The Essential Report

21 September 2020

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Prepared By:	Essential Research
Data Supplied by:	qualtrics

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About this poll

This report summarises the results of a fortnightly omnibus conducted by Essential Research with data provided by Qualtrics. The survey was conducted online from 16th to 21st September 2020 and is based on 1,081 respondents.

The methodology used to carry out this research is described in the appendix at the end of the report.

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

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Coronavirus concerns

Q   To what extent are you concerned about the threat of Covid-19 (coronavirus) in Australia?

	21/09	07/09	24/08	10/08	27/07	13/07	22/06	15/06	08/06	01/06	25/05
Very concerned	**36%**	37%	40%	50%	43%	36%	25%	28%	27%	32%	30%
Quite concerned	**45%**	45%	46%	40%	44%	48%	50%	45%	48%	49%	49%
Not that concerned	**15%**	13%	10%	7%	9%	12%	21%	23%	21%	15%	16%
Not at all concerned	**4%**	5%	4%	3%	4%	3%	4%	4%	5%	4%	5%
Base (n)	**1,081**	1,076	1,068	1,010	1,058	1,054	1,079	1,087	1,073	1,059	1,087

-   There has been no shift in concern about threat of Covid-19 in the past two weeks with 36% very concerned about the threat (37% in early September).

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Federal government response to Covid-19

Q Overall, how would you rate **the federal government's** response to the Covid-19 outbreak?

	21/09	07/09	24/08	10/08	27/07	13/07	22/06	15/06	08/06	01/06	25/05
Very poor	**5%**	8%	6%	7%	6%	6%	4%	3%	4%	5%	4%
Quite poor	**13%**	12%	11%	8%	11%	10%	8%	8%	8%	7%	6%
Neither good, nor poor	**21%**	22%	22%	21%	20%	20%	17%	16%	18%	20%	16%
Quite good	**40%**	40%	40%	40%	40%	40%	43%	42%	40%	39%	43%
Very good	**21%**	18%	22%	24%	24%	24%	27%	30%	30%	28%	30%
TOTAL: Poor	**18%**	19%	17%	16%	16%	16%	12%	11%	12%	12%	11%
TOTAL: Good	**61%**	59%	61%	63%	64%	64%	71%	72%	70%	68%	73%
Base (n)	**1,081**	1,076	1,068	1,010	1,058	1,054	1,079	1,087	1,073	1,059	1,087

- Rating of the Federal Government's handling of Covid-19 stays steady at 61% rating it very or quite good (59% earlier in the month).

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State government response to Covid-19

Q How would you rate your **state government's** response to the Covid-19 outbreak?

TOTAL: Good	21/09	07/09	24/08	10/08	27/07	13/07	22/06	15/06	08/06	01/06	25/05
NSW	**67%**	57%	59%	61%	62%	63%	70%	65%	67%	62%	65%
VIC	**47%**	50%	47%	49%	53%	49%	65%	75%	72%	71%	73%
QLD	**68%**	66%	73%	68%	67%	69%	64%	67%	68%	69%	74%
SA	**81%**	74%	65%	72%	76%	79%	79%	76%	79%	70%	84%
WA	**84%**	87%	84%	86%	82%	77%	75%	77%	84%	79%	83%

- Positive rating of the NSW Government has rebounded this week, with 67% rating the performance as very or quite good, up from 7% earlier in August.

- Positive rating of the Victorian Government remains steady at 47% over the past two weeks.

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Attitudes to latest Victorian restrictions (VICTORIA ONLY)

Q   On 6 September, Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews announced the state's roadmap for easing Covid-19 lockdown restrictions.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the updated restrictions?

