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Māori data experts challenge Government moves to offshore New Zealand data

Data Iwi Leaders Group have challenged Government as it increasingly offshores New Zealand data, saying there are long-term benefits to investing in local data infrastructure instead.

Offshoring data refers to the replacement of domestic data storage services with imported services produced offshore and owned by offshore companies.

Government agencies backing offshoring New Zealand – including Māori - data, cite greater security and reduced costs as key factors.

However Data Iwi Leaders Group (Data ILG), through its operational arm, Te Kāhui Raraunga, say Government should instead strengthen and invest in local options for data onshoring and procurement.

In a new report commissioned by Te Kāhui Raraunga, titled *Māori data sovereignty and offshoring Māori data*, international experts challenge assumptions that local services are inherently less secure and less reliable.

Data ILG Technician and co-author, Professor Tahu Kukutai, says the paper highlights how four Māori data sovereignty principles (control, jurisdiction, accountabilities and guardianship) are relevant to issues of data storage and jurisdiction.

"Considering a suite of options, including strategic investment in locally-hosted solutions would both enhance the public service drive for digital transformation and give greater effect to Māori data sovereignty."

She says upholding the principles of Māori data sovereignty is crucial for the Government to meet its responsibilities to Te Tiriti.

The paper recommends that Māori, as a Tiriti partner, are involved in policy setting and system-level decisions regarding the digital public service transformation, All-of-Government procurement policies and use of onshore and offshore Cloud-based services.

The paper also recommends Māori data sovereignty requirements are incorporated into contractual agreements for the use of onshore and offshore Cloud-based services.

TE KĀHUI RARAUNGA

"Government needs to take a more long-term strategic approach to treating data as an intergenerational taonga and invest in a wider range of options beyond public Cloud (offshore) ," Professor Kukutai says.

The paper identifies that a proactive approach to strengthening local infrastructure also aligns with calls to invest in developing local workforce capability to lift Aotearoa's global competitiveness.

Data ILG signed a Mana Ōrite Relationship agreement with the Department of Internal Affairs and the Government Chief Digital Officer in June 2021.

Together, the organisations are working to provide a te ao Māori lens over how Māori data sovereignty can and should be considered through the Government's adoption of Cloud services.

Data ILG Chairman, Rahui Papa, says Māori data sovereignty offers a holistic, tikanga-led approach that is inherently relational and is about driving towards better data relationships for all.

For all media queries, please contact Tahu Kukutai on tahu.kukutai@waikato.ac.nz.

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