

## NSW BUREAU OF CRIME STATISTICS AND RESEARCH: TWITTER POLICY

One of the primary functions of the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research is to provide the public with timely and objective information about crime and the operation of the criminal justice system. This document describes why and how we use the microblogging social network Twitter.com in order to achieve this aim.

### **Essential Summary**

---

This document outlines the Twitter Policy for the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research. It covers:

- Objectives and metrics – why we are using Twitter, and how we will assess its value.
- Risks and mitigation – how we will contain the risks to our corporate reputation.
- Channel proposition and management – how we will populate and use the channel; and
- Promotional plan – how we will promote our presence on Twitter to maximise value.

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

# Table of Contents

---

<b>1</b>	<b>Scope</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Definitions</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Objectives and metrics</b>	<b>6</b>
4.1	Objective and measures	6
4.2	Evaluation	7
<b>5</b>	<b>Risk and mitigation</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Channel proposition and management</b>	<b>9</b>
6.1	Positioning and profile of our Twitter account	9
6.2	Tone of voice	9
6.3	Resources	9
6.4	Content principles	9
6.5	Types and sources of content	11
6.5.1	Leveraging existing web content:	11
6.5.2	Adding value with exclusive content:	11
6.6	Clearance	12
6.7	Hashtags	12
6.8	Link shortening	12
6.9	Re-tweeting	12
6.9.1	Reactive re-tweeting	12
6.9.2	Proactive re-tweeting	12
6.10	Following and followers	12
6.11	Promotion	13
<b>7</b>	<b>Appendix A</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>Document information</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>Document history</b>	<b>15</b>

# 1 Scope

---

This document outlines the policies governing the use of the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research Twitter account. Twitter is a 'microblogging' platform which allows users to post short text messages (up to 140 characters in length) and converse with other users via their phones or web browsers. All staff involved in supporting the communication objectives of the Bureau should read this document. In addition this document is available to individuals who wish to "follow" the Bureau on Twitter.

# 2 Purpose

---

The purpose of this document is to outline

- Why we are using Twitter, and how we will assess its value
- How we will contain the risks to our corporate reputation
- How we will populate and use the channel
- How we will promote our presence on Twitter to maximise value

# 3 Definitions

---

**@Reply:** See *Reply*.

**API:** Twitter is an 'open platform' meaning other people can develop tools (software and websites) which use the Twitter functionality and the published content. The API (application programming interface) is the publicly available information used by coders to do this. It enables sites like Tweetminster, Twittergrader and Hootsuite and applications like Tweetdeck to be created.

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

**Click-through:** The process of clicking on a link and going to the Tweeter's web site.

**Direct message or DM:** a message from one user to another in private (not visible to the users, the internet or search engines). The Twitter equivalent of sending a private email.

**DM:** See *Direct message*.

**Follower:** someone who has subscribed to read your tweets. Displayed on Twitter as *Following or Friends*.

**Following:** The people that you follow on Twitter.

**Friend:** Someone who you follow that also follows you.

**Hashtags:** semantic tags (keywords), preceded by a # sign. This enables other users to search and filter based on those key terms, collaborate and share relevant information, and enables 'trending'.

**Micro-blogging:** the term given to the practice of posting short status updates via sites like Twitter (there are others, but none as big).

**Reply or @Reply:** a message from one user to another, visible to anyone following the user who is giving the reply. Also visible to the entire world (and search engines) in your Twitter profile page.

**Re-tweet or RT:** repeating a message from another user for the benefit of your followers and in recognition of its value (the Twitter equivalent of forwarding an email).

**RSS:** Rich Site Summary (RSS) is a format for delivering regularly changing web content.

**RT:** See *Re-tweet*.

**Statusphere:** See *Twittersphere*

**Trending:** shows topics that are immediately popular on twitter. Identified using an algorithm.

***Tweet:*** an update on Twitter, comprising a message of up to 140 characters, sometimes containing a link, sometimes containing a picture or video. Also a verb: to tweet, tweeting.