TOTAL: AGREE	21/09	10/08
I have a good understanding of what I am and am not allowed to do under the current restrictions	**74%**	80%
The restrictions affecting my area seem appropriate	**60%**	67%
The restrictions affecting my area will be effective at stopping the spread of Covid-19	**64%**	63%
State & federal governments are doing enough to help people and businesses that are negatively affected by the restrictions	**40%**	54%
The changes won't have much impact on my own lifestyle	**45%**	46%

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VICTORIA ONLY	TOTAL: Agree	TOTAL: Disagree	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree, nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
I have a good understanding of what I am and am not allowed to do under the current restrictions	**74%**	**6%**	43%	31%	20%	2%	4%
The restrictions affecting my area seem appropriate	**60%**	**19%**	29%	31%	21%	9%	9%
The restrictions affecting my area will be effective at stopping the spread of Covid-19	**64%**	**10%**	29%	35%	26%	5%	5%
State & federal governments are doing enough to help people and businesses that are negatively affected by the restrictions	**40%**	**24%**	15%	26%	36%	16%	8%
The changes won't have much impact on my own lifestyle	**45%**	**32%**	20%	25%	23%	18%	15%

- 74% of Victorians agree they have a good understanding of what they are (and are not) allowed to do under the current restrictions, this hasn't changed significantly from the 80% who agreed earlier the lockdowns. 60% agree that the restrictions are appropriate and 64% agree that the restrictions are effective at stopping the spread of the virus.

- 40% agree that enough is being done to help people and businesses that are negatively affected by the restrictions, this is lower that the 54% who agreed last month.

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Attitudes towards Queensland border closure

Q To what extent do you support or oppose the Queensland state government decision to close its borders to Victoria, New South Wales and ACT to prevent the spread of Covid-19?

	Total	State				
		NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA
Strongly oppose	**13%**	20%	14%	10%	5%	1%
Somewhat oppose	**13%**	16%	13%	12%	7%	7%
Somewhat support	**31%**	34%	35%	20%	23%	31%
Strongly support	**36%**	23%	29%	50%	55%	54%
Unsure	**8%**	7%	10%	8%	9%	7%
TOTAL: Oppose	**25%**	36%	26%	22%	13%	8%
TOTAL: Support	**66%**	57%	64%	70%	78%	85%
Base (n)	**1,081**	352	274	212	85	104

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	Total	Gender		Age Group			Federal Voting Intention			
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Labor	Liberal + National	Greens	TOTAL: Other
Strongly oppose	**13%**	15%	10%	6%	11%	19%	9%	17%	8%	24%
Somewhat oppose	**13%**	15%	11%	14%	11%	14%	9%	18%	12%	15%
Somewhat support	**31%**	31%	30%	40%	29%	25%	35%	30%	32%	24%
Strongly support	**36%**	33%	39%	30%	39%	38%	39%	31%	40%	30%
Unsure	**8%**	7%	10%	10%	10%	5%	8%	4%	8%	7%
TOTAL: Oppose	**25%**	30%	22%	20%	22%	33%	17%	35%	20%	39%
TOTAL: Support	**66%**	64%	69%	70%	67%	62%	74%	61%	73%	54%
Base (n)	**1,081**	539	542	338	374	369	298	460	115	104

- Two-thirds (66%) of Australians support the closure of its internal borders. Support for the decision is high in Queensland (70%), WA (85%) and SA (78%) support is lower in NSW (57%).

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State of the economy

Q Overall, how would you describe the current state of the Australian economy?

	Sep'20	Sep'19	May'18	Nov'17	May'17	Dec'16
Very good	8%	5%	8%	3%	3%	2%
Quite good	16%	27%	31%	30%	27%	21%
Neither good, nor poor	30%	32%	32%	38%	36%	37%
Quite poor	32%	25%	18%	17%	23%	28%
Very poor	14%	8%	6%	7%	6%	8%
Unsure	2%	3%	5%	5%	5%	4%
NET: Good	23%	32%	39%	33%	30%	23%
NET: Poor	46%	33%	24%	24%	29%	36%
Base (n)	1,081	1,097	1,033	1,021	1,007	1,001

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	Total	Gender		Age		
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+
Very good	8%	11%	4%	9%	12%	1%
Quite good	16%	18%	13%	21%	16%	11%
Neither good, nor poor	30%	28%	31%	34%	30%	26%
Quite poor	32%	30%	33%	23%	29%	41%
Very poor	14%	12%	16%	9%	12%	20%
Unsure	2%	1%	2%	3%	1%	1%
NET: Good	23%	29%	17%	30%	28%	12%
NET: Poor	46%	42%	49%	33%	41%	61%
Base (n)	1,081	539	542	338	374	369

	Total	Federal Voting Intention			
		Labor	Coalition	Greens	Independent / Other
Very good	8%	4%	10%	7%	9%
Quite good	16%	13%	20%	13%	13%
Neither good, nor poor	30%	26%	29%	33%	29%
Quite poor	32%	38%	28%	34%	33%
Very poor	14%	18%	12%	12%	16%
Unsure	2%	1%	1%	2%	0%
NET: Good	23%	17%	30%	19%	22%
NET: Poor	46%	56%	39%	46%	49%
Base (n)	1,081	298	460	115	104

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- Rating of the state of the economy has fallen in the last year in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. Now 23% of people the state of the economy as very or quite good, down 9%pts from 32% last year. Over the same time those rating the economy as poor (very/quite) has increased from 33% to 46%.

