Social Media Policy

2015

**CRIME
STATISTICS
AGENCY**

1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this document is to describe how social media (namely Twitter) is used at the Crime Statistics Agency (CSA). The policy outlines objectives, roles, procedures, and constraints on the use of these social media, and describes how such activity is measured and evaluated. It also covers how the CSA decides who to follow and what to tweet.

1.2 This policy should be read and applied in conjunction with the Department of Justice & Regulation social media policy, as well as CSA policies regarding pre-release procedures, data quality and confidentiality.

2. Who it applies to

2.1 This policy applies to all CSA staff, including contractors.

3. Objectives

3.1 The CSA has chosen Twitter as its primary social media platform, as a tool to help inform the public about the CSA's operations and information releases.

3.2 Social media is not a separate project or direction for the CSA. Rather, it is a tool or medium for the CSA to enhance and extend its existing work by:

- Staying up to date with current news, research, policy, analysis and commentary on crime and related matters locally, nationally and internationally;

- Establishing and maintaining dialogue with stakeholders and the wider community on crime and criminological issues; and

- Remaining aware of and adopting current best practices in:

  - public communications;

  - community education and engagement; and

  - statistical analysis and reporting.

4. Roles

4.1 CSA tweeters are staff delegated and trained to use the CSA's Twitter account, including tweeting and retweeting, following other users and editing the CSA's profile pages. The CSA will have one primary tweeter, however all CSA staff will assist in creating content.

4.2 It is the responsibility of the CSA tweeter to ensure that each tweet is accurate and complies with this policy (see below – What to tweet and what not). CSA tweeters will also record the tweets they make (see 'Metrics' below).

4.3 The Operations Manager will be responsible for tweeting most of the CSA tweets. They will also:

- draft and maintain the CSA's Twitter profile;

- edit all draft tweets into a final tweet;

- assess any risks associated with potential tweets, retweets and seek guidance and approvals from the Department of Justice & Regulation social media advisor or Chief Statistician as needed;

- follow relevant tweet streams and assess which of their tweets may be appropriate for retweeting on behalf of the CSA;

- maintain an up-to-date knowledge of Twitter technical issues, etiquette and good practice guidelines, and alert / train others at the CSA as required;

- manage and update lists of CSA Twitter followers and those the CSA is following; and

- compile metrics for evaluation and reporting.

5. Key audiences

5.1 Key social media audiences for the CSA to foster as followers will be diverse and are expected to grow in line with the profile of the agency. All staff will consider ways to grow this list. In the first instance, the CSA expects that these audiences will include (as individuals, groups or organisations):

- Victoria Police;

- justice policy makers;

- journalists (including those working in a paid or unpaid capacity in print, broadcast and online media, bloggers and community media);

- academics (law, criminology, social sciences etc) in Australia and internationally;

- other like-minded research and statistics organisations;

- students (legal studies, law, criminology, social sciences etc) especially those at secondary and tertiary levels and their teachers;

- professionals, volunteers and advocates working with offenders and victims;

- professionals, volunteers and advocates working with those in the community at increased likelihood of involvement in the criminal justice system; and

- those with the ability to refer information to, or influence the opinions of these listed key audiences.

6. Procedures

6.1 Creating tweets

- Because tweets must be no longer than 140 characters (including spaces and punctuation), writing good tweets is likely to be a skill developed through some practice and specialisation.

- Suggested tweets can be drafted by any CSA staff and submitted to a CSA tweeter.

- Final writing and publishing of all tweets will be carried out by the operations manager

- To enhance the usefulness of the CSA's tweets (and avoid followers becoming dismissive of 'spam'), the CSA will include a hyperlink in almost every tweet to allow interested followers to go to a web page with more detailed information on the topic of the tweet.

- To help users find the CSA and its tweets, some tweets will include the #viccrimestats hash tag or another relevant hash tag.

- Bitly.com will be used to condense URL's, as well as monitor the number of 'click-throughs' for evaluation purposes.

6.2 Frequency of tweets

- In keeping with current good practice guidelines, the CSA will aim for a minimum of one and a maximum of 10 tweets per day (at least 30 minutes apart).

- CSA tweeters will record the tweets they make in the appropriate corporate repository (see 'Metrics' below).

6.3 Tweeting to support reports, publications & media releases

- Prior to the publication of any CSA information releases, the operations manager will consider social media in the release strategy.

- Tweets or short summaries will be drafted (one draft tweet or short summary per key message or finding) by the project manager in consultation with the operations manager prior to publication of reports.