***Twitter:*** Twitter is a 'microblogging' platform which allows users to post short text messages (up to 140 characters in length) and converse with other users via their phones or web browsers. Unlike email or text messaging on mobile phones, these conversations take place in the open.

***Twitter client or application:*** software on your mobile phone or computer that you use to access Twitter. Popular clients are the Twitter website itself, Tweetdeck desktop software and a number of iPhone applications.

***Twitter application:*** See ***Twitter client.***

***Twittersphere:*** the universe/world sphere of Twitter (cf. blogosphere). See also ***Twitterverse / Statusphere.***

***Twitterverse:*** see ***Twittersphere.***

***Spoofers:*** A user who has registered an account on Twitter using the name of a company they do not represent.

***Squatters:*** See ***Spoofers.***

## 4 Objectives and metrics

---

### 4.1 Objective and measures

Objective	Measure
Promote public understanding of crime and criminal justice	Number of followers; relevance and type of followers; number of web traffic referrals from Twitter to our website content; number of retweets
Correct misleading or false claims about crime and criminal justice.	
Promote public understanding of the role and function of the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research	
To obtain feedback from the general public, the media and others on ways to improve the services of the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research	Suggestions for improvement to services or research
To provide live coverage of events (e.g. media conferences, seminars, community events) for those who cannot attend.	Volume and quality of @reply and DM contact from followers.

## 4.2 Evaluation

We will gather evaluation data using a range of methods.

- Click throughs from URLs in our tweets (using bit.ly) – to track referrals from Twitter to our web pages
- Twitter surveys – ‘straw poll’ surveys on Twitter to ask for feedback
- Twitter data – the follower/following data presented in our Twitter account
- Third party tools – analytics tools including measures based on re-tweeting (Retweet Radar; Twist); online reputation (Monitor, Twitter Grader); impact and influence (Difffluence, Twittersheep); unfollowers (Qwitter)
- Alert services – tweetbeep.com and other methods for tracking mentions of our work
- Real time observation - <http://twitterfall.com> and similar tools
- Analysis of our followers using <http://tweepler.com> and similar tools.

The information officers will provide the Director with an internal evaluation report every 6 months.

The use of Twitter will be reviewed within 12 months of commencement to assess its utility and effectiveness.

## 5 Risk and mitigation

---

Risk	Mitigation
Criticism arising from an inability to meet the demands of Twitter users to join conversations/answer enquiries, due to resource and clearance issues	Reduce by managing expectations with clear, published Twitter policy (see Appendix A); use holding replies where we state that an answer will need research; respond to ‘themes’ not individual replies.
Criticism arising from perceptions that our use of Twitter is out of keeping with the ethos of the platform (such as too formal/corporate, self-promoting or ‘dry’)	Reduce by sourcing varied content (see 6.5.1 and 6.5.2 below). Accept that there will be some criticism regardless.

<p>Criticism of jumping on the bandwagon/waste of public money/lack of return on investment/pointless content.</p>	<p>Reduce by evaluating against objectives above and adhering to content principles below.</p>
<p>Inappropriate content being published in error, such as: News releases under embargo.</p>	<p>Establish 'light' but effective procedural controls and guidelines for Twitter users; require clearance of all tweets by the Director or Deputy Director.</p>
<p>Technical security of the Twitter account and potential for hacking and vandalism of content.</p>	<p>Change Twitter password frequently using strong passwords; only 2 members of the Information team will have access to the twitter password along with the Director and Deputy Director; avoid using unknown 3rd party tools that require the account password; avoid "remember password" option.</p>
<p>Lack of availability due to Twitter being over capacity.</p>	<p>Accept (affects all Twitter users, occurs rarely and is brief). Take backup using tweetake.com.</p>
<p>Changes to the Twitter platform (to add or change features, or to charge users for accessing the service).</p>	<p>Review business case for continuing to use the service when any such changes are made.</p>
<p>Squatters/spoofers on Twitter.</p>	<p>Reduce by registering alternative names. Accept residual risk and monitor for this occurring. Report spoof accounts to Twitter for suspension.</p>

## 6 Channel proposition and management

---

### 6.1 Positioning and profile of our Twitter account

The avatar will be our logo. The profile text will read:

“Receive crime & criminal justice info from the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics & Research - NSW's official source of crime information. See our Twitter policy at <http://www.bocsar.nsw.gov.au>”

#### Tone of voice

Though the account will be anonymous it is helpful to define a hypothetical ‘voice’ so that tweets from multiple sources are presented in a consistent tone (including consistent use of pronouns).

