

NZCCSS

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DATAETHICSHUB MAGAZINE

Editor of the month

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Rachel and friends hold the pen for Easter

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Dr Lovely Dizon
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About DataEthicsHub

Aotearoa's Home for Data Ethics

DataEthicsHub is Aotearoa's growing community for anyone passionate about data, ethics, AI, trust, and responsible innovation. Hosted by the Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation (CDEI) at Stats NZ, the Hub brings together 86 members from government, academia, communities, and industry. Launched in 2024 on Circle.so with the support of a working group of pioneers, it has become a space to share insights, ask questions, discover resources, and collaborate on making data work better for people and communities.

About NZCCSS

The New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services (NZCCSS) represents six Christian networks made up of more than 100 organisations delivering community, health and social services across Aotearoa New Zealand. Their important mahi at the flax roots of communities informs our work advocating for change to improve the lives of all New Zealanders, which we see as an extension of the mission of Jesus Christ. We're dedicated to taking meaningful action to uphold and live out Te Tiriti o Waitangi in our work.

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Welcoming our Easter Editors-in-Chief from the NZCCSS

We are delighted to announce that Rachel Mackay, from the New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services, will be joining us as Guest Editor-in-Chief for an upcoming special edition.



For this occasion, we have slightly adapted our usual column title “X Holds the Pen” to “Rachel and Friends Hold the Pen.” Some readers may notice the small nod to Pavarotti and Friends, a fitting reference, as the spirit of collaboration, warmth, and shared values resonates strongly with the Christian ethos that inspires this edition.

I have long hoped to invite Rachel to write for our community and first reached out to her last year. She thoughtfully chose the Easter period for this collaboration, a time rich in meaning, carrying powerful messages of hope, resilience, joy, fortitude through suffering, and renewal.

Rachel will be collaborating with several respected leaders from across the social services and faith-based sector to curate a thoughtful and values-driven editorial series, encouraging us to reflect on the deep ethical call to care for others, particularly those who are most vulnerable.

For Rachel and the Christian social services sector, this translates into a strong sense of duty, solidarity, and service. From my conversations with Rachel, it is clear that this service is not about dwelling in hardship or accepting inequality as inevitable, but about working collectively to create the conditions for people and communities to move beyond difficult circumstances. In that sense, the themes of Easter resonate strongly with the principles of social investment: acting early, supporting people effectively, and building pathways toward dignity, stability, and opportunity. Thoughtfully used, data and technology can play an important role in this effort.



Please join me in welcoming Rachel Mackay, Alicia Sudden, David Hanna, Rv Dr Bonnie Robinson, and Sarah Mulcahy.

Florence Maron
Managing Editor

An Introduction from NZCCSS

Rachel Mackay



Tēnā koutou,
tēnā koutou,
tēnā koutou kātoa.
Ko Rachel Mackay ahau.



I am the Senior Policy Analyst in the Older Persons Portfolio at the New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services, and I will be your Guest Editor for March. Unlike the illustrious previous editors and the outstanding ones lined up next, I am not a data expert. I am, primarily, a communicator.

I like to ask big questions (like “how can we fund Aged Residential Care?” and “what is Older Persons Poverty?” and “why don’t more people have their Enduring Powers of Attorney?”).

I then look to back up the answers with good quality information to try and effect change. To do this I need good data, which often leads me to questions about the integrity of the data we use, the way it was collected, the inferences that can be made of it, and how my own biases will impact the way that I, in turn, present it to others.

One of my favourite whakataukī is this:

Hurihia tō aroaro ki te rā, tukuna tā ātārangi kia taka ki muri i a koe.
Turn your face to the sun and let the shadows fall behind you.

For those of us who use data, spreadsheets and stories are the sun. We turn our faces, our questions, towards it and hope that we can leave behind the darkness of ignorance and misunderstanding. We want the truth hidden in the data we collect, curate and criticise to illuminate our understanding.

For those who work in the Christian social services sector, there is also another light to turn to for hope and truth – faith.

The New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services represents six Christian social service provision networks that operate across Aotearoa New Zealand. Over 100 organisations under our umbrella deliver community, health and social services in the hearts of communities, from Residential Aged Care to foodbanks, budgeting services to pastoral care, early childhood centres to in-home disability support. Their important work at the flax roots of community informs our work as we advocate for change that improves the lives of all New Zealanders. The central tenants of the mission of Jesus Christ - to serve others and to love your neighbour - are core to the work that we do, alongside our commitments to upholding Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Like others in their fields, the nurses, managers, teachers, social workers, home care providers, team leaders, call centre operators, managers and CEOs of the faith-based social service providers handle a deluge of data.



