

# NSW BUREAU OF CRIME STATISTICS AND RESEARCH: INFORMATION SERVICE POLICY

One of the primary functions of the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research is to provide a timely and comprehensive information service on crime and criminal justice issues. This document outlines the policy governing access to information from the Bureau and the procedures that Bureau staff must follow when responding to requests for information.

## Essential summary

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The NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research offers an information service for clients who want information about crime and criminal justice issues. This document explains:

- When the service is available;
- The types of published and unpublished data held by the Bureau;
- Restrictions applying to data that are subject to special conditions;
- Timeframes for responding to requests;
- The cost of data extracted by the Bureau; and
- Payment procedures if purchasing for data to be extracted by the Bureau.

Printed copies of this document may not be up to date.  
Ensure you have the latest version before using this document.

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# 1 Scope

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This document outlines the policies governing the provision of information by staff at the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research. It aims to provide a broad overview of the types of information available from the Bureau and the restrictions on access to some types of data held by the Bureau. All Bureau staff members who have an active role in the provision of statistical information must read and comply with the provisions set out in this document. Clients of the Bureau should read this document if they require clarification of the procedures followed by Bureau information service staff.

## 2 Purpose

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This document is intended to standardise the procedures for provision of information, including:

- How the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research responds to requests for information;
- The timeframes for responding to requests for information;
- The cost associated with the extraction of some types of data sourced from the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research; and
- Restrictions on accessing some types of data the Bureau holds.

## 3 Definitions

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**Bureau** means NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research.

**Client** means a client of the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research.

**COPS** stands for the Computerised Operational Policing System, the computer system used by the NSW Police Force to record crime.

**Crime and Justice Bulletins** are a series of research papers published by the Bureau.

**Crime hotspot boundaries** are spatial data files representing areas of NSW with a relatively high crime density, that is, the number of criminal incidents per 50 square metres.

**Data cubes** are query tools that provide summarised reports that draw on NSW recorded crime or criminal court data.

**Digital spatial crime data** consists of geographically referenced crime data that can be mapped in a Geographic Information System (GIS).

**LGAs** are Local Government Areas.

**Powerplay** is business intelligence software produced by IBM Cognos that the Bureau uses to query databases to produce summary information on crime and criminal justice issues.

The **Re-offending Database** is a research database developed by the Bureau that uses matching algorithms to link all court appearances by the same individual since 1994.

**Unit record data** means the data are provided at an individualised level, rather than an aggregated or summary level.

## 4 Availability of information service

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Information requests are answered between 9am and 5pm on weekdays, excluding public holidays. The Information Officer handles most requests for information. They can be contacted on (02) 8346 1100 or at [bcsr@justice.nsw.gov.au](mailto:bcsr@justice.nsw.gov.au).

Depending upon the requirements and facilities available to the client, the required information may be provided in several ways: complete reports can be provided in hard copy, the Bureau can fax, email or mail specific material, information can be accessed from the Bureau website, or the client may be referred to a library.

Information Officers are required to undertake training in disability and flexible service delivery and reasonable adjustments can be made, on request, to accommodate the needs of persons with a disability.

## 5 Bureau publications

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The Bureau produces several types of published reports, including quarterly and annual recorded crime data, annual criminal court data and ad hoc research reports dealing with crime and criminal justice issues.

All recent publications can be downloaded free of charge in PDF format from the Bureau website ([www.bocsar.nsw.gov.au](http://www.bocsar.nsw.gov.au)).

Examples of publications available for download include:

- All annual *Recorded Crime Statistics* publications since 1997;
- All quarterly *Recorded Crime Statistics* updates since 2004;
- All annual *Criminal Court Statistics* publications from 1997 to 2017 (replaced by web-site [tables](#) from 2018);
- All quarterly *Custody Statistics* updates since 2013
- All Crime and Justice Bulletins published since 1990; and

If the client does not have access to the Internet, they can contact the Bureau on (02) 8346 1100.

