

# **The Mood of the Electorate and the Federal Election (4 days after the bombing of the Australian Embassy in Jakarta)**

**Geelong Business Club  
Victoria, Australia  
September 13, 2004**

**Presented by  
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Last Thursday September 9, 2004, the ALP was set to win the coming election. With support for the ALP at 56% to the L-NP's 44% on a two-party preferred basis, it was hard to see that the L-NP could regain the ground needed to be re-elected for a fourth term. It looked very much like early 2001.

On Budget night May 2001, support for the L-NP Government was at a record low, Consumer Confidence was low, real unemployment was high, the Australian dollar was low, and the economy was stalled on the GST. Gary Morgan and I presented a paper to CEDA and PricewaterhouseCoopers. The paper was, in hindsight, prophetically entitled, "[\*Only Real Leadership Or A Crisis Can Save The L-NP Coalition\*](#)"<sup>2</sup>.

Of course history tells us that we did indeed have a crisis. After the Budget, in which the unpopular GST was introduced, we saw:

- Tampa - The asylum seeker incident in August 2001
- September 11, 2001 - The terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre in New York
- Ansett collapse
- 'Children Overboard' claims - Reports that asylum seekers were setting their boats alight and throwing their children overboard, followed by questions on the accuracy of the reports. Navy admission that no children had gone overboard until the boat had sunk (2 days before the election) and questions over whether and when the Government had known.

In November 2001, the L-NP was re-elected to Government.

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<sup>2</sup> "[Only Real Leadership Or A Crisis Can Save The L-NP Coalition](http://www.roymorgan.com/news/papers/2001/20010501/)" May 23, 2001  
<http://www.roymorgan.com/news/papers/2001/20010501/>

If the 2004 Federal Election had been held on September 3, 2004, the ALP would have won. But of course it wasn't. On September 9, 2004 the Australian Embassy in Jakarta Indonesia was bombed.

In the [Morgan Poll published September 11, 2004](#)<sup>3</sup> Gary Morgan said:

*"Until the bomb in Jakarta the ALP looked set to win the Federal election."*

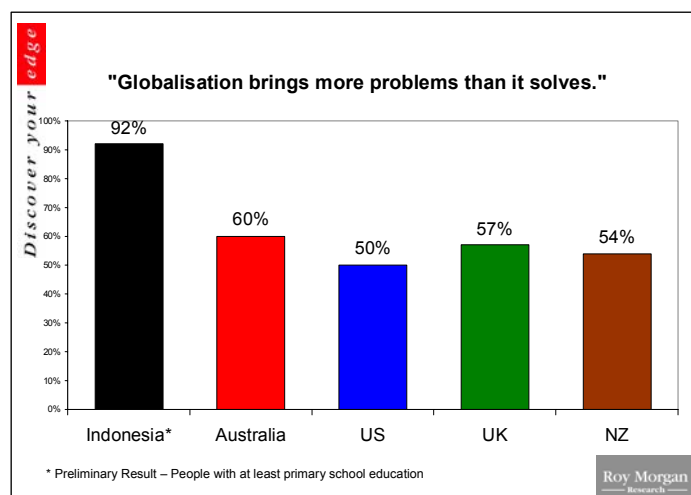
*"The bomb in Jakarta has essentially reset the clock. The race will start again from a different starting point after September 11."*

The election is a whole campaign away, and it's too early to do more than guess how the next four weeks will be played out. There will be no lack of people doing just that over the next days and weeks, but that's not what I'm here to do.

Today I would like to talk about the "*Mood of the Electorate*", and how we measure or research it; a little about polls – and what they can and cannot measure; and then look at what the mood of the electorate in conjunction with the polls might mean for the coming election – or at least how the electorate might approach the coming election.

But first, I'd like to share with you some of our latest Roy Morgan International research findings – which include our first Indonesian results.

"*Globalisation brings more problems than it solves*" is a fairly widely held view – even in the US. The latest [Roy Morgan International research](#)<sup>4</sup> shows that a majority of Australians (60%) believe "*Globalisation brings more problems than it solves*", as do 57% in the UK, 54% in New Zealand and 50% in the US. But nothing prepared us for the overwhelming response from Indonesia – 92% of Indonesians believe "*Globalisation brings more problems than it solves*."



<sup>3</sup> "ALP Well Ahead A Week Before Jakarta Bomb" Morgan Poll 3777, September 11, 2004 <http://www.roymorgan.com/news/polls/2004/3777/>

<sup>4</sup> Roy Morgan International research is part of the continuous Roy Morgan Single Source Survey.