- Those most pessimistic about the state of the economy include women (17% rating very/quite good, down from 30% last year), people aged over 55 (12%, down from 31% last year) Labor voters (17%) and Greens voters (19%).

- Rating of the economy among Coalition voters has dropped from 45% very/quite good in Sep'19 to 30% this year.

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Indictors of whether the Australian economy is in a good or poor state

Q Which of the following indicators do you think is the most important when thinking about whether the Australian economy is in a good or poor state?

	Sep'20	Sep'19
The unemployment rate	**39%**	25%
The cost of household bills	**13%**	22%
The value of the Australian dollar to international currencies	**12%**	13%
The amount of homeless people on the streets	**8%**	10%
The interest rate set by Reserve Bank of Australia	**6%**	9%
The gross domestic product per person	**7%**	8%
The consumer price index	**6%**	6%
The size of the national surplus	**6%**	6%
The number of new shops, restaurants and cafes opening	**3%**	2%
Base (n)	**1,081**	1,097

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	Total	Gender		Age		
		Male	**Female**	**18-34**	**35-54**	**55+**
The unemployment rate	**39%**	34%	44%	38%	42%	38%
The cost of household bills	**13%**	12%	14%	14%	14%	11%
The value of the Australian dollar to international currencies	**12%**	13%	10%	19%	9%	8%
The amount of homeless people on the streets	**8%**	10%	7%	9%	9%	7%
The interest rate set by Reserve Bank of Australia	**6%**	5%	6%	2%	7%	8%
The gross domestic product per person	**7%**	9%	5%	4%	6%	10%
The consumer price index	**6%**	8%	4%	8%	5%	5%
The size of the national surplus	**6%**	5%	8%	4%	5%	9%
The number of new shops, restaurants and cafes opening	**3%**	4%	3%	3%	3%	4%
Base (n)	**1,081**	539	542	338	374	369

- People rating the unemployment level as the key indicator for a healthy economy has increased in the past 12 months from 25% to 39% while the cost of household bills has fallen from 22% to 13%. All other indicators remain consistent.

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State of the economy in next six months

Q   How do you think the economy will look in the next six months?

	Total	Gender		Age		
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+
The economy will improve in the next six months	25%	29%	21%	27%	29%	20%
The economy will stay the same in the next six months	39%	37%	40%	43%	37%	37%
The economy will get worse in the next six months	36%	33%	39%	30%	35%	43%
Base (n)	1,081	539	542	338	374	369

	Total	Federal Voting Intention			
		Labor	Coalition	Greens	Independent / Other
The economy will improve in the next six months	25%	24%	31%	19%	19%
The economy will stay the same in the next six months	39%	35%	41%	38%	35%
The economy will get worse in the next six months	36%	40%	28%	43%	46%
Base (n)	1,081	298	460	115	104

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- A quarter of people expect the economy to improve in the next months, lower than the 36% who expect it to get worse. 39% do not expect any change.

- Older people aged over 55 are more likely than those aged 18-34 to expect the economy to get worse over the next six months (43% to 30%).

- 31% of Coalition voters think the economy will improve in the next six months, compared to 24% of Labor voters, 19% of Greens voters and 19% of independent/other minor party voters.

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Effectiveness of higher income earners tax cuts at stimulating the economy

Q The federal government is considering bringing forward tax cuts currently planned for 2022 which will give higher income earners much bigger tax cuts than those on lower incomes.

Which of these options do you most support?