Charges apply to some reports and postage and handling costs will apply if the client requires the information to be sent to them via regular mail. The following table summarises the cost associated with Bureau publications (all prices are inclusive of GST):

ITEM	COST
Crime and Justice Bulletins and Alcohol Studies Bulletins	Free (+ \$5.50 for postage and handling for the first item, then an additional \$2 per item to a maximum of \$13.50)
General, Legislative and Statistical Report Series published 2001-present	\$22.00 plus GST per report (+ \$5.50 postage and handling for the first item, then an additional \$2 per item to a maximum of \$13.50)
General, Legislative and Statistical Report Series published 1990-2000	\$11.00 plus GST per report (+ \$5.50 postage and handling for the first item, then an additional \$2 per item to a maximum of \$13.50)
General, Legislative, Statistical and Key Trend Report Series published pre-1990	Free (+ \$5.50 for postage and handling for the first item, then an additional \$2 per item to a maximum of \$13.50)

## 6 Data available from the Bureau website

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The Bureau makes significant quantities of crime and court data available on the Bureau website ([www.bocsar.nsw.gov.au](http://www.bocsar.nsw.gov.au)). Examples of information available on the Bureau website include:

- Information about crime, offenders and victims by area, suburb or postcode, with output by report, map or graph (using the "Crime Mapping Tool")
- How the crime rate for a given LGA ranks in comparison to other NSW LGAs (using the 'LGA ranking tool');
- Crime trends for the last 10 years, current to the most recent quarter of the current year (using the 'crime trends tool');
- Data on specific categories of crime, including the types of premises on which incidents occurred (using the 'specific crime tool');
- LGA tables showing the number and rate (per 100,000 population) of recorded criminal incidents, by the LGA in which they occurred; and
- Summary information on cases finalised in Local and Higher Courts, including number of persons charged, penalties imposed, persons sentenced to prison and the number of Apprehended Violence Orders granted;
- Research datasets containing information on all criminal incidents recorded by NSW Police from 1995, presented by offence type, month and Local Government Area.

During standard working hours (see section 4) the Information Officer will be available to advise on the suitability of different statistics or to assist clients in locating information on the website.

The Bureau aims to complete 95 per cent of such requests within one working day and 100 per cent of such requests within two working days.

Reports and/or data that are available for download from the website are provided free of charge to all clients.

## **7 Limited supply of published data by facsimile, email, regular mail or in person**

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Where a client does not have access to the Internet, the Information Officer may print out relevant tables from the website or from Bureau publications and send them to the client.

The volume of material available by these means is strictly limited to the following:

- The executive summary of any of the Bureau's publications;
- Up to three tables from the Bureau's *Statistical Report Series*;
- Up to two LGA tables.

In excess of these, the client must purchase the relevant publication(s) or pay for the data to be extracted from data cubes (see section 8) or from Bureau databases by an Analyst/Programmer (see section 9).

The Bureau aims to complete 95 per cent of such requests within one working day and 100 per cent of such requests within two working days.

Alternatively, the client may come to the Bureau's office (Level 1, Henry Deane Building, 20 Lee Street, Sydney) and take notes from published reports. If the client wishes to photocopy pages of the reports, the same rules outlining the volume of information (see above) will apply.

Data provided by facsimile, email or in person will be provided free of charge. Information sent by regular mail will incur postage and handling fees of \$5.50 (incl. GST).

## **8 Data available from data cubes**

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Some commonly requested data items are accessible via 'data cubes' created by the Bureau using Powerplay software. Examples of data that might be obtained via Powerplay requests include:

- Types of weapons involved in criminal incidents;
- Time of day or day of the week on which incidents were reported;
- Age and gender of alleged victims and offenders recorded by police in relation to criminal incidents;

- Number of charges in Local Courts under specific sections of criminal legislation;
- Age, gender and Indigenous status of persons found guilty in NSW courts.