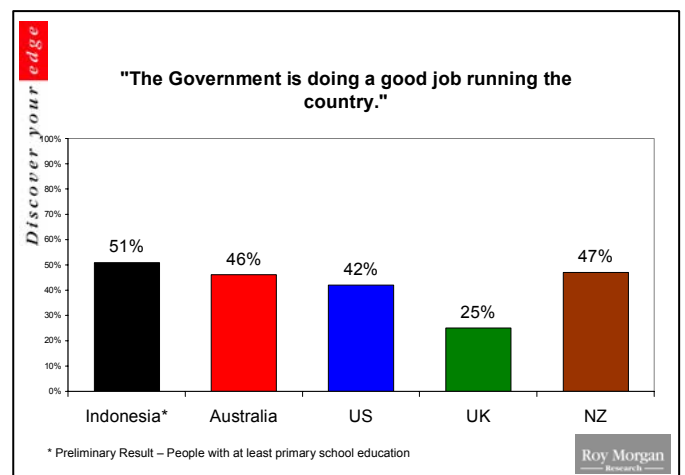
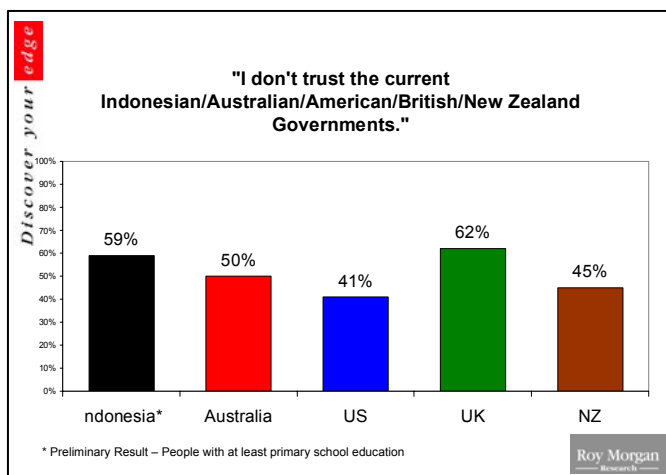
The data reported in this paper is based on surveying cross-sections of the population aged 14 years and over:

- In Australia: 27,659 interviews October 2003 - March 2004
- In USA: 2,499 interviews October 2003 – February 2004
- In UK: 1,570 interviews October 2003 – February 2004
- In NZ: 4,958 interviews October 2003 – February 2004
- In Indonesia: 1,973 interviews March 2004 – May 2004

## What about the Government?

The question of “Trust” has been a topical one, to say the least, in recent times.

The net result, 50% of Australians “*don’t trust the current Australian Government*”. 41% of Americans “*don’t trust the current US Government*”, 45% of New Zealanders don’t trust their Government, and a large 62% in the UK do not trust their Government. This UK figure represents a 50% increase in distrust since 2001 – when only 41% said they didn’t trust the Government. 59% of Indonesians don’t trust their Government.



On the question of whether the Government is doing a good job running the country, Indonesia was the only country where majority approval was recorded (51%). Closest is NZ where 47% consider their Government is doing a good job, followed by Australians at 46%, and the US at 42%. In the UK only one-in-four, or 25% now consider their Government to be doing a good job running the country (this is down from 42% in 2001).

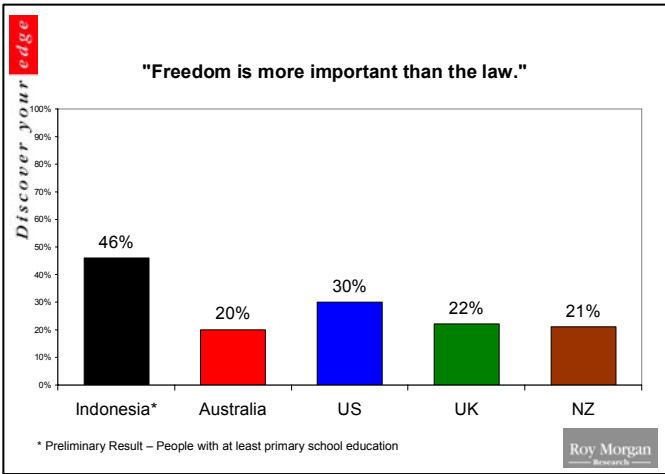
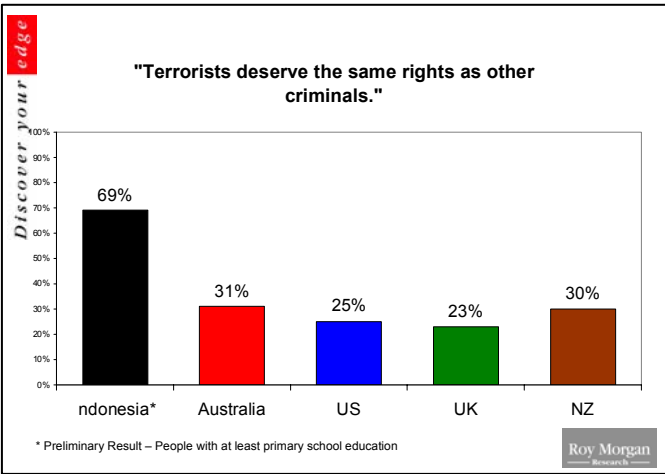
Generally, movements in this question relate to the “economic state” of the country – so the Government is considered to be doing a good job when the economic indicators are positive.

Clearly in the UK, the trust issue for Prime Minister Tony Blair is flowing over into the broader perception about the way the country is being run.

We now look at a series of questions that begin to capture the response of people in these countries to the recent terrorism and international unrest. These findings are ‘chilling’ within the context of the paper presented by Malcolm Fraser, Australia’s former Prime Minister, on the “[Conflict between the Rule of Law and National Security](#)”<sup>5</sup> in his Keynote Address, May 7, 2004, at the Future Summit 2004, Creating A Better World.

