21 September 2026

s9(2)(a) [redacted]

Ministry for Ethnic Communities
Te Tari Mātāwaka

Our ref: OIA 2627-0268

Tēnā koe s9(2)(a) [redacted]

Response to your Official Information Act request

Thank you for your email of 24 August 2026 to the Ministry for Ethnic Communities (the Ministry) requesting information under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act). Your full request has been attached as an appendix to this letter.

On 1 September and 8 September 2026, we attempted to clarify certain sections of, and some terms used in, your request. As we did not receive a response, we have framed our response in line with our interpretation of your request. For clarity, the timeframe for this request is from the date the Ministry was established on 1 July 2021, to the date the request was received on 24 August 2026, inclusive. The majority of the information requested is publicly available, and we have provided links to the relevant webpages. We have also included information that provides context and/or further explanations to ensure that you receive a fulsome response in the spirit of the Act.

In addition, two documents have been found to be within scope of your request, and are summarised in the below table:

Document Schedule

No.	Date	Title	Comments
1	19 March 2025	*MEC Status Report 19 March 2025* - *"Census data on faith communities"* update only.	Released in full.
2	30 July 2026	*Heads-up to Stats NZ publication of updated Ethnicity Standard and Classification*	Some information withheld under section 9(2)(g)(i) of the Act.

Document one contains the in-scope status update titled "*Census data on faith communities*". This update is being released to you in full. The remainder of the document is out of scope and has been withheld, as it contains updates on unrelated Ministry work programmes.

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Document two is being released to you with the final paragraph being withheld under section 9(2)(g)(i) of the Act on the grounds that withholding the information is necessary to maintain the effective conduct of public affairs through the free and frank expression of opinions by or between or to Ministers of the Crown or members of an organisation or officers and employees of any department or organisation in the course of their duty.

Your specific requests and our responses are below.

Part one: Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Terrorist Attack on Christchurch masjidain (RCOI) Recommendation 32 — Ministry role, work, and status

In response to part one, the Ministry collaborated with Statistics New Zealand (Stats NZ) to increase the visibility and availability of data on faith communities as part of our joint response to Recommendation 32 as part of the Royal Commission of Inquiry (RCOI) into the terrorist attack on Christchurch masjidain.

On 12 March 2025, Stats NZ published Census data on faith communities for the first time, which is a substantive increase in publicly available data. This makes available faith data by income, employment, occupation, education, tenure and unpaid activities. This, along with the Ministry's release of Ethnic Evidence: Increasing the visibility of and value of Ethnic Communities Report delivers to the recommendation.

On 2 August 2024, the Government announced that the formal cross government response to the RCOI was complete and moving into Business as usual (BAU). However, collecting and improving public sector agency data on ethnic and religious demographics is still a key focus and ongoing work programme for the Ministry.

Part two: Ministry data and evidence framework; and Part three: Data-gap register, assessment, or work programme

Our Strategic Intentions 2026 - 2030 outline how we focus on building better evidence, data and insights to help New Zealand understand its changing population.

In response to part two and three of your request, the best records we have that cover most of the details you have requested is Ethnic Evidence (specifically Appendix 1: Key data and sources, and Appendix 2: Data quality assessment); and related documents:

- Ethnic Evidence summary
- An approach to finding our people in the data
- Evidence behind the report

Ethnic Evidence is the latest and most robust consolidated record of Ethnic Communities data and evidence gaps. The Ministry has an ongoing process for identifying key areas for

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research and analytics; and the framework used for Ethnic Evidence still underpins our use of data and evidence.

The Ministry continues work on cross-government data improvement and census-related work. For example, the Ministry will be supporting Stats NZ's implementation of their Admin Data Improvement Plan. This Plan provides a coordinated programme of work to improve key information, including ethnicity data, over the next three years.

