

Inquiry into the Performance of the Opinion Polls at the 2019 Australian Federal Election

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Discussion Paper: Disclosure standards for election and political polling in Australia

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Acronyms

AAPOR – American Association for Public Opinion Research

ABC – American Broadcasting Company

AMSRO – Association of Market and Social Research Organisations

AMSRS – Australian Market and Social Research Society

APC – Australian Press Council

ASTAT – Accredited Statistician as recognised by Statistical Society of Australia

BPC – British Polling Council

CNN – Cable News Network

CRIC – Canadian Research Insights Council

ESOMAR – European Society for Opinion and Market Research

ISO – International Standards Organisation

NCPP - National Council for Public Polls

QPR – Qualified Accredited Researcher as recognised by the Australian Market and Social Research Society

RANZ – Research Association of New Zealand

SSA – Statistical Society of Australia

WAPOR – World Association for Public Opinion Research

1. About this report

1.1. Introduction

This is an initial discussion paper issued by the Inquiry Panel formed by the Association of Market and Social Research Organisations (AMSRO) in collaboration with the Statistical Society of Australia (SSA), to review the performance of the opinion polls at the 2019 Australian federal election.

The focus of this report is the transparency and disclosure standards as they apply to publicly released election and other political polls in Australia. We have chosen to release this report now (ahead of the Inquiry's main report) to maximise the time available for AMSRO, the polling industry and other stakeholders to consider and take action on these initial recommendations before the next federal election polling cycle.

This report examines the following issues:

- The existing codes of conduct/guidelines that apply to election and other political polling in Australia
- International guidelines for election and other political polling, as well as examples of disclosure standards in the USA, UK, Canada and New Zealand
- Implications for the development of more comprehensive standards for election and other political polling in Australia, and;
- Initial recommendations and issues for consideration by AMSRO.

This Discussion Paper partially addresses item 7 of our Terms of Reference (Appendix 2), which directs the Inquiry Panel to make 'recommendations for improving how opinion polls are conducted and how their results are conveyed to the general public'.

1.2. Definition of election and other political polling

An important first step in establishing the remit of this Inquiry was to settle on a working definition of the types of polling activity covered by the term 'published opinion polls' as set out in the Inquiry's Terms of Reference (see Appendix 2). We found the typology used by the House of Lords Select Committee into Political Polling and the Digital Media useful in this regard (House of Lords, 2018, p. 13). This comprised the following:

- Voting intention poll: This refers to pre-election polls or surveys which aim to gauge how people intend to vote at any one time or in a particular election.
- Policy issues poll: This refers to polling or surveying undertaken to assess people's views on issues that might relate to social policy or politics, such as views on same-sex marriage or the government's response to the bushfires crisis or the Coronavirus pandemic, but which do not involve estimating voting intention.
- Private poll: This refers to the polling or surveying undertaken by political parties, individuals, or private and public companies, where the results are only selectively released to the public.
- Exit poll: This is a poll conducted of voters as they leave the polling booth.
- Informal poll (sometimes called a 'snap poll' or 'straw poll'): This refers to a poll which has been conducted without using robust sampling techniques and where the representativeness

of the sample is questionable. An example of this would be a television station or newspaper running a limited poll of their own readers on an issue. There is nothing inherently wrong with this approach unless the poll findings are presented as being representative of the wider population.

- Social survey: This term refers to more comprehensive, longer-running exercises conducted by governments, independent research agencies, academics and think tanks to measure social and policy issues (for example, the Household Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia [HILDA]).

The focus of this Inquiry is on voting intention polls and policy issues polls when the results of these polls are released to the public. In this report such polls are referred to as 'election and other political polls'. A strong argument exists that privately commissioned polls that end up in the public domain should be required to meet the same disclosure standards.¹

¹ The view of the British Polling Council is that their disclosure standards apply to the privately commissioned polls of member organisations 'in the event that the results of (such polls) are made public by the organisation that commissioned the survey (including its employees or agents) (British Polling Council, n.d.).

2. The importance of election polling

Implicit in the commissioning of this Inquiry, and as evidenced by the widespread criticism of the polls following their performance at the 2019 federal election, is the contention that election polls are important.

It is also the opinion of the Inquiry Panel that election polling is important and, as such, warrants being done to a high standard with an appropriate level of disclosure as to the methods used.

Election and political polls perform the following important functions:

- They provide the most authoritative (and highly visible) guide as to which of the political parties are ahead and which behind, whether the gap between the government and opposition is widening or narrowing, and which of the two is likely to win the majority of seats – or, in more recent times, to form government.
- They are the most authoritative guide between elections as to the strength of minor parties – those that have not traditionally been parties of government – and of independents. To some extent they can also be a guide to the likely flow of preferences from minor parties and independents to the major parties – as expressed in the two-party preferred results.
- Among politicians, across the media, and among voters, political polls can create expectations, especially about which party or parties are likely to win, and expectations can drive a range of actions - changes in party leadership, closer policy scrutiny of a party by the media, and activism among the voting public.
- Businesses, the public service, and non-government organisations may also be affected by the polls, their actions or contingency plans, including funding being adjusted or maintained, depending on what the polls appear to be telling them – more so when all the polls, or the most reputable of them, seem to be pointing in the same direction and over long periods remain more or less unchanged.
- Politicians and political candidates pay close attention to their party's privately commissioned research – mainly focus groups and polls in individual seats – and to the public polls. Oftentimes politicians outside the leadership group only have access to the public polls. The topics covered by the public polls that receive particularly close attention relate to voting intentions, leader support and the public's position on issues. Both privately commissioned research and the public polls may affect the thinking of the parties' inner-circles, and therefore influence policy formulation. A parties' faith in the findings of their private research may be strengthened if the public polls seem to support the private findings, or raise doubts if there is a divergence in findings.
- For political journalists, broadcasters, bloggers and others operating in the public sphere, political polls have become central to how they discuss electoral politics. These polls help the media organise their coverage, prioritise and deprioritise stories, and prepare for political outcomes of particular kinds. Polls help attract audiences; hence, the media's willingness to commission or simply publicise polls. During election campaigns, poll results are front-page stories or used to help drive online subscriptions. The premier election polls also help to drive stories in other media.
- Electors may use election polls – national polls but also polls in particular seats – not to decide whether or not to vote (turnout is compulsory), but to get a sense of: whether they are out of step with the wider public, raising the possibility of a poll-induced 'bandwagon' effect; whether

the outcome seems a forgone conclusion, raising the possibility of a poll-induced 'underdog' effect, with voters not wanting the party that is ahead to win by too big a margin or not wanting it to win in both the House and the Senate; and, in those electorates for which individual seat polls are published, whether they should vote tactically or sincerely.