<sup>5</sup> Malcolm Fraser’s paper “Conflict between the Rule of Law and National Security”  
<http://www.roymorgan.com/resources/pdf/papers/20040503.pdf>

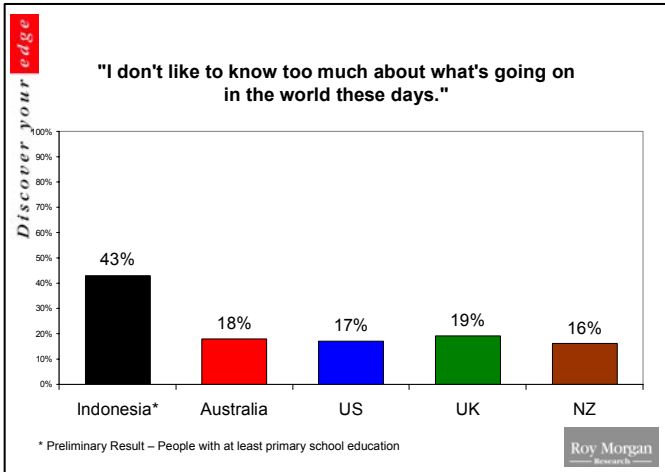
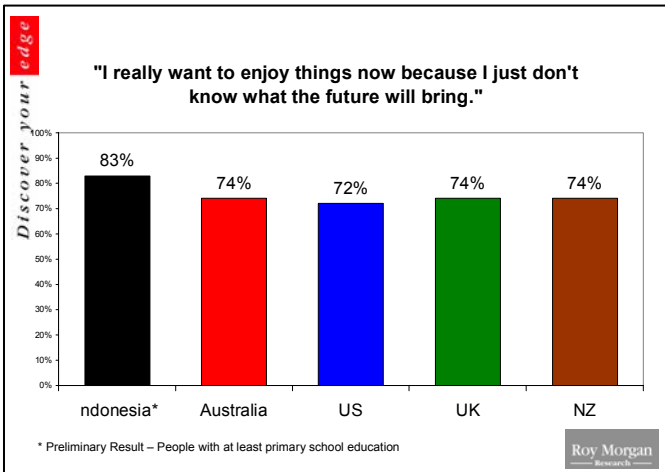
Less than one-in-three people in any of the four Western countries believe “terrorists deserve the same rights as other criminals”. Australia (31%) and New Zealand (30%) are more likely to hold the view than those in the US (25%) or UK (23%). In Indonesia a clear majority (69%) believe “Terrorists deserve the same rights as other criminals” – a real worry!



While fewer than one-in-three people from Western countries also support the view that “freedom is more important than the law”, the US stands out on this issue – with 30% holding the view compared to around 20% in the other countries. Freedom is, of course, a core American value and belief. In Indonesia almost half (46%) consider freedom to be more important than the law – again, a real worry!

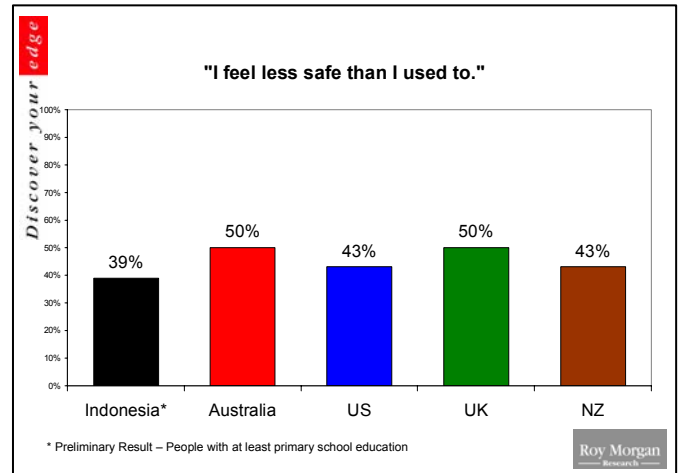
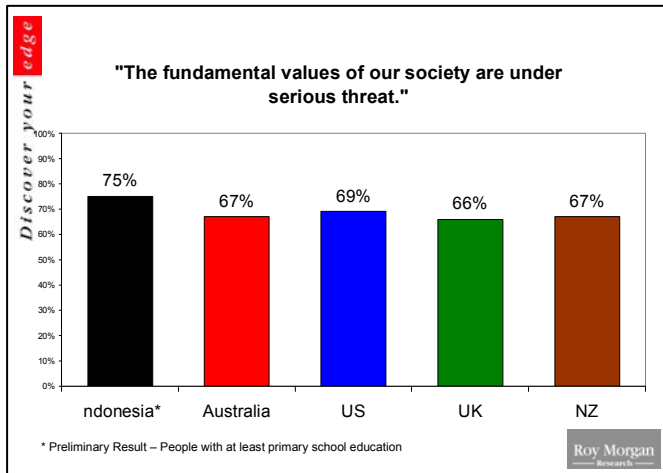
There was fairly remarkable consistency across the five countries in the next three related issues.

Over 70% in all countries agreed “I really want to enjoy things now because I just don’t know what the future will bring”.