Part four: Advice to Ministers and public agencies

In response to part four, please see the two within-scope documents that are attached to this response:

- Document 1: "*Census data on faith communities*" update in the *MEC Status Report 19 March 2025;* and
- Document 2: *Heads-up to Stats NZ publication of updated Ethnicity Standard and Classification*.

Part five: Rights-affecting and highly opaque public-sector processes

For this part of your request, we are unclear what specific information you were seeking which is why we attempted to clarify your request with you. As we have received no response to our clarification emails, this part of your request lacks due particularity, and as such no response has been provided for this part of your request.

As the the chief advisor to the government on ethnic diversity and inclusion in New Zealand society, the Ministry provides a range of policy advice to other agencies to improve how the public sector responds to the needs of Ethnic Communities.

If you are able to provide further clarification and identify the specific information you are seeking, please contact us to make a new OIA request and we can work with you to identify the information you are seeking.

Part six: Shadow measures and integrated indicators

In response to part six, information on shadow measures will be included in the upcoming Annual Report 2025/26. This report will be published on 21 October 2026 on the Ministry's website at Annual reports | Ethnic Communities. As such, this part of your request is being refused under section 18(d) of the Act, on the grounds that the information requested is, or will soon be, publicly available.

For context, the Ministry's "2027/28 integrated indicators" is an umbrella term which will include finalised "shadow measures" and existing "performance measures". Shadow measures (also referred to as 'prioritised measures') have been developed in response to the Ministry's review of its Outcomes Framework which can be found on page 50 of the Strategy 2022 – 2025.

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These measures are internal measures of performance and are not designed to record the level of ethnic and intersectional disaggregation, nor identify systemic or unequal outcomes. The shadow measures, and targets, are at an early stage of development. No baseline data has been established, and further work is required to assess their feasibility, and reliability. The measures and their wording may change as a result of this work.

Over 2026 and 2027, the shadow measures will be tested, monitored and reported on to better demonstrate the Ministry's internal performance progress against the Ministry's two strategic impact areas: Data and Evidence, and Social Cohesion. Once the shadow measures testing period is complete the 'Integrated Indicators' will then be developed to support the Ministry's 2027/28 annual reporting.

Part seven: Record keeping and governance

In response to part seven, the Ministry collects, records and preserves the types of information you asked about across a range of files in accordance with the Public Records Act 2005, and the Ministry's information management framework. The Ministry does not maintain a single administrative file or work programme. Instead, this information is held across a range of records, projects, work programmes, briefings, research activities, stakeholder engagements, and governance documents maintained by the Ministry.

As a departmental agency hosted by the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA), the Ministry uses DIA's information management systems, policies, and practices, including DIA's SharePoint-based information, and records management environment, to manage all records created or received by the Ministry in the course of its work.

In regards to the Ministry's preservation of records, this is managed in accordance with DIA information management requirements and are retained and disposed of under authorised disposal authorities, including DIA's Retention and Disposal Schedule DA633 and applicable General Disposal Authorities. Records and associated metadata are preserved to ensure information remains accessible, reliable, and usable for as long as required.

As is required by section 9(1) of the OIA, I have considered whether the grounds for withholding information under section 9 of the OIA are outweighed by other considerations which would make it desirable, in the public interest, to make that information available. In this instance, I do not consider that to be the case.

Under section 28 of the OIA, you have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Office of the Ombudsman of my response relating to this request. The relevant details can be found on their website at: www.ombudsman.parliament.nz

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Please note, due to the public interest in our work, the Ministry may publish responses to requests for official information on our website, shortly after the response has been sent. If you have any queries about this, please feel free to contact our Ministerial Services team: Ministerial@ethniccommunities.govt.nz.

