Accuracy of Opinion Polling in Australia

- by -

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and
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The Roy Morgan Research Centre Pty Ltd

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Thank you for the opportunity of speaking today at the 9th Australian Statistical Conference.

1. The Proposed Referendums

Before presenting this paper I thought it only appropriate to comment on the coming referendums, not the subject matter (which is the Government's prerogative) but the actual questions.

"A Bill for an Act to alter the Constitution to provide for four-year maximum terms for members of both Houses of the Commonwealth Parliament.

. Do you approve this proposed alteration?

A Bill for an Act to alter the Constitution to provide for fair and democratic parliamentary elections throughout Australia.

. Do you approve this proposed alteration?

'A Bill for an Act to alter the Constitution to recognise local Government.

. Do you approve this proposed alteration?

A Bill for an Act to alter the Constitution to extend the right to trial by jury, to extend freedom of religion, and to ensure fair terms for persons whose property is acquired by any Government.

. Do you approve this proposed alteration?"

There is no doubt that the proposed referendum questions are biased to try to obtain a "yes" vote. In addition the questions do not honestly convey the issues being asked. With the questions in their present form, the referendums will be rejected for the wrong reasons. The issue will become the questions not the content. Any public opinion polling company who asked questions as blatantly biased as the Government proposes would completely lose credibility.

Unfortunately many Federal and State Government commissioned surveys, and commercial market research surveys (in some instances worth $1 million or more) are worthless because of biased questions. (This area of questionnaire bias will be covered by me in a paper to be presented in June at the Gallup International Conference in Helsinki.)
2. Public Opinion Polling in Australia

Today, I've been asked to talk about opinion polling in Australia. The Morgan Gallup Poll is Australia's most widely accepted and respected public opinion poll. For over 47 years it has been independent of political parties, government bodies and media.

The first Australian public opinion poll was conducted in 1941 by my father, Roy Morgan. The Morgan Gallup Poll (from 1941 - 1972 called Gallup Poll) is Australia's longest running poll.

The Morgan Gallup Poll findings have been tested in over 57 Federal and State elections and referendums. Our record is unmatched by any other opinion research company in Australia or the world.

Before getting into the details of measurement and accuracy, it's important to consider some of the social implications of opinion polling.

I'd like to start by quoting 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.

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 created 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.

*Interview David Jones had with Roy Morgan just before he died. From manuscript: "Roy Morgan, The Gallup Poll Man".
3. The Use of Opinion Polls by Political Parties

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.

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

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 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 turnaround what seemed to everyone to be inevitable failure.

4. The Use of Opinion Polls in Political Agenda Setting

The following letter was written by me to the editors of all major newspapers and magazines which report political opinion polls. It sets out very clearly the issues of responsibility which need to be considered in relation to the use of polls for setting the political agenda. The letter was published in March in the Times on Sunday.

.../4
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.
5. Why The Roy Morgan Research Centre Conducts Political Opinion Polls

Our reason for conducting political polls is to prove our ability to conduct accurate social research and consumer market research, and thereby maintain our reputation for accuracy.

Public opinion polls that have repeatedly published accurate predictions of the voting intention at elections are accepted as being able to measure public opinion on political and social questions, also with accuracy.

That "acceptance" of a reputation for accuracy often extends to objective "quantitative social, consumer and public relations surveys; but should not also extend to subjective unquantified qualitative surveys, known as group discussions or focus groups.

Of course, nobody knows for a fact whether a nation-wide survey of voting intention, taken seven days before an election, is actually an accurate measure of how the nation then intended to vote on election day.

That is because figures from that survey could differ from actual voting for two reasons:

- Because the survey was done inaccurately, or
- Because a significant proportion of people actually voted differently from how they had said (when interviewed) they intended to vote i.e. they changed their mind.

This brings me to the second part of my paper which deals with some more technical aspects of polling - Election day polls and telephone polls.

6. Election Day Polls

The only way to test the accuracy of a public opinion poll's surveying procedure is to compare that poll's result from a survey on election day with the actual vote.