Given the importance of election and political polling, there is a commensurate obligation upon pollsters and those reporting the findings of the polls 'to disclose sufficient information about how their research was conducted to allow for independent review and verification of research claims' (AAPOR, 2015).

3. Standards for election and political polling

Standards for Australian market and social research practitioners, including pollsters, are provided by two organisations, the Australian Market and Social Research Society (AMSRS) and the Association of Market and Social Research Organisations (AMSRO). There are no mandated standards set by governments or others. A third organisation, the Australian Press Council (APC), provides guidelines to journalists and editors for the reporting of ‘opinion polls’ to try and ensure that enough information is reported ‘to prevent polling results from being misconstrued’ (Australian Press Council, 2018). The APC guidelines are as follows:

‘Editors should take reasonable steps to ensure that reports about previously unpublished opinion poll results include, or have been written taking into account, at least the following matters:

- the name of the organisation that carried out the poll;
- the identity of any sponsor or funder;
- the exact wording of the questions asked;
- a definition of the population from which the sample was drawn;
- the sample size and method of sampling; and
- the dates interviewing was carried out.

Publications are also encouraged to consider including the following matters where possible:

- how the interviews were carried out (in person, by telephone, by mail, online, etc.); and
- the margin of error’ (Australian Press Council, 2018).

This Inquiry is not privy to the extent to which the APC guidelines are monitored or enforced. The APC received 554 complaints in 2017-18 (Australian Press Council Annual Report, 2019, p.20) but did not provide a breakdown of complaints specifically relating to public opinion polls. This is perhaps something the APC could consider.

With regard to applicable standards for pollsters, individual pollsters/researchers who are members of AMSRS are bound to uphold the AMSRS Code of Professional Behaviour (the Code), which covers both the ethical requirements and standard conditions of conducting and reporting market and social research. In terms of disclosure standards, the AMSRS Code of Professional Behaviour sets out the following provisions (AMSRS, 2017, emphasis added):

Rule 12 - Researchers must inform clients if the work to be carried out for them is to be combined or syndicated in the same project with work for other clients, without disclosing the identity of such clients without their permission.

Rule 13 - Researchers must inform clients, prior to work commencing, when any part of the work for them is to be subcontracted outside the researcher’s own organisation (including the use of any outside consultants). On request clients must be told the identity of any such subcontractor.

Rule 14 - Researchers must ensure that research projects are designed, carried out, reported and documented accurately, transparently and objectively.

Rule 32 - Researchers must ensure that findings and any interpretation of them are clearly and adequately supported by the data

Rule 33 - When reporting on the results of research, researchers must make a clear distinction between the findings, the researcher's interpretation of those findings and any conclusions drawn or recommendations made.

Rule 34 - Researchers must provide their clients with appropriate methodological details of any research project carried out for the clients to enable them to assess the validity of the results and any conclusions drawn.

Rule 35 - Researchers must take reasonable steps to ensure that findings from a research project, published by themselves or in their company name, are not incorrectly or misleadingly presented.

Rule 36 - Researchers must take reasonable steps to check and where necessary amend any client prepared materials prior to publication to ensure that the published results will not be incorrectly or misleadingly reported.

Rule 37 - Researchers must take reasonable steps to ensure that their name and/or company name are not associated with the dissemination of conclusions from a research project unless they are adequately supported by the data.

Notably absent from the Code is the right of members of the public to access the methodological details of publicly released polls.

The disclosure requirements of the AMSRS Code of Professional Behaviour is framed in general terms and does not provide specific minimum disclosure standards for researchers producing survey findings that will end up in the public domain, nor does it provide specific standards relating to disclosure requirements for election or other public domain polling.

Based on a review of the AMSRS membership list as of 21 February 2020 (AMSRS, 2020a), it appears that all bar one of the individual researchers involved in published election polling for the 2019 federal election are AMSRS members. Therefore, in terms of coverage of individual researchers, AMSRS is well-placed should it decide to introduce into its Code of Professional Behaviour specific transparency requirements for election polling and other public domain research.

AMSRS also has a professional accreditation scheme enabling individual members to gain accreditation as a Qualified Professional Researcher (QPR) (AMSRS, 2020b). Historically, not all pollsters have had QPR accreditation, and based upon a viewing of the QPR list on 20 March 2020 it appears that several currently active pollsters do not have QPR accreditation.

The SSA also has a professional accreditation scheme enabling members to gain accreditation as an Accredited Statistician (AStat), using a system partly modelled on the Chartered Statistician (CStat) accreditation of the Royal Statistical Society, the equivalent UK body. The level of AStat or CStat qualification in the polling industry appears to be even lower than that of QPR.

AMSRO, the organisation that commissioned this inquiry with the support of the Statistical Society of Australia, is the membership-based body that represents employers in the Australian market and social research industry and claims to 'represent over 75% of the (market and social research) industry' (AMSROb, n.d.). The top tier of AMSRO members, 'AMSRO Trust Mark' members, must meet the following requirements to qualify: adhere to the Privacy (Market & Social Research) Code and the AMSRS Code of Professional Behaviour, plus hold the International Standard for Market, Opinion and Social Research certification (ISO 20252) (AMSROa, n.d). Of the four companies that publicly released polling results ahead of the 2019 election (Roy Morgan Research, Essential Research, Ipsos and YouGov Galaxy, also responsible for the Newspann) only Ipsos is an AMSRO Trust Mark member. Along with Ipsos, but outside of the AMSRO structure, Roy Morgan Research is also ISO 20252 accredited.

While the ISO standards are not specifically designed for election and other political polling, some of the standards seem broadly applicable. These being the requirement to:

- disclose the name of client and research provider
- disclose and identify any subcontracted services
- report where applicable the target population; methods of data collection; fieldwork dates; incentive types; methods of statistical analysis; margin of sampling error; and provide a statement of substantial limitations affecting the validity of the findings.

For published results, there is the additional ISO 20252 requirement to ensure that the conclusions are adequately supported by the data, and that the results and the interpretation of the results are clearly distinguishable.

It is the view of this Inquiry that the disclosure standards required by the ISO standards do not provide an adequate transparency regime for election and other political polling in Australia. Some of the existing standards are too vague to be meaningfully interpreted, and there are important gaps, as discussed below.

Table 1 (following) summarises the transparency/disclosure standards that would apply in Australia if ISO standards and APC guidelines were universally applied, and also sets out the disclosure standards in other selected national and international codes (refer to Appendix 1 for the underlying details). Whilst summary in nature and somewhat dependent upon how sometimes general provisions in these codes are interpreted, viewing the various disclosure provisions of the codes in this way provides a reasonable starting point for comparing the transparency and disclosure standards notionally in place for election polling in Australia with other national and international models.

This provides a starting point for judging the adequacy of the current standards regime in Australia.

