail except to say a considerable amount of evidence on this topic was given to the Joint Parliamentary Committee of Public Accounts - Engagement of External Consultants by Commonwealth Departments. The minutes of evidence are available.

However, as pointed out earlier during 1984 to 1987 Cameron's ANOP was the recipient of **nearly a million dollars** worth of surveys from the Victorian ALP Cain Government. Not only was this expenditure of taxpayer's money not made with "value for money" as a priority, but as of today, no computer printouts or the specific questionnaires used by interviewers have been made available to prove that ANOP actually conducted those surveys or to establish the reliability of their data.

It would be interesting to know whether Bob Hogg and/or John Cain have seen the questionnaires and computer printouts of the following surveys:

**Some of the Surveys conducted for the Victorian Government
by Cameron's ANOP - 1984 to 1987**

Date:	Survey Name:	Fee:
Oct 84	Attitude Surveys	\$120,000
Nov 85	Two Attitude Surveys	\$ 88,000
Dec 85	Industrial Relations	\$ 22,000
Apr 86	Liquor Law Reform	\$ 39,000
Sept 86	Four Attitude Surveys	\$290,000
Oct 86	Education	\$ 22,000
July 87	Four Attitude Surveys	\$359,800

In Canberra during 1984 to 1989 Cameron's ANOP was also the recipient of over a million dollars worth of survey contracts, many given by Mick Young's Department. Some of those surveys were:

**Some of the Surveys conducted for the Federal Government
by Cameron's ANOP - 1984 to 1989**

Date:	Survey Name:	Department:	Fee:
Apr 84	Attitudes of Young Australians to Defence	Minister for Defence and Dept of the Special Minister for State	\$30,000
Apr 84	Tasmania's reaction to Commonwealth Policies and programs - Two Community Attitudes Studies	Federal Government	Not known
Aug 84	Federal budget community reaction, Phase 1: A summary analysis of immediate community response	Department of Special Minister of State	Not known
Sept 84	Federal budget community reaction, Phase 2: A summary analysis of considered community reaction	Department of Special Minister of State	Not known
Sept 84	Community attitudes towards school funding	Department of Special Minister of State	Not known
Oct 84	Introduction of unleaded petrol in Australia: Report on Attitude Research Program	Department of Home Affairs & Environment	\$44,000
84 - 87	Survey of Consumer Opinion in Australia	Attorney General's Department	\$571,000
Apr 85	Taxation - The Community perception, A National attitude study	Federal Government	Not known
Jan 86	Unleaded petrol in Australia survey: An update of research on community attitudes	Department of the Arts, Heritage and Environment	\$24,000
July 87	Public attitudes to Defence	Minister for Defence	\$121,000

Continued....

Date:	Survey Name:	Department:	Fee:
Sept 87	Community attitude to the Australia Card	Federal Government	Not known
1987	Survey of Public Attitude to, and acceptance of, Medicare	Minister for Community Services and Health	\$61,000
Not known	Community attitudes to Commonwealth Employment, Education and Training policies and programs	Employment, Education and Training	\$230,000
1988	Survey of Public Attitude to, and acceptance of, Medicare	Minister for Community Services and Health	\$69,000
1989	Survey of Public Attitude to, and acceptance of, Medicare	Minister for Community Services and Health	\$76,000

I am not aware of any Federal Government Department for whom ANOP conducted surveys **yet being supplied by ANOP with the specific questionnaire** used by interviewers, or a copy of the **computer printout** confirming that the surveys were actually conducted to the contract specifications. In fact I would not be surprised if the computer printouts don't exist!

Without a responsible and open policy in relation to research and Government expenditure, Governments are open to corruption, or suspicion of corruption. (See Appendix H)

In finishing I'd like to point out that democracy requires:

- **freedom of information** and its **distribution**,
- information which is **accurate**, and
- a political process which **does not abuse** that freedom of accurate information.

Unfortunately today Australian does not have that political process.

Our best chance of obtaining that political process is for the media to be responsible. For instance, I was advised recently that ABC TV will only reference public opinion poll results known to be authentic and properly conducted.

Strange as it may seem, democracy in Australia lies in the hands of the media.

