

Guardianship Risk to Māori Data Sovereignty from Census Transformation

The transition to administrative datasets compromises Māori guardianship responsibilities over their own data, creating risks that simultaneously violate both **Kaitiakitanga** and **Rangatiratanga** principles.

Traditional Census methodology enabled Māori to act as guardians of their demographic information through direct participation in data collection, ensuring cultural appropriateness and accuracy. Administrative datasets, however, are extracted from government systems without Māori oversight or ethical review, breaching the **Kaitiakitanga** principle of 'guardianship' and 'ethics.' This extraction occurs without considering cultural restrictions around sensitive information like iwi affiliations or whakapapa connections.

Simultaneously, this approach undermines **Rangatiratanga** by removing Māori 'control' and 'jurisdiction' over how their data is defined, categorised, and used. Government agencies become the sole arbiters of Māori identity markers, effectively colonising the process of Māori self-determination through data.

The combined impact threatens the accuracy of Māori population counts, potentially leading to inadequate funding for Māori services and undermining Treaty-based resource allocation. More critically, it perpetuates systemic exclusion of Māori worldviews from data governance.

One recommendation is to implement Māori ethical review processes for all administrative data extraction affecting Māori populations, establishing iwi-appointed kaitiaki roles within the IDI framework to restore guardianship responsibilities and sovereign control over Māori data definitions and usage protocols.

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