- Draft tweets and short summaries will be provided to the Operations Manager with as much prior notice as practically possible to enable editing (to 140 characters) and tweet scheduling.

- Tweets about CSA media releases, research or reports will be given priority over other potential tweet content.

6.4 Responding to tweets and direct messages

- The CSA will respond to comments and enquiries in a timely fashion where it is practical and reasonable to do so.

- Choosing whether to respond to tweets or direct messages will be determined in accordance with the Department of Justice & Regulation Social Media Policy.

- Specific cases of continuous tweeting or trolling will be discussed and resolved in consultation with the Department's social media team.

6.5 Links to external research, news, analysis and opinion of interest

- All CSA staff are encouraged to send recommendations for tweeters to follow, tweets, retweets, links, news, analysis and opinion to the CSA tweeters.

6.6 Work in progress

- Work in progress will be discussed at team meetings to determine which information might be appropriate to being communicated as a tweet.

- In keeping with good practice guidelines, some CSA tweets will refer to work currently underway, not just work completed. However, specific findings generated by work underway will not be tweeted until after a formal release has been made and embargo no longer applies, in line with CSA embargo and release policies.

6.7 Accessibility and website integration

- The CSA website will include a Twitter button, enabling viewers to go directly to the CSA's Twitter profile page and view (and retweet) CSA tweets.

- All CSA tweets and retweets will be published on the CSA website in an accessible format on the home page.

- Hotlinks will be added to all CSA email signatures enabling the reader to go quickly to the CSA's Twitter profile

7. Social media publishing guidelines

7.1   The CSA will aim to produce tweets that promote the objectives of this policy and are accurate, relevant, interesting and timely to our followers.

7.2   All language in CSA-authored tweets will be professional, polite and respectful.

7.3   Following users, tweeting or retweeting to other non-CSA web content will not imply CSA endorsement of the opinions expressed therein, however the CSA will not follow, tweet or retweet anyone or anything that is likely to bring the CSA into disrepute.

7.4   Each potential tweet will be assessed by the CSA tweeter and, if there is any significant risk of reputation damage to the CSA, the matter will be referred to the Chief Statistician for judgement.

7.5   No CSA Tweet will disclose information that is not already in, or gathered with the intention of being in the public domain.

7.6   No CSA tweet will include (or contain a link to) personal attacks, or language that is defamatory, offensive, threatening, discriminatory or hateful toward any group or class of persons in the community (e.g. racist or sexist language, personal attacks).

7.7   No CSA tweet will include (or contain a link to) content that infringes copyright, breaches privacy laws, constitutes contempt of court, breaches a court suppression order or agreement reached between the CSA and any other party, or is in any other way unlawful.

7.8   Any complaint or report of copyright infringement will result in that tweet being immediately taken down, unless the complaint or report can be quickly demonstrated as invalid.

8. Criteria for selecting tweets and retweets

8.1   Potential tweets (here referred to as 'links') will be measured against eight criteria.

8.2   No one criteria is automatically or uniformly more important than any other. A link that scores highly in only one consideration may be tweeted in preference to a link that scores moderately well across a number of criteria.

1. Topic. Is it about crime statistics, rates, trends or a related subject?

2. Accuracy. Is the link an accurate representation or reasonable analysis of the issue? Does the tweet truthfully and accurately convey the main meaning of the link?

3. Locality. How close is it to Victoria - or applicable to the current Victorian situation?

4. Audience. Of how much interest will it be to our current or planned key audience(s)?

5. Purpose / priority / effect. Is the likely effect of the tweet consistent with the CSA's aims and objectives?

6. Currency / originality / timeliness. Have our audience(s) already seen it? Is it current?

7. Partnership. Will tweeting the link grow the CSA's audiences and partners?

8. Risk. Is it controversial or contrary to Department of Justice & Regulation policies? Will it damage partnerships or the CSA reputation?

8.3   Topic

• Preference will be given to links dealing with crime trends, and other related criminological information.

• Related criminal justice topics such as what happens after police processes (e.g. service delivery, court processes, prison conditions) will also be considered.

- A link that deals with another aspect of justice may be considered for tweeting where it is strongly suggested by other criteria (e.g. that it is of interest to our strategic audiences, or will be instrumental in building a partnership).

8.4 Accuracy

- Preference in tweeting will be given to links that can be fairly and accurately summarised in 140 characters or less.

- Preference in tweeting will be given to links that contain accurate and balanced descriptions and fair and reasonable analysis.

8.5 Locality

- Preference will be given to local links, i.e. links from Victorian organisations, or about Victorian issues or issues that affect Victoria. Links with an Australian focus will next be considered.