Appendix A

Eastern European Organisations with whom Gallup International Companies have worked:

Soviet Union:

Professor Yadov/Elena Bashkirova,
Institute of Sociology,
The USSR Academy of Sciences,
Krzyzhzanovskogo, 24/35, b.5.,
Moscow 117218.

Tatjana Zaslavskaja,
National Public Opinion Research Centre,
Leninsky Prospekt 146,
Moscow 117604.

Vladimir Andreenkov,
Cessi,
C/-Institute of Sociology,
The USSR Academy of Sciences,
Krzyzhzanovskogo, 24/35, b.5.,
Moscow 117218.

Mrs Cherkasova,
Marketing Information Centre,
Kolpachny 7,
101000 Moscow.

Baltic Republics:

Mrs Karin Niinas,
Dept. of Public Opinion and Market
Research,
"Mainor",
200104 Tallinn,
Kuhlbari 1.
Estonia SU.

Mme. Maris Mellens,
Director of the Sociological Research
Dept.,
"Atmoda",
Vecpilsetas iela 13/15,
226250, Riga,
Latvia.

Rasa Alishanskiene,
Department of Sociology,
University of Vilnius,
Latvia.

Eastern Europe:

Mr Laszlo Radni,
Mareco,
Ude utca3, 1037,
Budapest,
Hungary.

Mme. Eموke Lengyel,
Modus,
Teleki Laszlo ter.7,
Budapest 1086.
Hungary.

Gallup Budapest,
C/- American Gallup Organisation,
Suite 200,
100 Palmer Square,
Princeton, NJ 08542.
USA.

Ms M. Marody,
Institute of Sociology,
Ul Karowa 18,
Warsaw 64.
Poland.

Dr Roland Pac,
Market Research Institute for Foreign
Trade,
Warsaw,
Poland.

Prof. Kwiatkowski,
Societ Research for Public Opinion,
Warsaw,
Poland.

USUMAR,
East German Research Group,
C/- EMNID Institut GmbH & Co,
Bodenschwingstrasse 23-25,
4800 Bielefeld 1,
West Germany.

Appendix B

Accuracy of the Morgan Gallup Poll

It is important that the record of the Morgan Gallup Poll is shown so all politicians and political commentators are aware of the Morgan Gallup Poll's accuracy record - clearly the best in Australia.

The following is a summary of Morgan Gallup Poll results obtained from surveys conducted during the last few days before the 1987 and 1990 Federal elections and the most recent NSW, Victorian, South Australia and Queensland State elections. Pre-election surveys were not conducted in the final weeks of the Tasmanian or West Australian State elections - consequently no comparisons can be made for those elections.

It should be understood that predicting the outcome of an election involves:

- accurately estimating the percentage of the vote **each** party will receive (not only the major parties), and
- predicting, based on the percentage vote, which party will win.

Predicting an election today is very different from when my father predicted elections in the 1940's before the founding of the DLP. Problems in the 1950's and 1960's were associated with underestimating the DLP vote. Today TV and radio commentary up until election day, as well as TV advertising and more sophisticated use of information and target marketing, has created a new set of problems.

The Morgan Gallup Poll has overcome these problems by surveying up to and on election day.

1. The March 1987 Federal Election - accurately predicted by a Morgan Gallup Poll telephone survey

The Morgan Gallup Poll published in The Bulletin was the only poll to accurately show that the ALP would win but with a reduced share of the "two-party ALP/L-NP preferred vote".

All other public opinion polls showed the ALP share **increasing**.

The Morgan Gallup Poll was also the only poll during the 1987 election campaign not to show wild unrealistic fluctuations. The Morgan Gallup Poll showed the ALP lead declining steadily over 3 weeks from 6% to 2%.

During the election campaign Newspoll had the ALP lead fluctuating from 15% to 5%, AGB/McNair Anderson from 14% to 2%, and the SMH/Age Saulwick Poll from 8% to 4%.

The following table compares the final Morgan Gallup Poll (conducted by telephone on the Wednesday and Thursday nights before the election and released on Eyewitness News) with other final polls.

