



TE MANA RARAUNGA

Māori Data Sovereignty Network

Te Mana Raraunga Statement on the the independent report from the External Data Quality Panel on the 2018 Census.

23 September 2019

Independent review shows major change required if the next Census is to deliver high quality Māori data.

Te Mana Raraunga, the Māori Data Sovereignty Network, welcomes the findings of the independent External Data Quality Panel on the results of the 2018 Census (<https://www.stats.govt.nz/reports/initial-report-of-the-2018-census-external-data-quality-panel>).

The report of the Data Quality Panel indicates that the electoral counts and national Māori ethnicity data is acceptable quality. The expert panel confirms that the methods for generating these Census counts are robust for this data. However, the unplanned extensive use of administrative data to backfill gaps in Census 2018 remains a concern for Te Mana Raraunga. Māori and Pacific peoples were most affected by this change in census method but had no input into decision-making. The data matching processes raise issues around the social licence and cultural licence of agencies working with people's data and are definitely inconsistent with the principle of indigenous data sovereignty.

Major concerns remain with the absence of iwi data from the 2018 Census and the quality of regional data. Te Mana Raraunga acknowledge that quality of the the iwi data was so poor that they can't be released as official statistics. This is a huge blow to iwi development and the iwi in the Treaty claim settlement process, especially as the recent iwi classification review enabled another 32 groups to be counted in the Census.

Te Mana Raraunga agree with the review panel that StatsNZ have not met their Treaty obligations to Māori with the failure to produce iwi data from the Census. This failure is also inconsistent with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which New Zealand has supported since 2010.

The limitations of the Census 2018 data are going to be a major impediment to developing data informed policies and programmes that support Māori self-determination and flourishing. The absence of household level information means there will be no information about Māori households and their wellbeing. In addition, the change in the way the Census population is created will mean that measures of Māori outcomes and therefore equity measures will not be comparable with those of previous years. Consequently it will not be possible to see if outcomes for Māori have changed compared with previous years, especially at a regional level where most Māori-focused services are delivered.

Rebuilding the trust and confidence of Māori in any future census and the official statistics system more broadly will require Treaty-based data governance and partnership in the planning and delivery of the Census. This will require processes and resourcing that need to start now while the Census 2023 planning is beginning. Te Mana Raraunga also see much potential for investment in alternative Māori and iwi-led data systems that are strongly focused on delivering high quality, timely and relevant data for Māori.

About Te Mana Raraunga:

Te Mana Raraunga, the Māori Data Sovereignty Network, brings together more than 100 Māori researchers, practitioners and entrepreneurs across the research, IT, community and NGO sectors. TMR advocates for Māori rights and interests in data and for the development of Māori, iwi and hapū data infrastructure and capability.

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