The Essential Report

25 February 2019

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Date:	25/02/2019
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Data Supplied by:	qualtrics

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About this poll

This report summarises the results of a weekly omnibus conducted by Essential Research with data provided by Qualtrics. The survey was conducted online from 20th February 2019 to 25th February 2019 and is based on 1,085 respondents.

Aside from the standard question on voting intention, this week's report includes questions on tax policy, the Medivac transfer bill, and importance of issues.

The methodology used to carry out this research is described in the appendix on page 17.

Note that due to rounding, not all tables necessarily total 100% and subtotals may also vary.

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Federal voting intention

Q   If a Federal Election was held today to which party will you probably give your first preference vote? If not sure, which party are you currently leaning toward? If don't know - Well which party are you currently leaning to?

	Total	2 Weeks ago 15/02/19	4 weeks ago 01/02/19	Election 02/07/16
Liberal	35%	31%	34%	
National	3%	3%	4%	
Total Liberal/National	**38%**	**34%**	**38%**	**42.0%**
Labor	**37%**	**38%**	**36%**	**34.7%**
Greens	9%	10%	10%	10.2%
Pauline Hanson's One Nation	6%	7%	7%	
Other/Independent	10%	11%	9%	13.1%
2 party preferred				
Liberal/National	**48%**	**45%**	**48%**	**50.4%**
Labor	**52%**	**55%**	**52%**	**49.6%**

NB. Respondents who select 'don't know' are not included in the results. The two-party preferred estimate is calculated by distributing the votes of the other parties according to their preferences at the 2016 election.

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Tax Policy

Q   From what you know, which of the following tax policies would you be more likely to support?

	Total	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+
Cut corporate tax and maintain tax concessions for investors and retirees	**27%**	32%	22%	20%	25%	35%
Close tax concession and loopholes and insert the money into schools, hospitals and other social programs	**53%**	51%	54%	57%	54%	48%
Unsure	**20%**	17%	24%	23%	21%	17%

Over half of respondents said they would be more likely to support the closing of tax concessions and loopholes, including a majority of males, females, and all age groups except for overs 55's (though 48% of this age group supported still supported the measure, as opposed to the 35% who supported maintain tax concession for investors and retirees.

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	Total	Labor	Liberal + National	Greens	NET: Other
Cut corporate tax and maintain tax concessions for investors and retirees	**27%**	15%	46%	17%	26%
Close tax concession and loopholes and insert the money into schools, hospitals and other social programs	**53%**	69%	35%	63%	54%
Unsure	**20%**	16%	19%	20%	20%

The closing of tax concessions and loopholes was very strongly preferred by Labor voters (69% prefer) and Greens voters (63% prefer), though more Coalition voters supported the alternative measures of cutting corporate tax and maintaining tax concessions, with only 35% supporting closing concession and loopholes.

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Better Party on Tax Policy

Q   Which party do you think would provide the better tax policies for each of the following groups if they were to win the next federal election in 2019?

	NET	Labor	Liberal/National Coalition	Unsure
First-time home buyers	+13	39%	26%	34%
Pensioners	+12	41%	29%	30%
Workers earning up to $150,000 per year	+11	40%	29%	31%
Workers earning more than $150,000 per year	-11	34%	45%	21%
Self-funded retirees	-21	23%	44%	33%
People who use family trusts	-24	20%	44%	36%
Property investors	-36	17%	53%	30%

The Labor party was seen as the best party for first home buyers (NET 13% more preferred), pensioners (12%), and workers earning up to $150k per year (11%). Conversely, the Coalition was seen as the best party for property investors (36% NET preferred), people who use family trusts (24%), self-funded retirees (21%), and workers earning more than $150k per year.

In all cases, between 21% and 36% said they were unsure who would be the best party, with uncertainty highest for who would be the best party for people who use family trusts (36% unsure) and first home buyers (34%).

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Tax Policy Statements

Q   To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding tax policies?

	Strongly agree + Somewhat agree	Strongly disagree + Somewhat disagree	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
The tax avoidance industry costs Australia $20B a year. Closing tax breaks and loopholes for corporations returns the money to the people through better funded public health and education and more infrastructure to cope with growth	59%	9%	30%	29%	18%	6%	3%	15%
The Labor Party plans to close tax loopholes for the wealthy	53%	11%	23%	30%	18%	7%	4%	20%
The Liberal Party's tax policies favour wealthier Australians	51%	15%	30%	21%	19%	10%	5%	15%
Labor's policy is not to increase taxes but to stop tax concessions for the wealthy	46%	17%	21%	25%	18%	10%	7%	19%
Taxes will always be higher under Labor	37%	23%	20%	17%	23%	14%	9%	17%
The Labor Party plans to increase taxes	35%	22%	17%	18%	23%	14%	8%	20%
I don't really understand tax policy – I take my advice from my accountant	28%	33%	9%	19%	28%	19%	14%	11%

The most widely agreed with statement addressed the tax avoidance industry and the benefits of curbing it (59% agree, while only 9% disagree). There was also majority support for the idea that the Labor Party plans to close tax loopholes for the wealthy (53% agree) and that the Liberal Party's tax policies favour wealthier Australians (51% agree).