The difference between the result of the election day survey and the actual vote is then a measure of accuracy or inaccuracy.

"Exit Polls" are conducted near polling booths on election days in Australia and several other countries. As far as is known, the Morgan Gallup Poll in Australia is the only nation-wide survey, which, on election day, has regularly asked people in their homes how they had voted or would vote. This, of course, is the best test, not only of the representativeness of the cross-section interviewed, but also of the reliability of the interviewers and the correctness of the question asked. Figures for the 1975 to 1984 Federal elections in Australia for the House of Representatives follow (the 1987 election day telephone poll is covered in detail in Table 2). Asterisks show the percentages of first preference votes cast for the Party which won.

.../6
The last two columns below show that only once (in 1980) was the "election day" survey of the Morgan Gallup Poll on the "wrong side", with the margin of 1.5% for the ALP, whereas the actual margin was 1.2% for Lib/NCP. However, the error on ALP was only 1.2% (See 3rd last column).

The average below the last column shows that the average winning margin between ALP and Lib/NCP was 5.7% at the five elections. In comparison, the 2nd last column shows that the Morgan Gallup Polls in election day gave an average winning margin of 5.5%, a difference of only 0.2%.

Table 1: Election day polls 1975 - 1984

| Date     | Morgan Gallup Poll |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |
|----------|---------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
|          | on election day     | on election day | election day | election day | election day | election day | election day |
| 13/12/75 | 52.5 1.3 42.4 3.8  | 53.0 0.4 42.8 3.8  | -0.4 -10.1 | -10.2 |
| 10/12/77 | 48.6 9.0 40.2 2.2  | 48.1 9.4 39.6 2.9  | +0.6 -8.4 | -8.5 |
| 15/10/80 | 44.8 7.1 46.3 1.8  | 46.3 6.6 45.1 2.0  | +1.2 +1.5 | -1.2 |
| 5/5/83  | 43.9 5.2 49.6 1.3  | 43.6 5.0 49.5* 1.9  | +0.1 +5.7 | +5.9 |
| 1/12/84 | 44.7 6.9 46.6 1.8  | 45.0 5.3 47.7* 2.0  | -1.1 +1.9 | +2.7 |

* Winning Party

It is noteworthy that whereas the 1984 election day survey conducted by face-to-face interviewing under-estimated the ALP first preferences by 1.1% (Col.5 above) the Morgan Gallup Poll conducted 7 days before the election over-estimated that ALP vote by 3%. That over-estimation is the subject of the next section of this paper which examines some especially interesting election experiences.

6.1 1987 Election Day Telephone Poll

In 1987 the Morgan Gallup Poll conducted for the ABC for the first time a telephone election day poll. The result of this poll was released on the ABC at 6:30pm on election day (half an hour after the polls had closed). The poll was accurate in showing the ALP vote would decline. The poll showed the same ALP lead as the final telephone Morgan Gallup Poll (conducted on the Wednesday and Thursday nights before the election). This was the first election day poll in Australia to predict the correct result.
The AGB/McNair Anderson 1987 election day poll incorrectly gave an increased ALP vote of 49% with the L-NP vote of 43% and 8% for others.

The following analysis of the election day Morgan Gallup Poll shows that electors who said they would vote ALP, some of whom probably didn’t actually vote, cast their vote later in the day than L-NP voters.

This fact will significantly change the way parties campaign, particularly with postal votes and on election day.

Table 2: Election day telephone poll

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>45.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L-NP</td>
<td>46.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Democrats</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Queensland Morgan Gallup Poll election day survey results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1986 Queensland election result</th>
<th>Morgan Gallup election day survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Party</td>
<td>39.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Party</td>
<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>41.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Parties</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. Telephone Polls

Up until the Queensland election, telephone polls had generally not been as accurate as door-to-door surveys. In the 10 years prior to the Queensland election, experience had shown that telephone polls were biased toward the party in office.