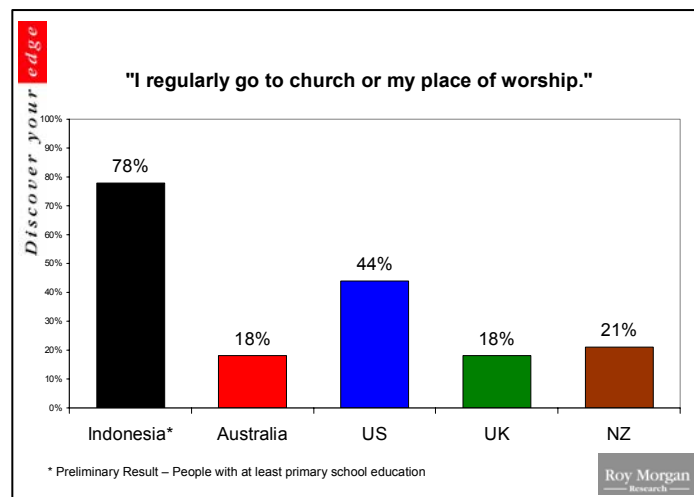


On the question designed to pick up a sense of withdrawal “I don’t like to know too much about what’s going on in the world these days”, less than 20% in all countries agreed – the exception being Indonesia where 43% did not want to know too much.

A two-third majority in all countries agree “*the fundamental values of our society are under serious threat*”, Indonesia topping the list with 75% of that view. Around half the populations in all countries claim to feel less safe than they used to. In Australia and the UK, 50% claim to feel less safe. In the US and NZ the figure is somewhat lower at 43%. Indonesia is lowest with 39% feeling less safe – this result was before the Australian Embassy bombing in Jakarta.



Finally, when it comes to church going, Americans are way out in front of those from other Western countries – 44% of Americans “*regularly go to church or their place of worship*”. This is more than double Australia (18%), or UK (18%) and NZ (21%). But in Indonesia it’s another level – 78% regularly go to their place of worship.



### So what is the “mood” of the Australian electorate?

Only a year ago we described the Australian electorate as “just a little unplugged”. What we meant was that we were no longer really “plugged in” - linked into an understandable, reasonable, and predictable corporate reality - everything was not in good order with everything very much as it should be.

But nor were we completely “unplugged”, so we could step back and understand what was going on - where it all fitted, and have a rational well-considered view.

As a nation Australia had seen, in a very short space of time, so many things unravel:

- Some like the Ansett, HIH, and Enron corporate collapses threatened our economic stability.
- Some like Tampa, and September 11 threatened our peace and national security and created heightened levels of uncertainty and fear.
- Some like the scandal associated with the ‘Children Overboard’ issue and the Governor General being forced to resign, threatened our confidence in some of the most fundamental institutions.

All in all we emerged with our sense that we could believe what we hear at a very low ebb.

We in Australia were, in our view, "just a little unplugged".

None of these things have changed. A special Global Study conducted for the [World Economic Forum](#)<sup>6</sup> by Roy Morgan International and our international affiliate, Gallup International, among almost 43,000 people in 51 countries found very real safety concerns among people everywhere, with 75% of Australians and 57% of all people holding the belief that their country is now less safe than it was ten years ago.

We have seen more terrorist attacks and more lies (60% of Australian electors believe Mr Howard deliberately misled the Australian public on the “[Children Overboard](#)” issue<sup>7</sup> before the 2001 Federal election). No weapons of mass destruction were ever found. We’ve seen major corporations like Australia’s largest bank, the NAB, struggle with serious financial and corporate Governance issues.

Yet, we believe the mood has changed – it is as if the electorate has “plugged in” to the new reality – we are no longer surprised!

In Australia, [honesty and ethics of MPs has fallen to a 6 year low](#)<sup>8</sup>. Australians believe Federal Members of Parliament (MPs) standards of honesty and ethics have plummeted.

Now, only 9% of Australians regard Federal MPs as having “high” or “very high” standards of honesty and ethics, down 8% from 17% in December 2003. This is the lowest result recorded for Federal MPs since 1998.

State MPs also experienced a sharp decline, with 10% of Australians now rating State MPs as having “high” or “very high” honesty and ethical standards (down 7% from 17% in December 2003). This puts State MPs on par with Newspaper journalists (10%, down 2%), the lowest of the three media professions surveyed.

And Australians’ regard for the honesty and ethics of Police is down 7% to 57% - the lowest result since 1997.

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<sup>6</sup> “Global Survey Finds Ordinary People Feel 'Unsafe, Powerless and Gloomy' About the Future Security and Prosperity of the World” Morgan Poll 3704, January 23, 2004 <http://www.roymorgan.com/news/polls/2004/3704/>

<sup>7</sup> “60% Believe Howard Deliberately Misled the Australian Public on the Children Overboard Issue as Latham's Approval Rises and Image Soars” Morgan Poll 3771, August 20, 2004 <http://www.roymorgan.com/news/polls/2004/3771/>

<sup>8</sup> “86% Believe Newspaper Journalists are Biased as Media Honesty and Ethics Ratings Fall” Morgan Poll 3778, September 16, 2004 <http://www.roymorgan.com/news/polls/2004/3778/>

[The media are seen to be biased](#)<sup>9</sup>. Australians are very critical of the media, with 86% of Australians saying Newspaper journalists are often biased, 73% that Talkback radio announcers are often biased and 72% TV reporters and journalists. Talkback “giants” John Laws and Alan Jones topped the list, mentioned by 28.5% and 26% of Australians respectively.