Personal information, social returns on investment, funding information, programme content, marketing and communication strategies, anecdotes and interviews. Everything has to be documented, recorded, analysed, and assessed – especially if you want to keep receiving funding for your programme. In an environment where everything can and must be quantified, and there is an expectation that that data will not only be stored safely and reliably, but used to improve your organisational practice, how is this impacted by the lens of faith?

How does faith and faithfulness impact the policies and processes that govern an organisation, including its data principles?

How does it influence the ways that we think about data ethics, data innovation, data sovereignty, and even the concept of what data is?

Over the next few weeks I will be sharing with you some thoughts from within our membership. We have managed to find contributions from across our membership, from case studies and lenses in reports to musings and considerations. Along the way I'll introduce each of our authors and their organisations so you can meet some of the amazing membership that we at NZCCSS are proud to represent.

Organising the pieces for this month has been a privilege and a joy and I hope that you find them as interesting and thought provoking as I have. I look forward to hearing your thoughts on each of the perspectives, especially if they may challenge you, and giving you a slightly different perspective as we move towards Easter.

Kia tau te rangimārie ki ā koe,
Rachel.

What data isn't neutral

Reimagining Data Ethics through community and Christian Values

Anglican Care Waiapu (ACW) is part of the Anglican Care Network, one of the six members of NZCCSS. The Anglican Church in New Zealand had its beginnings in 1814 at Oihi in the Bay of Islands. The Anglican presence in the eastern side of Te Ika-a-Māui and the Diocese of Waiapu dates back to the Missionary work of Māori evangelists. Established in 1991 within the Anglican Diocese of Waiapu, ACW service communities in the Bay of Plenty, Tairāwhiti, Hawke's Bay and Tararua regions.

This piece is written by Sarah Mulcahy, the ACW's General Manager of Programme Design and Evaluation. Sarah has been with ACW since 2019 and has served as convener on the NZCCSS Equity and Inclusion member committee since then. Her role and her background in service delivery management gives her a unique perspective on not just the acquisition of data, but how it can be used in practice.



Sarah's strong values and commitment to the work being done to improve the lives of people in her region coupled with the beautiful devotionals she blesses the Member Committee meetings with made her the first person I thought of when asked to put together this collection of thoughts, and I'm so glad she said yes.

NZCCSS is proud to have ACW as a key member that contributes both to their community and our work, and thrilled to be able to share this thoughtful and well-referenced work from Sarah.

When Data Isn't Neutral

Reimagining Data Ethics through community and Christian Values

Sarah Mulcahy



For a long time, I've worked in spaces where data is treated as the most objective voice in the room. Numbers are trusted, statistics are persuasive and graphs feel authoritative. And yet, the more I engage with communities, and with my own ethical and faith commitments, the more uneasy I've become with the assumption that data is neutral.

Most of our institutions rely heavily on dominant data largely expressed through national or institutional statistics. It helps us identify patterns, allocate resources, and surface disparities. But it also has limits. It tells us what is happening, far more often than it tells us why.

More troublingly, dominant data has achieved a kind of supremacy. It is treated as the most legitimate, sometimes the only legitimate form of evidence. In practice, this means that the lived experiences of communities are often dismissed as "anecdotal" unless they are statistically validated. Statistics can function as a technology of mistrust: they are demanded precisely when decision-makers do not trust people to speak truthfully about their own lives.

This dynamic does real harm. When data is framed solely through inequities when communities are repeatedly shown to "perform worse" across indicators reinforces deficit narratives. People become problems to be solved rather than communities navigating unjust systems. Those who don't fit neat categories, whose numbers are too small to count, or whose experiences don't translate cleanly into surveys are erased altogether.

This is where community data, evidence generated by communities about their own lives, on their own terms is important. It can include numbers, but it also includes stories, art, maps, music, oral history, and collective memory. It reflects community-centred ways of knowing, being, and imagining futures. Crucially, it provides what dominant data cannot: context, nuance, and insight into why inequities exist and how systems are failing specific populations.

For me, this conversation opens naturally into questions of ethics and faith. Christian theology offers a valuable, and under-utilised, framework for thinking about data. At the heart of Christian ethics is the doctrine of *Imago Dei*: the belief that every person is made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). If we take that seriously, it becomes impossible to reduce people to datapoints, variables, or economic units.

A Christian approach to data ethics insists on human dignity. Data about people must be handled with care, humility, and reverence. This includes a preferential concern for those who are most vulnerable echoing Jesus' ministry among the marginalised (Luke 4:18). In practical terms, it means resisting dehumanising abstractions and remembering that behind every dataset are real lives.

Christian ethics also emphasises truthfulness. Truth, in this sense, is not just technical accuracy but integrity: being honest about uncertainty, limitations, and assumptions (John 8:32). Selective reporting or overstated claims may pass technical scrutiny, but using data in this way fails ethical scrutiny. Choices are made about what data is included which can reinforce agenda or preconceived views and transparency of this is not apparent to those without technical statistical skills.