If a client's Powerplay data request is complex or unclear, the client will be asked to submit the request in writing (either by post, email, facsimile or in person).

In most cases, if the required data is contained within one of the Powerplay data cubes, the request will be progressed using Powerplay. If, however, the request is particularly large, a programming query will be written by a statistical programmer to extract the data. The procedures for programming requests are outlined in section 9.

The Bureau aims to complete 95 per cent of Powerplay requests within two working days and 100 per cent within three working days. Where there is any uncertainty as to the nature of the required data, the client will be asked to clarify the request in writing. The timeframe for provision of information begins once the request has been clearly specified.

All Powerplay requests will be charged as per the programming costs outlined in section 9.

## **9 Data available from programming**

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Where summary statistics are not available from a Powerplay data cube but can be compiled from a Bureau database, the client may be able to obtain the data via statistical programming. Examples of information that might be available via statistical programming include:

- Types of goods stolen in theft offences;
- Types of motor vehicles stolen;
- Number of persons charged with specific offences by the outcome of those charges;
- Types of injuries inflicted against victims in the commission of offences.

If programming is required, the request must be submitted in writing (either by post, facsimile, email or in person). Where available, details of the client's contact telephone, email address and postal address for invoicing (if applicable) should be provided. If the written request is not clear, the client will be asked to clarify the request.



The Bureau aims to complete 95 per cent of such requests within 10 working days and 100 per cent within 15 working days. Where there is any uncertainty as to the nature of the required data, the client will be asked to clarify the request in writing. The timeframe for provision of information begins once the request has been clearly specified.

Data from Powerplay requests or statistical programming are provided free of charge to State Government agencies and other individuals or organisations collaborating with the Bureau in research.

For all other clients of the Bureau, data from Powerplay or statistical programming taking longer than 30 minutes to extract will incur a minimum charge of \$500 plus GST. Any request taking longer than two hours will incur an additional charge of \$250 per hour (or part thereof). Programming time includes time spent by the principal programmer extracting the data and the time spent by the secondary programmer checking the request.

## **10 Requests subject to special conditions**

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Data are subject to special conditions if they are (a) required at a geographic level below that of LGA, (b) requested frequently or (c) may be used to identify specific persons or incidents. The following subsections outline the procedures that apply to data subject to special conditions.

### **10.1 Postcode and suburb level data**

Local Government Area data is the standard geographic unit used by the Bureau. In cases where Local Government Area data is not adequate postcode and suburb data can be provided if the data does not pose any privacy concerns. Information requests for postcode data are charged at the same rate as other data requests.

### **10.2 Other units of aggregation**

In limited circumstances, aggregated data can be made available from the Bureau's Criminal Incidents Geodatabase at a level of geographic aggregation other than postcode or LGA. Such requests must be made in writing. These data are only available for certain types of offences and will only be released with the approval of the Executive Director or Director. The conditions for release of data below the level of LGA are described in section 10.5.

The same time standards and costs that apply to the provision of spatial data (see section 10.5) apply to requests involving data aggregated at a level other than postcode or LGA.

### **10.3 Victim and offender data from the COPS database**

When victims report crimes to the police or when police record the details of alleged offenders on the COPS database they expect their details to be kept confidential.

Except as provided for under the Bureau's Privacy Code of Practice (<https://www.bocsar.nsw.gov.au/Documents/codeofpractice.doc>) Bureau staff are bound by the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998*. This Act prohibits the unauthorised release of personal information.

Data relating to small numbers of cases will not be released without the permission of the Executive Director or Director.

When permission is granted to release this information, particular care will be taken to protect the identity of individuals. As a general rule, time periods with between 1 and 4 victims are not publicly released.

Offender data is limited to only those alleged offenders legally proceeded against by Police. An alleged offender may be proceeded against to court by way of a Court Attendance Notice or proceeded against other than to court by way of a warning, infringement notice, caution or Youth Justice Conference.