Newspaper journalists were considered by 63% of Australians to often get facts wrong, while ‘more than half’ of Australians said Talkback radio announcers (55%) and TV reporters and journalists (54%) often get facts wrong.

We are no longer surprised!

### **So how do we (Roy Morgan Research) know?**

In general if you want to know how people think or feel about something, the best way to find out is to ask them. By asking a reasonably large representative sample of people a series of well-constructed questions, we can begin to get an understanding of the mood of the people – and even measure the key dimensions.

Some of the most enlightening research we have done of late comes from asking people about their [hopes and fears if each party were elected](#)<sup>10</sup>, regardless of how they intend to vote.

When the Morgan Poll asked: “*What, if anything worries you about the Liberal Party being re-elected at the Federal election on October 9, 2004?*”, a major concern for the Howard Government, according to supporters of the Liberal Party, is that if elected for a fourth term, the Government may become arrogant and complacent.

*“Because they’ve been in Government for so long they might become complacent.”*

*“They have been there for some time, they may be getting tired.”*

The same view was expressed by some ALP supporters.

*“Too much power — they may become complacent in their fourth term.”*

*“I just think they have become a bit arrogant and it’s time for a bit of a change.”*

And they saw the ALP as a better alternative.

*“A change of Government with new blood and fresh ideas would be good.”*

Of greater concern to supporters of the ALP, however, was the Howard Government’s strong association with the United States in a time of great global unrest, and its decision to involve Australia in the War in Iraq.

*“I am terrified that the Liberals will retain power and we will come more under the influence of the USA.”*

*“I feel that their continued involvement with the USA is damaging to our security and wellbeing.”*

*“They have sold us out to America. The War in Iraq was a sham.”*

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<sup>9</sup> “86% Believe Newspaper Journalists are Biased as Media Honesty and Ethics Ratings Fall” Morgan Poll 3778, September 16, 2004 <http://www.roymorgan.com/news/polls/2004/3778/>

<sup>10</sup> “Sound Economic Management, Experience and Honesty Seen as Top Issues for Impending Federal Election” Morgan Poll 3775, September 7, 2004 <http://www.roymorgan.com/news/polls/2004/3775/>

And importantly, they believe the ALP would do things differently and better.

*“(Under Labor) we wouldn’t be so focused on war, we’d be looking at bringing troops back and making us a safer country. I’d feel less open to attack.”*

*“Labor don’t seem as supportive of our involvement in the war and I would hope there would be some change there.”*

*“Labor’s viewpoints are better than the Liberals’ viewpoints about Iraq.”*

*“I believe they will take more control of what is happening in Iraq. They will stand up to the Americans and make better deals with the USA instead of accepting them unquestioningly as a world power.”*

Few Liberal supporters expressed concern over these issues, but those who were concerned made comments such as:

*“I don’t approve of the war and don’t know what will happen in the future because of the war.”*

*“Our blind co-operation with the US and our involvement in Iraq — it just seems like a war that’s going to go on for many years and we’re going to spend millions and millions helping Iraq find its feet when we have hospitals that need to be looked after.”*

*“They need to separate themselves from the US.”*

Although very few Liberal supporters mentioned the allegations of Mr Howard’s untruthfulness over various issues, for ALP supporters, it was a sore point.

*“I feel as though Australia will continue to be misled in political and international issues.”*

*“I think it’s been shown how they’re telling lies on so many issues — the reasons we went to Iraq, and the ‘Children Overboard’ issue. We couldn’t trust him in the past, so why trust him now?”*

*“I don’t think Howard is credible any more. I think it’s time for a change after eight years.*

*“I don’t trust the Prime Minister.”*

And the ALP and Mark Latham were seen to be a better, honest alternative.

*“So we can get somebody who tells the truth up there.”*

*“The Government has a record of diverging from the truth and concealing the truth. The Liberal attitudes to refugees and asylum seekers are cruel.”*

*“Seems Mark Latham is honest. John Howard has got a bit dishonest.”*

Some ALP supporters raised concerns in relation to what the Howard Government may do with health and education should it be returned to power as they perceived the Liberal Party’s policies to favour high income earners.

*“People are dying because of lack of funds — the general hospital system should be top priority.”*

*“Education will keep going in a downward spiral, health is ignored as it always is. It will be three more years of the same.”*

*“I’m worried about children’s education, worried for Medicare.”*



The ALP was seen by supporters of both parties as delivering better outcomes for education, Medicare and hospitals.

*“Australia needs more emphasis on health and social responsibility.”*

*“Basically their policies on public schooling and health issues.”*

*“I think they will deliver a better outcome for public education. Health is another important issue, Howard hasn't done the right thing by Medicare and private health cover.”*

*“They seem more interested in education and health.”*

Others were concerned that the gap between the rich and poor would increase under a returned Liberal Government.

*“I feel that they are moving too far to the right. I feel that they are only for the ‘haves’ rather than the ‘have nots’.”*

*“They're not for the working class, too much for the ‘big money’ people.”*

A concern held by supporters of both parties was that Mr Howard would resign shortly into a new term, leaving Mr Costello to take over as Prime Minister.