Ngā mihi



Edward Firth
Director of Ministerial Services

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Appendix: Request questions

"…for the timeframe 1 January 2021 to the date of the request [24 August 2026]…

Part 1: Recommendation 32 — Ministry role, work, and status (2 records max)

1.1 *Provide final/latest substantive record that most directly defines the Ministry's role in implementing or supporting Recommendation 32.*

1.2 *Please also provide the final or latest substantive record that most directly records the present status or outcome of the Ministry's Recommendation 32 work.*

Part 2: Ministry data and evidence framework (2 current records max)

2.1 *Provide the current central framework, strategy, work programme, governance document, or equivalent record that most directly governs the Ministry's function of:*

2.2 *monitoring; b) collating; c) analysing; d) integrating; and e) using ethnic, religious, demographic, intersectional, qualitative, and quantitative data and evidence.*

2.3 *If no single framework exists, provide maximum of two current records that most directly govern the above functions.*

Part 3: Data-gap register, assessment, or work programme (1 current record max)

3.1 *Provide current central:*

- *a) data-gap register;*
- *b) evidence-gap register;*
- *c) research-priority schedule;*
- *d) analytical work programme;*
- *e) data-improvement plan;*
- *f) monitoring framework; or*
- *g) equivalent consolidated record identifying gaps in information about Ethnic Communities.*

3.2 *If no consolidated gap register or equivalent exists, then state that clearly and provide the single current record that most directly identifies the Ministry's principal data gaps and remediation priorities.*

Part 4: Advice to Ministers and public agencies (2 final/latest substantive record max)

4.1 *Please provide no more than the two final or latest substantive records that most directly contain Ministry advice, recommendations, or system-leadership guidance concerning:*

- *a) improving public-sector collection and recording of ethnicity or religious-demographic information;*
- *b) consistent use of government ethnicity-data standards;*
- *c) collection of sufficiently detailed ethnicity information to avoid obscuring outcomes within broad population groups;*
- *d) intersectional demographic information;*
- *e) documenting decisions not to collect particular demographic information;*
- *f) privacy-protective alternatives where collecting particular information is not necessary or proportionate;*
- *g) assessing or ruling out disparate impact;*
- *h) monitoring the effects of government interventions on Ethnic Communities; or*
- *i) information required to identify systemic issues.*

4.2 *Include advice given to:*

- *a) Minister for Ethnic Communities;*
- *b) Minister of Statistics;*

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c) *Statistics NZ or Government Chief Data Steward;*

d) *DIA or Archives NZ;*

e) *DPMC;*

f) *justice, border, immigration, policing, intelligence, national-security, health, housing, employment, or social-service agencies; and*

g) *any other public-sector body.*

Part 5: Rights-affecting and highly opaque public-sector processes (1 final/latest substantive record max)

5.1 *Provide the final/latest substantive Ministry record, if any, that most directly addresses ethnic, religious, or demographic data and equality assurance in public-sector processes that are:*

a) *highly opaque;*

b) *risk-based;*

c) *rights-affecting;*

d) *difficult for an individual to challenge; or*

e) *subject to restricted reasons or review rights.*

5.2 *Relevant categories may include:*

a) *Privacy Act or Official Information Act refusal decisions;*

b) *neither-confirm-nor-deny responses;*

c) *immigration or border decisions;*

d) *policing or intelligence practices;*

e) *national-security risk assessment;*

f) *alerts, flags, markers, or special handling;*

g) *automated or algorithmic decision-making;*

h) *public-sector complaints and review outcomes; or*

i) *another comparable administrative process.*

5.3 *Include where addressed:*

a) *whether demographic information is collected;*

b) *whether it should be collected;*

c) *why it is not collected;*

d) *risks of direct or proxy discrimination;*

e) *alternative methods of assessing or ruling out disparate impact;*

f) *aggregate reporting;*

g) *auditability;*

h) *cultural safety; and*

i) *access to correction, complaint, and effective-remedy pathways.*

5.4 *State if no record is held.*

Part 6: Shadow measures and integrated indicators

6.1 *Provide current record describing "shadow measures" referred to in Ministry's Strategic Intentions 2026–2030.*

6.2 *Provide current record describing integrated indicators intended for use from the Ministry's 2027/28 annual reporting.*