If permission is given to access victim and offender data and the data are available via Powerplay data cubes, the Powerplay timeframes will apply. If this information can only be accessed via statistical programming, the timeframes associated with programming requests will apply.

For both Powerplay and programming requests, programming time will be charged at \$500 plus GST if the request will take longer than 30 minutes, plus \$250 for each hour (or part thereof) of programming time in excess of two hours. Programming time includes time spent by the principal programmer extracting the data and the time spent by the secondary programmer checking the request.

### **10.4 Unit record data**

There are special conditions governing access to unit record information held in the Bureau's Re-offending Database (ROD). These are set out in the policy document entitled '[Guidelines and form to access unit-record Reoffending data](#)' also located on this website.

The Bureau aims to complete 95 per cent of standard programming requests within 10 working days and 100 per cent within 15 working days. The Bureau aims to complete 95 per cent of complex requests, such as those that involve record linkage, within 15 working days and 100 per cent within 20 working days.

If a request involves the provision of unit record data, the data will be provided free of charge to State Government agencies and other individuals or organisations collaborating with the Bureau in research.

## 10.5 Digital spatial data and maps

Spatial crime data, including crime hotspot boundaries, incident point maps, and digital spatial data (longitude and latitude coordinates) may be made available under certain circumstances from the Bureau's Criminal Incidents Geodatabase. All requests for spatial crime data must be made in writing and require the approval of the Executive Director or Director.

The following requirements apply when requesting digital spatial data and maps:

1. Maps containing crime hotspot boundaries are only available on the condition that they are presented at a level of aggregation that cannot identify individual victims;
2. Crime maps produced by the Bureau must be sourced to the Bureau in any published reports or documents where those maps are reproduced;
3. Incident point maps and digital spatial data will not be made available for offences against the person (e.g. domestic violence-related assault) occurring on residential dwellings;
4. Incident point maps and digital spatial data will only be provided to State and Federal Government agencies where there is a clear public benefit from the release of such information and where the agency or agencies sign the undertaking provided in Section 17;
5. Incident point maps and digital spatial data will only be made available to bona fide researchers if they have ethics committee clearance from a recognised university or research institute to use the data for the purposes prescribed in the request.
6. Incident point maps and maps created from raw digital spatial data must not be reproduced in any publication or passed on to any third party without the express consent of the Executive Director or Director.

## 11 Summary of timeframes for completion of requests

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The Bureau aims to provide a timely and accurate information service for clients. The following table summarises the timeframe within which officers at the Bureau aim to complete requests for data. Where there is any uncertainty as to the nature of the required data, the timeframes summarised below begin once the request has been clearly specified. Any amendments to data requests (other than those arising from error on the part of the Bureau) will result in the timeframe being reset to the date of the amendment.

ITEM	TIMEFRAME
Publications/ data from the website	95% within one working day 100% within two working days
Limited supply of published data via facsimile, email, regular mail or in person	95% within one working day 100% within two working days
Data from Powerplay data cubes	95% within two working days 100% within three working days
Data from statistical programming, unit record and re-offending data	95% within 10 working days 100% within 15 working days
Complex programming requests (e.g. record linkage)	95% within 15 working days 100% within 20 working days
Digital spatial data, including hotspots, incident point maps and digital spatial data	95% within 15 working days 100% within 20 working days

## 12 Summary of cost structure of Bureau data

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### 12.1 Pricing principles

- The Bureau is committed to providing open access through its website to key crime and justice statistics.
- The Bureau will only charge a fee for data where its provision consumes significant staff resources.
- The Bureau will seek over time to increase the range of data made available on its website.

