

December 2021

NZ AI Forum Submission

Data and Statistics Bill

Summary

1. The Artificial Intelligence Forum of New Zealand (AI Forum) thanks the Governance and Administration Committee for the opportunity to submit on the Data and Statistics Bill. The AI Forum NZ would be happy to speak to the Select committee about our submission.
2. We believe the narrow focus on collecting data via statistical surveys, under the Statistics Act 1975, has resulted in insufficient tools for ensuring the supply and quality of administrative data used for producing official statistics. Therefore, in principle, we support the intent of the Data and Statistic Bill, which provides an important step towards enabling more effective systems leadership and coordination, strengthening and future-proofing the framework for collecting data for official statistics and modernising the framework for access data for research.
3. We believe not using AI tools will greatly limit the effectiveness of future statistical understanding and decision-making. At the same time, using algorithmic collection and analysis without due consideration of bias and other potential issues also creates risk. Given the opportunity AI technologies present to data and statistical analysis, we recommend the Committee should take this opportunity to at least capture the potential use of AI in the Bill

About the AI Forum of New Zealand

4. The AI Forum is a purpose-driven, not-for-profit, non-governmental organisation (NGO) that is funded by members. The association was founded in 2017.
5. The AI Forum brings together New Zealand's community of artificial intelligence technology innovators, end users, investor groups, regulators, researchers, educators, entrepreneurs and interested public to work together to find ways to use AI to help enable a prosperous, inclusive and thriving future for our nation.
6. The Forum advances New Zealand's AI ecosystem through connections, advocacy, growing talent and collaboration. The AI Forum promotes the economic opportunities raised by AI, supporting great applications of AI and emerging New Zealand AI firms, and works to ensure that society can adapt to the rapid and far-reaching changes that AI technology will bring.

Comment

7. In general, we support the Bill's intent, which represents an important step towards enabling more effective systems leadership and coordination, strengthening and future-proofing the framework for collecting data for official statistics, and modernising the framework for access data for research.
8. While the Bill focusses on a number of proposed amendments in relation to these matters, the AI Forum believes the Committee needs to consider the implications of technology, especially artificial intelligence (AI) within the Bill for the long-term future of data and statistics in New Zealand.
9. The Statistician will likely be using some level of machine learning technologies to collect and analyse large amounts of data in the future. We recommend the Bill be amended to specifically reflect this because it has significant implications on the nature of the data being sourced by the Statistician, and the potential accuracy, perspectives or official statistics that can be drawn from said the data.
10. We recommend the inclusion of a new "data and transparency" clause in Part 7 General and miscellaneous provisions, with specific sub-clauses stating that where possible with due respect to clauses on privacy, the Statistician will ensure the processes of collection and analysis of data will be designed and undertaken with transparency, especially when algorithmic or machine learning collection of and analysis of the data is used. This would provide transparency and mitigate the potential for machine learning technologies and AI analytical tools to create unconscious bias.
11. We support the inclusion of Te Tiriti o Waitangi in the Data and Statistics Bill because it recognises Māori interests and encourages the adoption of a Te Ao Māori lens when capturing, producing and using data as a decision-making tool . This is especially important in cases when algorithmic or machine learning collection of and analysis of the data is used.



Conclusion

12. Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the Data and Statistics Bill. The AI Forum NZ would be happy to speak to the Select committee about our submission.
13. If you have any further queries do not hesitate to me.

Nāku Noa,

Megan Tapsell | Chair

Artificial Intelligence Forum of New Zealand

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