See next page for more comments

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There is limited support for the idea that the Labor party is the higher taxing party - 35% agree that the Labor party plans to increase taxes (while 22% disagree and 43% are either neutral or don't know), while 37% agree that taxes will always be higher under Labor (while 23% disagree and 40% are either neutral or don't know).

Just over a quarter of respondents believe that they don't really understand tax policy (28% agree).

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Tax Policy Comparison

Q For each of the following pairs of tax policies, please select which one you would prefer was implemented by the Government?

Pair		Total	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+
1	Continue to allow property investors to claim negative gearing tax concessions	**32%**	33%	30%	24%	32%	38%
	Invest in new social and community housing to ease rental costs	**68%**	67%	70%	76%	68%	62%
2	Continue to pay tax credits to people with shares who do not pay any income tax	**39%**	44%	35%	32%	40%	46%
	Funding two days universal access to early learning for three and four year olds	**61%**	56%	65%	68%	60%	54%
3	Continue to allow people to split incomes through family trusts to minimise tax	**35%**	35%	37%	42%	35%	32%
	Increase the Newstart allowance	**65%**	65%	63%	58%	65%	68%

Overall, there was a strong preference for investing in new social and community housing. (68% prefer) over continuing the practice of negative gearing (32% prefer), a strong preference for funding universal access to early learning for three and four year olds (61% prefer) over tax credits for those who do not pay income tax (39%), and a strong preference for increasing the Newstart allowance (65%) over allowing the use of family trusts to minimise tax (35%).

In each case, support for the former measure was highest amount Labor voters, Greens voters, and those aged 18-34, and the support for the latter measure was highest among Liberal/National voters.

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Pair		Total	Labor	Liberal + National	Greens	NET: Other
1	Continue to allow property investors to claim negative gearing tax concessions	**32%**	21%	47%	20%	31%
	Invest in new social and community housing to ease rental costs	**68%**	79%	53%	80%	69%
2	Continue to pay tax credits to people with shares who do not pay any income tax	**39%**	29%	53%	26%	38%
	Funding two days universal access to early learning for three and four year olds	**61%**	71%	47%	74%	62%
3	Continue to allow people to split incomes through family trusts to minimise tax	**36%**	23%	49%	26%	36%
	Increase the Newstart allowance	**64%**	77%	51%	74%	64%

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Most Important Issues

Q   Which of the following issues are the most important for the Federal Government to address over the next 12 months?

	% Top three
Improve the health system	**31%**
Reduce utility bills	**31%**
Create jobs and reduce unemployment	**28%**
Increase housing affordability	**25%**
Limit the amount of migration to Australia	**24%**
Crack down on tax avoidance by big companies	**22%**
Improve wages and working conditions	**22%**
Protection of the environment	**16%**
Promote renewable energy	**15%**
Provide more money for education	**14%**
Maintain strong border protection	**14%**
Provide tax cuts	**12%**
Reduce the budget deficit	**12%**
Ensure the security of energy supply	**11%**
Combat domestic crime	**11%**
Combat international crime and terrorism	**6%**
Improve conditions for refugees and asylum seekers	**6%**

The most important issues were improving the health system (31% placed it in their top three), reducing utility bills (31%) and creating jobs and reducing unemployment (28%).

There was comparatively little importance placed in improving conditions for refugees and asylum seekers (6% placed it in their top three), and combating international crime and terrorism (6%).

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Medivac Bill

Q Last week, the Federal Parliament passed legislation to allow doctors, not politicians, to determine the appropriate medical treatment offered to people in offshore detention. This may include medical evacuation (Medivac) transfer to Australia if necessary.
Which of the following statements most closely aligns with your views of this legislation?

