Pickering and Liberals locked in close contest as Labor vote collapses in Pakenham: TKW/DemosAU poll

- One Nation's Victorian leader Warren Pickering leads the primary vote in Pakenham on 40%, ahead of Liberal candidate Radmila Dyson on 24% and Labor's Alessandra Soliven on 14%
- After preferences, Mr Pickering and Ms Dyson are tied 50–50, with Labor out of contention in a seat it currently holds

Labor is on track to lose the outer south-east Melbourne seat of Pakenham, with One Nation leader Warren Pickering and the Liberals' Radmila Dyson locked in a dead heat, according to a new TKW/DemosAU poll.

Labor won Pakenham by less than one percentage point after preferences at the 2022 election. Sitting Labor MP Emma Vulin is not recontesting the seat at the 28 November election.

The poll of 484 Pakenham voters, conducted from Wednesday 4 to Sunday 8 November 2026, shows Mr Pickering on 40% of the primary vote, ahead of Ms Dyson on 24%, Ms Soliven on 14% and Greens candidate Nasser Yawari on 13%. Independent Raymond French was on 3%, and other candidates on 6% combined.

A further 6% of voters were undecided and 5% declined to say. Both groups are excluded from these figures.

Labor's primary vote is down almost 20 points on the 33.9% Ms Vulin won in 2022, while One Nation's is up from 3.4%. The Liberal vote is down from 32.4% and the Greens' is up from 6.6%.

On a two-candidate preferred basis, Mr Pickering and Ms Dyson are tied 50–50, DemosAU's model of respondent allocated preferences taken **across its recent Victorian polls**, with Labor and Greens preferences set to decide the seat,

More than two in five voters (43%) said they could still change their mind. Mr Pickering's supporters were the most firmly decided, with 64% saying their vote was locked in.

The poll revealed a sharp gender divide. Mr Pickering won 49% of the primary vote among men and leads Ms Dyson 57–43 among men after preferences. Among women, Ms Dyson leads by the same 57–43 margin.

Mr Pickering was strongest among voters aged 50 to 64, winning 56% of their primary vote, while Ms Dyson led among those aged 65 and over on 42%.

Mr Pickering and Opposition Leader Jess Wilson were tied as preferred Premier among Pakenham voters on 33% each, with Premier Ben Carroll on 22%.

Mr Pickering was the only leader or local candidate tested with more voters viewing him favourably (28%) than unfavourably (25%). Just 8% viewed Mr Carroll favourably, while 42% viewed him unfavourably. Ms Wilson was evenly split at 24% favourable and 24% unfavourable.

Ms Dyson (14% favourable, 20% unfavourable) and Ms Soliven (10% favourable, 28% unfavourable) were less well known, with 22% and 18% respectively saying they had never heard of them.

Almost three in four voters (73%) said Victoria was heading in the wrong direction, compared with 19% who said it was heading in the right direction.

Cost of living was the most important election issue for Pakenham voters (34%), followed by crime and community safety (15%) and state finances, debt and spending (11%), according to analysis of an open-ended question.

More than half (56%) said crime in their local area had got worse over the past year, and 73% said youth bail laws should be made tougher.

On the Suburban Rail Loop, 47% said it should be paused or cancelled and the money spent on other priorities, while 39% said it should continue as planned.

Labor also faces a hard ceiling in the seat: 38% of voters said they would never consider voting Labor, compared with 28% for One Nation and 17% for the Liberal Party.

Quotes Attributable to TKW Chief Executive Paul Jamrozik:

“On these numbers, Pakenham is no longer a Labor contest. Only one in seven voters is backing Labor, and of those who voted Labor at last year’s federal election, only about a third are sticking with the party here.

“Pakenham is a young, fast-growing community with one of the highest shares of mortgage holders in the state. When a third of voters name cost of living as their top issue and three in four say Victoria is heading in the wrong direction, it’s not hard to see why voters are looking elsewhere.

“Crime is the other big story. More than half of Pakenham voters told us crime in their local area has got worse over the past year, and nearly three in four want youth bail laws made tougher. Both Mr Pickering and the Liberals are speaking directly to those concerns.

“This is a snapshot of how Pakenham voters were feeling as recently as Sunday, not a prediction. More than two in five say they could still change their mind, and with preferences set to decide the result, this seat is genuinely too close to call.

“Getting a seat poll right means talking to the people who actually live there. We spoke to 484 Pakenham voters by telephone, which gives us a genuine cross-section of the electorate. We funded this poll ourselves because voters in marginal seats deserve independent, transparent information.”

Quotes Attributable to DemosAU Head of Research George Hasanakos:

“In an election where the state Coalition is headed for a strong result, One Nation should be very happy with Warren Pickering’s strong primary vote in this poll at 40%. This result puts One Nation with a decent chance of victory without a favourable preference flow.

“While the Liberals Radmila Dyson is only polling 24%, down 8 points on the 2022 state election result, she is still in the race thanks to the bulk of the remaining vote being held by Labor, Green and Victorian Socialists who will likely flow strongly away from One Nation to the Liberals when they are distributed.

“While having a higher profile as One Nation’s state leader has helped Warren Pickering with to a strong result in this poll, One Nation should be heartened that they are doing very well after only a few months after Pickering entered the Pakenham race.

“It is possible that Pickering’s leadership status makes this result atypical, it is also possible that One Nation may do well in other outer metro and regional seats with no Coalition incumbent.

“However, One Nation will need to poll around 40% in a seat and hold a large lead over the Coalition, to hope to win without significant preference flows to it.”