In a press release the Morgan Gallup Poll stated:

"The inaccuracy of all polls, except the Morgan Gallup Poll, means that other pollsters in Australia must change their telephone survey methods or stop polling, particularly between elections. There is no evidence that the wild fluctuations obtained by other polls during the campaign can be taken seriously."

Table 1: 1987 Federal election

	1984 election result %	1987 election result %	Last published pre-election polls							
			Morgan Gallup Poll		Newspoll#		AGB: MCNair Anderson*		Saulwick SMH/Age	
			%	Diff	%	Diff	%	Diff	%	Diff
ALP	47.6	45.8	46	+0.2	48.5	+2.7	47	+1.2	46	+0.2
L-NP	44.7	45.8	44	-1.8	43	-2.8	41	-4.8	42	-3.8
Aust. Democrats	5.5	6.0	7	+1.0	6.5	+0.5	9	+3.0	10	+4.0
Other	2.2	2.4	3	+0.6	2	-0.4	3	+0.6	2	-0.4
	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100</u>		<u>100.0</u>		<u>100</u>		<u>100</u>	
Swing against the ALP		-1.8	-1.6		+0.9		-0.6		-1.6	
ALP lead	+2.9	-	+2		+5.5		+6		+4	
Average % error on each published figure			0.9		1.6		2.4		2.1	

Newspoll is a joint venture 50% owned by a News Ltd company and 50% owned by Yann Campbell Hoare Wheeler.

* AGB:McNair is owned 60% by Robert Maxwell's UK company and 40% by the AMP.

2. The March 1990 Federal Election - The Morgan Gallup Poll was the most accurate Poll

The Morgan Gallup Poll accurately predicted the Federal election would be close and decided on preferences of Australian Democrats and "Others".

The Morgan Gallup Poll was the only published poll to show that the L-NP would receive a greater percentage share of the vote than the ALP.

The final Morgan Gallup Poll conducted on Friday night, and released by Network Nine, showed an L-NP lead over the ALP of 2%. The actual L-NP lead was 3.8%.

- Saulwick inaccurately gave the ALP a lead of 1%.
- AGB:McNair inaccurately gave the ALP a lead of 1%, and
- Newspoll inaccurately gave the ALP a lead of 2%.

Table 2: 1990 Federal Election

Date conducted	1984 election result %	1987 election result %	1990 election result %	Last published pre-election polls							
				Morgan Gallup Poll (Nine Network) 23/3/90		Newspoll# (Australian) 20-22/3/90		AGB: McNair (Mirror/ Melb. Herald) 22/3/90		Saulwick (SMH/Age) 23/3/90	
				%	Diff	%	Diff	%	Diff	%*	Diff
ALP	47.6	45.8	39.4	40	+0.6	41.5	+2.1	42	+2.6	40	+0.6
L-NP	44.7	45.8	43.2	42	-1.2	39.5	-3.7	41	-2.2	39	-4.2
Aust. Democrats	5.5	6.0	11.3	14	+2.7	14.0	+2.7	13	+1.7	15	+3.7
Others	2.2	2.4	6.1	4	-2.1	5.0	-1.1	4	-2.1	5	-1.1
	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100</u>		<u>100.0</u>		<u>100</u>		<u>99</u>	
Swing from ALP		-1.8	-6.4	-5.8		-4.3		-3.8		-5.8	
ALP lead	+2.9	-	-3.8	-2		+2		+1		+1	
Average % error on each published figure				1.7		2.4		2.2		2.4	

* In the first edition of the Age, Saulwick released: ALP 41%, L-NP 37%, Australian Democrats 17% and Others 5%. The above figures add to 99%!

3. The 1988 NSW State Election

On the morning of the 1988 NSW election, the final Morgan Gallup Poll, conducted with 919 electors on the Friday night before the election, was broadcast on Sydney radio. That final poll accurately predicted the L-NP would win the NSW election. Percentage estimates for each party were extremely close when compared with the counted vote for each party.

During the last week of the election the Morgan Gallup Poll conducted and released the results of **four** different but comparable telephone polls on NSW voting. Thursday night's poll showed a close election. Friday night's poll, after publicity surrounding the issue of "dead" electors voting, showed the beginning of the swing to the L-NP. Without this issue of the cemetery vote, the election would have been much closer.