Table 1: Comparison of selected international, national and Australian disclosure standards for election polling

 Available upon release
 Available after release/On website/Upon request

Disclosure requirements	Transparency standards								
	ISO	ESOMAR/ WAPOR	NCPP	AAPOR (TI)	CNN	BPC ^(f)	CRIC	RANZ	Australia ^(d)
Research organisation/Funder									
Name of Research organisation									ISO/APC
Research funder/sponsor									ISO/APC
Identification of subcontracted services (including fieldwork provider)									ISO
Contact details for further queries									
Population/Sample									
In-scope population (may include limiting to voters / likely voters)									ISO/APC
Estimated coverage of the target population									
Procedures for managing the membership, participation, and attrition of the panel, if a pool, panel, or access panel was used.									
Achieved sample size									APC
- Sample size for sub set estimates									
Geographic coverage (a)									ISO/APC
Sampling method	(b)								APC
- Description of sampling frame and its coverage of the target population									
- Name of sample supplier									
- Recruitment/respondent selection methods (e.g. if sample was drawn from a pre-recruited panel). Within household selection									
- A description of the sample design (including any quotas)									
- Any screening for respondents. E.g. in the case of an online survey if a router was used.									
Six month prohibition of including the same online panel member in the same poll									
Minimum 72 hour fieldwork period for online panel surveys									
Fieldwork									
Fieldwork dates									ISO/APC
Methods of interviewer training, if applicable									
Paid or unpaid interviewers used									
In what languages were respondents interviewed									
Number of attempts to reach a respondent									
Use of respondent incentives & other strategies to gain cooperation									ISO/APC
Online panels should be managed in accordance with ESOMAR guidelines									

Table 1: Comparison of selected international, national and Australian disclosure standards for election polling (cont.)

 Available upon release
 Available after release/On website/Upon request

Transparency standards

Disclosure requirements	ISO	ESOMAR/ WAPOR	NCPPI	AAPOR (TI)	CNN	BPC ^(f)	CRIC	RANZ	Australia ^(d)
Data collection									
Methods of data collection (including survey mode)									ISO/APC
- Proportion of telephone interviews completed on a mobile phone / Proportion of online surveys completed on a mobile phone or small screen									
- If not undertaken by a live interviewer how do you ensure the respondent is a real person and paying attention to the survey									
Response rates									
Response rates (and sample dispositions) for probability samples (or a similar statistic for non-probability samples)	(b)								
Minimum number of completed questions to qualify as a completed interview									
Survey questions									
The relevant questions and the order in which they are asked									APC
Full questionnaire including interviewer and programming instructions									
Whether the survey questions were asked as part of an omnibus survey									
Any non-English language versions of the questionnaire									
Any visual stimuli, show cards, etc.									
Adjustments									
Whether weighting was used and the universe used for the weights									
- A full description of sampling and weighting procedures									
- Has the survey been adjusted for education of respondents. If not, why not.									
- Include unweighted bases for any subgroup									

Table 1: Comparison of selected international, national and Australian disclosure standards for election polling (cont.)

 Available upon release
 Available after release/On website/Upon request

Transparency standards

Disclosure requirements	ISO	ESOMAR/ WAPOR	NCP	AAPOR (TI)	CNN	BPC ^(f)	CRIC	RANZ	Australia ^(d)
Analysis and reporting									
Methods of statistical analysis									ISO
Margin of sampling error (or similar). Has margin of error been adjusted for design effects?									ISO/APC
A verifiable claim about the record of accuracy of the poll									
Comment on the statistical significance of the findings									
Specifications adequate for replication of indices or statistical modeling included in research reports.									
A statement of substantial limitations									ISO
Percentage results for all questions reported (incl. refused and undecided for voting intentions)									
Complete computer tables showing the exact questions asked in the order they were asked, all response codes and the weighted and unweighted bases for all demographics and other data that has been published									
Data quality checks (including checks to ensure surveys completed by 'real' people)									
Statement of adherence to disclosure standards									

- a) Presumably also covered by describing the in-scope population.
- b) There are additional ISO requirements to disclose considerable details about sampling and methodological detail to clients, but no such requirements for public disclosure.
- c) Membership to the BPC is restricted to those organisations that use sampling methods and/or weighting procedures to broadly represent the opinions of all peoples in designated groups.
- d) Whether Australian standard is attributable to the ISO standards the Australian Press Council guidelines or both.

4. Initial recommendations and issues for consideration

The view of the Inquiry Panel is that the current disclosure standards as they notionally apply to publicly released election and other political polls in Australia are inadequate. Even if all Australian election pollsters were obliged to adhere to the ISO 20252 standards and APC guidelines, and this is not currently the case, Australian pollsters would still have an oversight regime with far fewer disclosure obligations than pollsters in the US, UK, Canada and New Zealand.

Based on the information made available to the Inquiry thus far, the initial recommendation of the Inquiry is that the adoption of new regime of disclosure standards be considered.² These standards are based on existing ISO/APC standards and guidelines, along with additional recommendations. These interim standards serve as a starting point, and may be altered/extended in the ensuing main report currently underway by the Inquiry Panel.

The minimum set of disclosure standards put forward for the consideration of AMSRO and other stakeholders are outlined below. Of course, not all of them can be included in a press release, news article or bulletin, or online story. Other national and international codes get around this by requiring that such information is available via the pollster's and or media outlet's website, or readily available if requested.

It is the view of the Inquiry Panel that pollsters must provide, and publishers must make available, the following:

1. Name of the research organisation undertaking the poll/survey (ISO/APC).
2. Name of the organisation funding the poll/survey (ISO/APC).
3. Name of subcontractors used for fieldwork and/or to provide the sample (e.g. sample provider and/or online panel provider) (ISO expanded).
4. The in-scope population (e.g. eligible voters) (ISO/APC).
5. Geographic scope for the poll (e.g. National, State, seat, other) (ISO/APC).
6. Description of the sampling frame and its coverage of the population (e.g. online panels exclude the offline population; landline telephone samples exclude persons without a landline telephone, etc.) (New).
7. Which language/s the poll was conducted in (New).
8. Methods for recruiting respondents, for online specify whether an opt-in or probability panel, for CATI surveys specify whether landline and/or mobile telephone numbers were used and/or whether or not such numbers were random-digit dialled telephone sample, list-based telephone sample or both (New).
9. Achieved sample size (APC).

² The main constraint faced by the Inquiry Panel so far in making recommendations regarding a minimum set of disclosure standards for Australian election polls is the general lack of detailed methodological information provided by the pollsters to ascertain where polling practices might be wanting and, therefore, where better or more transparent methods and higher levels of disclosure might be warranted.