	Total	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+
This legislation does not go far enough to provide humane treatment for people in offshore detention	**15%**	16%	15%	21%	15%	12%
This legislation strikes a balance between strong borders and humane treatment for people in offshore detention	**38%**	41%	35%	43%	39%	32%
This legislation will weaken our borders and result in boats arriving in Australia as they have in the past	**30%**	31%	30%	16%	27%	47%
Unsure	**16%**	12%	20%	20%	20%	9%

A plurality of respondents said that the legislation struck the right balance between strong borders and humane treatment (38%), while 15% said it did not go far enough to protect people in offshore detention, and 30% said it will weaken our borders.

Those most likely to think the measure did not go far enough to provide humane treatment for those in offshore detention were Greens voters (45%), Labor voters (21%), and those aged 18-34 (21%).

Those most likely to think that the measure would weaken our borders were "Other voters" (48% agree), Coalition voters (47%) and those aged 55+ (47%).

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	Total	Labor	Liberal + National	Greens	NET: Other
This legislation does not go far enough to provide humane treatment for people in offshore detention	**15%**	21%	5%	45%	10%
This legislation strikes a balance between strong borders and humane treatment for people in offshore detention	**38%**	48%	35%	34%	30%
This legislation will weaken our borders and result in boats arriving in Australia as they have in the past	**30%**	14%	47%	8%	48%
Unsure	**16%**	16%	13%	13%	12%

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Medivac Bill and Vote

Q   To what extent will the issue of medical evacuations have on your voting intention at the next Federal Election?

	Total	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+
It will have a strong influence on my vote at the upcoming election	**27%**	30%	23%	24%	25%	30%
It will have a moderate influence on my vote at the upcoming election	**35%**	32%	38%	47%	35%	25%
It will have no influence on my vote at the upcoming election	**38%**	38%	39%	29%	40%	44%

Just over a quarter said that the Medivac bill will have a strong influence on their vote at the next Federal Election. Those most likely to say this were "Other voters" (36%), Liberal/National voters (32%), males (30%) and those aged 55+ (30%).

35% said it will have a moderate influence on their vote at the next election, with those most likely to say this being those aged 18-34 (47%), women (38%), and Greens voters (38%).

38% said it will have no influence on their vote at the next election, with those most likely to say this being those aged 55+ (44%), Labor voters (42%), and those aged 35-54 (40%).

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	Total	Labor	Liberal + National	Greens	NET: Other
It will have a strong influence on my vote at the upcoming election	**27%**	21%	32%	25%	36%
It will have a moderate influence on my vote at the upcoming election	**35%**	37%	34%	38%	33%
It will have no influence on my vote at the upcoming election	**38%**	42%	34%	37%	31%

Crosstabulation – Importance of Medivac bill by attitude to Medivac bill

	Strong influence	Moderate influence	No influence
This legislation does not go far enough to provide humane treatment for people in offshore detention	19%	17%	12%
This legislation strikes a balance between strong borders and humane treatment for people in offshore detention	20%	46%	44%
This legislation will weaken our borders and result in boats arriving in Australia as they have in the past	57%	24%	18%
Unsure	4%	14%	26%

Of those who said that the Medivac bill will have a strong influence in how they vote at the upcoming election, 57% were of the view that the legislation will weaken our borders, and 19% said it does not go far enough to provide humane treatment for those in offshore detention.

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Appendix: Methodology, margin of error and professional standards

The data gathered for this report is gathered from a fortnightly online omnibus conducted by Qualtrics.

Every two weeks, the team at Essential considers issues that are topical, and a series of questions are devised to put to the Australian public. Some questions are repeated regularly (such as political preference and leadership approval), while others are unique to each week and reflect current media and social issues.

The response rate varies each week, but usually delivers 1000+ interviews. In theory, with a sample of this size, there is 95 per cent certainty that the results are within 3 percentage points of what they would be if the entire population had been polled. However, this assumes random sampling, which, because of non-response and less than 100% population coverage cannot be achieved in practice. Furthermore, there are other possible sources of error in all polls including question wording and question order, interviewer bias (for telephone and face-to-face polls), response errors and weighting. The best guide to a poll's accuracy is to look at the record of the polling company - how have they performed at previous elections or other occasions where their estimates can be compared with known population figures. In the last poll before the 2016 election, the Essential Report estimates of first preference votes averaged less than 1% difference from the election results and the two-party preferred difference was only 0.1%.

The online omnibus is live from the Wednesday night and closed on the following Sunday. Incentives are offered to participants. Essential Research uses the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software to analyse the data. The data is weighted against Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data.

All Essential Research and senior Your Source staff hold Australian Market and Social Research Society (AMSRS) membership and are bound by professional codes of behaviour. Your Source is an Australian social and market research company specializing in recruitment, field research, data gathering and data analysis.

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