### 12.2 Charges

- Data requests that can be answered using the website are free.
- Data requests taking up to 30 minutes are free.
- The minimum charge for a data request taking longer than 30 minutes but up to 2 hours to complete is \$500 plus GST.
- All data requests taking longer than two hours will incur an additional charge of \$250 plus GST per hour (or part thereof).
- Requests for updates of data within 3 months of the original request may incur the minimum fee of \$500 plus GST.
- All charges are inclusive of GST.
- Charges are based on Australian Bureau of Statistics rates for information consultancy services which accord with Australian Government cost recovery guidelines.

### 12.3 Charging exemptions

The following agencies/individuals are exempt from charging:

- State Government agencies
- Members of Parliament
- Students who are doing placements with NSW Government agencies

- Other individuals or organisations collaborating with the Bureau in research

## 12.4 Publications

PDF versions of recent publications can be downloaded without charge from the Bureau's website ([www.bocsar.nsw.gov.au](http://www.bocsar.nsw.gov.au)).

If hard copies of Bureau publications are required, the following costs will apply to all clients of the Bureau:

ITEM	COST
Crime and Justice Bulletins, Alcohol Studies Bulletins	Free (but add \$5.50 for postage and handling for the first item, then an additional \$2 per item to a maximum of \$13.50)
General, Legislative and Statistical Report Series published 2000-present	\$22.00 plus GST per report (+ \$5.50 postage and handling for the first item, then an additional \$2 per item to a maximum of \$13.50)
General, Legislative and Statistical Report Series published 1990-1999	\$11.00 plus GST per report (+ \$5.50 postage and handling for the first item, then an additional \$2 per item to a maximum of \$13.50)
General, Legislative, Statistical and Key Trend Report Series published pre-1990	Free (but add \$5.50 for postage and handling for the first item, then an additional \$2 per item to a maximum of \$13.50)

## 12.5 Any information sent via regular mail

Information sent by regular mail will incur postage and handling fees of \$5.50.

## 12.6 Costs of computing requests

The following table outlines the costs associated with data requests that require computing. The programming time includes time spent by the principal programmer extracting the data and the time spent by the secondary programmer checking the request.

ITEM	COST
Powerplay requests	No charge if a request takes less than 30 minutes.
Computer programming – COPS data, court data, unit record data  Digital spatial data, raw point data, maps displaying incident point data or hotspots	A minimum charge for a request taking longer than 30 minutes but up to 2 hours to complete is \$500 plus GST.  Any request taking longer than two hours will incur an additional charge of \$250 plus GST per hour (or part thereof)

## 13 Payment procedures

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When paying for publications and/or data requiring computer programming, the following applies:

- Clients can be invoiced for their purchase. If the client wishes to receive an invoice, the client should indicate in writing that he or she agrees to pay the charge and should provide a postal address. The Bureau will arrange an invoice from the Finance section of the Department of Communities and Justice.
- Alternatively, clients can make payment prior to, or at the time that they receive the product. Payment can be made by cash, selected credit cards or by cheque. Clients may provide credit cards details by telephone. A receipt will be provided.

## **14 Requests from specific categories of clients**

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### **14.1 Requests from the media**

Limited supplies of published reports are provided to the media at no cost. The quantities supplied are to be determined by the Executive Director or Director.

Unpublished data may be made available, subject to the costs structures set out in section 12, at the discretion of the Executive Director and/or Director.

In order to facilitate informed public debate about crime and criminal justice issues, any unpublished data given to the media may also be given to other media outlets, the relevant Government departments and/or Ministerial officers.

The Executive Director or Director will respond to all requests for comment to the media.

### **14.2 Requests from consultants**

Irrespective of whether a consultant is employed by a Government agency, requests for publications or data requiring statistical programming will be charged according to non-Government agency rates.

Data access provisions for consultants will be the same as those that apply to the agency for which they are consulting. For example, consultants who have been contracted by a government agency will be given access to incident point maps and/or digital spatial data if the data are requested by the government agency and if there is a clear public benefit from the release of such information. In such situations, both the government agency and the consultant are required to sign the undertaking in Section 17 and both parties will be deemed to be responsible for any breach of that undertaking.

