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# New Algorithm Charter a world-first

**HON JAMES SHAW(/MINISTER/HON-JAMES-SHAW)**[Statistics \(/portfolio/labour-led-government-2017-2020/statistics\)](/portfolio/labour-led-government-2017-2020/statistics)

This Government has today become the first in the world to outline a set of standards to guide the use of algorithms by public agencies.

The Minister for Statistics, James Shaw, today launched the Algorithm Charter for Aotearoa New Zealand (<https://data.govt.nz/use-data/data-ethics/government-algorithm-transparency-and-accountability/algorithm-charter>) to give New Zealanders confidence that data is being used safely and effectively across government.

“We live in a data rich world where algorithms play a crucial role in helping us to make connections, and identify relationships and patterns across vast quantities of information. This helps to improve decision-making and leads to benefits such as the faster delivery of targeted public services,” James Shaw said.

Algorithms are used by agencies to help process and interpret large amounts of data, which can speed up decision-making.

“However, using algorithms to analyse data and inform decisions does not come without its risks. It is important, therefore, that people have confidence that these algorithms are being used in a fair, ethical, and transparent way. And that’s what this Charter is all about,” James Shaw said.

The Charter has been signed by 21 agencies, including the Ministry for the Environment, Ministry of Education, the Department of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Justice, and Inland Revenue. The Charter commits these agencies to a range of measures, including explaining how decisions are informed by algorithms and embedding a Te Ao Māori perspective in the development and use of algorithms.

“Most New Zealanders recognise the important role algorithms play in supporting government decision-making and policy delivery, however they also want to know that these systems are being used safely and responsibly. The Charter will give people that confidence. It will help to build public trust over the long term, meaning that we can unlock the full potential of data to improve people’s lives.

“Today we have set a world-leading example of how government can work with diverse groups of people, communities and organisations to improve transparency and accountability in the use of data. It is an example that we hope others will follow,” James Shaw said.

### **More information**

The agencies that have signed the Charter so far are:

The Department of Corrections, Ministry of Education, Ministry for the Environment, Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, Department of Internal Affairs, Inland Revenue, Ministry of Justice, Land Information New Zealand, Ministry of Māori Development, Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children, Ministry for Pacific Peoples, Ministry for Social Development, Statistics New Zealand, Ministry of Transport, the NZ Transport Agency, Te Kāhui Whakamana Rua Tekau mā Iwa—Pike River Recovery Agency, Ministry for Women, the Social Wellbeing Agency, New Zealand Defence Force, Te Arawhiti, and the Accident Compensation Corporation.

The Algorithm Charter for Aotearoa New Zealand follows a recommendation by the Government Chief Data Steward and Chief Digital Officer, who said in a 2018 report that the safe and effective use of operational algorithms required greater consistency across Government.

The Charter draws on the Principles for the Safe and Effective Use of Data and Analytics co-designed by the Government Chief Data Steward and the Privacy Commissioner.

The Charter is one of a wide range of government initiatives to improve transparency, including the convening of an independent data ethics advisory group and work on improving data ethics education at a tertiary level.

New Zealand is also a signatory to the International Open Government Partnership.