Before the Morgan Gallup Poll accurately used telephone interviewing to predict the 1987 Federal election and the NSW State election, some telephone pollsters in Australia referred to telephone polling for the 1984 election as verification of their accuracy. Although Spectrum (an associate of AGB/McNair-Anderson) in 1984 obtained an accurate prediction for the House of Representatives, Spectrum's estimate of the Senate vote was one of the most inaccurate election predictions ever published in Australia.

Table 4: 1984 Senate election Morgan Gallup Poll and Spectrum predictions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Senate Election Dec. 84</th>
<th>Estimated for Senate Morgan Gallup</th>
<th>Estimated for Senate Spectrum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A.L.P.</td>
<td>42.5%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal/NP</td>
<td>39.8%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aust. Dem.</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDP</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Spectrum estimates of the 1984 House of Representatives vote and Senate vote were based on answers from telephone interviews with the same sample of respondents. The question for the House of Representatives gave a result which was accurate, while the question for the Senate gave a result which was inaccurate.

Two similar and related questions on the one questionnaire should have yielded similar accuracy, so Spectrum's big error (7.5% underestimate of the A.L.P vote) nullified their accuracy for the House of Representatives.

Spectrum's telephone poll result for the House of Representatives was probably accurate for the 1984 House of Representative vote more by "luck" than "design".

In the 1986 Queensland election the telephone poll by Newspoll was accurate to within 1%. However with the 1986 South Australian and Western Australian State elections, Newspoll underestimated the L-NP votes by about 5%; although they correctly forecasted the A.L.P State Governments would be returned. With the 1986 Tasmanian State election Newspoll overestimated the Liberal vote by 3%. Although the Liberal Party was re-elected Newspoll's forecast was another example of overestimating support for the party in office.
8. Three Unique Election Experiences

The final part of this paper deals with three unique election experiences - the 1984 and 1987 Federal elections and the recent 1988 NSW election.

8.1 The Morgan Gallup Poll and the Unique 1984 Federal Election

After a long record of accurate forecasts of elections for the House of Representatives (as shown in Section 6), a Morgan Gallup Poll of 3,415 voters, 7 days before the election for the Federal House of Representatives on December 1, 1984, over-estimated by 3% the vote of 48% for the Australian Labor Party (ALP) (See Table 5 below). It was accurate, however, within 1% for the Senate, which previously had usually been predicted with less accuracy. (See Table 4 on Page 9).

Table 5 below shows that two other national surveys, also based on personal interviews, (AGB/McNair Anderson and SRC/Saulwick) over-estimated the ALP vote even more than the Morgan Gallup Poll; whereas two surveys conducted by telephone on election eve (Spectrum and Telegraph/Channel 10) were accurate:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>H &amp; R Election Dec.1</th>
<th>Personal Interviews</th>
<th>Telephone Interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Morgau</td>
<td>McNair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>47.7</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal/NP</td>
<td>45.0</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Democrat</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Interviews conducted by AGB/McNair Anderson  
+Spectrum is a subsidiary of AGB/McNair Anderson

A Unique Election

Four unique features of the 1984 election were:

1. A first-ever TV debate between an Australian Prime Minister and a Leader of the Opposition took place on the Monday evening before the Saturday election.

2. For the first time ever, TV and radio commentaries on the election were allowed on the Thursday and Friday before the election. (Until then, by law, there had been a 48 hour ban on any radio or television discussions. Print media was not included in the ban).
3. For the first time ever, people could vote a Party’s Senate ticket simply by making only one mark, instead of having to number their preferences for all candidates, which had always resulted in an informal vote of about 7% for the Senate, and

4. A new one-plank party, the Nuclear Disarmament Party (NDP), sprang up during the election campaign and contested all Senate seats in all States.

On the Wednesday night before the election (i.e. two nights after the TV debate) the Morgan Gallup Poll telephoned 1,184 electors in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. It was found that the rating for the leader of the Opposition had jumped in 4 days by 17 points, from 37% to 54% (an increase of 17%!), but without any increase in the intended vote of 40% for the Liberal and National Party coalition (L-NP) for the House of Representatives.

