

15 April 2026

Chair  
Justice Select Committee

## **Data and Statistics (Census) Amendment Bill**

Greater Wellington welcomes the opportunity to submit on the Data and Statistics (Census) Amendment Bill

Census data is fundamental to regional planning, statutory responsibilities, long-term investment decisions, and equitable allocation of resources. As a public agency Greater Wellington Regional Council wants to be assured that it can rely on credible and timely data to make key infrastructure investment decisions for the Wellington Capital Region.

We support innovation where the use of administrative data improves timeliness and efficiency. However, it is essential that any new model continues to provide accurate, trusted, and sufficiently granular population data at regional, sub-regional, and community levels.

Stats NZ has acknowledged that local government is a key user group and that some information needs may be harder to meet under the proposed model.

### **Census data critical to regional council functions**

Regional councils rely on census data to deliver statutory and strategic functions across planning, transport, infrastructure, flood protection, climate adaptation, and emergency management.

The most critical data includes:

- Population structure and change
- Socio-economic characteristics
- Ethnicity, identity, and community characteristics
- Commuting and spatial interactions such as journey to work patterns

These datasets must remain available at small geographic scales and be consistent over time to support trend analysis and evidence-based decision-making.

### **Expectations for an admin-data-first census model**

If New Zealand proceeds with an admin-data-first approach, Greater Wellington seeks assurance in the following areas.

### *Rigour and accuracy*

Administrative data is not collected for statistical purposes and varies in coverage and quality. International experience shows some population groups are under-represented and key variables (such as ethnicity, disability, occupation, and household composition) are inconsistently recorded. Māori and people with invisible disabilities have been traditionally underrepresented on Stats data and we would like this to be addressed by the new system Stats NZ so that we can more adequately plan for these groups.

### *Geographic detail*

For regional decision-making, granularity is critical. Pooling multiple years of data risks masking rapid local change, reducing usefulness for fast-growing or declining areas, and weakening equity analysis. Smaller communities must not lose visibility.

### *Timeliness and comparability*

More frequent data is valuable only if it remains comparable over time. Regional councils require stable definitions, clear methods, and transparency about revisions to ensure trends can be reliably interpreted.

Greater Wellington recommends that the Select Committee reviews the Bill to ensure:

1. Guaranteed continued availability of high-quality regional and sub-regional data, including for communities under 10,000 people
2. The existing census timeframes are retained until such time that the government has a comprehensive alternative system in place.
3. Engage in sustained co-design with local government users, including pilots assessing impacts on regional planning
4. Publish detailed quality metrics, uncertainty measures, and clear guidance on appropriate uses and limitations of admin-based outputs.

We wish to speak to this submission.

Ngā mihi



Daran Ponter  
Heamana | Chair