10. Sample design including quotas and stratification scheme, and including other elements of sample design as applicable/appropriate (e.g. cluster or multi-stage design). See item 23 for expanded requirements (New).
11. Fieldwork dates (ISO/APC).
12. Use of respondent incentives or other means for gaining cooperation (ISO/APC).
13. Mode of data collection (e.g. online/CATI/IVR, Mixed mode, other). See item 20 for expanded requirements (ISO/APC).
14. The exact wording of relevant questions and response options and the order in which they were asked. Ideally the full questionnaire is disclosed, where practical to do so (APC expanded).
15. Provision of response rates or similar statistics including description of how these metrics have been calculated. The Inquiry's preference is that a uniform means for calculating response metrics is used with a strong preference for the AAPOR standards to be adopted (New).
16. Estimation methods to be described, including whether the survey has been weighted and if the survey has been weighted, what weighting techniques were used (e.g. post-stratification, raking, etc.); the weighting variables used and benchmarks used for the weighting parameters. See item 21 for expanded requirements (New).
17. Measures of uncertainty possibly in the form of confidence intervals or margins of error and how estimated, the historical record of the pollster and/or other measures of uncertainty as appropriate (ISO/APC expanded).
18. How the two-party preferred vote was calculated (e.g. by allocating preferences as per previous election(s), or asking intending minor party voters their major party preference or other means) (New).
19. Quantifying item-level non-response, including the definition and treatment of unknowns, unstated and undecided (New).

In addition to the above, the Inquiry regards disclosure of the following items to be highly desirable:

20. The proportion of telephone interviews undertaken on a mobile phone and/or the proportion of online surveys completed on a mobile or small screen browser (New).
21. Whether the organisation follows a standard weighting methodology and whether this standard was adjusted in any way at all for this poll (New).
22. Membership and accreditation of key professionals with the relevant professional bodies (e.g. QPR or ASTAT) (AMSRs, 2020b, Statistical Society of Australia, 2019) (New).³
23. Ability to show that sampling methods and weighting procedures used enable accurate representation of all people within the scope of the poll (e.g. voters or adults) (New).

In addition to these minimum and desirable standards for disclosure, further consideration is needed as to whether a prescribed set of survey or statistical practices should also be in place. For example, the British Polling Council limits membership to 'organisations that can show to the satisfaction of the BPC that the sampling methods and weighting procedures used are designed to accurately represent

³Qualified Professional Researcher (QPR) is an accreditation available to researchers, data analysts, or insights practitioners who are members of the AMSRS. ASTAT – an Accredited Statistician – is the accreditation available to members of the Statistical Society of Australia.

the views of all people within designated target groups (such as all adults, or voters etc.)' (British Polling Council, 2019).⁴

By way of further example, CNN announced that 'they will not report on polls that are conducted by campaigns or by those who have a financial or advocacy interest in the outcome; polls that are conducted by telephone using robocalls rather than live interviewers; polls that are conducted without any type of sampling, where anyone who chooses to can participate; polls that are conducted solely using unrepresentative sample sources; polls that do not take into account people who take surveys on their cellphones, either over the phone or by web and polls that do not ensure that respondents of all education levels are adequately reflected' (CNN, 2019).

Having considered the above and whether or not Australia should follow suit and prescribe certain minimum survey methodological and statistical standards for publicly released election and other political polls, it is the view of the Inquiry Panel that the starting point for the development of our Australian standards should be to agree and enact a minimum set of disclosure standards. Consideration as to whether or not a prescribed minimum set of methodological or statistical practices needs to be developed (along the lines of the British Polling Council) is an issue to be considered after an adequate disclosure regime is in place.

It is not within the Terms of Reference of the Inquiry Panel, nor is it within our resources or expertise, to make recommendations as to the mechanism/s to be used to introduce new disclosure standards for election and other political polling in Australia. However, based on the knowledge we have gained as to how these codes work in other countries, we are in a position to suggest some areas for consideration. These are as follows:

- What type of model is best adopted? There are many options to consider, such as a voluntary compliance model with some sort of review mechanism, an accreditation and audit model, or any number of variations on these themes. The Inquiry Panel is of the view that an independently reviewed voluntary accreditation industry code is the best starting point.
- Should AMSRO, another existing entity or a new entity be responsible for drawing up and administering this new code?
- What infrastructure would be needed to support this endeavour, and where would the funding come from? For instance, would a membership or subscription fee be charged? Given the very small election polling industry in Australia this is likely to mean that the establishment and administration of any new code is going to need to be supplemented/subsidised. Where would this funding come from? What level of in-kind support can be provided by the polling companies?
- What would the working title of this new entity or code be (e.g. the Australian Polling Council, the Code of Conduct for Australian Election and Political Polling, Code of Conduct for Publicly Released Opinion Polls, etc.)?
- Given that election and other political polling represents only a very small proportion of the Australian market and social research industry consideration should be given to making any resultant disclosure standards applicable to all publicly released polls and surveys.

⁴ The prescription of certain survey and statistical standards is a position supported by Essential Media in their written submission to the Inquiry dated 22 April 2020. The premise of this acceptance is that adherence to such standards would support the key goal of improving the accuracy of polls.

- What is role of those major news outlets who commission election and other political polling, and the media more broadly, in helping to uphold any new disclosure standards and how is this best managed?
- What type of people/organisations should be brought together to draft and oversee any new code? The Inquiry Panel is of the view that consideration should be given to the following; an AMSRO representative, a nominee from the Statistical Society of Australia, a representative from AMSRS, a representative from the Australian Press Council and/or interested media outlets, a representative from each organisation undertaking publicly released election polls (i.e. each organisation intending to sign up to the new code), academic representatives (e.g. quantitative political scientists), etc.
- The chair of any such committee should be independent from current polling organisations.

A further question is whether there is a broader remit to provide education resources about polling methods and standards to journalists and other interested parties. This could be along similar lines to election polling resources provided by AAPOR and the British Polling Council (AAPOR, 2020; British Polling council, 2019a).

In terms of next steps, the Inquiry Panel recommends that AMSRO consult with pollsters, political scientists, overseas polling oversight bodies, members of this Inquiry Panel, the Australian Press Council, the Statistical Society of Australia, AMSRS, media outlets, and others that might be appropriate with a view to establishing new disclosure standards for publicly released Australian election and political polls, and to implement these new standards before the next federal election polling cycle.

Pollsters with formal links to media outlets seem to be generally supportive of taking this next step. YouGov indicated their support for the creation of an Australian Polling Council via an announcement on their website on 19 September 2019 (YouGov, 2019) and in a submission to this Inquiry dated 19 November 2019. Essential Media also indicated their support for the establishment of an Australian Polling Council, or similar, in an email to this Inquiry on 16 August 2019. In discussions between representatives from Ipsos and members of the Inquiry Panel on 27 November 2019, Ipsos also indicated that they would be open to considering such an arrangement. A view shared by these pollsters is the desire to balance the need for disclosure, and the associated disclosure burden, against the need to protect the intellectual property of the pollsters and their clients. The concern around disclosure of intellectual property is heightened in Australia given the very small number of active pollsters.

