*Protecting Māori Rangatiratanga in a Census*

The proposal of a new Census method, based on administrative data, endangers Māori Data Sovereignty and Governance (Māori rights of collection and control over Māori data). Rangatiratanga (Authority) refers to Māori people's right to exercise control, jurisdiction, and self-determination over Māori data. Administrative data is often collected in fragmented methods, leading to iwi and ethnicity regularly being left out or inconsistently recorded, risking the misrepresentation of Māori populations and could hinder the ability for iwi to govern on accurate, relevant data. For example, one government may use ethnicity as statistic whereas another may use descent, leading to potentially large differences in counts. Without the traditional Census, iwi will lack the resources needed to plan or exercise their rights.

To prevent any dangers to rangatiratanga, the new Census must be designed with significant input from Māori so that their worldviews are embedded in the entire statistical pipeline, from data collection to analysis. This ensures that Māori maintain control over the storage, access, and use of their data. If Māori were part of the design process, the Census could become more accurate and more respectful, ensuring iwi have the reliable information they need to plan housing, education, and health services.

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