Stewardship is another core concept. Scripture frames our role not as owners, but as caretakers of what has been entrusted to us (1 Peter 4:10). Applied to data, this challenges the idea that data is a commodity to extract and exploit. Instead, data should serve the common good, with long-term impacts considered alongside short-term efficiency. This resonates strongly with Indigenous Data Sovereignty (IDS), particularly as articulated by Māori scholars and Te Mana Raraunga. Indigenous perspectives understand data as a taonga, a treasure, deeply connected to people, land, ancestors, and identity (Kukutai & Taylor, 2016). IDS asserts collective rights over how data is collected, governed, and used (Rainie, Rodriguez-Lonebear & Martinez, 2017). Concepts like kaitiakitanga (guardianship) align closely with Christian stewardship, justice, and relational accountability.

Kaupapa Māori research reinforces this ethical stance by challenging extractive research practices and insisting that data remains accountable to the communities from which it comes, not merely to institutions or disciplines. In this framing, honouring data is inseparable from honouring people, and ethical responsibility continues through how findings are returned, communicated, and used to support community aspirations rather than ending at analysis (Smith 2017).

Both Christian ethics and Indigenous worldviews challenge Western individualism. They remind us that humans are relational beings, that knowledge is shaped by relationships, and that ethical responsibility flows from those relationships, not just from abstract rules or compliance checklists.

Reimagining data ethics through these lenses is not about rejecting statistics or institutional data. It's about interrogating their limits, uplifting community knowledge, and transforming what we count as trusted evidence. Community data can help explain the statistics or can triangulate what the numbers might tell us and give deeper insight into the matter at hand. It's about asking hard questions: Whose voices are missing? Who benefits from this analysis? What does love require of us in this situation?



If we can hold dominant data and community data, Christian ethics and Indigenous data sovereignty, in creative tension, then data practice becomes more than a technical exercise. It becomes a moral vocation, one that honours dignity, truth, justice, and ultimately, our responsibility to one another.

Sarah Malcahy

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Te Ora o Te Whānau

A new lens on the State of the Nation Report 2026

By Charm Skinner

The Salvation Army is one of the six members of NZCCSS, and houses the Social Policy and Parliamentary Unit (SPPU). This unit, established in 2004, is a bastion of social research and policy evaluation that works alongside the work done by NZCCSS. The SPPU has a strong focus on the eradication of poverty, and their annual State of the Nation report tracks a wide variety of metrics year-to-year to uncover the harsh truth of poverty in Aotearoa. This short piece, written by SPPU Te Ao Māori Policy Analyst Charm Skinner (Ngāti Wairere), outlines the newest facet of the State of the Nation Report, the inclusion of the dedicated Te Ora o Te Whānau section. Charm also discusses the importance of data framing, and the choices that those who present data must make in order to hold to ethical principles, especially in areas such as poverty and hardship. NZCCSS is proud to represent The Salvation Army and to work alongside the SPPU to work towards a poverty-free Aotearoa. I would encourage you to read the full State of the Nation 2026 report for a sobering look at the levels of poverty and hardship across our nation.



Now in its 19th edition, the State of the Nation report assesses how Aotearoa is doing across the five domains: children and youth, work and incomes, housing, crime and punishment and social hazards.

The report has, for some years, included a section focusing specifically on how the statistics relate to Māori, but for the first time, the report includes an assessment of Māori wellbeing using the te ao Māori framework, Te Ora o Te Whānau. Grounded in the scholarship of the late Professor Manuka Henare and Professor Piri Sciascia and developed further by Sacha McMeeking in partnership with the National Iwi Chairs Forum, the framework offers a lens to interpret the data that centres collective wellbeing and whānau, rather than statistics and data alone.

Rather than presenting outcomes as deficits, we asked a different question: what structural settings are failing to uphold hauora and wellbeing? The framework's interconnected layers — kawa, tikanga, ritenga and āhuatanga, trace how upstream influences shape downstream outcomes, allowing us to identify where collective effort is most needed to improve hauora and wellbeing outcomes.

This edition also for the first time, uses case stories from the frontline of The Salvation Army's social services. Some of these narratives come from whānau who once engaged with our services and now give back as kaimahi—whether as volunteers, employees, or in faith-based roles. We saw this as essential. Data without context, risks reducing people to numbers and our responsibility is to handle that data in ways that are mana-enhancing rather than stigmatising.

Where disparities emerged, we resisted framing them as failures of individuals or communities. Instead, through the lens of Te Ora o te Whānau, we named the systemic drivers that shape those inequities. This approach aligns with both te ao Māori and the guiding purpose of our unit: working toward the eradication of poverty in Aotearoa.