The following table compares the final Morgan Gallup Poll result with other published pre-election surveys.

Table 3: 1988 NSW State Election

	1984 election <u>result</u> %	1988 election <u>result</u> %	<u>Last published pre-election polls</u>					
			<u>Morgan Gallup Poll</u>		<u>Newspoll/ Australian</u>		<u>AGB:McNair</u>	
			%	Diff	%	Diff	%	Diff
Labor	49.4	38.5	40	+1.5	39	+0.5	35	-3.5
Liberal	32.0	35.8	36	+0.2	} 46	-3.5	39	+3.2
National	10.6	13.7	12	-1.7			7	-6.7
Aust Democrat		1.8	2	+0.2	6	+4.2	3	+1.2
Others	8.0	10.2	10	-0.2	9	-1.2	15	+4.8
	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>		<u>100</u>		<u>100</u>	
Swing against Labor		-10.9	-9.4		-10.4		-14.4	
L-NP lead over Labor	-6.8	+11.0	+8.0		+7.0		+11.0	
Average % error on each published figure			0.8		2.4		3.9	

Predicting the NSW election result was particularly difficult because of the high support for some individual independents and, apart from the ALP, no other party contested all 109 seats. The Liberal Party contested 90 seats, National 26 seats, Australian Democrat 34 seats, and Independents 58 seats.

To win, the L-NP had to receive significantly more than 50% of the two party preferred vote. Estimating the final number of seats was made more difficult because of voluntary preferential voting.

In the ten days before the NSW election the traditionally stable electorate was confronted with four controversial issues.

First, on the day of Mr Unsworth's policy launch, Rod Cameron, the ALP's pollster and recipient of many Government contracts, tried to reset the political agenda of the election by focusing attention on Mrs Kathryn Greiner's drink driving charge. This was obviously not an issue relevant to the election, but an abuse of Mr Cameron's position of authority as an unbiased pollster. In the May 13, 1988 Australian Newspaper, a front page article quoted Mr Stephen Loosley, NSW ALP secretary, as identifying the deliberately leaked poll about Mrs Greiner as one of "several decisions that cost the ALP support".

Secondly, early in the week, before the March election, there was the announcement of Mick Young (a former Federal Minister) obtaining a job with Qantas.

This was followed on the Wednesday by publicity on Mr Hawke's casino activities.

Finally, on the Thursday before the election, the Liberal Senator Bishop raised in the Senate the issue of an ALP member winning a NSW by-election based on votes which were cast in the names of people who had died.

There is no doubt these four issues brought to the elector's minds the long running debate on corruption and dishonest Government in NSW.

4. Victorian State Election - Morgan Gallup Poll only accurate poll

The Morgan Gallup Poll, commissioned by The Bulletin, was the **only** poll to predict that there would be a swing **against** the Cain ALP Government in the 1988 Victorian State election. The Morgan Gallup Poll was the only poll to accurately predict an L-NP lead over the ALP, although the ALP won office. (This situation is very similar to final poll results before the March 1990 Federal election.) All other polls published an ALP lead of between 3% and 7%.

The Morgan Gallup Poll's final release on October 1 pointed out that the outcome of Saturday's election depended on the number of seats won rather than either party obtaining a majority of the two party preferred vote.

The Morgan Gallup Poll said the Cain ALP Government would just be defeated with preferences from the minor parties. The outcome of the election was not known for about a week.

Although all other public opinion polls predicted an ALP victory, they all produced figures that were so inaccurate on estimating the vote for each party that their polling methods must be questioned.

