



Privacy Commissioner  
Te Mana Mātāpono Matatapu

## MEDIA RELEASE

# Privacy Commissioner welcomes shift in MSD policy

8 May 2018

The Government's intention to consult with social welfare NGOs and service providers is a good first step towards regaining the trust of vulnerable communities and the social sectors which work with them, says Privacy Commissioner John Edwards.

To coincide with the start of Privacy Week, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern and Social Development Minister Carmel Sepuloni yesterday announced plans to reach a shared understanding with NGOs and service providers about how personal information collected by the Ministry of Social Development would be used, shared and protected.

The Government plans to invite over 1500 groups to participate in its consultation on how personal information can be used in investing in social wellbeing. The move comes after a previous policy required NGO service providers to provide information about individual clients in order to receive government funding. The information included clients' names, number of children and other social services they engaged with.

Last year, the Office of the Privacy Commissioner [carried out an inquiry](#) which concluded that the move could deter people from seeking support or assistance, which could put them at further risk and make them "invisible" to government and policy makers.

Mr Edwards says the timing of the Government's announcement was particularly pleasing because of Privacy Week in New Zealand. "If people perceive that government policies are overly intrusive, it can undermine well intentioned aims by creating an environment of distrust in which people leave out key details or are dissuaded from accessing social services in the first place."

Mr Edwards also welcomed the Prime Minister and Social Development Minister's support for Privacy Week yesterday.

The Office of the Privacy Commissioner's Privacy Week events will continue this week, with a full day [Privacy Forum](#) at Te Papa in Wellington tomorrow (9 May 2018) and the release of a number of resources to help organisation promote privacy and data protection messages in their workplaces.

More information about Privacy Week [is available here](#).

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