

# No rest over Easter as the barrage of news continues on Twitter

Written by Axel Bruns, Professor, Creative Industries, Queensland University of Technology



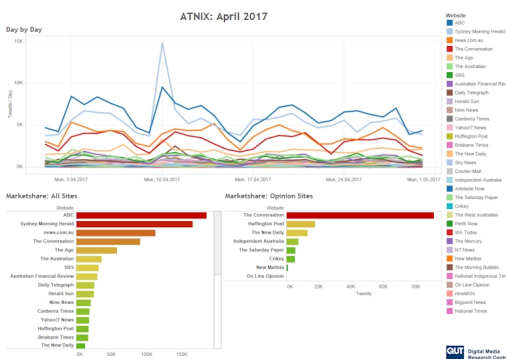
A burst of news kept us on Twitter. Shutterstock

There seems to be no end in sight to the barrage of breaking, critical news from home and abroad these days. The Australian Twitter News Index (ATNIX) for April 2017 shows that Australians weren't even able to tear themselves away from their social media newsfeeds during the Easter and ANZAC holidays.

Throughout April news sharing patterns on Twitter largely continued to follow their weekly patterns. The weekend before ANZAC Day even seems unusually active. Perhaps there is simply too much going on today for us to disconnect for long.

ATNIX for April 2017 is dominated, however, by a very substantial spike in sharing Sydney Morning Herald content on 10 April. There were 5,900 tweets sharing news of [the arrest of a Russian programmer suspected of hacking the U.S. election](#). Given the topic it is very likely that a substantial number of those tweets were posted by Twitter users outside Australia. We have seen this pattern with other international stories in the past - articles in Australian news sites that address key international stories occasionally go viral well beyond Australia.

On the same day, Twitter users' attention was also drawn to news of beloved Australian comedian John Clarke's sudden death, further increasing the volume of news-sharing tweets that day. An article on Clarke [in the SMH](#) was shared some 1,400 times, while [ABC News's coverage](#) received 1,200 shares.



Australian Twitter News Index, Apr. 2017. Axel Bruns / QUT Digital Media Research Centre

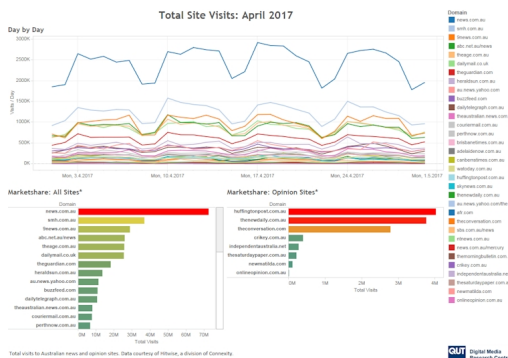
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Over the course of the entire month, our data show again that a diverse range of unrelated topics sought to draw our attention.

At the Sydney Morning Herald, in addition to its coverage of the Russian hacker's arrest (7,200 tweets in total for the month) and of John Clarke's death (1,400 tweets), articles on [Malcolm Turnbull's proposed changes to the citizenship test](#) (1,500 tweets), [the Australian Federal Police's illegal access to a journalist's communications metadata](#) (1,300 tweets), and [an opinion piece in defence of Yassmin Abdel-Magied](#) (1,000 tweets) round out the top five.

For ABC News, its coverage of [the Australian March for Science events](#) was most widely shared in April (1,700 tweets), along with pieces on [North Korea's warning that Australia should not blindly follow the United States](#) (1,500 tweets), John Clarke's death (1,300 tweets), [an investigation into federal politicians' property portfolios](#) (1,000 tweets), and [a controversial video by an Islamic group that seemed to condone violence against women](#) (900 tweets).



Total visits to selected Australian news and opinion sites, Apr. 2017. Data courtesy of Hitwise, a division of Connexity.

Meanwhile data from [Hitwise](#) shows that the total number of visits to the leading Australian news and opinion sites are only very loosely correlated with news sharing activities on Twitter. There is no sign of the substantial spike in interest in the SMH's Russian hacker story on 10 April. This suggests that much of the Twitter sharing was by non-Australian readers. We do see some small increases in traffic to the SMH, ABC News, and The Age that day, however, which might be attributed to audience engagement with coverage of John Clarke's passing.

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Overall, there is very little sign of flagging news interest during the Easter long weekend or on ANZAC Day. With so many major developments taking place simultaneously, domestically as well as internationally, perhaps we just can't afford to switch off from the news any more.

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*ATNIX is based on tracking all tweets which contain links pointing to the URLs of a large selection of leading Australian news and opinion sites. Sites that cover more than just news and opinion (abc.net.au, sbs.com.au, ninemsn.com.au) are filtered to exclude the non-news sections. Data on Australian Internet users' news browsing patterns are provided courtesy of [Hitwise](#), a division of Connexity*. This research is supported by the ARC Future Fellowship project "Understanding Intermedia Information Flows in the Australian Online Public Sphere".

### Disclosure

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