Appendix 1: Selected disclosure standards for election polls

To inform this Discussion Paper, we examined some of the models used internationally to prescribe disclosure standards for election polls (refer back to Table 1). This was not an exhaustive examination of such models, but a review of those models that came to our attention in the course of our broader work on this Inquiry.

The **ESOMAR/WAPOR** Guide to Opinion Polls and Published Surveys is the main international standard. It is designed to 'help those interested in the subject of opinion polls to reach a more informed judgement about the value of such polls and the most appropriate ways of conducting and reporting them.' (ESOMAR/WAPOR, 2009, p.2)⁵ The ESOMAR/WAPOR Guide has 5 sections. First is a statement on the role of polls; second is a list of frequently asked questions to help judge the quality of polls; third is a guideline for the publication of opinion polls and survey results; fourth is specific guidance to practitioners regarding pre-election polls; and fifth is guidance regarding the conduct of exit polls and results forecasting. These guidelines are a subset of a broader ESOMAR code, the ICC/ESOMAR International Code on Market, Opinion and Social Research and Data Analytics.

The specific requirements set out by ESOMASR/WAPOR code for published public opinion surveys are as follows:

- a) the name of the research organisation carrying out the survey
- b) the universe effectively represented (i.e. who was interviewed)
- c) the achieved sample size and its geographical coverage
- d) the dates of fieldwork
- e) the sampling method used (and in the case of full random probability samples the response rate achieved)
- f) the method by which the information was collected (face-to-face, telephone interview, internet panel, etc.)
- g) whether weighting was used to adjust the results and the universe used for the weights; and
- h) the relevant questions asked. In order to avoid possible ambiguity, the actual wording of the question should be given.

The other international standard which has elements that can be applied to the reporting of election and other political polling is **ISO 20252**: the international standard for market, opinion and social research, including insights and data analytics.⁶ Although the ISO standards are not specifically designed for election polling, some of the standards seem broadly applicable:

- disclose name of client and research provider
- disclose and identify any subcontracted services

⁵ ESOMAR is the European Society for Opinion and Market Research. WAPOR is the World Association for Public Opinion Research.

⁶ International Standards Organisation

- report where applicable the target population; methods of data collection; fieldwork dates; incentive types; methods of statistical analysis; margin of sampling error; and provide a statement of substantial limitations affecting the validity of the findings.

For published results, there is the additional ISO 20252 requirement to ensure that the conclusions are adequately supported by the data and that the results and the interpretation of the results are clearly distinguishable.

The governance of published polls in the **United States** was for a long time overseen by the National Council for Public Polls (NCP), established in 1969. The NCP website does not appear to have been updated since issuing its analysis of the final national and statewide pre-election polls for the 2012 election. According to its president Evans Wit of Princeton Survey Research Associates, the 'NCP has been relatively dormant for a number of years.'⁷ At the very least the NCP, if not totally defunct, is in hiatus.

Nonetheless the NCP is important both in its own right and for the precedents it established. The mission of the NCP is to 'affirm ... commitment to standards of disclosure designed to ensure that users of survey results that enter the public domain have an adequate basis for judging the reliability and validity of the results reported' (National Council for Public Polls, circa 2012). The purpose of the NCP Code is '(not) to pass judgment on the merits of the methods employed in specific surveys. Rather, (its) ...purpose is to ensure that pertinent information is disclosed concerning methods that were used so that consumers of surveys may assess studies for themselves' (Ibid).

NCP member organisations that undertake polls are required to provide evidence to the Council that they comply with the Code and, if approved, are permitted to state that they comply 'with the Principles of Disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls'.

The NCP code specifies the level of disclosure to be met in relation to survey findings publicly released by a member organisation, or subsequently made public; the additional disclosure requirements that arise in response to any specific written requests for additional information; and recommended levels of disclosure in relation to raw data sets and survey questions. There is also a complaints and dispute resolution procedure.

There are three levels of disclosure summarised below:

Level 1 Disclosure: All reports of survey findings issued for public release by a member organisation will include the following information:

- Sponsorship of the survey
- Fieldwork provider (if applicable)
- Dates of interviewing
- Sampling method employed (for example, random-digit dialled telephone sample, list-based telephone sample, area probability sample, probability mail sample, other probability sample, opt-in internet panel, non-probability convenience sample, use of any oversampling)
- Population that was sampled (for example, general population; registered voters; likely voters; or any specific population group defined by gender, race, age, occupation or any other characteristic)

⁷ Via email correspondence to the Inquiry on 10 February. 2020

- Size of the sample that serves as the primary basis of the survey report
- Size and description of the subsample, if the survey report relies primarily on less than the total sample
- Margin of sampling error (if a probability sample)
- Survey mode (for example, telephone/interviewer, telephone/automated, mail, internet, fax, e-mail)
- Complete wording and ordering of questions mentioned in or upon which the release is based
- Percentage results of all questions reported
- Member will endeavour to have print and broadcast media include the above items in their news stories.

The NCCP code makes a distinction between privately commissioned surveys and publicly reported election polls. However, in the event that the results of a privately commissioned poll are made public, the above items should be disclosed.

Level 2 Disclosure: In response to any specific written request for additional items pertaining to any survey findings a member organisation has released publicly, the member organisation will additionally release any of the following:

- Estimated coverage of target population
- Respondent selection procedure (for example, within household), if any
- Maximum number of attempts to reach respondents
- Exact wording of introduction (any words preceding the first question)
- Complete wording of questions (per Level 1 disclosure) in any foreign languages in which the survey was conducted
- Weighted and unweighted size of any subgroup cited in the report
- Minimum number of completed questions to qualify a completed interview
- Whether interviewers were paid or unpaid (if an interviewer administered survey mode)
- Details of any incentives or compensation provided to respondents
- Description of weighting procedures (if any) used to generalise data to the full population
- Sample dispositions adequate to compute contact, cooperation and response rates.

Level 3 Disclosure: The third level of disclosure encourages the following:

- Release raw datasets (ASCII, SPSS, CSV format) for any publicly released survey results (with telephone numbers or other identifying personal information removed)
- Post complete wording, ordering and percentage results of all publicly released survey questions to a publicly available website for a minimum of two weeks
- Publicly note their compliance with these Principles of Disclosure.

Membership of the NCCP is drawn from news/media outlets, research centres, academia and polling organisations.

The U.S. is also served by the member-based organisation, the American Association of Public Opinion Research (AAPOR), which offers a broad standards regime as part of its Transparency Initiative.⁸ Officially launched in 2014, the AAPOR Transparency Initiative operates on a voluntary opt in basis and sets out a series of 'minimum disclosure' standards for any survey or poll which is released publicly by an organisation receiving the AAPOR certification of transparency. To date, nearly 100 survey organisations have received this AAPOR certification.