By embedding Te Ora o Te Whānau into the structure of the report from the outset, the final product reflects a more holistic, relationship-centred understanding of wellbeing. It sharpens our analysis, grounds our conclusions and enables us to tell a story that truly honours our most vulnerable whānau and communities.

As a faith-based organisation, The Salvation Army views Te Tiriti o Waitangi as a covenant, a sacred and enduring agreement that calls us into relationship, honour and shared responsibility. This understanding aligns deeply with our values of justice, dignity and partnership and with our Christian mission to serve others with compassion and integrity.

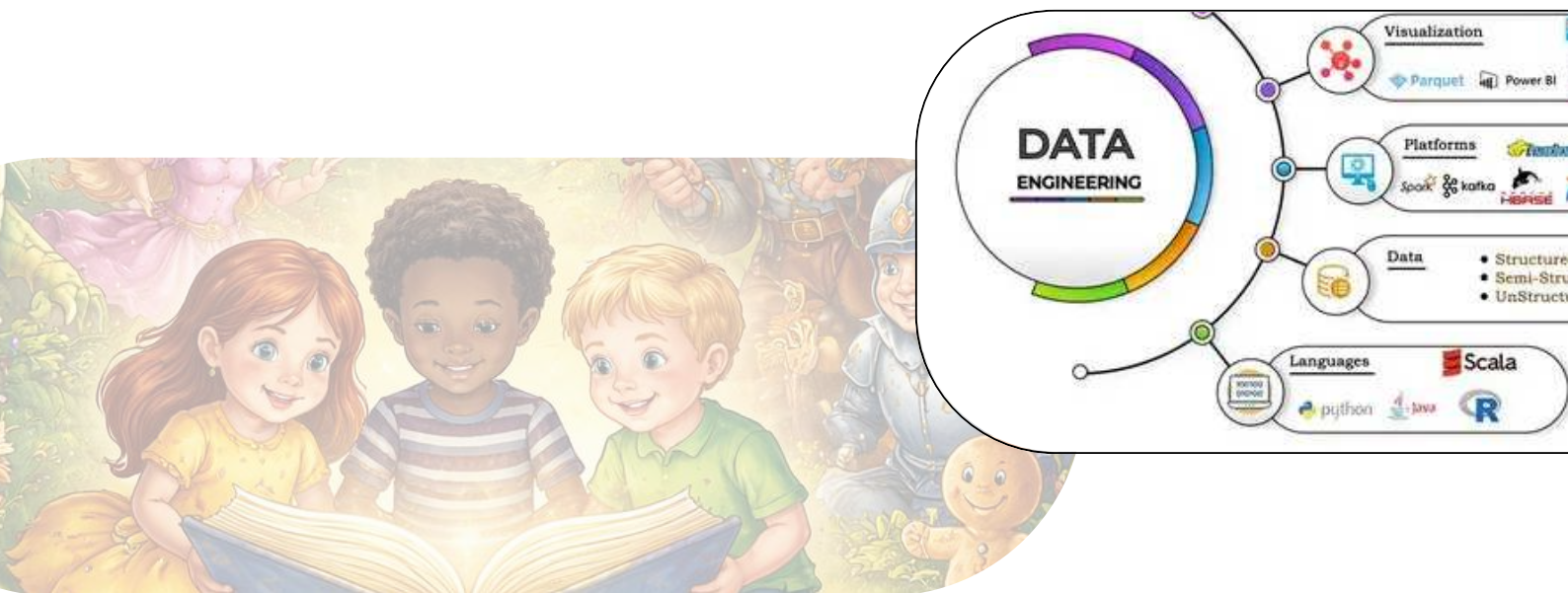
We chose to embed this framework throughout our reporting because it is our commitment to honouring our Te Tiriti obligations and because it is the right thing to do. The inequities we highlight are not new, but the urgency of change needed to address these dire statistics is real.

While we acknowledge we do not always get it perfect, we remain committed to learning, listening, and continually striving to uphold Te Tiriti in the way we work, the stories we tell and the systems we seek to influence.

Whose story is it anyway?

The Ethics of Story as Data

BY REV. DR BONNIE ROBINSON, MNZM



The Reverend Dr Bonnie has a special place in the history of NZCCSS. Three generations of her family have been involved in the leadership and governance of the organisation since our creation. She has served in the past as a both the Executive Officer and the President of the Council and is currently a Council appointed additional member. Currently Director of the Social Policy and Parliamentary Unit, Bonnie was the Deputy Director at its inception in 2004 and in between has worked for a variety of NZCCSS members, including as Chief Executive Officer for both Howick Baptist Healthcare and Presbyterian Support Northern. As an ordained Presbyterian minister, Bonnie brings her commitment to faith as service to every role she holds. For this she received a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit (MNZM) in 2023 for her services to seniors and social services. Her Doctor of Professional Practice, awarded in the same year, was on supporting leaders of not-for-profit social services to include social justice in their decision-making, which formed the basis of this piece.