*“Mr Howard is going to be in for a short time before Mr Costello takes over.”*

*“Howard will be retiring soon, lack of future leadership.”*

*“We don't know for sure if Howard is going to be elected to a full term or if Mr Costello is going to replace him, when people voted for Howard.”*

This sentiment was echoed by some Liberal supporters, with comments including:

*“Howard may not continue as leader – don't like Costello.”*

*“I wouldn't like to see Peter Costello getting into control shortly after the election.”*

*“Hope Howard does not retire.”*

**The Liberal Government's strength** is its economic record. When asked: *“For what reasons would you like the Liberal Party to win the Federal election on October 9, 2004?”* a large number of Liberal and some ALP supporters said proven economic management.

*“Economic management, fostering of small business.*

*“For the economy of the country, because they handle it better than Labor does and it's very important.”*

*“Sound financial management we can be sure of.”*

*“Financially, economically the country is stronger.”*

When asked *“What, if anything, worries you about Labor being elected at the Federal election on October 9, 2004?”* a number of ALP and Liberal supporters alike cited their previous record in Government, particularly in relation to economic management, and their perceived inexperience, particularly in light of Mr Latham's relatively short time as Opposition Leader.

In relation to Labor's fiscal track record, ALP supporters made comments such as:

*“They are an unknown quantity, economic management might be a problem.”*

*“Their spending, they spend too much which usually means higher taxes.”*

*“Lack of financial expertise.”*

*“The economy might not be as good as it has been lately.”*

Liberal supporters were more scathing in their criticism of Labor's economic track record, and made comments such as:

*"Economically the country will go back 20 years."*

*"Economy would go into disarray."*

*"I think they'll do the same as they've always done – get us into much debt and make it harder for everybody."*

*"No one could afford to pay their mortgage under Labor because home mortgage interest rates peaked at 17%."*

Possible interest rate rises were also of concern to Liberal supporters, who made comments such as:

*"Interest rates will go up."*

*"Terrified of economic problems, like rising interest rates."*

Mr Latham's approach appears to be a big question mark for both Liberal and Labor supporters. Liberal comments included:

*"I don't believe in the leader. He is not the type of person to lead Australia. Does he have any relationship with the countries we are aligned with?"*

*"I don't think Mark Latham has the character for politics."*

*"Not confident about Latham himself."*

*"Mark Latham is such a fool."*

*"Mark Latham is a loose cannon."*

Some ALP supporters, too, questioned Mr Latham's style and leadership abilities, and made comments such as:

*"I'm worried Latham may shoot his mouth off."*

*"I don't think Mark Latham is a leader, he does not have leadership qualities."*

*"Mark Latham's ability to govern — not sure if he has the capacity."*

*"Latham's immaturity."*

Other ALP supporters were more concerned that a Latham Government would be too inexperienced to adequately run the country.

*"They haven't been in Government for some time and as a result their lack of experience."*

*"Don't know if they have it — they might do more damage. They're out of practice leading the country."*

Foreign affairs and international relations were an area of concern to Liberal voters when considering the possibility of a Labor Government being elected.

*"I think we have to have respect from other nations and see that we don't antagonise people who support the US and then supported us. I look at the present conflict in Iraq and once we've committed ourselves I think we have to see it through."*

*"Concerned about a harmed relationship with the US."*

The potential influence of Trade Unions was another issue of concern.

*"Labor is a Party that caters to unions and is run by unions."*

*"Influence of the unions on the Labor Party, specifically in regards to industrial relations."*

*"There is potential for volatile union involvement."*

Labor's policies were seen as too vague by Liberal supporters.

*"Their policies are not really clear."*

*"No policies at present."*

*"No policy in how to deal with the US."*

ALP supporters feared the policies would simply be old policies, re-hashed.

*"Labor lacks a clear policy distinction from the Liberal Party."*

*"They will continue the same old policies they were doing for the last 10 years or so."*

The final verdict on the Australian Federal election will be known on October 9. It remains to be seen if the Opposition can do enough in the remaining weeks of campaigning to convince the electorate that it, too, can provide stable leadership and appropriately manage the country's finances to ensure Australia's financial security in the long term.

### **So what about the polls?**

Let me begin by saying, the very best any poll can do is measure accurately how the electorate feels or intends to vote if an election were being held on the day the poll was taken.

We can interpret or interpolate from past experience what might happen "all things being equal", but no-one can predict what will happen in the future.

Last Thursday, September 9, 2004, our considered view was that the ALP was set to win the coming election – barring a crisis. What is the likelihood that all things will be equal from now until October 9?

Having made the point that polls cannot predict elections some polls do a better job than others of measuring the electorate at the time they are taken.

The best poll is the one taken in person, face-to-face, with a 'secret ballot' on the day. And we work back from that.

Telephone polls have been shown to be both biased 'away from' the less affluent in society and biased 'towards' the political party people think will win the election, and who is getting the best media coverage at the time. (This is 'social desirability bias' in social science terms.) Telephone polls are also more volatile – we believe because they evoke less 'considered' responses from people on weekday evenings than do face-to-face questionnaire techniques on the weekend (recall in Australia the election is always held on Saturday).

Approximately twice as many people refuse or decline to be interviewed on the telephone than face-to-face – a significant factor in obtaining an accurate sample.

