Written critique

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* Title – Stats NZ move to admin data first approach for future Census

The scrapping of full census enumeration in favour of administrative data poses a significant risk to Māori Data Sovereignty (MDS). This risk directly challenges the six principles of MDS. Under Rangatiratanga (Authority), Māori have the right to control how their data is collected, categorised, stored and reused. Relying solely on administrative data needs active consulation to involve them in the sovereignty of data and to support sustainable development of Māori data infrastructure and security systems. Whakapapa (Relationships) highlights the need for accurate metadata and meaningful disaggregation; however, many administrative datasets may possibly lack iwi or hapū identifiers, weakening Māori ability to plan for their own communities. Whanaungatanga (Obligations) requires accountability to Māori, but any misrepresentation or undercounting of Māori populations will erode this trust. Kotahitanga (Collective benefit) needs to be considered when providing researchers accesses to data so that their research can contribute to wellbeing and benefit of Māori. Manaakitanga (Reciprocity) requires consultation with Māori to uphold the dignity of Māori communities, groups and individuals. Finally, Kaitiakitanga (Guardianship) requires Māori control over where and how data is stored.

Therefore, we can say that data sovereignty and governance will become of utmost importance. Stats NZ needs to co-design data frameworks with Māori and contributing government organisations to exert control over how the data will be collected, stored, safeguarded, protected, accessed, updated, utilised and confidentialised and to prevent any misuse of data.