NZCCSS is proud to count Bonnie as a strong ally as we walk our path towards a Just and Compassionate Aotearoa, and I am personally grateful to her taking the time to share with us this special contribution.

Whose story is it anyway?

The Ethics of Story as Data

Rev. Dr. Bonnie Robinson, MNZM





Story is an ancient form of information sharing. Humanity for centuries used the power of story to convey facts, history, geographical signposts, genealogy, morality, and cultural norms. Story is easily remembered, and natural to every human being. It is an effective tool to gather, understand and disseminate information.

In the western developed world of research however, for many centuries story was a second-class citizen. Story was not considered scientific because it is hard to replicate, test, and can't be put through the "gold standard" of double-blind randomised trials. Story was seen as of use only to the so called 'soft' sciences and applied areas of study.

Fortunately, over the past 50 or so years, story has made a resurgence and is now understood by many researchers as "data" in its own right. The use of case study, case stories, autoethnographic description, fictionalised reporting, contextual fiction and other forms of narrative research and reporting give access to information that is not easily accessed by other research methods.

Using story, however, raises several ethical questions – which may not get asked as often as they should, given that story is often used in action research contexts, where the participants are frequently both researcher and researched. In social services, where I work, we are often using story as data without being fully conscious of this. We hear clients' stories, take notes, complete client records, and produce summaries and reports for management and funders – turning story into data without being aware that this is a form of research reporting that has ethical consequences.

Usually if we do think about it, we often regard adherence to privacy, anonymisation and the use of client consent forms as sufficient. Yet no human being can present their story in isolation. "The self is porous, constantly leaking into others" (Tolich 2016, 1608). My story is inevitably also someone else's. I may have given consent, but did they and do they have to?

It can feel more ethical (or at least easier) not to gather and tell stories. Yet, the not telling can also have ethical implications, especially if by not telling, certain voices, and information are not heard and taken into consideration.

How then do we gather and use story ethically? Acknowledgment and mitigation of ethical issues is key. Understand, on a deep level, the ethical risks, to both research subjects, and researcher, and then work to develop mitigation strategies that are acceptable to all in the data gathering process.

When I do research using story I use Tolich's three categories and then tease out the detailed implications for the use of story in my research context.



The three categories are:

CONSENT:

respecting participants autonomy while recognising the limitations on the voluntary nature of participation

Here we recognise that all consent is partial, even my own, because no one can foresee all possibilities. We are unable to control how people will react to a story/data embedded in research or reporting or how they will use it. Harm may be inadvertently done by communication of self-reflection because even if others are not named readers may assume who is being talked about.

To mitigate consent, we need to acknowledge and make overt its partiality. For sensitive topics we need to explore the most appropriate method of telling the story – fictionalised accounts, rather than case study, anonymising of contexts, timeframes, and using generalised scenarios rather than specific incidences. Cultural alignment of researcher, topic, method and reporting is critical.

CONSULTATION:

checking with others about ethical issues and not publishing anything that I would not be prepared to show to those implicated or mentioned in the text.

Consultation involves understanding that in all research there are multiple layers of accountability – to self, family, employer, sector, community, perhaps even society. These accountabilities may result in conflict in terms of process, outcomes and communication.

To mitigate requires an on-going process of communication and negotiation of boundaries – who is comfortable with sharing what, when and how? Multiple opportunities for participation in and understanding of what the story will be used for must be offered.

VULNERABILITY:

assumes that all people mentioned or implicated in the story will read it and that we must ensure internal as well as external confidentiality.

Vulnerability recognises that we need to balance micro and macro ethical issues. Micro issues are those affecting an individual or one situation, while macro issues concern the impact on a wider group or society in general. Protecting an individual, by not using a story, might solve a micro ethical issue, but create a macro one, if that negates the ability to create a positive outcome for a wider group.

Mitigation here involves an overt recognition of the vulnerability of those who share their story for use as data and when-ever possible, use of multiple sources of data (many stories), so that the research or work can continue, even if one story is not available.

All data has ethical considerations. Data in some shape or form is essential for us to pursue knowledge, move things forward, make change. But “if there is capacity for benefit there is capacity for harm” (Campbell and Groundwater Smith 2007, 16). While story provides opportunity for much richness, its depth offers multiple opportunities for, usually, inadvertent harm. This should not stop us using story but make us very diligent to ask the ethical questions, and always be mindful, of whose story it is, who gets to decide and who gets to tell.