A very interesting review of the British Polls and why the telephone polls get elections wrong has recently been published by [Anthony Wells](http://anthonywells.typepad.com/anthony_wells/2004/09/anthony_wells_g.html)<sup>11</sup>. He explains how the pollsters are trying to correct the problems by "weighting" to the "past vote". Unfortunately, when you are dealing with human beings, questions like "*How did you vote at the last election?*" are just as subject to 'social desirability bias' as the question on voting intention. Also see Attachment 1 which is Gary Morgan's note September 13, 2004, to Anthony Wells on his thoughts on his paper.

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<sup>11</sup> Anthony Wells' Guide to Opinion Polls (UK) Published September 01, 2004  
[http://anthonywells.typepad.com/anthony\\_wells/2004/09/anthony\\_wells\\_g.html](http://anthonywells.typepad.com/anthony_wells/2004/09/anthony_wells_g.html)

Attachment 2 shows Morgan Poll “voting intention” results from face-to-face interviews and telephone interviews taken at about the same time. The results are very different – the past vote results are also different with face-to-face being much closer to the actual vote in 2001.

Face-to-face interviewing (especially with a ‘secret ballot’) obtains the closest measure of voting intention today. This is the gold standard. **BUT** in the last week of the election, it is not possible to track changes in voting intention using face-to-face interviewing – so we all are thrown back to the indicative rollercoaster of telephone interviewing and interpolation – and maybe some fancy “correction” factors.

And remember, around 22% of people make up their mind how they will vote in the booth!

Having said we can only measure more or less accurately what the electorate is thinking today, we can look at trends. Some interesting trends that emerge that help us to interpret our Morgan Polls include the relationship between Consumer Confidence and support for the Party in Government. Consumer Confidence is typically correlated with support for the political party in Government (Consumer Confidence below 100 typically foreshadows a change of Government) – today, [Consumer Confidence](#)<sup>12</sup> is at an all time high in both Australia and [the US](#)<sup>13</sup>.

However, the last few years since the Tampa asylum seeker incident in August 2001 and World Trade Centre terrorist attack September 11, 2001, have been anything, but “typical”. The electorate’s support for the Howard Government has been driven less by confidence in the economy, and the L-NP’s economic management, than the delicate balance between international fear and domestic concerns.

The trend over the last few years has shown clearly that the L-NP gains support when international issues and concerns over national security are top of mind for the Australian electorate. As these issues move into the background, and more domestic issues come to the fore, the ALP gains support.

I mentioned earlier that it is unlikely that “all things will be equal” over the next four weeks. That is not just because we seem to live in a world of surprises, but even more importantly, that election campaigns are run by powerful well-oiled political machines today.

Roy Morgan, who founded public opinion polls in Australia in 1941, always believed that people’s views matter, and that measuring public opinion was extremely important.

Just before he 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.

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<sup>12</sup> “Slight Fall in Consumer Confidence in September” Morgan Poll Article No. 339, September 11, 2004 <http://www.roymorgan.com/news/polls/2004/339/>

<sup>13</sup> “Convention Boosts Confidence – at least among Republicans” ABC News/Money Magazine Consumer Index – September 5, 2004 <http://www.roymorgan.com/resources/pdf/papers/m0905.pdf>

As an example, a Morgan Poll analysis, published in the [May, 2004 New Observer](#)<sup>14</sup>, of the electorate since Mark Latham became Leader of the ALP showed clearly that the overall swing to the ALP (and thus away from the L-NP) had been most dramatic among small business owners, families with children (particularly those with two or three children) and those with personal incomes over \$60,000 per annum.

Against this electoral backdrop, the 2004 Federal Budget must be seen as perfectly targeted – small business had much of the administrative pain of the GST removed, those with children received clear benefits, and those on higher incomes received tax cuts. There could be no doubt about the targets of the Budget.

The Morgan Poll conducted the [night after the 2004 Federal Budget](#)<sup>15</sup> showed the Budget was generally well received by the Australian electorate. More electors (27%) considered it a good Budget than a bad Budget (12%). It positively reversed the electorate's view of Mr Howard on the critical issues of "minimising the tax you pay", and being "better at looking after your family's needs"; and the electorate recorded a large swing back to the L-NP (L-NP 52%, ALP 48%). If an election had been held the day after the Budget, the L-NP would have won.

Although the many telephone polls showed differing responses to the Budget, when the more stable face-to-face Morgan Poll was conducted on the [weekend after the Budget](#)<sup>16</sup>, Voting Intention for the L-NP was recorded as 47.5% (up 1% on a two-party preferred basis since before the Budget) and the ALP at 52.5% (down 1%).

It must be noted that the 2004 Budget did not occur in isolation or in a socio-political vacuum. This was the same period as the electorate witnessed the videotaped beheading of the American civilian, Nick Berg, by Iraqi terrorists; the increase in petrol prices to over a dollar; and the drop in the Australian dollar to below US70c. So against this back drop an L-NP increase suggests the Budget did a fair amount of 'electoral work' for the L-NP.

On balance as we look at what might happen in the next four weeks, the electorate will be balancing the concerns they have about the L-NP against the concerns they have about the ALP.