	Total	Gender		Age Group			Federal Voting Intention			
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Labor	Liberal + National	Greens	TOTAL: Other
The government should bring forward these tax cuts to this year	**33%**	34%	31%	33%	41%	24%	28%	40%	26%	29%
The government should stick to the existing timetable of 2022	**29%**	31%	27%	40%	25%	24%	29%	31%	28%	26%
The government should scrap these tax cuts and spend the money on other priorities	**38%**	35%	42%	27%	34%	52%	43%	29%	46%	45%
Base (n)	**1,081**	539	542	338	374	369	298	460	115	104

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	Total	Household Income		
		TOTAL: Lower Income (Up to $51,999 per year)	TOTAL: Mid Income ($52,000-$103,999 per year)	TOTAL: Higher Income (More than $104,000 per year)
The government should bring forward these tax cuts to this year	**33%**	25%	29%	46%
The government should stick to the existing timetable of 2022	**29%**	24%	33%	27%
The government should scrap these tax cuts and spend the money on other priorities	**38%**	50%	37%	27%
Base (n)	**1,081**	359	318	317

- 33% would support a decision to fast-track tax cuts for high income earners from 2022 to 2020. 29% think the cuts should keep to the existing timetable of 2022, while 38% think they should be scrapped.

- Fast-tracking the tax cuts has greatest support among those with a high household income (46%), while only 25% of those in a household with a lower income, and 29% of people in a mid-income household.

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Effectiveness of higher income earners tax cuts at stimulating the economy

Q   Thinking about tax cuts which benefit higher income earners, which of the following statements is closer to your views?

	Total	Gender		Age Group			Federal Voting Intention			
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Labor	Liberal + National	Greens	TOTAL: Other
Tax cuts for higher income earners are very effective at stimulating the economy because people will spend the additional money	**21%**	24%	18%	23%	28%	13%	17%	27%	12%	20%
Tax cuts for higher income earners are only moderately effective at stimulating the economy because only some of the additional money will be spent	**41%**	41%	40%	52%	38%	33%	36%	45%	45%	38%
Tax cuts for higher income earners are not effective at stimulating the economy because people will save and not spend any additional money they receive	**38%**	35%	42%	25%	34%	54%	47%	28%	43%	42%
Base (n)	**1,081**	539	542	338	374	369	298	460	115	104

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	Total	Household Income		
		TOTAL: Lower Income (Up to $51,999 per year)	TOTAL: Mid Income ($52,000-$103,999 per year)	TOTAL: Higher Income (More than $104,000 per year)
Tax cuts for higher income earners are very effective at stimulating the economy because people will spend the additional money	**21%**	18%	24%	23%
Tax cuts for higher income earners are only moderately effective at stimulating the economy because only some of the additional money will be spent	**41%**	34%	39%	49%
Tax cuts for higher income earners are not effective at stimulating the economy because people will save and not spend any additional money they receive	**38%**	48%	37%	27%
Base (n)	**1,081**	359	318	317

- One in five people (21%) believe tax cuts for higher income earners are very effective at stimulating the economy. 41% think they are only moderately effective at stimulating the economy and 38% believe they are not effective.

- Even among living in household with an annual income of over $100k, just 23% think these tax cuts would be very effective at stimulating the economy, while 49% say they would be moderately effective and 27% say they would not be effective

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Priorities for upcoming Federal Budget

Q From the options below, which of the following initiatives should the government prioritise in the upcoming Federal Budget in October?

Please select your top three choices with 1 being the top priority, 2 being the second top priority and 3 being the third top priority.

TOTAL: TOP 3	Total	Gender		Age Group			Federal Voting Intention			
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Labor	Liberal + National	Greens	TOTAL: Other
Build more affordable housing	60%	57%	64%	60%	57%	64%	66%	54%	61%	56%
Invest in renewable energy projects	52%	53%	50%	45%	52%	56%	48%	51%	66%	54%
Invest in large-scale infrastructure projects (e.g. roads, transport networks, ports etc.)	48%	51%	45%	37%	47%	58%	41%	59%	26%	55%
Extend JobKeeper and JobSeeker payments at current rate	47%	47%	47%	52%	45%	45%	52%	39%	61%	44%
Directly fund jobs in aged care	41%	36%	46%	35%	37%	51%	41%	41%	35%	44%
Establish a universally accessible early learning system	27%	29%	25%	38%	31%	13%	29%	24%	33%	27%
Fast-track tax cuts for higher income earners	25%	28%	23%	33%	31%	13%	22%	31%	20%	21%
Base (n)	**1,081**	539	542	338	374	369	298	460	115	104

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- Building more affordable houses was the most selected issue, with 60% rating this as a Top 3 priority for the Government in the next budget. Investing in renewable energy (52%), investment in large-scale infrastructure (48%) and the extension of JobKeeper and JobKeeper (47%) also rated highly.