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Data as Taonga

Caring for our whānau through honouring their data

By Dr Lovely Dizon

Visionwest Waka Whakakitenga is a Baptist-founded provider of services based in West Auckland. Founded in 1982 in the disused Glen Eden Railway Station, and then called 'The Friendship Centre Trust, the organisation has gone to support thousands of whānau with food, counselling, budgeting services, housing, in-home care, and has led the social service sector with its strong kaupapa Māori and shared leadership journey. With services now spreading across Auckland, Waikato, Bay of Plenty, Rotorua, Taupō and Canterbury, Visionwest provides support and manaaki to whānau across the nation every single day.

Dr Lovely Dizon is Visionwest's Research and Evaluation Advisor. With her doctoral research in mixed-methods grounded theory, she brings a deeply engaged and thoughtful lens to the work done at Visionwest.

NZCCSS is proud to have Visionwest Waka Whakakitenga as a member living their values in communities around the country, and I am grateful to Dr Lovely for writing this piece, Visionwest's Chief Information Officer Andrew Fraser for facilitating it, and to Grant Taylor (also of Visionwest and my Older Persons Member Committee) for finding such a wonderful contributor to remind us of the responsibilities of working with people's data.



Data as Taonga

Caring for our whānau through honouring their data

Dr Lovely Dizon

At Visionwest Waka Whakakitenga, we seek to align everything we do with our values of aroha, mana, whānaungatanga and manaakitanga. We believe that this extends not only to our community facing work, but our back office support teams as well. For Visionwest, data is a taonga (treasure) provided by whānau (clients), staff, suppliers and/or generated by our kaimahi (workers). To be good kaitiaki (guardians, stewards) of this data is of the highest priority. At Visionwest, our Data Governance Policy outlines how we care for the information provided to us throughout the entire data lifecycle, and It provides an important foundation for how we continue to sharpen our practices. Our approach is to continuously improve our practices and systems for how we collect, manage, analyse, and report data; respecting the emerging and best practice standards for information use, storage and protection.



One example of Data Innovation is our current Outcomes Framework work. Our organisation's vision is: 'He Oranga Tāngata, He Oranga Hapori – in all we do, we endeavour to reflect the values we believe lead to empowerment and transformation for whānau.' Currently, the evidence of the full extent of transformation for client whānau is often anecdotal and not well captured. Yet, there is a desire within Visionwest to have more rigorous and in-depth information (regarding the changes we hear whānau sharing with us), that is not currently systematically gathered at present. This led Visionwest's Insights and Analytics team to commission a Outcomes Framework project, led by our Research and Evaluation Advisor. The Outcomes Framework aims to describe the outcomes individuals and whānau may experience through engaging with Visionwest services. To ensure our outcome framework reflects whānau experiences at Visionwest, we held multiple focus groups with whānau.

Prior to collecting any information from whānau, we chose to apply for formal ethics approval through Aotearoa Research Ethics Committee (AREC). A process that assessed the purpose of data collection, consent procedures, privacy protections, potential risks and benefits for participants and data storage and management. Whilst time consuming, undertaking this process ensured that our work with whānau on this project was conducted in an ethically sound manner. For us, the time and resource spent to this end, was worth it. We remain deeply committed to working with data in a way that is integrally joined to our work for the empowerment and transformation of the whānau we serve.

Data as Taonga

Caring for our whānau through honouring their data

By Dr Lovely Dizon

WARM DATA LABS

David Hanna

THE VALUE OF AN APPROACH THAT ADDRESSES THE LIMITS OF ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

Wesley Community Action (WCA) was formalised in 1950 and has since grown to a network of centres based across the wider Pōneke region, prioritising working in a whānau-led, community-driven, and warm-hearted way to uplift and inspire real change. Coming from the Methodist tradition, who had some of the first missionaries in Aotearoa and were at the signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, WCA has a strong commitment to upholding Te Tiriti in its work and actively promotes a Rangatira approach through its Te Ahunga Te Hua strategic direction.

This piece is written by David Hanna, WCA's Director for the last 21 years. David has long been part of the Council at NZCCSS and we are fortunate enough to have him as one of our current Co-Presidents alongside Renee Rewi of Kake Oranga Hāhi Katorika | Catholic Family Support Services. David is someone who passionately engages with new ideas and leads WCA with data-driven insights meshed with human compassion. His strong Methodist background drives him to be a fierce advocate for communities, justice, and ethics. I knew asking him to write something for this collection would gift us with something I hadn't even considered, and so it has, as he introduced me to the concept of Warm Data Labs.

NZCCSS is proud to have WCA as a key member who practice awhitanga and manaakitanga for the whole Pōneke community, and I am grateful to David for the opportunity to share his thoughts with you all.