If, as is always said, a week is a long time in politics, both contenders for the prize of Governing Australia have plenty of time for the electorate to settle on its final view. And, of course, there are new angles emerging every day, which the electorate will consider, digest, and take into account in some way in their final vote.

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<sup>14</sup> "What Difference a Leader: When must the Regime change?" May 01, 2004

<http://www.roymorgan.com/news/papers/2004/20040502/>

<sup>15</sup> "2004 Federal Budget Improves Mr Howard's Image And L-NP Support" Morgan Poll 3740, May 13, 2004

<http://www.roymorgan.com/news/polls/2004/3740/>

<sup>16</sup> "ALP Down In Primary Support But Retains Lead" Morgan Poll 3742 May 22, 2004

<http://www.roymorgan.com/news/polls/2004/3742/>

As Gary Morgan said in the [September 11, 2004 Morgan Poll](#)<sup>17</sup>:

*“The 2004 Federal election result will be decided on the issues of economic management, taxation, health, education and unemployment (including hidden unemployment).*

*“The ‘sleepers’ are Iraq — whether Australians are killed or taken hostage, industrial relations, Labor controlling all State Parliaments and the Federal Parliament, terrorism, how long Howard stays, and whether electors think it is ‘time for a change’.”*

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<sup>17</sup> “ALP Well Ahead A Week Before Jakarta Bomb” Morgan Poll 3777 September 11, 2004  
<http://www.roymorgan.com/news/polls/2004/3777/>

To: Anthony Wells  
From: Gary Morgan  
Date: September 13, 2004  
Sent to Anthony Well's web site  
[http://anthonywells.typepad.com/anthony\\_wells/2004/09/anthony\\_wells\\_g.html](http://anthonywells.typepad.com/anthony_wells/2004/09/anthony_wells_g.html)

Dear Anthony Wells,

Congratulations on a 'top' paper. It agrees with what we have been saying about telephone polls on voting intention for nearly 30 years. They can be very wrong! They are biased toward the party who gets the best publicity, so in Australia this week the L-NP will have a big lead- courtesy of Nielsen (Fairfax) and Newpoll (News/Murdoch) - a joke but the media like it!

All pollsters who are honest know telephone polls on voting intention have this error! Some weight by past vote which is naïve.

In Australia we conduct both face-to-face and telephone polls regularly on voting intention. We are the only polling company in Australia who conduct face-to-face political polls. In the US, UK and NZ we do telephone and self administered polls on voting intention. The telephone [Morgan Poll before the 2001 UK election](#) was the most accurate poll!

Our polls in the US, UK and NZ are part of Roy Morgan Single Source which is described on our web site. We pay or give gifts to respondents to complete the questionnaires. You didn't discuss voting intention by self administered surveys. They have different accuracy problems than internet polls- which we do but not for voting intention.

For YouGov to weight by the UK National Readership Survey results shows they do not understand readership methods and how the results vary by survey method. Many UK readership estimates are inflated and wrong. Read our papers on the front page of our web site, [www.roymorgan.com](http://www.roymorgan.com) .

I worked for UK Gallup in 1964. We knew then their 'quota' sample polls were wrong! Your paper covers this point well. In Australia Roy Morgan (my father) started using probability sampling in 1949. We have many papers on the different polling methods and their accuracy. Using a 'secret' ballot is the only really accurate method - people do, however, change their minds!

There is no doubt that Gallup was wrong in 1948 due to using 'quota' sampling. My father prepared a paper on this for Dr Gallup when he worked with him before the 1948 US Presidential election!

I was Dr Gallup's assistant for 5 months before the 1964 US Presidential election. Paul Perry then looked after the sampling and other technical issues. How to allocate the 'undecided' vote was a big issue. Paul is still alive and well, he lives in Princeton.

Unfortunately for pollsters some electors change their minds when they walk into the booth to vote. Publicity, advertising and news on Election Day can all make people change their minds and vote differently - electors are allowed to, although some media believe they are not!

We have put a link to your paper from our web site, [www.roymorgan.com](http://www.roymorgan.com) . Hopefully some of the media will study your paper and realise the problems telephone polls have measuring voting intention!

Regards  
Gary Morgan

	Nov 10, 2001 Federal Election Result %	Face-to-Face Morgan Poll Aug 28/29 Sep 4/5 2004 <sup>18</sup> %	Telephone Morgan Poll Sept 9/10 2004 %
<b><u>Two Party</u></b>			
L-NP	51	44	53.5
ALP	49	56	46.5
<b><u>Think will win</u></b>			
L-NP	52*	47.5	62
ALP	34	36.5	21.5
Can't Say	14	16	16.5
<i>* Nov 3/4 2001</i>			
<b><u>Past-Vote (2001 Federal Election)</u></b>			
Liberal	37.4	36	43
National	5.6	2	3
L-NP	43	38	46
ALP	37.8	36	29.5
Other	19.2	14.5	14.5
Aust Dem	5.4	3	3.5
Greens	4.4	6.5	6.5
One Nation	4.3	1.5	2.5
Other	5.1	3.5	2
Didn't vote		6	4.5
Can't Say/Refusal		5.5	5.5
	100	100	100

<sup>18</sup> "ALP Well Ahead A Week Before Jakarta Bomb" Morgan Poll Finding No. 3777, September 11, 2004  
<http://www.roymorgan.com/news/polls/2004/3777/>