Table 4: 1988 Victorian State Election

	March 1984 election <u>result</u> %	Oct 1, 1988 election <u>result</u> %	<u>Last published pre-election surveys</u>							
			<u>Morgan Gallup Poll</u> % Diff		<u>Newspoll/ Australian</u> % Diff		<u>AGB:McNair</u> % Diff		<u>Saulwick Age Poll</u> % Diff	
Labor	50.0	46.6	47.0	+0.4	50	+3.4	48	+1.4	48	+1.4
Liberal	41.9	40.5	41.5	+1.0	*		39	-1.5	*	
National	<u>7.3</u>	<u>7.8</u>	<u>6.5</u>	<u>-1.3</u>	<u>*</u>	<u>=</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>-1.8</u>	<u>*</u>	<u>—</u>
Total L-NP	49.2	48.3	48.0	-0.3	43	-5.3	45	-3.3	44	-4.3
Aust Dem	-	1.1	1.0	-0.1	4	+2.9	5	+3.9	5	+3.9
Others	0.8	4.0	4.0	-	3	-1.0	3	-1.0	3	-1.0
	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>		<u>100</u>		<u>100</u>		<u>100</u>	
Swing against Labor		-3.4	-3.0		-		-2.0		-2.0	
Labor lead over L-NP	+0.8	-1.7	-1.0		+7.0		+3.0		+4.0	
Average % error on each published figure			0.6		3.2		1.9		2.7	

* Obviously measured but not released.

In the 1988 NSW State election the Morgan Gallup Poll showed the final swing occurred in the last few days of the election campaign.

In the Victorian State election the swing against the ALP was measured by the Morgan Gallup Poll a **week before** the election and released in The Bulletin on Wednesday, September 28. There was no change in voting preference during the final week. This means that not only did other polls fail to predict the swing, but they were consistently wrong over the entire week before the election.

5. The November 1989 South Australian Election

In the 1989 South Australian election the final Morgan Gallup Poll, released on the Nine Network, estimated correctly that the Liberal Party would gain more votes than the Labor Party, but incorrectly predicted that the Liberal Party would win the election.

An examination of the seats shows the Liberal and National party won 23 seats, while the Labor Party won 22 seats and was only returned to Government with the aid of two Independent Labor candidates.

The swing against the South Australian Labor Party was 8.9%. The Morgan Gallup Poll predicted a 10.5% swing against the Labor Party while Newspoll predicted the swing would be 11.5%.

Table 5: The 1989 South Australian State Election

	Dec 1985 election result %	Nov 25, 1989 election result %	Last published pre-election polls			
			Morgan Gallup Poll		Newspoll/ Australian	
			%	Diff	%	Diff
Labor*	50.5	41.6	40	-1.6	39	-2.6
Liberal	42.8	44.2	46	+1.8	45	-0.4
National	1.7	1.2	2	+0.8		
Aust Democrat	4.2	10.3	10	-0.3	12	+1.7
Others	0.8	2.7	2	-0.7	4	+1.3
	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100</u>		<u>100</u>	
Swing against Labor		-8.9	-10.5		-11.5	
L-NP lead over Labor	-6.0	+3.8	+8.0		+6.0	
Average % error on each published figure			1.0		1.5	

* Includes 2 Independent Labor candidates

6. The December 1989 Queensland Election

In the 1989 Queensland election the final Morgan Gallup Poll, released on the Nine Network, estimated correctly that the Labor Party would receive more votes than the National and Liberal Parties combined, and would win the election.

The swing to the Queensland Labor Party was 10.9%. The Morgan Gallup Poll prediction of a 13.6% swing to the Labor Party was the most accurate of the five polls which conducted pre-election surveys.

Newspoll under-estimated the swing to the Labor Party by 2.8%, Saulwick over-estimated the swing by 3.7%, AGB:McNair by 4.7% and Kenning by 6.7%.

Table 6: 1989 Queensland State Election

	Nov 1986 election result %	Dec 2, 1989 election result* %	Last published pre-election surveys									
			<u>Morgan Gallup Poll</u> % Diff		<u>Newspoll/ Australian</u> % Diff		<u>AGB:McNair Courier Mail</u> % Diff		<u>Saulwick SMH/Age</u> % Diff		<u>Kenning Sunday Mail</u> %# Diff	
Labor	39.4	50.3	53	+2.7	47.5	-2.8	55	+4.7	54	+3.7	57	+6.7
National	41.8	23.9	23	-0.9	25.5	+1.6	21	-2.9	21	-2.9	20	-3.9
Liberal	16.4	21.9	20	-1.9	20.0	-1.9	19	-2.9	19	-2.9	19	-2.9
Others	2.4	3.9	4	+0.1	7.0	+3.1	5	+1.1	6	+2.1	4	+0.1
	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>		<u>100</u>		<u>100</u>		<u>100</u>		<u>100</u>	
Swing to Labor		+10.9	+13.6		+8.1		+15.6		+14.6		+17.6	
Labor lead over L- NP	-18.8	+4.5	+10.0		+2.0		+15.0		+14.0		+18.0	
Average % error on each published figure			1.4		2.4		2.9		2.9		3.4	

