



October 18, 2018

Mr Michael Williams

Partner

Gilbert + Tobin

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Dear Mr Williams,

Thanks for your instructions in this matter. Below is a brief report on the polling done by the Queensland government to determine public attitudes to the naming of the Queensland Children's Hospital.

[My background and expertise](#)

I am providing the report in my capacity as an expert in opinion polling and community consultation. I should also note that the Australian Institute for Progress ran a petition against the change in name of this institution, and that as part of that process we made public comments critical of the polling process.

I have been polling public attitudes to political issues since 1989. In 2001, along with Mike Kaiser, former State Secretary of the Australian Labor Party, I established a site for conducting qualitative polling using the Internet which formed the basis for commentary that we both did on ABC radio, as well as in various op-eds in major newspapers.

That qualitative polling is still ongoing, although Mike Kaiser is no longer involved with it.

www.aip.asn.au

The Australian Institute for Progress exists to advance the discussion, development and implementation of public policy for Australia's future, from its base in Brisbane. The future does not look after itself.

The Australian Institute for Progress, under its previous name as The National Forum, also designed, built and administered public consultations and online petitions and polls for commercial clients. The current petition system used by the Brisbane City Council was designed and built by us.

First poll conducted by the Queensland state government

It is difficult to comment on the first poll conducted by the Queensland state government because I do not have a copy of the report, and I was not one of the respondents. I have been supplied with a media release from the minister (attached), as well as a copy of an email response to some questions from Channel 7 (attached).

The release says that the survey showed:

1. Almost 90% of parents said it was “important” or “really important” that Queensland have a specialized children’s public health hospital.
2. Just under half (49%) of Queensland parents know that Lady Cilento Children’s Hospital is a public hospital.
3. 23% believe Lady Cilento Children’s Hospital is a private hospital.

The email further reveals:

1. The sample consisted of 976 Queenslanders who were parents of a child aged 0 to 16, and 500 Queenslanders who were not parents of a child in that age bracket. That the percentages in the release are probably the responses of the 976 respondents with children aged between 0 and 16, rather than the whole sample.

Normally in a case like this I would expect that the report, along with the questions asked, would have been made public. Without that report it is impossible to know:

1. Why the panel was composed as it was – a split of 976 and 500 seems unorthodox.
2. How the survey was conducted – telephone, internet, or face to face.

3. How the panel was selected. Was it a random group from the community, and if so what were the geographical constraints? How do the demographics of the sample match those of the community? Was it an opt-in sample?
4. What the actual wording of the questions were, and whether they were worded impartially.
5. What answer options were available for each question. From the report it would appear that a 5 point Likert scale was used for the question asking whether the respondent thought the hospital was public or private, but I can't be certain of that without seeing a report.
6. What other questions were asked that have not been reported, and what the response to them was, and why they were asked, and why they were not reported.

Other issues that arise from this survey which I cannot answer, but could be important are:

1. What was the purpose of this survey? The question asking how important a children's hospital is doesn't seem to be related to the issue of the name of the hospital, or whether parents know that it is a public hospital, suggesting that this poll may have been conducted for some entirely different reason.
2. What is the benchmark against which the knowledge of whether the hospital is public or not is to be judged. We know that 49% know it is public and 23% don't. What are the comparable figures for other hospitals in Queensland? Is the Queensland Children's Hospital's status less understood than its peers? It might be that these are typical figures for a public hospital.

Second poll conducted by the Queensland state government

I have good knowledge of this poll because as part of the campaign that we ran I completed it 3 times. There are a lot of problems with this poll, and I would recommend that a copy of the server logs be obtained, as well as the database file, to check its robustness. The state government software is substandard, and there was little care and attention given to the consultation by those who set up the page.

