

Becky Hirst, Consultant (5AA 11.08-11.29)

Use of social networking sites Facebook and Twitter

(Anderson: ... do you think it's a good thing, do you think Mike Rann has been wise, he has really embraced social networking, he's got a Facebook, he's had cameras ... following him around so he can actually have vision on his own website of new policy announcements and that sort of thing, he has a Twitter account ... is that wise, should all politicians be embracing Facebook?) I think it's a great tool for communicating out to the public what you're doing, how you're spending your days, the decisions you're making, when you want people to get involved. It's a brilliant communication tool. Obviously it needs to be really well managed and it needs to be thought about and planned ... you can't just hop on Twitter and start sending out random tweets. I would definitely recommend to any client of mine that you actually have a bit of a plan as to what sort of thing you're going to be sending out ... are you going to respond to people when they send you a message or are you just going to ignore them ... what's your plan?

(Anderson: ... with Twitter, if people send you a message and you respond, everybody else can see what you've said but they can't see what that person has said ...) Yeah, you respond publicly ... *(Anderson: ... Becky Hirst ... what's your background ...)* ... my background is in community work, community engagement ... involving the public in decision making by ... decision makers ... so really encouraging the Government to use social media tools and online tools to involve the public in problem solving or decision making, which is a challenge in a face to face world let alone an online world. *(Anderson: ... Twitter, in particular where you can, say Mike Rann sends out a tweet and you can go straight back to him and say whether you like it or whether you don't like it ... that's actually a pretty powerful thing for an individual ... to be able to go straight back to the Premier?)* Oh yeah, very empowering and I've had it a couple of times ... exchanges of information with the Premier directly, myself and him ... in the early days ... he only had, you know, a couple of hundred followers, you could definitely have a conversation with him on Twitter. These days though it's a bit harder because he's got so many followers ... it's the same for anybody in a position of power, at what point do you stop being able to respond to people individually ... you don't necessarily want to be getting into those one to one conversations with people. *(Anderson: Especially because people think, well, shouldn't you be running the state instead of, like, sitting and tweeting people but maybe that is running the state, I don't know. Do politicians by and large do their own tweeting ... wouldn't they have ... a Government minion who does that for them?)* ... people say to me, oh how do you know it's them and certainly with the Prime Minister, you know, she always signs off ... and Kevin Rudd did the same, if it's her, she'll do a little JG, if it's her team it will say JG Team ... they certainly identify whether it's her team or her ... *(Anderson: ... it's so time consuming ... where do people get enough time to do it?)* Well it depends ... if you've got systems set up ... there are tools that you can use that you can monitor all of your Facebook activity and your Twitter ... it's just part of modern day working ... *(Anderson: ... thank you ...)*