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Media release

For comment, please contact

Clive Hamilton (02) 6162 4140 0413 993 223 (mob)

Josh Fear (02) 6162 4140 0403 424 866 (mob)

Do Politicians Deserve To Go To Heaven?

If perceived moral standing ensures a ticket to the after-life, some Australian politicians will need to do some fast talking when they arrive at the pearly gates, according to research by the Australia Institute.

A survey of Australian attitudes as to who deserves to go to heaven found even the lead contender among six prominent politicians could muster only 74 per cent support among those who expressed a view. On the same basis, the second highest candidate scored only 66 per cent.

Results of the survey are contained in a paper entitled *Do Politicians Deserve To Go To Heaven? Public Attitudes to Prominent Australians* by Dr Clive Hamilton and Josh Fear from the public interest think tank The Australia Institute.

Releasing the paper today, Dr Hamilton said Australians believe that, of the politicians included in the survey, Labor's environment spokesperson Peter Garrett most deserves to go to heaven, with 74 per cent of respondents who expressed a view indicating that he deserves that fate and 26 per cent saying he does not.

Greens leader Bob Brown scored next highest, with a score of 66 per cent, followed by Opposition leader Kevin Rudd on 61 per cent. Former One Nation leader Pauline Hanson and Health Minister Tony Abbott seem equally likely to go to heaven, with a score of 52 per cent, while Prime Minister John Howard attracted the lowest figure, with 47 per cent saying he deserves to go to heaven and 53 per cent saying he does not.

"This survey shows most Australians believe in heaven or some form of life after death, so asking whether a politician deserves to go to heaven is a fair summary measure of the public's assessment of their personal moral standing," Dr Hamilton said.

The survey was conducted by research company Pollinate and was based on a random sample of 928 respondents aged between 18 to 64 years.

"Some of the most interesting differences in survey responses are associated with voting intention," Dr Hamilton said. "Peter Garrett and Bob Brown generate a high level of agreement across the political divide. Among Coalition voters who expressed a view, 65 per cent said Peter Garrett deserved to go to heaven and 64 per cent said Bob Brown did."

"But while 60 per cent of Coalition voters said Kevin Rudd deserves a heavenly afterlife, only 29 per cent of Labor voters would give Saint Peter a reference for John Howard."

The paper can be read on the Institute's website - www.tai.org.au