



Aotearoa New Zealand
Association of Social Workers
Te Rōpū Tauwhiro i Aotearoa

WHAKAMANAWA 2026 · GENERATIVE AI FOR SOCIAL SECTOR LEADERS

Social work ethics in the age of AI

Kia tūpato, kia māia. Testing AI against our tikanga.

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An interim briefing for our profession

The start of a conversation. Two ideas weave it together.

FIRST

Precautionary principle

We do not adopt a tool until there is credible evidence it is safe. Better safe than sorry.

SECOND

Harm reduction

For those already using AI, or required to, we reduce the harm we can see.

AI is not neutral. It is political. It is structural. It locates power at its core.

PĀTAI TUATAHI | THE WORKFORCE INTERFACE

Nearly seven in ten of our kaimahi already use genAI. Those carrying the heaviest load are leaving our profession.

When our kaimahi reach for AI to survive a workload we have not fixed, **are we easing their exhaustion, or relying on it?**

Erased foundations

As we ask government to lead on the regulation of AI, can we be assured data sovereignty and racial bias will be taken seriously?

- **The removal is deliberate and system-wide.**

Government is repealing or weakening Te Tiriti o Waitangi references across policy and legislation.

- **Where the work is already done, we see the shape of it.**

Section 7AA, the Tiriti duty in our care and protection law, repealed. Te Aka Whai Ora, the Māori Health Authority, disestablished under urgency. Regulatory Standards Act ...

Data has whakapapa

Within Te Ao Māori, and for Pacific People, our stories (a.k.a data) are relational. They are taonga, to be protected, not extracted.

Predictive tools trained on our histories find Māori, Pacific, already over-represented in care and justice, risk marking us as risk.

Robodebt, Australia

Predictive matching to recover welfare debt. Later called probably illegal. Real people. Real harm.

KAITIAKITANGA

Our taonga need kaitaki. With AI, that has to be us.

Testing AI against our tikanga

We weigh the tool against our own standards, not the other way around.

- **Rangatiratanga**
Māori authority over Māori data
- **Manaakitanga**
the care at the centre of our mahi
- **Whanaungatanga**
relationships, not extraction
- **Aroha**
for people and for Te Taiao
- **Kotahitanga**
the many, not the few
- **Wairuatanga**
many worldviews, not one
- **Mātātoa**
moral courage stays ours



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Precaution is not inaction. Standing firm is not standing still.

Kia tūpato, kia māia. Let us be careful, and let us be brave.

Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā tātou katoa.