- Links about international issues may be considered, especially where the issue is also relevant locally (e.g. criminal justice policies and their effects, recidivism, prisons etc.).

8.6 Audience

- Preference will be given to links that are likely to be of utility or interest to strategic audiences as listed above in 'Key audiences'

8.7 Purpose

- Preference will be given to links that can be shown as helping the CSA to achieve its aims and objectives as outlined in the Crime Statistics Bill 2014, the CSA's Business Plan and Strategic Plan.

8.8 Currency

- Preference will be given to links that will be immediately relevant, novel or fresh for a significant sector of the audience even if the link itself is not new.

- Links will not be tweeted if they contain a call to action (e.g. surveys or submission to a consultation) that is closed or no longer operative.

8.9 Partnerships

- Preference will be given to links to, from or of interest to organisations with which the CSA is trying to foster constructive working relationships or partnerships (e.g. research agencies, other departments or universities).

- Preference will be given to links that will not damage the CSA's reputation or relationships with a strategic audience. Links will be drafted carefully to minimise this risk.

9. Diversifying the CSA social media

9.1   The CSA will continue to research, and monitor trends in community uptake of social media and consider other social media platforms as tools to meet the objectives outline here.

9.2   Any social media platforms adopted by the CSA will be interlinked and cross-referenced to reach new stakeholders and to maximise engagement with existing stakeholders. Systems will be designed to be as automated and easy as possible.

9.3   The CSA may investigate the use of additional social media platforms as required to reach its target audience.

10. Reviewing and updating this policy

10.1   Social media is a fast-moving area of online communications. New social media platforms and features emerge often. The CSA's use of social media must keep pace and adapt to this changing environment.

10.2   To prevent this policy becoming outdated and irrelevant, it will be reviewed periodically to reflect on lessons learned from the experience of using social media.

10.3   Other relevant CSA policies will also be updated on the same schedule to reflect the social media policy and procedures.

11. Definitions

Bitly – a website utility allowing long URL (website addresses beginning with http:/) to be condensed into a much shorter but still unique URL. Recommended web addresses can in this way be more easily accommodated within short tweets or pins. Bitly is the preferred utility for the CSA because it allows us to see how many people have 'clicked-through', i.e. clicked on our unique shortened link to visit a web page that we have recommended in a tweet.

Blog, Blogging - (short for web log) a website or part of a website containing news, opinion, journal entries, images, video or other files posted by an individual on their chosen theme or topic. Blogs are generally viewable by anyone (not restricted to 'friends', 'followers' or registered users).

Follower – For Twitter, a 'follower' is a user who has elected to subscribe to someone's tweets. The effect of following someone is that his or her tweets will automatically appear in their 'timeline' window (Twitter). A follower can 'un-follow' at any time.

Metrics – for the purposes of this policy, 'metrics' refers to statistics kept to measure the CSA's social media activity and impact, e.g. the number of followers, tweets, retweets and click-throughs.

Retweet – similar to email "forward" function, when a user sends on to their own followers a tweet they have received from someone else. Retweeted tweets appear on the retweeter's profile page*.*

Social media – the use of online (especially web) technologies for easy and simple self publishing, dialogue between users and social networking (including the formation of groups or communities of interest). Social media is accessible through computers, smart phones and tablet devices. Popular social media platforms include Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, StumbleUpon, Google+, Yammer, Scribd, Reddit and Digg. Each of these has a slightly different set of features, focus of content and type of use / user.

Timeline – a window on a Twitter user's home page that displays recent tweets and retweets from those the user is following.

Tweet – a message or 'post' of up to 140 characters. Can include a bitly-shortened link to a web page. Tweets automatically appear in the timeline window on the home page of the tweeter's followers, and are publicly visible to any other user who visits the tweeter's profile page.

Tweeter – a Twitter user who tweets or retweets something.

Twitter – a micro blogging website allowing registered users to publish short messages or 'tweets' which are then publicly displayed on the users Profile Page.

Twitter home page – the personalised and unique page that appears when a user logs on to Twitter. Its main function is to display recent tweets and retweets from those being followed. The home page also displays and allows editing of the list of those being followed, and options to manage the user's profile information, account and display options.

Twitter profile page – the personalised and unique page that publicly displays information about a Twitter user to other users. It shows the user's recent tweets and retweets, whom the user is following and who is being followed by them.

URL – Uniform Resource Locater. The unique web address for content on the World Wide Web. Beginning with http://, in most web browsers the URL of the page being displayed appears in the address window at top of the screen.