* Election result as at 14/12/89

Re-percentage to exclude 5% undecided

Implications for Media Research, Consumer Research and Public Attitude Surveys

Using public opinion polls to predict election results is the main way of assessing the accuracy of market research companies. In this regard, The Roy Morgan Research Centre's Morgan Gallup Poll has an unrivalled record of accuracy.

The inaccuracy of AGB:McNair, Newspoll and Saulwick Age Poll should make those who commission media research, consumer research and public attitude surveys (which includes the media, companies and government organisations/departments) more careful with whom they contract. It is obviously in the public's interest for some market research companies to immediately take steps to improve their methods.

Appendix C

Lessons from the Victorian Election - The Polls

In a paper Michele Levine and Gary Morgan presented to CEDA "Lessons from Political; History, 47 Years of Polling", they stated the following after the 1988 Victorian State election.

"There is no doubt that, contrary to what Rod Cameron (ANOP)* (ALP's agenda setter and political advisor) claimed, the ALP called the Victorian State election when they believed they had a large lead in the polls.

When the election was announced the Morgan Gallup Poll showed ALP support at 51%, Liberal Party support at 32%, National Party at 8%, and 9% for others.

The VFL Final Series and the Olympic Games clearly detracted from public interest in the Victorian State election campaign and therefore benefited the party which was ahead at the time of the election being called.

Over the next 4 weeks, during which all political parties campaigned vigorously, the ALP lost significant support among the Victorian electorate. What was obviously designed to be a comfortable ALP victory turned out to be a cliffhanger!

On election day October 1, only 47% of electors voted for the ALP, while 47.9% voted for either the Liberal Party or the National Party.

Given the ALP's carefully targeted campaigning in marginal seats, the swing against the ALP was remarkably consistent across Victoria (with a few exceptions such as the most marginal seat of Bentleigh). Again, contrary to ALP propaganda released by Rod Cameron and reported widely in the press immediately (eg. Age-October 3, Herald-October 3), the ALP did not gain support in the marginal seats (except Bentleigh). The ALP actually lost support in the marginal seats as they did everywhere else. (See next page for Michelle Grattan's Age article.)

The following table shows the percentage vote in the eighteen marginal seats referred to in the press by Rod Cameron (ANOP) as where the ALP vote had "improved" on 1985.

Vote in Rod Cameron's (ANOP) marginal seats

	<u>1985</u>	<u>1988</u>	<u>Change</u>
ALP	49.6	45.6	-4.0
Liberal	48.7	46.0	-2.7
National Party	0.4	1.4	+1.0
L-NP	49.1	47.4	-1.7
Australian Democrats	-	4.5	+4.5
Other	<u>1.3</u>	<u>2.5</u>	+1.2
	100.0	100.0	

* **Footnote:** The media normally refer to Rod Cameron (ANOP) as the "ALP pollster". (See articles by Paul Kelly and Stephen Loosley in The Weekend Australian, October 22, 1988). Rod Cameron's (ANOP) role, or accuracy, as a public opinion pollster, is impossible to determine. The public is never told specific poll details such as **who** ANOP interview, **where** they interview, **how** they interview, **how many** they interview, **when** they interview, or **what** specific questions they ask.

Rod Cameron's ANOP "research findings" on current issues, trends and swings, widely reported in the press, sound authentic, but real data is never produced. In no other country would the media give such credibility to such propaganda.

Gary Morgan was recently advised that ABC TV now has a policy not to refer to results of public opinion polls unless specific details on who conducted the survey, methodology and actual questions asked are supplied. Hopefully other media will follow suit.