The Disclosure Standards members of the AAPOR Transparency Initiative are obliged to adhere to guidelines set out in the AAPOR Code of Ethics as follows (AAPOR, 2015):

1. 'Who sponsored the survey and who conducted it. If different from the sponsor, the original sources of funding will also be disclosed.
2. The exact wording and presentation of questions and response options whose results are reported. This includes preceding interviewer or respondent instructions and any preceding questions that might reasonably be expected to influence responses to the reported results.
3. A definition of the population under study and its geographic location.
4. Dates of data collection.
5. A description of the sampling frame(s) and its coverage of the target population, including mention of any segment of the target population that is not covered by the design. This may include, for example, exclusion of Alaska and Hawaii in U.S. surveys; exclusion of specific provinces or rural areas in international surveys; and exclusion of non-panel members in panel surveys. If possible, the estimated size of non-covered segments will be provided. If a size estimate cannot be provided, this will be explained. If no frame or list was utilized, this will be indicated.
6. The name of the sample supplier, if the sampling frame and/or the sample itself was provided by a third party.
7. The methods used to recruit the panel or participants, if the sample was drawn from a pre-recruited panel or pool of respondents.
8. A description of the sample design, giving a clear indication of the method by which the respondents were selected, recruited, intercepted or otherwise contacted or encountered, along with any eligibility requirements and/or oversampling. If quotas were used, the variables defining the quotas will be reported. If a within-household selection procedure was used, this will be described. The description of the sampling frame and sample design will include sufficient detail to determine whether the respondents were selected using probability or non-probability methods.
9. Method(s) and mode(s) used to administer the survey (e.g., CATI, CAPI, ACASI, IVR, mail survey, Web survey) and the language(s) offered.
10. Sample sizes (by sampling frame if more than one was used) and a discussion of the precision of the findings. For probability samples, the estimates of sampling error will be reported, and the discussion will state whether or not the reported margins of sampling error or statistical analyses have been adjusted for the design effect due to weighting, clustering, or other factors. Disclosure requirements for non-probability samples are different because the precision of estimates from such samples is a model-based measure (rather than the average

⁸ Survey organisations operating outside of the U.S. are also able to apply for membership of the AAPOR Transparency Initiative.

deviation from the population value over all possible samples). Reports of non-probability samples will only provide measures of precision if they are accompanied by a detailed description of how the underlying model was specified, its assumptions validated and the measure(s) calculated. To avoid confusion, it is best to avoid using the term “margin of error” or “margin of sampling error” in conjunction with non-probability samples.

11. A description of how the weights were calculated, including the variables used and the sources of weighting parameters, if weighted estimates are reported.

After survey results are reported, we will make the following items available within 30 days of any request for such materials:

12. Procedures for managing the membership, participation, and attrition of the panel, if a pool, panel, or access panel was used.
13. Methods of interviewer training, supervision, and monitoring, if interviewers were used.
14. Details about screening procedures, including any screening for other surveys that would have made sample members ineligible for the current survey must be disclosed (e.g., in the case of online surveys if a router was used).
15. Any relevant stimuli, such as visual or sensory exhibits or show cards. In the case of surveys conducted via self-administered computer- assisted interviewing, providing the relevant screen shot(s) is optimal, though not required.
16. Details of any strategies used to help gain cooperation (e.g., advance contact, compensation or incentives, refusal conversion contacts) whether for participation in a group, panel or access panel or for participation in a particular research project.
17. Procedures undertaken to ensure data quality, if any. Where applicable, this includes re-contacts to confirm that the interview occurred and/or to verify the respondent’s identity, measures taken to prevent respondents from completing the same survey more than once, and other quality control procedures (e.g., logic checks and tests for speeding and patterning). If no such efforts were undertaken, this will be disclosed.
18. Summaries of the disposition of study-specific sample records so that response rates for probability samples and participation rates for non- probability samples can be computed. If response or cooperation rates are reported, they will be computed according to AAPOR Standard Definitions. If dispositions cannot be provided, the reason(s) will be disclosed and this will be mentioned as a limitation of the study.
19. The unweighted sample size on which one or more reported subgroup estimates are based.
20. Specifications adequate for replication of indices or statistical modelling included in research reports.’

In addition to AAPOR’s review of the performance of the polls in the 2016 U.S. election (AAPOR, 2017), AAPOR has been an active advocate for transparency in election polling as far back as the 2008 pre-election polls in New Hampshire (AAPOR, 2008), and as recently as January 2020 AAPOR released a public statement about the accuracy of polling in advance of the Iowa caucuses (AAPOR, 2020b): AAPOR is also active in providing election polling resources for researchers and for media (AAPOR, 2020a).

In the U.S. media organisations such as CNN, ABC and others detail their own standards in relation to election polling (CNN, 2019, ABC News, 2019). In the case of CNN, they will only publish polls that meet the best practices the industry has with methodologies that have been proven to work.

CNN requires pollsters to answer 16 questions:

1. What survey firm conducted the poll?
2. How were respondents interviewed – by live interviewers on the phone, IVR, online, self-administered questionnaire or another method?
3. Who paid for the survey and why was it done?
4. How many people were interviewed for this survey?
5. In what language(s) were respondents interviewed?
6. Please provide a copy of the full text and interviewer instructions/programming for all questions included in this survey release.
7. When was your survey conducted?
8. What is the source of your sample for this survey, and by what method were respondents selected? Please be as specific as possible, and if via web panel(s), please include a description of how the panellists were recruited. If your study was conducted online and included respondents chosen via routers, approximately what percentage of respondents were directed to the survey via routers?
9. If any quotas were applied to sampling or interviewing, at what stage were they applied, what variables and targets were used, and what is the source of your estimate of the target quota?
10. What is the universe of people you are trying to survey, and what makes you confident that the sample source represents that universe?
11. If surveys were conducted by telephone, what percentage of interviews were conducted via calls to cell phones? If surveys were conducted online, were respondents allowed to complete the survey via mobile browsers, and approximately what share of your respondents did so?
12. If surveys were conducted by telephone, how many callback attempts did a sampled number receive before being retired?
13. If surveys were not conducted by a live interviewer, what do you do to ensure your respondents are real people and are paying attention to the survey?
14. What is your estimate of this survey's error, how is it calculated, and why is this an appropriate error estimation for your survey? If you are reporting a margin of sampling error, has it been adjusted for design effects?
15. If your survey has been weighted, please list the weighting variables and the source of the weighting parameters. If your survey has not been adjusted for education, please explain why and provide an unweighted frequency for education distribution among your respondents.
16. Is there a minimum unweighted sample size you require before releasing any subset estimates, and if so, what is it?