6.3 *Include, where recorded:*

a) *each measure or indicator;*

b) *its purpose;*

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c) *relevant outcome or strategic priority;*

d) *its data source;*

e) *whether the underlying information is already held;*

f) *any known data-quality or coverage limitation;*

g) *level of ethnic or intersectional disaggregation;*

h) *reporting frequency;*

i) *baseline;*

j) *responsible business unit or partner agency; and*

k) *how the measure will identify systemic or unequal outcomes.*

6.4 *If measures/indicators are in development, then provide latest substantive draft/design record.*

Part 7: Recordkeeping and governance (1 record max)

7.1 *Provide current record that identifies how the Ministry records and preserves:*

a) *advice concerning demographic or equality-data gaps;*

b) *engagement with Statistics New Zealand and other agencies;*

c) *Recommendation 32 decisions and outcomes;*

d) *data-quality and evidence-gap assessments;*

e) *decisions not to collect or analyse particular information;*

f) *monitoring and evaluation findings;*

g) *community concerns about missing or inadequate data; and resulting action, referral, or policy advice.*

7.2 *State whether the Ministry maintains an identifiable administrative file or work programme for:*

a) *Recommendation 32;*

b) *religious demographic data;*

c) *ethnicity-data standard;*

d) *system-wide demographic data gaps; and*

e) *data and evidence functions described in the Strategic Intentions 2026–2030.*

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Ministry for Ethnic Communities
Te Tari Mātāwaka

Status Report
Minister for Ethnic Communities

19 March 2025

Released under the Official Information Act 1982



Mervin Singham
Chief Executive

Ref No: EC25-9074

Priority updates

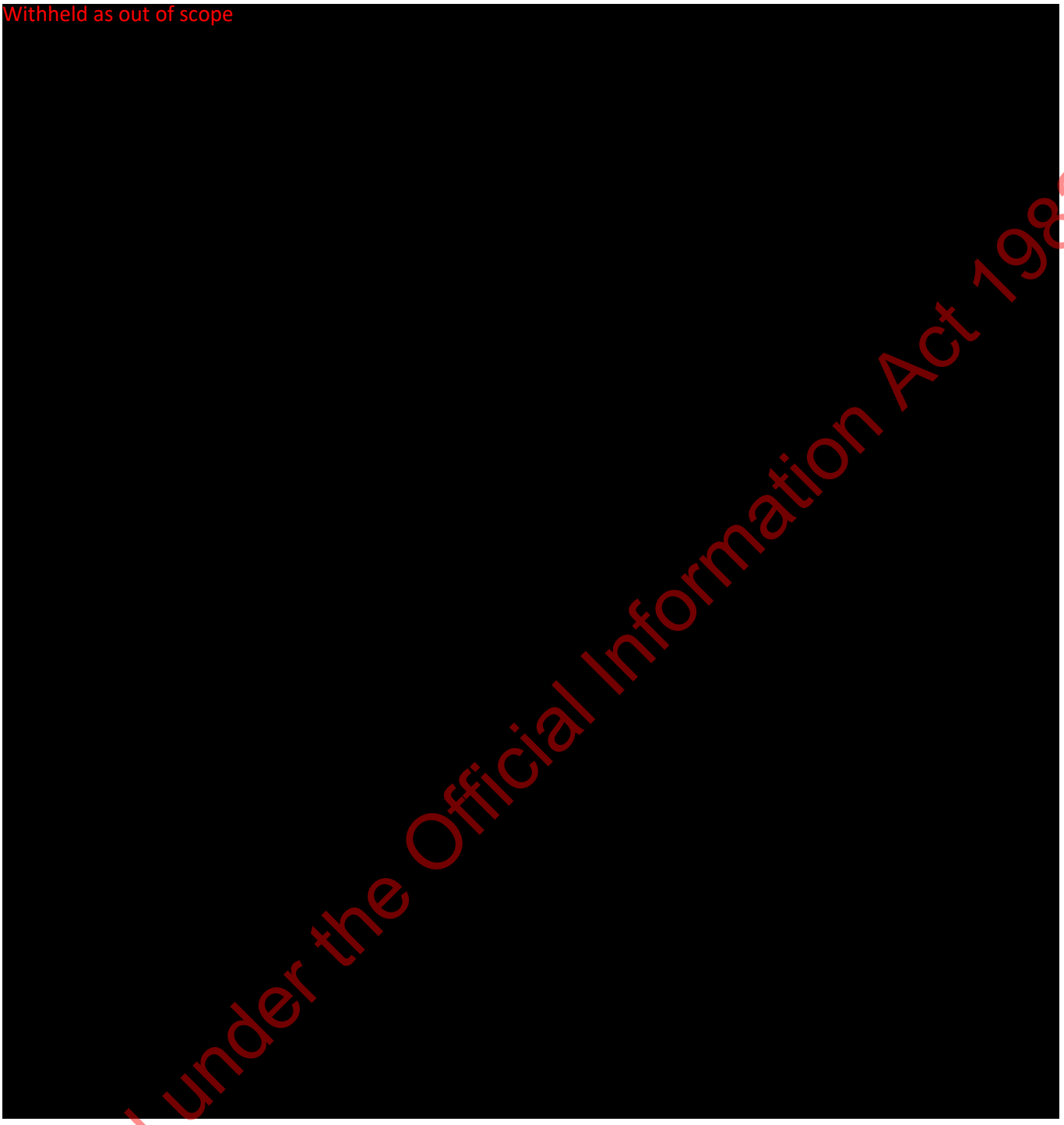
Priority 1: Taking action to promote the value of diversity and improve inclusion of ethnic communities within wider society	
Update or activity	**Outcome or next steps**
Census data on faith communities On 12 March 2025, Stats NZ published Census data on faith communities for the first time, which is a substantive increase in publicly available data. This makes available faith data by income, employment, occupation, education, tenure and unpaid activities. The Ministry collaborated with Stats NZ to increase the visibility and availability of data on faith communities as part of our joint Recommendation 32 as part of Royal Commission of Inquiry (RCOI) into the terrorist attack on Christchurch masjidain. "Public sector agencies to prioritise the collection of data on ethnic and religious demographics to support analysis and advice on the implications of New Zealand's rapidly changing society, inform better policy making and enhance policy evaluation." This, along with Ethnic Evidence delivers to this recommendation.	The Ministry will communicate the release of this data through our channels and incorporate this into our advice to government agencies.

Withheld as out of scope

[redacted]

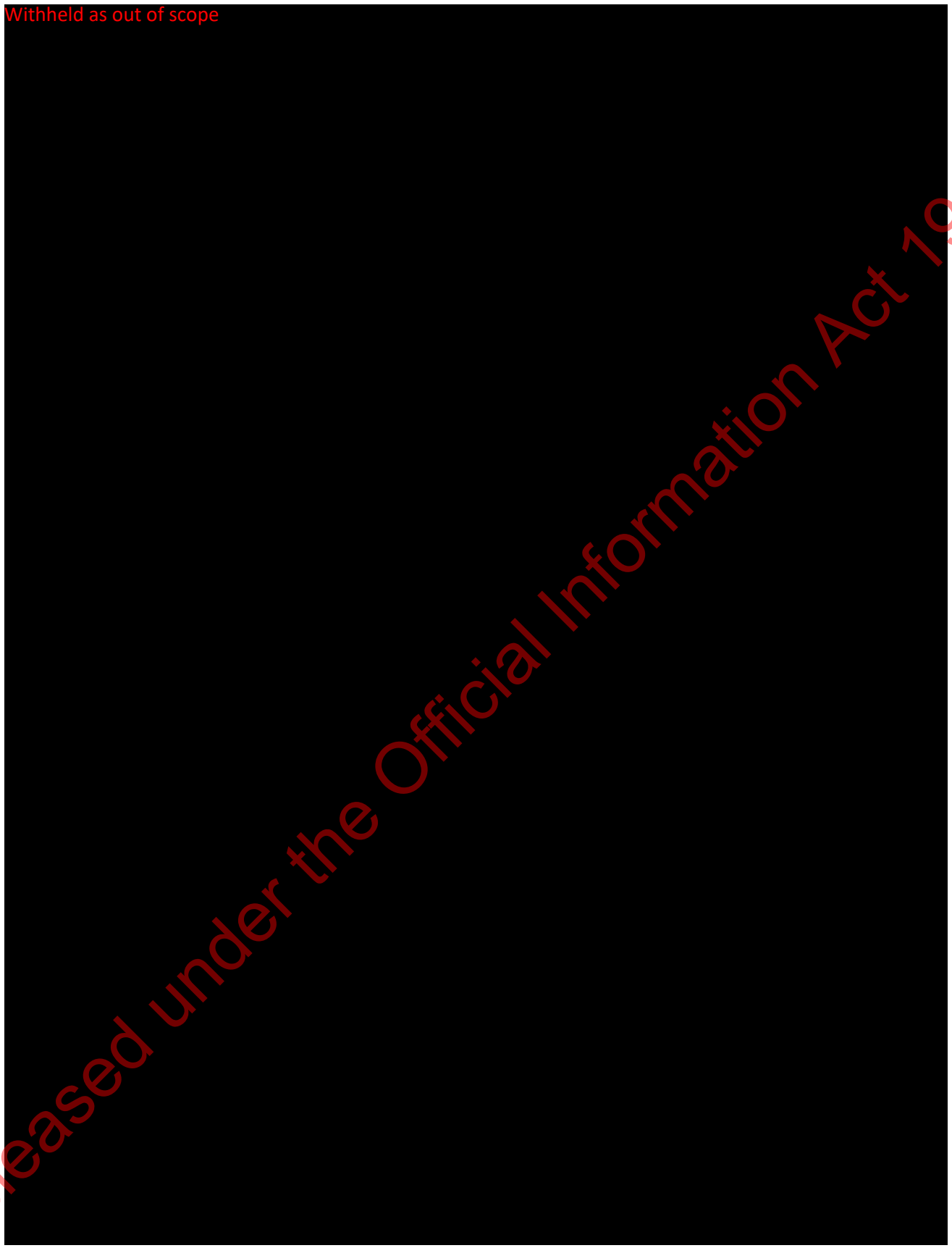
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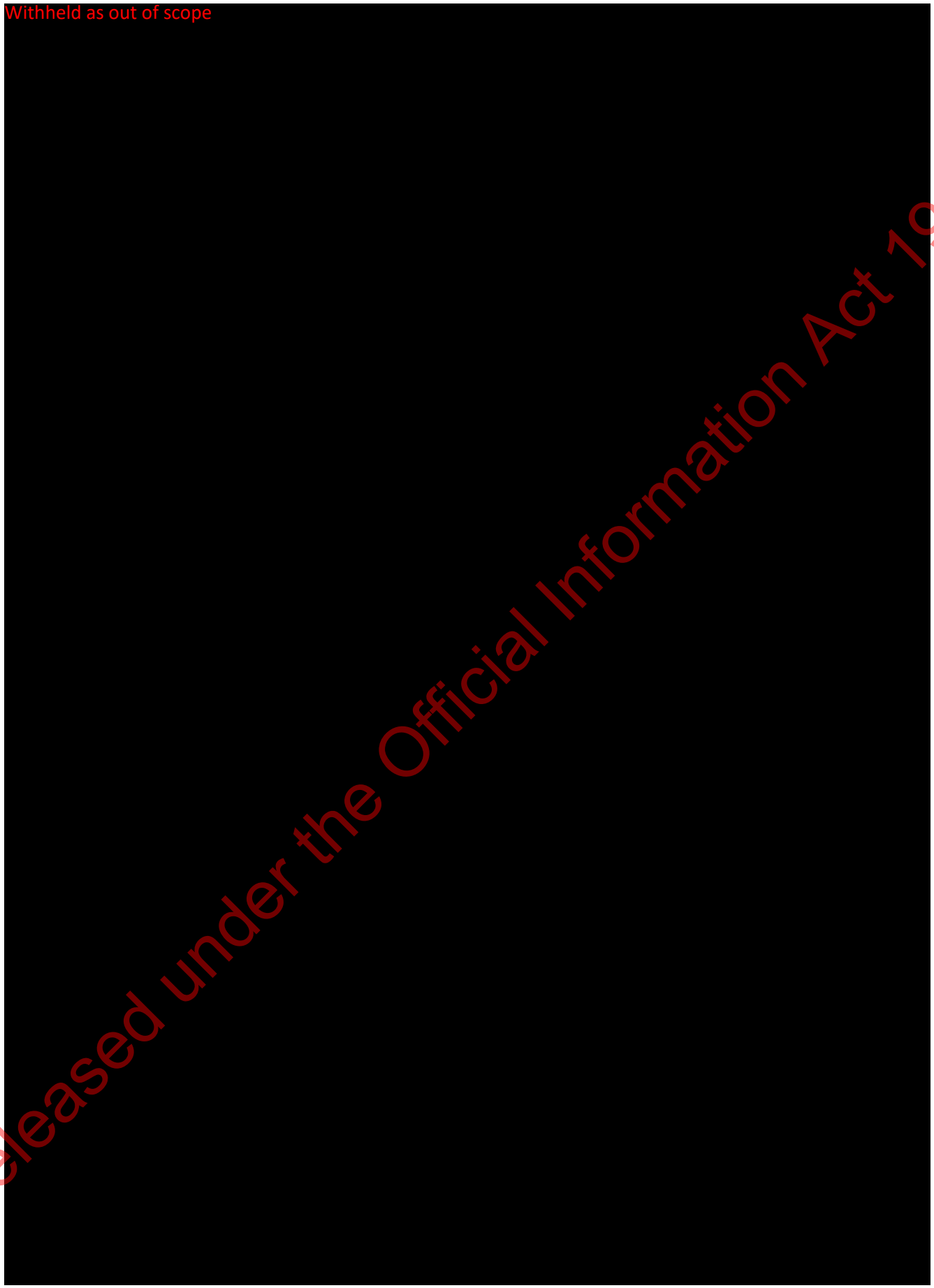
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EC26-0209 –Heads-up to Stats NZ publication of updated Ethnicity Standard and Classification

30 July 2026

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Ministry's contact: Steve Murray, Director Analytics, Monitoring and Evaluation

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- Later today, Stats NZ is preparing to release an updated version of the ethnicity standard and classification, following the recent review of the standard and classification that concluded in December 2025. This release includes a paper summarising the review outcomes.
- The review focused on improving the quality, consistency, and comparability of ethnicity data across government. It also focused on ensuring smaller communities are accurately represented in official statistics.
- Stats NZ have informed us that the release will be supported by a coordinated communications approach, including:
    - information on the Stats NZ website;
    - direct communications to key stakeholders engaged throughout the review process, including ethnic community groups, iwi Māori, iwi Moriori partners, government agencies, and members of the Ethnicity Expert Group established to support the review.
- Stats NZ has committed to ongoing direct engagement with communities on new and emerging issues that have not been fully resolved through this review. This includes issues that cannot be addressed through an updated standard or need further engagement with partners and communities.
- This work is separate from, but complements, planned work with ethnic communities to support census delivery. Together, they support a shared goal of better understanding and meeting the data and statistical needs of ethnic communities.
- The Ministry will be engaged across both streams of work as signalled by our Relationship Agreement with Stats NZ.
- Withheld under s9(2)(g)(i) of the OIA [redacted]

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