Appendix D

(See The Age, October 3, 1988 “*A marginal turn of the tide*” by Michelle Grattan)

Roy Morgan

Research

The Roy Morgan Research Centre Pty. Limited
A.C.N. 004 433 265
Quality System Certified to AS/NZS ISO 9001 : 94 Cert. No.6669

Appendix E

May 4, 1990

The Editor
The Age
David Syme & Co Limited
250 Spencer Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3000

Dear Sir

Your headline article of May 3 "Consumer confidence at lowest in 17 years" is wrong.

The Westpac/Melbourne Institute (part of the Melbourne University) Consumer Sentiment **telephone** survey began in 1990. There is no historical data in their series, so no claims can be made about the last 17 years.

The Westpac/Melbourne Institute are making a spurious comparison with the long running series of data collected by The Roy Morgan Research Centre by personal **door-to-door** interviews.

Apart from this obvious "error" of comparing surveys using different methods, Westpac/Melbourne Institute have "adjusted" previous Consumer Confidence figures calculated by our company.

Although the April Westpac/Melbourne Institute Consumer Sentiment figure is lower than their March figure, there is no evidence to suggest that the April result is lower, or should be somehow considered lower, than the figure of 72.8 we obtained last year in June.

However, Consumer Confidence will go lower if people like Westpac/Melbourne Institute continue to release wrong information.

Yours faithfully

Gary C Morgan
MANAGING DIRECTOR

(See The Age, May 3, 1990 "*Consumer confidence at lowest in 17 years*" by Toby Darvall)

Appendix F

Consumer Confidence continues to decrease

June 12, 1990

In early June, Consumer Confidence, as measured by the Roy Morgan Research Centre, fell 1.6 points to 83.1.

This June rating is the lowest recorded for 1990 but it is higher than the June, and all-time low, rating of 72.8 recorded in 1989.

Consumer Confidence is calculated by collating the answers to five questions asked Australia-wide by the Roy Morgan Research Centre.

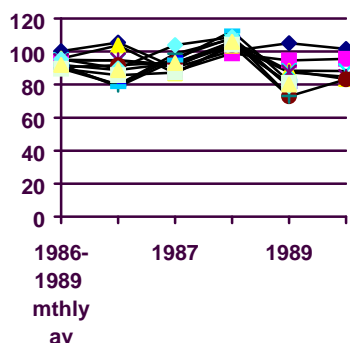
The results are copyright to the Roy Morgan Research Centre and cannot be published without permission and acknowledging the following:

“Survey results based on 966 face-to-face interviews conducted Australia-wide in June by the Roy Morgan Research Centre.”

In June, pessimism outweighs optimism on all questions except people’s expectations of their own personal and family’s financial situation over the coming year, where optimism outweighs pessimism by 5 points.

After the March quarter GDP figures showing positive growth (rather than the negative growth anticipated) people are less pessimistic than they were a month ago about future economic conditions for Australia. 51% (down 7%) expect bad times in the coming year and 44% (down 7%) expect bad times over the next 5 years.

Despite these improvements in consumer’s attitudes to the economy, the Consumer Confidence Rating actually decreased. This is because people were significantly less optimistic about their own personal financial situation in the coming year, and, for the first time this year more people believe now is a **bad** time to buy major household items than believed now is a **good** time.



Roy Morgan Research

The Roy Morgan Research Centre Pty. Limited
A.C.N. 004 433 265
Quality System Certified to AS/NZS ISO 9001 : 94 Cert. No.6669

Appendix G

February 9, 1988

The Editor,

Dear Sir,

Now that the media coverage of the SA by-election is out of the way, it is important for the future that the political journalists of Australia improve their standards for reporting and referencing public opinion polls.

In the February 4 Financial Review, Geoff Kitney referred to the ALP strategists being "armed with ANOP research".

In the February 7 Sun-Herald there was reference to the ALP's research results, from pollster Rod Cameron, improving.

For many years now ANOP, with their ALP associates, have been trying to set the political agenda by alluding to results of public opinion polls.