### **14.3 Requests from students on placement with NSW Government agencies**

Students who are on placement with NSW Government agencies who request data requiring statistical programming will be exempt from standard charges.



Data access provisions for students will be the same as those that apply to the agency for which they are on placement. For example, students who are on placement with a NSW Government agency will be given access to incident point maps and/or digital spatial data if the data are requested by the Government agency and if there is a clear public benefit from the release of such information. In such situations, both the Government agency and the student are required to sign the undertaking in Section 17 and both parties will be deemed to be responsible for any breach of that undertaking.

#### **14.4 Requests from students and academics doing grant-funded research projects**

Irrespective of whether a project is supported by a NSW Government agency, requests for data requiring statistical programming will be charged according to non-Government agency rates.

Data access provisions for grant-funded research projects will be the same as those that apply to non-Government agencies.

## **15 Acknowledgement and referencing of data**

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Data sourced from the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research must be acknowledged in any document (electronic or otherwise) containing that data. The acknowledgement should take the form of **Source: NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research.**

## **16 References**

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Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research Privacy Code of Practice:  
<https://www.bocsar.nsw.gov.au/Documents/codeofpractice.doc>

*Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 No 133*  
<http://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/maintop/scanact/inforce/NONE/0>

## 17 Undertaking by Non-Employees of the Bureau

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I, \_\_\_\_\_ acknowledge the following conditions on the use of the data provided by the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, NSW Department of Communities and Justice:

1. Data are to be used solely for the declared purpose for which they have been requested.
2. Analysis, results and findings derived from the data will not present individual cases or small numbers that may allow the identification of individuals.
3. Data will be sourced to the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research in any published report.
4. A copy of any resulting research report is to be provided to the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research at least one week prior to publication.
5. Data obtained as part of this study will be kept on a password protected computer server for a period of seven years and then destroyed.
6. Personal information collected as part of this project will be safeguarded against unwanted publication.
7. In cases where unit record data, incident point maps or digital spatial data have been provided, this information will not be passed on to any third party without the express consent of the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research.
8. I am to inform the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research of any approach by any person seeking access to personal information.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Witness

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Witness

\_\_\_\_\_  
Title

\_\_\_\_\_  
Organisation (if applicable)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## 18 Document information

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**Title:** Information Service Policy

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**Business Centre:** NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research

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**Reviewer:** Tracy Painting

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**Approver:** Jackie Fitzgerald

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**Date of Effect:** 28 August 2019

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**Next Review Date:** 27 August 2020

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**File Reference:** 1.2.2

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**Key Words:**

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## 19 Document history

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Version	Date	Reason for Amendment
14	27 August 2019	Revised by Tracy Painting. Revisions include change of Department name, fee increase, and revisions to sections 3, 4, 5, 6, 10.4 and 10.5)
13	20 December 2012	Revised by Don Weatherburn (section 10.4 and 10.5)
12	19 July 2012	Revised by Jackie Fitzgerald for fee increase
11	5 September 2011	Revised by Craig Jones to clarify access arrangements for student researchers
10	16 May 2011	Revised by Craig Jones to clarify access arrangements for spatial data
9	31 August 2010	Revised by Jessie Holmes to incorporate spatial/mapping data
8	31 March 2010	Revised by Jessie Holmes to incorporate acknowledgement and referencing of BOCSAR data by others
7	22 October 2009	Revised by Jessie Holmes to reflect victim and person of interest policies
6	1 August 2008	Revised by Tracy Painting to incorporate revised pricing policy
5	Feb 2007	Revised by Don Weatherburn and Craig Jones
4	Dec 2005	Revised by Suzanne Poynton
3	May 2004	Revised by Jackie Fitzgerald
2	Jul 2001	Revised by Jackie Fitzgerald
1		Written by Karen Freeman