New Zealand's Social Investment approach is growing the reliance on administrative data, metrics, and quantitative indicators to inform decision-making. This has significant ethical implications that are not being fully discussed.

These forms of data offer clarity, comparability, and a sense of control. They allow systems to count, measure, and monitor trends at scale. Yet when relied on in isolation, administrative data can unintentionally flatten reality. It abstracts human lives into categories and numbers, often stripping away context, meaning, and relationship. Warm Data Labs offer a vital counterbalance to this tendency by bringing forward the richness of lived experience and enabling a deeper engagement with the complexity of human systems.

The psychiatrist and philosopher Iain McGilchrist offers a helpful lens for understanding why this imbalance occurs. His work on the brain's hemispheres suggests that the left and right hemispheres attend to the world in fundamentally different ways. The left hemisphere tends toward narrow focus, abstraction, categorisation, and control. It excels at measurement, analysis, and decomposition. The right hemisphere, by contrast, takes in the world as a whole. It is attuned to context, relationship, nuance, embodiment, and meaning. Crucially, McGilchrist argues that while both modes are necessary, modern Western systems have become dominated by left hemisphere ways of knowing, often at the expense of the right.

Administrative data aligns strongly with this left hemisphere orientation. It privileges what can be counted, standardised, and compared, often decontextualising human experience in the process. Numbers can tell us what is happening, but they struggle to convey how it is experienced, why it matters, or what it means within the wider fabric of people's lives. When this mode of attention becomes dominant, organisations risk mistaking the map for the territory—treating representations of reality as though they are reality itself.

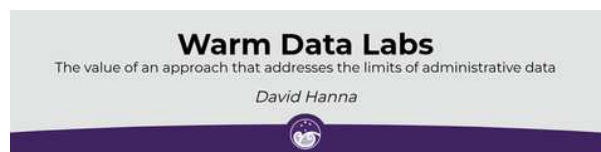
Warm Data Labs deliberately reengage a more right-hemispheric mode of attention. Rather than extracting information from individuals, they create conditions for people to meet as people, not as roles or data points. Through facilitated conversations that move across multiple contexts—family, culture, economy, environment, governance, identity—participants surface how different parts of a system interact and co-shape one another. What emerges is not a dataset to be analysed, but a living picture of relational complexity.

The richness of warm data lies precisely in what resists easy measurement. It includes stories, emotions, metaphors, tensions, and contradictions. It reveals patterns of relationship rather than isolated variables. This aligns closely with McGilchrist's assertion that the right hemisphere is better suited to apprehending living systems, where meaning arises through connection and context rather than fragmentation. Warm data does not seek certainty or closure; it holds ambiguity long enough for deeper understanding to emerge.

Importantly, Warm Data Labs do not reject quantitative data. Instead, they restore balance. They allow the left hemisphere's analytical capacities to be guided by the right hemisphere's broader, more humane grasp of reality. In doing so, they help organisations ask better questions of their numbers and recognise what those numbers cannot capture on their own.

In an era increasingly shaped by dashboards, algorithms, and performance indicators, Warm Data Labs re-centre the human. They remind us that systems are not merely managed—they are lived in. By integrating relational, contextual understanding alongside administrative data, Warm Data Labs support responses that are more ethical, resilient, and attuned to the full complexity of human systems.

Warm data does not seek certainty or closure; it holds ambiguity long enough for deeper understanding to emerge.



Easter and Ethics

BY RACHEL MACKAY

You have likely already come across hot cross buns in the supermarket, since apparently they've decided to start selling those in January now. Lent is hardly halfway done and already we are hurtling towards a chocolate cacophony, an avalanche of bunny-and-chick related decorations, and a decent long weekend (even if we can't nip to the supermarket). Somewhere lurking behind the collective attitude toward Easter is the understanding that these are the holiest days on the Christian calendar, a story we all know, at least in passing.

After a betrayal by his disciple Judas, Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Son of Man, was crucified on the orders of the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate. On the hill of Calvary, outside the historic walls of Jerusalem, he died alongside common thieves. After his death his body was tended and placed reverently in a sealed tomb. On the third day that followed, the same women returned and found the stone that had sealed it was rolled away and the tomb was empty. An angel revealed to these loyal women that Jesus had risen from the dead.



After this, Jesus appeared to the men who were to inherit his Church, despite the fact that they had fled and hidden in fear, and to the crowd of five-hundred, to prove that he had died and returned to them in advance of his ascension to the Kingdom of Heaven, having paid the penalty for human sin, reconciling humanity with God and offering Eternal Life to believers.

Great, Rachel, awesome and snappy recap, but why are we talking about this in the CEDI Circle?