- Fast-tracking tax cuts was considered a Top 3 priority for 25% of people.

- Coalition voters were more likely to select investment in renewable energy (51%) than the fast-tracking of tax cuts for higher income earners (31%) as a priority issue. Investment in large-scale infrastructure (59%), build affordable housing (54%) and investment in renewables (51%) were the most selected priorities among Coalition voters.

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Support for loan system for aged care

Q The Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Assurance is investigating the current funding system for residential support and aged care. One suggestion for improvement is to introduce a loan scheme to pay for a person's care in retirement. The personal loan is paid off using the person's assets only after they die, with any outstanding loan amount covered by the government.

To what extent would you support or oppose this loan system for aged care if it were introduced?

	Total	Gender		Age Group			Federal Voting Intention			
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Labor	Liberal + National	Greens	TOTAL: Other
Strongly oppose	**12%**	12%	12%	7%	12%	17%	10%	9%	18%	23%
Somewhat oppose	**18%**	20%	16%	19%	18%	18%	22%	17%	22%	16%
Somewhat support	**37%**	40%	34%	43%	35%	33%	39%	41%	32%	27%
Strongly support	**11%**	13%	10%	13%	13%	8%	10%	16%	9%	5%
Unsure	**22%**	15%	28%	18%	23%	24%	19%	16%	19%	30%
TOTAL: Oppose	**30%**	32%	29%	25%	29%	35%	32%	27%	41%	38%
TOTAL: Support	**48%**	53%	44%	56%	47%	41%	49%	57%	41%	32%
Base (n)	**1,081**	539	542	338	374	369	298	460	115	104

- Just under half of people (48%) say they would support (somewhat/strongly) a change of funding for aged care to a loan-style system. Under a third opposed the idea (30%) and a further fifth (22%) were unsure.

- Younger people aged 18-34 were more supportive of the suggestion than those aged over 55 (56% to 41%). There was high support among Coalition voters (57%).

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Preferred energy sources for Government support

Q   As you may be aware, many of Australia's coal-fired power stations are reaching the end of their operational lives and will soon need to be replaced.

Which of the following would you prefer that the government supported?

	Total	Gender		Age Group			Federal Voting Intention			
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Labor	Liberal + National	Greens	TOTAL: Other
New coal-fired power stations	**15%**	19%	11%	15%	14%	15%	10%	20%	11%	24%
New gas-fired power stations	**15%**	21%	10%	13%	13%	19%	12%	20%	11%	13%
Renewable energy solutions (e.g. wind and solar)	**70%**	60%	79%	72%	73%	66%	78%	60%	78%	63%
Base (n)	**1,081**	539	542	338	374	369	298	460	115	104

-   The vast majority of people would prefer the Government supported renewable energy solutions ahead of coal or gas powered plants.

-   70% of people opted for renewable power, with just 15% each selecting gas and coal powered stations.

-   The preference for renewables was across all gender, age and voting demographics.

-   Those most supportive of renewable energy sources include women (79%), Labor voters (78%) and Greens voters (78%).The highest support for coal-fired power stations was among Coalition voters (20%), residents of NSW (20%) and people living in regional areas.

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Appendix: Household income definitions*

TOTAL: Lower Income	**Up to $51,999 per year** Total of all wages/salaries, government benefits, pensions, allowances and other income that your household usually receives (GROSS – before tax and superannuation deductions)
TOTAL: Mid Income	**$52,000 to $103,999 per year** Total of all wages/salaries, government benefits, pensions, allowances and other income that your household usually receives (GROSS – before tax and superannuation deductions)
TOTAL: Higher Income	**More than $104,000 per year** Total of all wages/salaries, government benefits, pensions, allowances and other income that your household usually receives (GROSS – before tax and superannuation deductions)

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 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 staff hold Australian Market and Social Research Society (AMSRS) membership and are bound by professional codes of behaviour.

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