Specific issues are:

1. The poll allowed multiple voting. I voted three times, and asked for a confirmation twice. The confirmations are attached and show that they were received 2 minutes apart.
2. The minister claims in a tweet that I have attached that there were 38,681 respondents, and that 62% supported renaming the hospital. The number of responses seems far too high. This was an online-only consultation with minimal publicity. I only found the link by accessing the minister's media release – not something most members of the community would do. To put that in perspective, Cherish Life, a pro-life organisation, managed to get only 23,879 signatures on a petition on the Queensland parliament's website against the abortion bill which the parliament has just passed. In my experience it would be easier to get signatures on an anti-abortion bill than on a consultation about changing the name of something like a hospital.
3. Another pointer to the accuracy of the poll, and its potential manipulation, is that the *Courier Mail* ran an online poll asking "Should the name of the Lady Cilento Children's Hospital be changed?" It received approximately 4,500 responses which were 18% in favour, and 82% against. This is a much smaller response rate than the governments, and the results are more than completely opposed. All other things being equal, the maximum sampling error of a properly constructed sample of 4,500 would be 1.46%, while that for a sample of 38,681 is 0.5%. They are both opt-in surveys, but in my experience opt-in surveys are not generally this far apart in their results. One, or both, is likely to have been manipulated, and this makes the matter worth investigating.
4. It was well-known that multiple voting was possible. We pointed it out in a media release (attached), and Courier Mail State Political Editor Steve Wardill pointed it out in a tweet (attached).
5. Points 1, 2, 3 and 4 lead to a suspicion that there was an organised campaign with some individuals voting many times over. This can be checked. The server logs should show the IP addresses, plus browsers and operating systems of respondents. These can be used to build a picture of whether significant amounts of multiple voting occurred or not. Depending on how the survey database was

configured, the data file of responses may also have IP details which could be used to check for multiple voting.

6. The consultation was not carefully set-up. It invites comments, but there was no comment field (see attached image). Further carelessness can be seen from the passage in the confirmation email that reads: "The information you provide on this form will only be used for the purpose of informing the State Government's final position on [name of consultation]", as well as the forward slashes next to the apostrophes in the proposition at the top, and the lack of full contact details at the bottom. Obviously not all of the database had been set-up properly, and no one had checked the live site properly to detect any issues.
7. Best practice is for respondents to be required to register to participate, using an email address. There should be at least a two-step registration process where the system sends an email to the email address provided containing a confirmation link to be clicked by the respondent to complete the registration process. To see an example of this best practice you can go to another Queensland government consultation which has appropriate safeguards and is being run by the Department of Housing and Public Works
<https://www.yoursayhpw.engagementhq.com/RentingInQLD>.
8. The question asked by the state government poll didn't mention Lady Cilento at all. It asked "Do you support renaming Queensland's specialist children's public hospital to Queensland Children's Hospital?" This is not a clear statement. It's not clear what the name of the hospital is, and it might appear that it is actually the "Queensland Specialist Children's Public Hospital". And it omits the fact that a name change will entail removing Lady Cilento's name from the hospital. The phrasing of the question would have the likely effect of increasing the number of people prepared to say yes, although, as only fairly motivated respondents would have got to the survey, the effect would probably be very modest.

Conclusion

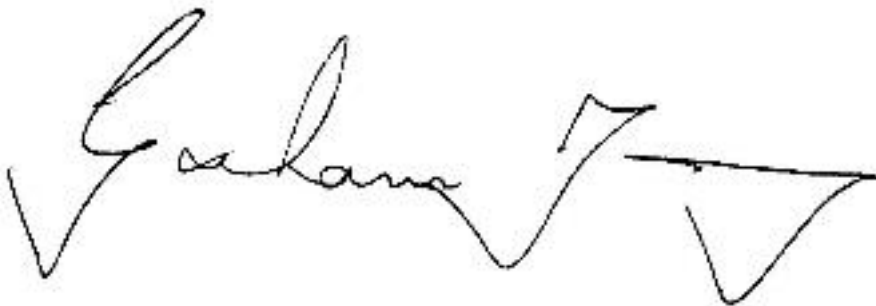
It is impossible to tell whether the first survey was properly conducted, or even what the quoted results really mean. I can think of no reason why the government could not make the survey instrument and the full report available. If they fail to do that, then it brings

the quoted results into disrepute. No professional researcher would accept results without seeing the survey instrument and the methodology, as well as all of the results.

The second survey was poorly designed and conducted. For it to have any validity the server logs, and the data file need to be examined to determine whether multiple voting occurred on a significant number of occasions. I am unaware of any reason why the government could not provide these details to you, as long as the data file records were de-identified by removing names and email addresses from them.

If you need to discuss anything further with me, please call me on 0411 104 801, or email me at graham.young@aip.asn.au.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Graham Young', followed by a stylized flourish or checkmark.

GRAHAM YOUNG

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR