



7 August 2025

Tēnā koe

Official Information Act request

Thank you for your email of 28 May 2025, requesting information about algorithmic tools and automated decision-making.

I have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act). Please find my decision on each part of your request set out below.

Do you use algorithmic tools or automated decision-making in benefit processing, fraud detection, or case prioritisation, if so, to what extent?

Algorithmic tools

Algorithmic tools are used in many business processes across the Ministry.

When we received your request, we contacted you to ask about what type of tool you were asking about. We advised that your request was very broad and would likely result in a refusal under section 18(f) of the Act, as it would require substantial manual collation to provide you with details of all algorithmic tools.

As we did not receive a response from you, I am refusing this part of your request under section 18(f) of the Act. The greater public interest is in the effective and efficient administration of the public service.

I have considered whether the Ministry would be able to respond to your request given extra time, or the ability to charge for the information requested. I have concluded that, in either case, the Ministry's ability to undertake its work would still be prejudiced.

Automated decision-making

The Ministry does not use automated decision-making (ADM) for fraud detection.

The Ministry does use ADM to deliver a range of services and support in the welfare system. ADM can help us deliver efficient and modern services more quickly to our clients.

For example, a process that uses ADM is the granting of the Winter Energy Payment, which helps people with their household heating costs over the winter period.

Our most recently introduced use of ADM is to automatically regrant benefits in some situations as part of the 26-week reapplication process. This will happen

when the system can confirm that the client has met all requirements of the reapplication process.

MSD does not use ADM to make decisions about obligation failures or to administer sanctions. Our obligations failure and sanctions process must always be managed by a staff member.

Has the Ministry undertaken a privacy impact assessment or fairness audit of these systems?

Our ADM standard, introduced in early 2022, requires that any ADM process undergoes a Security, Privacy, Human Rights and Ethics assessment prior to implementation, in addition to other requirements.

For ADM processes that were implemented prior to 2022, privacy impact assessments have also been completed where possible.

What rights do clients have to be informed of, or to challenge, decisions made (wholly or partly) by algorithm?

The ADM standard requires that all ADM processes have a channel for challenging or appealing decisions, and that we communicate this to affected clients. This is the same right of review that clients have for decisions we make without using ADM.

You can read more here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/about-work-and-income/feedback-and-complaints/review-of-decisions.html

More information about the Ministry's use of ADM is available on our website, here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/about-work-and-income/automated-decision-making/index.html

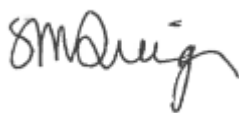
Our ADM standard is also available online. We are reviewing the Standard this year, in consultation with New Zealand's Privacy Commissioner, to ensure it remains current and effective. www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/work-programmes/initiatives/phrae/adm-standard.html

I will be publishing this decision letter, with your personal details deleted, on the Ministry's website in due course.

If you wish to discuss this response with us, please feel free to contact OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz.

If you are not satisfied with my decision on your request, you have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or 0800 802 602.

Ngā mihi nui

pp. 

Anna Graham
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