**Title: Census Reform, Māori Sovereignty, and Data Governance**

The Māori people have the rights to govern themselves as can be affirmed through the Declaration of Independence (*He Whakaputanga*) in 1835 and the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi (*Te Tiriti o Waitangi*) in 1840. The Waitangi Tribunal (Wai 1040) makes it clear that Māori entered a partnership with the crown and never ceded sovereignty. This partnership creates enduring obligations to uphold Māori authority and wellbeing.  
  
By replacing traditional census in favour of administrative data Māori Data Sovereignty and Governance (MDS/G) is threatened because the census ensures that treaty commitments are honoured and that the Māori people are visible in national statistics. Administrative datasets were not designed with the Māori people in mind and thus do not achieve this goal. These datasets have been found to undercount Māori and exclude essential details about them, limiting their authority over their own data thus undermining MDS/G principles.  
  
If only administrative data is relied on, there is risk of unfair resource allocation, flawed design policies and weak Treaty monitoring. To ensure that the MDS/G is upheld, and the Treaty of Waitangi is honoured, Stats NZ should partner with Māori in designing the new census, incorporating their principles and prioritizing accurate ethnicity data.