Yet, three days later (after two days of first-time-ever TV and radio commentaries) the L-NP vote was 45%. That was about 5% higher than the 40% both the Morgan Gallup Poll and the foreign-controlled AGP/McAin Anderson Poll had found a week earlier.

Large Informal Vote for House of Representatives

The facility to vote a Party’s Senate ticket by making only one mark (3rd feature above) cut the informal vote for the Senate to 5.4%. That probably contributed to the accuracy of the Senate prediction by the Morgan Gallup Poll. (See Table 4).

However, a mistaken belief by some electors that one mark would also suffice for the House of Representatives, was probably one of the reasons for an increase in the informal vote for the House to 6.7%, compared with an average of only 2% at the preceding four elections.

A new party, the Nuclear Disarmament Party (NDP), which concentrated on the Senate, did not issue how-to-vote cards for the House of Representatives, except in four electorates where they had candidates. In those four electorates, the informal vote was 4.6% for both the House of Representatives and the Senate.

In the 10 seats with the highest ALP vote for the House of Representatives, 11% of votes were informal, whereas only 5% were informal in the 10 seats with the lowest ALP vote. This indicates that many of the informal votes were from people who normally would have voted ALP.

It seems, therefore, that of the 4.7% of informals in excess of the usual 2% about three-quarters were probably ALP supporters, i.e. about 3.5% ALP to 1.2% L-NP and others.

Applying those figures to the actual House of Representatives vote (ALP 47.7%, L-NP 45.0%, Australian Democrats 5.3% and Other 2.0%) the "intended" vote for the House of Representatives could be estimated as: ALP 49%, L-NP 44%, Australian Democrats 5%, Others 2%. That ALP figure of 49% is between the actual vote and the Morgan Gallup Poll's estimate, as in Cols. 1 and 2 of Table 5 above.

.../11
8.2 The 1987 Federal Election - Accurately Predicted by The 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 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 night before the election and released on Eyewitness News) with other polls.

In a press release we 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 6: 1987 Federal election - Last published pre-election surveys

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1984 election result</th>
<th>1987 election result</th>
<th>Morgan Gallup</th>
<th>Newspoll</th>
<th>AGB/McNair Anderson</th>
<th>SMH/Age Saulwick</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>47.6</td>
<td>45.8</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>48.5</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lib/National</td>
<td>45.0</td>
<td>46.1</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aust Democrats</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALP lead</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>-0.3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>.6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Marginal seats

Although the ALP received slightly fewer votes than the L-NP (.3%) they polled relatively better in the marginal seats and in Queensland. A special Morgan Gallup Poll conducted in marginal seats the week before the election showed the ALP lead to be greater in the marginal seats than other seats. The marginal seat poll also showed the ALP vote would drop significantly more in the strong ALP seats than other seats.

As previously mentioned (See Page 7) the Morgan Gallup Poll election day poll, conducted for ABC TV, was accurate in showing the ALP vote would decline. That poll showed the same ALP lead as the final telephone Morgan Gallup Poll.

.../12
8.3 The 1988 NSW State Election

On the morning of the 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.

The following table compares the Morgan Gallup Polls leading up to the election with the March 1984 State election result and the March 1988 election result.

Table 7: 1988 NSW State Election – Morgan Gallup Polls

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election result</th>
<th>Morgan Gallup Polls</th>
<th>Election result</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March '84</td>
<td>March '88</td>
<td>March '88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>49.4</td>
<td>39.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L-NP</td>
<td>42.6</td>
<td>49.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aust. Dem.</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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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 Loxley, 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 electorate’s minds the long running debate on corruption and dishonest Government in NSW.

As mentioned, during the last week of the NSW 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 the issue of the cemetery vote, the election would have been extremely close.

Predicting an election today is very different from predicting an election in the 1940’s before the founding of the DLP. Problems in the 1950’s and 1960’s were associated with understimating the DLP vote. Today TV and radio commentary up until election day, as well as 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.

References:

Surveys by The Morgan Gallup Poll on Australian Federal Elections 1946-84 - Roy Morgan, Gary Morgan and Michele Levine. Published ESOMAR/WAPOR Congress 1985