The Bureau's Twitter ‘voice’ will be that of Information Services, positioning the channel as an extension of the main BOCSAR website – effectively an ‘outpost’ where new digital content is signposted throughout the day. This will be implicit, unless directly asked about by our followers

The tone will be an informal, ‘human’ voice of the organisation.

### 6.2 Resources

The resource impact of running a Twitter account is low relative to other channels. Information Services will be responsible for sourcing and publishing tweets, co-ordinating replies to incoming messages and monitoring the account.

This activity is expected to take less than an hour a day. Evaluation will take longer: approximately one day every 3 months. The provision of content will require some low level input from all BOCSAR colleagues. This will be an add-on to business as usual internal activity

### 6.3 Content principles

All content for our Twitter channel will be cleared by the Director (or in their absence the Deputy Director).

Content will be:

- **Apolitical and in context**

Where possible there should be an actual link to related content to allow followers to access more information. In addition, tweets regarding crime statistics should give and indication of the direction of the trend.

- **Varied**

The channel will cover a broad base of Crime and Criminal Justice issues to retain interest levels.

- **Human**

Twitter users can be hostile to the over-use of automation and to re-gurgitation of press release headlines. The tone of our Twitter channel must therefore be informal spoken English, human-edited and – for the most part -written/paraphrased for the channel.

- **Frequent**

A minimum 0 and a maximum 5 tweets per working day, with a minimum gap of 30 minutes between tweets (to avoid flooding our followers' Twitter streams) and a maximum of 48hrs (to keep followers interested in our messages). These frequencies do not count @replies to other Twitter users, or live coverage of a crisis/event.

- **Re-tweetable:**

To make it easy for others to re-tweet our most important announcements, we will restrict those tweets to 131 characters. (Allowing sufficient space for “RT @[BOCSAR]” to be included as a prefix).

- **Timely**

In keeping with the ‘zeitgeist’ feel of Twitter, our tweets will be about issues of relevance today or events/opportunities coming soon.

- **Credible**

While tweets may occasionally be ‘fun’, we should ensure we can defend their relation back to our objectives. Where possible there should be an actual link to related content or a call to action, to make this credibility explicit.

- **Inclusive**

In keeping with the knowledge-sharing culture of social media, BOCSAR should pursue opportunities to signpost relevant content elsewhere and re-tweet messages from stakeholders and other government departments. (See re-tweeting policy below). Exclusive use of Twitter for self-promotion can lead to criticism.

- **Corporate**

Twitter acts as an extension of BOCSARs corporate website. Avoid exclamation marks.

## **6.4 Types and sources of content**

Content for the channel will be business as usual communications re-purposed for Twitter.

### **6.4.1 Leveraging existing web content:**

The following existing content may be mentioned on BOCSARs Twitter page:

- BOCSAR press releases, presentations, ad hoc data requests and statements
- External news releases, speeches and statements published
- The headlines of news releases, speeches and statements from external websites (i.e. from the Australian Bureau of Statistics and Australian Institute of Criminology)
- Marketing campaign messages (i.e. Seminar series, Conferences, Radio/TV interviews)

### **6.4.2 Adding value with exclusive content:**

- Announcement and coverage of events: Pre-announcement and promotion of forthcoming events that BOCSAR has organised. Live coverage of events where there is significant interest beyond the attendees.
- Thought leadership (or “link blogging”)
- Highlighting relevant research, events, awards etc. elsewhere on the web to position BOCSAR as a thought leader and reliable filter of high quality content.

