

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

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- The types of published and unpublished data held by the Bureau;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.

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Ensure you have the latest version before using this document.

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1 Scope

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

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

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 an irregular series of research papers published by the Bureau.

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

LGAs are Local Government Areas.

Powerplay is business intelligence software produced by Cognos Inc, which 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 probability-matching techniques to link all court appearances by the same individual since 1994.

SSDA is the Social Science Data Archives, a repository for social science data from a number of organisations, including the Bureau.

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

4 Availability of information service

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) 9231 9190 or at bcsr@agd.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.

5 Bureau publications

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). 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 since 1997;

- All Crime and Justice Bulletins published since 1990; and
- Local Government Area Crime Maps for selected LGAs since 2006.

Hard copies of Bureau reports can be ordered through Shop NSW (www.shop.nsw.gov.au). If the client does not have access to the Internet, they can contact the Bureau on (02) 9231 9190 and order publications from the Publications Officer.

Alternatively, the State Library of NSW and several university and public libraries hold copies of Bureau publications.

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 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 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)
Local Government Area Crime Maps (available for a limited number of LGAs)	\$44.00 per report (+ \$5.50 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

The Bureau makes significant quantities of crime and court data available on the Bureau website (www.bocsar.nsw.gov.au). Examples of information available for download from the Bureau website include:

- 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.
- Local Government Area crime maps for a limited number of LGAs
- 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

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 8, St James Centre, 111 Elizabeth St, 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

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; and
- 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 Bureau aims to complete 95 per cent of Powerplay requests within two working days hours 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

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; and
- 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 and Federal Government agencies, The Australian Institute of Criminology, The National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, The National Drug Research Institute, The Crime Research Centre (WA), The Office of Crime Statistics (SA) and other individuals or organisations collaborating with BOCSAR 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 \$352. Any request taking longer than two hours will incur an additional charge of \$176 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

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-level data

NSW annual crime data by postcode are available on disk as a complete set (including all NSW postcodes) at a cost of \$1056 (incl. GST). The data set contains monthly data for all offence types for each postcode, an annual total and a rate of offending per 100,000 population for postcodes with a population over 3,000 persons.

Local Government Area data is the standard geographic unit used by BOCSAR. People requesting regional crime information should be offered Local Government Area data in the first instance. In cases where Local Government Area data is not adequate postcode 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 Alleged victim and offender data

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 (http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/lawlink/privacynsw/ll_pnsw.nsf/pages/PNSW_03_co_deboscar) 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 Deputy Director or Director.

When permission is granted to release this information, particular care must be taken to protect the identity of individuals. As a general rule, time periods with between 1 and 4 alleged 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 \$352 if the request will take longer than 30 minutes, plus \$176 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.

10.3 Unit record data

Some de-identified unit record data pertaining to police and court records are deposited with the Social Science Data Archives (SSDA) within 12 months of the corresponding annual report being published by the Bureau. Raw data files are available to researchers in various formats with explanatory notes. The SSDA can be contacted by phone on 02 6125 4400.

De-identified unit record data will only be provided for research purposes and only if approved by the Director or Deputy Director. The following procedures apply when requesting data at unit record level:

- Requests for such information must be submitted in writing, specifying in detail who requires the information, the purpose for which the data is being sought, the data items required and how the information will be used and disseminated;
- Data are to be used solely for the declared purpose for which they have been requested;
- Analysis, results and findings derived from the data will not present individual cases or small numbers that may allow the identification of individuals;
- A copy of any resulting research report is to be provided to the Bureau at least one week prior to publication.
- Researchers must sign a Disclosure Form for Non-Employees of the Bureau.

The Bureau aims to complete 95 per cent of such requests within 10 working days and 100 per cent within 15 working days.

If a request involves the provision of unit record data, the data will be provided free of charge to State and Federal Government agencies, The Australian Institute of Criminology, The National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, The National Drug Research Institute, The Crime Research Centre (WA), The Office of Crime Statistics (SA) and other individuals or organisations collaborating with BOCSAR in research.

For all other clients of the Bureau for whom access to unit record data has been granted, the programming time will be charged at \$352 (incl. GST) if it will take longer than 30 minutes, plus \$176 (incl. GST) for each hour (or part thereof) of programming time in excess of two hours taken to complete the request. 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 Data from the Re-offending Database (ROD)

The same conditions that apply to the provision of unit record data apply to any data requested from ROD. The following *additional* requirements also apply to data from ROD:

- Aggregated data may be available for non-research purposes subject to the approval of the Director or Deputy Director. All requests should be made in writing;
- Unit record information from ROD will only be provided to bona fide researchers who have ethics committee clearance to use the data for the purposes prescribed in the request;
- Researchers must ensure that any personal information collected as part of the project is safeguarded against unwanted publication;
- In limited circumstances, identified individuals may be matched with individual records held on the Re-offending Database. In such situations, the data may be de-identified before being released as a unit record file;
- If researchers are given access to identified ROD data, they must ensure that the data are securely stored on a password protected computer server for a period of seven years and then destroyed.

The same timeframes and cost structures that apply to unit record data apply to the provision of ROD data.

11 Summary of timeframes for completion of requests

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.

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
Alcohol-related crime and postcode-level data	95% within two working days 100% within three working days

12 Summary of cost structure of Bureau data

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 \$352.
- All data requests taking longer than two hours will incur an additional charge of \$176 per hour (or part thereof).
- 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 and Federal Government agencies
- Members of Parliament
- The Australian Institute of Criminology
- The National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre
- The National Drug Research Institute
- The Crime Research Centre (WA)
- The Office of Crime Statistics (SA)
- 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).

Hard copies of publications can be ordered from Shop NSW (www.shop.nsw.gov.au) or directly from the Bureau. 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 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 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)
Local Government Area Crime Maps (available for a limited number of LGAs)	\$44.00 per report (+ \$5.50 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, Courts data, unit record data or data from the Re-offending Database	A minimum charge for a request taking longer than 30 minutes but up to 2 hours to complete is \$352. Any request taking longer than two hours will incur an additional charge of \$176 per hour (or part thereof)
Complete postcode-level data set	\$1056 for complete set of postcodes by offence types

13 Payment procedures

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 Attorney General's Department.
- 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

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 Director and/or Deputy Director.

Unpublished data may be made available, subject to the costs structures set out in section 9, at the discretion of the Director and/or Deputy 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 the relevant Government departments and/or Ministerial officers.

The Director or Deputy 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.

15 References

Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research Privacy Code of Practice:

http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/lawlink/privacynsw/ll_pnsw.nsf/pages/PNSW_03_cod_eboscar

Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 No 133

<http://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/maintop/scanact/inforce/NONE/0>

16 Document information

Title: Information Service Policy

Business Centre: NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research

Author: Tracy Painting and Jessie Holmes

Approver: Don Weatherburn

Date of Effect: 22 October 2009

Next Review Date: 22 October 2010

File Reference: 1.2.2

Key Words:

17 Document history

Version	Date	Reason for Amendment
	22 October 2009	Revised by Jessie Holmes to reflect victim and person of interest policies
	1 August 2008	Revised by Tracy Painting to incorporate revised pricing policy
	Feb 2007	Revised by Don Weatherburn and Craig Jones
	Dec 2005	Revised by Suzanne Poynton
	May 2004	Revised by Jackie Fitzgerald
	Jul 2001	Revised by Jackie Fitzgerald
		Written by Karen Freeman
