



Privacy Commissioner
Te Mana Mātāpono Matatapu

Privacy Trust Mark FAQs

1. What is the Privacy Trust Mark?

The Privacy Trust Mark is an initiative of the Office of the Privacy Commissioner that recognises and certifies excellence in privacy. The Trust Mark is awarded at the discretion of the Commissioner to an outstanding product, service, or process.

The Privacy Trust Mark identifies products that the Commissioner considers to be outstanding in the way they manage personal information. While the Trust Mark applies only to discrete products, and does not 'certify' an entire agency, agencies can apply to have more than one of its products or services recognised.

It is intended to build public awareness around privacy and provide incentives for organisations to engage in best practice. It also provides a means for organisations to showcase their practices.

The Privacy Trust Mark is designed to help consumers have trust and confidence that their information will be safeguarded. It will also make it easier for people to choose privacy-friendly goods and services.

2. Why is the Office of the Privacy Commissioner behind the Privacy Trust Mark?

Under the Privacy Act 1993, the Privacy Commissioner has a role in promoting, by education and publicity, an understanding and acceptance of the information privacy principles. The Privacy Trust Mark will support this function by giving the Privacy Commissioner the ability to reward and encourage excellent privacy practice.

3. Has this idea been tried elsewhere?

Privacy trust marks are used overseas. They are not a new idea but they are an idea that is gaining popularity. The renewed interest is being driven by concerns over the exponential increase in data collected by governments and businesses and the compulsory acceptance of terms and conditions associated with the data collection via mobile apps and online services.

Some privacy trust mark programmes have existed for more than 20 years. In the United States, TRUSTe, which has evolved into TrustArc, was launched in 1997. TRUSTe/TrustArc 'privacy seal' demonstrated compliance with the certification standards and a commitment to privacy protection. It gave customers confidence and trust in the certified products and services.

The European Commission has noted that privacy seals and marks “promote certified entities, build consumer trust and confidence and bring market advantages” from an industry perspective. From a consumer perspective, they “help consumers, users and the general public make quick judgements about an organisation’s privacy and data protection policies and practices”. The EU’s General Data Protection Regulation also encouraged the “establishment of certification mechanisms, data protection seals and marks” to enhance transparency and legal compliance.

Japan’s PrivacyMark scheme certifies an organisation’s overall compliance and ability to handle personal information. The administering agency, the Japan Information Processing Developing Centre, has certified over 20,000 organisations from a wide variety of public and private sectors, from manufacturing to real estate.

4. How will the Privacy Trust Mark work in New Zealand?

The Privacy Trust Mark is intended to be applied to specific products or services. It might be an online service, a mobile app, a type of computer software or a privacy statement. Individual products or services would be certified with a Privacy Trust Mark - **not** an entire organisation. An organisation would be free to promote a particular product or service as having a Privacy Trust Mark and to use the trust mark in its marketing and promotion of that product or service.

5. How can you help?

Talk to us. Tell us if you think your organisation has a product or service that is privacy-friendly and designed to give customers control over personal information. Also tell others about the Privacy Trust Mark. Contact us if you want to know more about how to apply for a Privacy Trust Mark by emailing trustmark@privacy.org.nz.