- Crisis communications: In the event of an incident where BOCSAR needs to provide up to the minute advice and guidance, Twitter would be used as a primary channel alongside our corporate website.

## **6.5 Clearance**

All tweets will be cleared by the Director (or in their absence the Deputy Director). Tweeters will be the: Director, Deputy Director and Information officers.

## **6.6 Hashtags**

It is a convention among Twitter users to distinguish content using semantic tags (keywords), preceded by a # sign. This enables other users to search and filter based on those key terms, collaborate and share relevant information, and enables 'trending'. When appropriate BOCSAR will use hashtags when tweeting (i.e. #BOCSAR, #nswcrime)

## **6.7 Link shortening**

Unless they are already very short, URLs in tweets will be shortened using link compressing sites (like tinyurl.com). To avoid any implied endorsement of one such service we will vary our choice as much as possible – but preferring those which provide click tracking statistics. The top four providers are:

- is.gd
- bit.ly
- tinyurl.com
- sinpurl.com

## **6.8 Re-tweeting**

### **6.8.1 Reactive re-tweeting**

We may occasionally be asked to re-tweet content from other Twitter users. We will consider these case by case.

### **6.8.2 Proactive re-tweeting**

We should seek opportunities to re-tweet interesting and relevant content that shows up in our own Twitter stream (i.e. research findings and statistics, industry networking events /conferences).

## **6.9 Following and followers**

As part of the initial channel launch we will actively follow other relevant organisations and professionals. We will not initiate contact by following individual

users as this may be interpreted as interfering / 'Big Brother'-like behaviour. We may, however, follow back individuals who follow our account. This is because:

- It's good Twitter etiquette to follow people back when they follow you
- Having an imbalance between 'following' and 'follower' figures can result in poor Twitter reputation and grading on third party Twitter sites like Twittergrader.com –and even account suspension by Twitter administrators in extreme cases.

#### **6.10 Promotion**

At launch, the channel will be promoted by:

- A link from the our website homepage
- Finding and following relevant Twitter users
- Asking key influencers on Twitter to announce us to their own Twitter stream
- Adding the link to the email signatures of BOCSAR staff
- An intranet story (and possibly an article in the staff magazine)
- Adding the link in all press releases
- An email to key stakeholders

## **7 Appendix A**

---

### **Appendix A: Twitter policy**

The following text will be published on our website and a link to this page will be provided in our profile on Twitter.

“The BOCSAR Twitter account is managed by our Information team, on behalf of colleagues across the Bureau. If you follow us, you can expect between 0-5 tweets a day covering some or all of the following:

- BOCSAR press releases
- Information on what we are up to ( seminars and conferences),
- Statistics on Crime and Criminal Justice Issues in NSW
- Relevant external news releases, speeches and statements.

If you follow @BOCSAR we will not automatically follow you back. Please note that being followed by BOCSAR does not imply endorsement of any kind.

We will update and monitor our Twitter account during office hours, Monday to Friday. Twitter may occasionally be unavailable and we accept no responsibility for lack of service due to Twitter downtime.

We welcome feedback and ideas from all our followers, and endeavour to join the conversation where possible. However, we are not able to reply individually to all the messages we receive via Twitter. The Information team reads all @replies and Direct Messages and ensures that any emerging themes or helpful suggestions are passed to the relevant people at BOCSAR. We cannot engage on issues of party politics or answer questions which break the rules of our general comments policy. The usual ways of contacting us for official correspondence are detailed in the 'contact us' section of our website. “

(End)

## 8 Document information

---

<b>Title:</b>	NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research: Twitter Policy
<b>Business Centre:</b>	NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research
<b>Author:</b>	Katrina Grech, Jessie Holmes, Craig Jones
<b>Approver:</b>	Don Weatherburn
<b>Date of Effect:</b>	1st June 2011
<b>Next Review Date:</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> June 2012
<b>File Reference:</b>	
<b>Key Words:</b>	Twitter

## 9 Document history

---

<b>Version</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Reason for Amendment</b>