No value can be placed on research based claims unless the reliability of the research is beyond dispute. No reference should be made to such research unless backed up with specific details of:

- . When the survey was conducted,
- . Where the survey was conducted,
- . How the survey was conducted,
- . Actual questions asked, and answers given,
- . Sample size, and
- . Who paid for the survey (It seems that in some States political surveys have been paid for by Governments).

ANOP and the ALP are not the only ones who use this practice of "alluding" to favorable opinion polls. Recently Mr Greiner was reported in the Sydney newspapers as making reference to favorable Liberal private polls in NSW without giving any details.

It's understandable that political parties try to present poll results in the best possible light.

It is up to the journalists not to simply publish "propaganda", but to check and publish the important details, and the actual facts.

Comments such as the following made in the February 6-7 Weekend Australian make a mockery of public opinion polls.

"The private opinion polls of political parties are curiously obliging. Both the Government and the Opposition claim they are ahead in the critical marginal electorates and will win."

Yours sincerely,

Gary C. Morgan,
MANAGING DIRECTOR.

411 Collins Street, Melbourne, Victoria 3000, G.P.O. Box 2282U, Melbourne, Victoria 3001, Australia
Tel: (03) 9629 6888 Fax: (03) 9629 1250 (03) 9622 8399 Email: melrmr@roymorgan.com

Website: www.roymorgan.com

Offices also in: Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth, Canberra & Auckland

“The Bulletin” - November 7, 1989

Polling data

Laurie Oakes' column (“A matter of opinion,” B, October 17) on polls is important for two reasons. It points out some of the problems associated with how the media use public opinion polls and the article gives a good example of how journalists (in this case, Oakes) misuse polls by stating :...it is well-known that Cameron's confidential polling (for the ALP) shows Labor's support at a significantly lower level than the published polls indicate”.

The media need to obtain a number of details before quoting supposed opinion poll results. For example:

- Where was the poll conducted? Australia-wide, marginal seats, Sydney, Melbourne, etc?
- What were the specific questions asked?
- What sample size was interviewed: 20, 200, 1000 or 2000?
- What method of surveying was used: telephone, face-to-face, group discussion?
- Has the computer analysis of results been seen by anyone?

Let's hope that in the coming election the political journalists don't keep quoting “unauthenticated” polls promoted by the political parties whose purpose is trying to reset the political agenda.

GARY C. MORGAN

Managing Director

The Roy Morgan Research Centre Pty Ltd

Melbourne Vic

Appendix H

“*The Australian*” - September 8, 1988

Who pays the pollster?

THERE are few conventions more firmly established or more widely respected in our political system than that a government ought not to use taxpayers' money for party political purposes.

At times there is a difficulty in judging exactly where to draw the line between legitimate government expenditure and expenditure for party political purposes. However, the difficulty in drawing the line does not mean that such a line does not exist.

It was crossed in 1984 when the Victorian Premier, Mr Cain, set up a special unit in his department to conduct regular surveys on a wide range of issues, many of them politically sensitive.

Since then the Victorian Government has made a practice of conducting extensive public opinion polls and then keeping the information itself. Clearly this gives an unfair advantage to the Victorian ALP.

Mr Cain's defence of this action has been to argue that governments consult the electorate by whatever means are available and that it is a normal part of the political process for a government to seek to find out what the people actually want of it.

He defends the secrecy of the poll results by saying that they frequently involve

submissions to Cabinet and therefore Cabinet confidentiality demands that they not be published.

This is a most unsatisfactory explanation. It is difficult to see how a poll result could need to be kept confidential. After all, any private polling company could conduct a poll on the same issue as that conducted by the Government and find out what public opinion is.

Moreover, some of the reported subjects of the polls, such as the public's reaction to the dismissal of the former Victorian tourism chief, Mr Bob Nordlinger, or the role the Deputy Premier, Mr Fordham, in the Wallace International float affair, are plainly political issues. The results of polls on these issues are of obvious political interest to both the Government and the Opposition.

The Victorian Government's polling practices would be less objectionable if the results of the polls were made public. Then at least it would be clear that the ALP was not seeking an unfair advantage over its political opponents.

If the Victorian ALP wants confidential polling information on political issues it should pay for it out of party funds, as other parties do all over Australia.