In addition, CNN announced that they will not report on polls that are conducted by campaigns or by those who have a financial or advocacy interest in the outcome; polls that are conducted by telephone using robocalls rather than live interviewers; polls that are conducted without any type of sampling, where anyone who chooses to can participate; polls that are conducted solely using unrepresentative

sample sources; polls that do not take into account people who take surveys on their cellphones, either over the phone or by web; and polls that do not ensure that respondents of all education levels are adequately reflected.

The **British Polling Council** (BPC), established in 2004, is an association of polling organisations that publish polls. The BPC is modelled on the NCPP. 'Membership is limited to organisations that can show to the satisfaction of the BPC that the sampling methods and weighting procedures used are designed to accurately represent the views of all people within designated target groups (such as all adults, or voters etc.)'.

Through full disclosure, the Council 'aims to encourage the highest professional standards in public opinion polling and to advance the understanding, among politicians, the media and general public, of how polls are conducted and how to interpret poll results (British Polling Council, 2019). The BPC will also provide interested parties with advice on best practice in the conduct and reporting of polls. As is the case for the NCPP – but in contrast to CNN – the BPC does not see it is its role to pass judgment on the merits of methods employed in specific surveys. Rather, the purpose of the BPC is to ensure that all relevant information is disclosed concerning the methods that were used so that consumers of surveys may assess the studies for themselves.

Nonetheless, and as mentioned above, the BPC does see fit to ensure that membership is limited to organisations who can show that the sampling methods and weighting procedures used are designed to accurately represent the views of all people within designated target groups (such as all adults, or voters etc.)'.

The BPC has an established set of Objects and Rules member organisations agree to abide by. Failure to do so could see them placed on probation or even expelled. Investigatory powers as they apply to disciplinary hearings are well documented.

In terms of published data, the main elements of disclosure, as they pertain to this Inquiry, are as follows:

- Client commissioning the survey
- Dates of interviewing
- Method of obtaining the interviews (e.g. in-person, telephone, internet)
- The universe effectively represented (all adults, voters etc.)
- The percentages upon which conclusions are based; and
- Size of the sample and geographic coverage.

In addition, whenever it is practical to do so, the following information should also be published:

- Complete wording of questions upon which the release is based
- A web address where full computer tables may be viewed.

Survey organisations reporting results will endeavour to have print and broadcast media include the above items in their news stories, and will in any event make a report containing these items together with full computer tables of the results available on the survey organisation's website within two working days of the original release, or make such information available on request.

The research organisation responsible for conducting the survey will place the following information on its own website or provide the information to any interested party on request:

- A full description of the sampling procedures adopted by the organisation

- Computer tables showing the exact questions asked in the order they were asked, all response codes and the weighted and unweighted bases for all demographics and other data that has been published
- A description of the weighting procedures employed, including weighted and unweighted figures for all variables (demographic or otherwise) used to weight the data, whether or not such breakdowns appear in any analysis of sub samples
- An e-mail address for further enquiries. It is assumed that all other reasonable requests for data necessary for readers of the polls to assess the validity of the data will be answered, and a link to the BPC web-site.

In May 2018, and following the Sturgis Inquiry into the 2015 British election polls, the BPC introduced an important new rule that requires its members, when reporting estimates of vote intention, ‘to publish a statement of the level of uncertainty that has historically been associated with polls of voting intention’ (British Polling Council, 2018).

The BPC distinguishes between publicly released polls and privately commissioned surveys, a distinction we think is also useful in the Australian context, and acknowledges that organisations conducting privately commissioned surveys have the right to maintain the confidentiality of survey findings. However, in the event results of a privately commissioned poll are made public by the organisation that commissioned the survey (including its employees or agents), such results will be deemed to have entered the public domain and procedures outlined above will be followed in respect of those findings.

The BPC also has a documented procedure for handling complaints and resolving disputes that member organisations must abide by.

The BPC currently has 23 member organisations. These account for almost every market research organisation in the UK that publishes political polls. Its management committee and officers are drawn from the member organisations, but its Sub-Committee on Disclosure (which provides the technical advice) comprises representatives from research organisations, academia and the media as well as member organisations. It is worth noting that the BPC accepted and implemented all the recommendations arising from the Report of the Inquiry into the 2015 British general election opinion polls (Sturgis et al., 2016, British Polling Council, 2016).

Also important in the UK is the role of the Market Research Society (MRS). An extract from the report of the House of Lords Select Committee on Political Polling and The Digital Media explains the role of the MRS as follows:

‘(The MRS) promotes, develops, supports and regulates standards and innovation across market, opinion and social research and data analytics. Its standards for the research sector are contained in its Code of Conduct, which covers commissioning and design, client confidentiality, informed consent, participant anonymity, data collection, analysis and reporting of findings, and data security.’ House of Lords, 2018, p.53.’

In terms of transparency, the MRS code requires members to ‘comply with reasonable requests to make available to anyone the information necessary to assess the validity of any published findings from a project’ (Rule 55) and further requires that ‘Members must ensure that reports include sufficient information to enable reasonable assessment of the validity of results’ (Rule 60) (Market Research Society, 2019).

There are also a variety of codes in the UK relating to the media’s reporting of polling. The House of Lords Select Committee on Polling and the Digital Media (2018) notes: ‘Together with the BPC and

the MRS, the press and broadcaster regulators make up the broad supervisory framework, such as it is, that currently governs polling' (p.56).

The **Canadian Research Insights Council (CRIC)** has 32 members and was formed out of the Canadian Market Research Association in June 2019. The CRIC Public Opinion Research and Disclosure standards as applied to research released into the public domain are designed to:

- support sound and ethical practices in the disclosure of research
- ensure research is unbiased and supports decision-making in the public, private and not-for-profit sectors
- enhance public trust and improve the public's understanding of the use of research
- ensure the appropriate transparency and disclosure of research results and methods of studies (Canadian Research Insights Council, 2019).

The CRIC standards adhere to and complement ESOMAR standards:

1. Members will disclose on their website details on how to obtain required disclosures for survey research released into the public domain.
2. In advance of any undertaking, members will inform those who wish to conduct research studies to be released into the public domain, including its use in whole or in part for advertising or other public displays, about the CRIC Public Opinion Research Standards and Disclosure Requirements and our professional obligations.
3. Members will disclose who sponsored the research and who conducted it. If different from the sponsor, the sources of funding will also be disclosed.
4. Members will provide an e-mail address and contact name for further enquiries. All other reasonable requests for data necessary for readers of the research to assess the validity of the research will be answered.
5. Members will embed a clear URL on the release to the CRIC website that links to the CRIC Public Opinion Research Standards and Disclosure Requirements and a statement confirming compliance with the CRIC Standards.
6. Members will disclose the following in a common, readily accessible format on a verifiable corporate or officially sponsored website, and make available to all when a report, results, or both from survey research are released into or appear in the public domain:
 - a. The exact wording and presentation of questions and response options. This includes any preceding interviewer or respondent instructions and any preceding questions that might reasonably be expected to influence responses to the reported results. The percentage of respondents answering who are undecided or refuse to respond on voting questions should be reported.
 - b. A definition of the population under study.
 - c. The dates data were collected.
 - d. A description of the sampling frame(s) and its coverage of the target population.
 - e. The name of the sample supplier, if the sampling frame and/or the sample itself was provided by a third party always with an embedded URL to the supplier's web site home page.