Easter is an absolute cornerstone of a Christian worldview, regardless of which denomination you may fall into. The atonement of sin, sacrifice, and love are the lens of understanding of everyone who holds them in their heart. It forms the foundation of how you construct the concept of 'good' and 'evil' in your day-to-day life, including what behaviours you find acceptable. In this world of data acquisition, management, manipulation, storage, analysis, and sovereignty, it also asks you to take this moral basis and use it to understand your ethical interactions with data.

Easter and Ethics

The CDEI Human Values for Data Ethics might not be constructed in a foundation of Christian thinking, but I would argue that the Easter story holds at its core many of the same values.

Informed and Included

At the Last Supper, Jesus tells his disciples exactly what is going to happen to him. He outlines the immanent betrayal, the expected suffering, the inevitability of his death on the cross, and his return to life. Christ is also often portrayed as a teacher and a guide, explaining the Scripture to his followers so that they can fully understand what is asked of them, and to provide a relevant lens on information to ensure that it is understood in a meaningful and useful way. Te Ora o Te Whānau from the SPPU is a clear representation of this value.



Responsible Protection

Protection, security, and absorbing risk are key to the purpose of Easter. Jesus absorbs the injustice of his trial and death in order to protect his followers as he atoned for their sins. Protection from misuse is also core to Christian ethics, as Sarah Mulcahy's piece touches on.

Fair and Just

The Crucifixion is an example of an institutionally sanctioned but ethically and morally corrupt outcome. In our practice, we must ask ourselves not only what is lawful, but what is right and just for us to do to people in pursuit of their data, and with that data when we have it.

Empowered Choice

After the resurrection, Jesus is confronted by Thomas who doubts he died at all. He invites him to see and touch the wound of the crucifixion, actively provided evidence to go alongside the claims in order for him to make the decision to believe.

Easter and Ethics

Collaborative Value

Jesus could have revealed himself to his male followers, to powerful leaders, or to the Roman governor. Instead, he revealed himself to the women, those who were least among society. He shares with them his power in giving them the news of his resurrection and ensures that their participation in the miracle cannot be ignored. David Hanna's discussion on Warm Data Labs touches on the value of collaboration, between hemispheres of the mind and between streams of data, for a fuller picture of the world.



Respected and Understood

Too much to fit into one post could be written about the nuances that can be extracted from a reading of the Easter story when its wider cultural context is better understood. The contribution by Bonnie Robinson is the best reflection of this value and how it enriches our understanding.

Any reading of the Easter Story can generate discussion, and I hope this lens adds to your understanding of it and to how people might use their own social, moral, and ethical contexts to engage with the Human Values for Human Data. Our membership might not yet use the wording of these values, but I think the ideas that underpin them would be very familiar. It also emphasises that the Values are an underpinning and speak to something truly human within us all. The lenses we see the world through are shaped by a wide range of understandings, of which faith is only one, but knowing that there is a space and a framework for us to all see clearly, together, gives hope that these lenses can be used to draw us together instead of pulling us apart.

As our time holding the pen comes to a close, we look forward to continuing to share the ideas from CDEI with our membership and encouraging a nuanced, ethical, and distinctly Christian conversation around data. My thanks to all of you who have engaged this week with our thoughts and perspectives, and I look forward to staying connected as we all work together to create an Aotearoa where data ethics and innovation are a values-driven part of everyday life.



Thank you Rachel and friends from the NZCCSS

By Florence Maron

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Rachel Mackay and all the wonderful contributors who served as Editors-in-Chief for this remarkable series.

What you have offered to the DataEthicsHube goes far beyond a collection of articles. It is a thoughtful and deeply human body of reflection that reconnects data ethics with its most essential foundations: people, values, and meaning.

Reading this series felt, at times, like an epiphany. There was a strong sense that “the circle was complete”: ideas that can often feel abstract or technical were brought together and made clear, almost as if something long felt intuitively had finally been articulated.

One of the most powerful aspects of this series is its ability to connect contemporary data and social issues with timeless moral and spiritual traditions.

Each contribution added depth and perspective, from challenging the neutrality of data, to reframing it through dignity, story, stewardship, and collective responsibility.

It also felt like a particularly meaningful time to have these conversations. Lent and Easter invite us to reflect on themes such as justice, hope, truth, effort, temptation/dilemma, sharing, and protection: all of which resonate deeply with the questions we face in data ethics.

Thank you again for your generosity, insight, and clarity. This series does not simply inform, it leaves a lasting impression.

As someone working in the field of statistics, I have chosen a passage from the Book of Numbers to express my gratitude to Rachel and our Friends from the NZCCSS:

“The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make his face shine on you
and be gracious to you;
the Lord turn his face toward you
and give you peace.”

Book of Numbers 6:24–26