- f. Whether the sample was drawn from a pre-recruited panel or pool of respondents and, if applicable, the methods used to recruit the panel or participants.
- g. Details of any strategies used to help gain cooperation (e.g., advance contact, compensation or incentives)
- h. A description of the sample design, giving a clear indication of the method by which the respondents were selected, recruited, intercepted, or otherwise contacted or encountered, along with any eligibility requirements and/or oversampling. The description of the sampling frame and sample design will include sufficient detail to determine whether the respondents were selected using probability or non-probability methods.
- i. The Method(s) and mode(s) used to administer the survey (e.g., CATI, CAPI, ACASI, IVR, mail survey, Web survey) and the language(s) offered.
- j. A statistic that expresses the amount of sampling error in a survey's results—such as a margin of error or a Bayesian credibility interval—if scientifically applicable.
- k. Whether weighting/calibration/normalization was used to adjust the results and the impact of the procedure on the data as measured through a weighting efficiency calculation and/or disclosure of the range (i.e., min and max) and variance of weights.
- l. For research released on public policy topics or election voting, the detailed tables or representations thereof by standard demographic questions with weighted and unweighted number of respondents so that the public can transparently see the original number of responses by standard demographic category and the weighted number of responses by standard demographic category. This data must be made available upon request for research released on other topics.
- m. For research released in to the public domain with a media partner, the required disclosures should be made available within 90 minutes of the release of the results by the media partner (Ibid.).

Before the CRIC was established, the Market Research and Intelligence Association, established in 2004, represented opinion pollsters and market researchers in Canada, and had developed a similar code of conduct.

In **New Zealand**, the Research Association of New Zealand (RANZ), a member of ESOMAR, established the New Zealand Political Polling Code effective January 2014.

The RANZ code closely follows the main elements of the ESOMAR code. The RANZ code details 'best practice' for the researcher conducting the poll, 'best practice' for the researcher in reporting results, and 'best practice' for the media in publishing the results. The code, binding on member companies, only applies to 'political polls' (Research Association of New Zealand, 2014.).

It is intended that the code assist politicians, political scientists, journalists and members of the public to be confident that political polls represent the opinions of the wider public, and are a guide as to likely voting behaviours.

The rationale provided by RANZ for the establishment of the code is summarised as follows:

- The development of the code is in recognition of the fact that reporting of polls can have an impact on how people vote

- Inaccurate polls or polls that are reported inaccurately can impact on voting attitudes and behaviours and thus influence the democratic process
- It behoves all members of the polling and media communities to treat polling responsibly. Reliable polls, rather than informal surveys, require a high degree of rigour. These guidelines are designed to ensure that rigour is understood and applied.

The main elements of this code are as follows:

- The code documents best practice guidelines for the conducting and reporting of political polls in New Zealand
- The code is binding on companies that are members of Research Association New Zealand and on researchers that are members of the Research Association New Zealand
- The code only covers 'political polls', which for the purpose of the code are polls that related to public votes such as national elections, local body elections and parliamentary referenda. This is in recognition of the fact that reporting of polls may have an impact on how people vote.

The code sets out a number of recommended and mandatory requirements under the headings of sampling, collection method, weighting, margin of error, timing and results. Whereas most of the codes reviewed for this paper focus mainly on prescribing disclosure requirements, the RANZ code is somewhat more prescriptive in terms of survey methodology and statistical techniques.

- Sampling:
 - Report must include the sample size, and the sample size of "decided" voters
 - Report must disclose the sampling method
 - Report should disclose that multiple call-backs occurred
 - The report should include the response rate
 - Report should disclose the population the sample represents
 - Report must exclude those unlikely to vote from the analysis of voting behaviour
 - The report should include a definition of how it was determined someone was likely to vote.
- Collection method:
 - Phone: Report must disclose how a respondent is selected. The report should disclose if calls were to landlines only, and any impact this may have had on the poll.
 - Online: Report should disclose panel recruitment and makeup, and that it complies with the ESOMAR guideline for online research. The report should disclose if there were any major platforms that the poll was not accessible on.
 - Omnibus: The report must disclose if the questions were part of an omnibus survey.
 - Question order: The report must disclose the order of questions asked and any political questions asked before the principal voting behaviour question.
- Weighting:
 - Weighting method: The report should confirm the sample was weighted.
 - Weighting variables: Report should disclose the variables the poll is weighted on.

- **Margin of error:** The report must disclose the maximum margin of error. The report should disclose the sample size and maximum margin of error for demographic breakdowns.
- **Statistical significance:** The report should highlight results that are statistically significant. This includes trend changes, not just from the previous poll.
- **Timing:**
 - The report must disclose the dates the data collection occurred. The median date of collection should be included in the report.
- **Reporting:**
 - **Undecided:** The report must state the number and percentage of undecideds and refusals.
 - The agency should prepare a report suitable for publication with full results and methodology. The report should include the wording of the voting questions.

Appendix 2: Terms of reference

Revised 6 July, 2019

1. To assess the accuracy of the published opinion polls (both national and sub-national) at the 2019 Australian federal election.
2. To evaluate whether any inaccuracies identified might be part of a pattern evident at any previous elections or during polling since the last (2016) election.
3. To investigate the causes of any inaccuracies that are identified. Potential causes to be considered will include (but not necessarily be limited to): the possible impact of late changes in vote preferences, the extent to which sample frames (sample sources) provided adequate population coverage, sampling methods, interview methods, data weighting or other data adjustments undertaken, differential availability and willingness to participate, question order and question wording and data item refusal.
4. To assess whether the analysis or reporting of polls was influenced by a reluctance to be out of line with the published figures of other polls.
5. To consult and seek relevant evidence from appropriate stakeholders, including but not exclusively, polling organisations, news organisations, journalists, and other polling experts.
6. To assess whether adequate information was communicated to, and communicated by, the pollsters, the media and other interested commentators to inform the public about how polls were conducted and what their results mean.
7. To make, as it sees fit, recommendations for improving how opinion polls are conducted and how their results are conveyed to the general public.

To submit a preliminary report to AMSRO as soon as practicable, with a view to publication

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