

18 June 2026

S9(2)(a)

By email: S9(2)(a)

Tēnā koe S9(2)(a)

Your request

Thank you for your request, received on 2 May 2026, under the Official Information Act 1982 (Act) for the following information:

- *What Artificial Intelligence is your Ministry considering implementing in the next year?*
- *What aspects or parts of the business will it be implemented? ie how will the AI be used*
- *Will it's implementation reduce the workload or staff numbers?*
- *What safety and security protocols has it had to pass to be considered acceptable for implementation?*

I will respond to each of your questions separately.

1. What Artificial Intelligence is your Ministry considering implementing in the next year?

In the next year, the Electricity Authority Te Mana Hiko (Authority) is progressing a number of artificial intelligence (AI) tools and capabilities. These include the following:

- **Microsoft Copilot** is currently in place to support staff with day-to-day tasks. Over the next year we intend to develop a limited number of Copilot agents for selected low risk business activities such as quality assurance reviews of written material.
- **Databricks** AI capability for advanced analytics and machine learning is currently in place and we intend to continue to develop our maturity and increase our use of this platform.
- **Subsense** consultation submissions analysis tool, provided by DataSing and MartinJenkins, is currently being trialed using historical data. We expect to use this tool for analysis of submissions to Authority consultation processes from next year pending Board approval.

We are also in the early stages of considering other areas of value for introducing AI tools or capabilities into the Authority's work but have not yet formally scoped these.

2. What aspects or parts of the business will it be implemented? ie how will the AI be used

How will it be implemented?

AI tools are being introduced across the Authority in a targeted way.

Microsoft 365 Copilot Chat (not premium) is available to all staff to support general administrative and routine tasks. We intend to roll out a limited number of Copilot premium licences to staff who have a clear use case for its more advanced capabilities.

Other tools are being developed for specific use cases where they provide clear value, such as data analysis, machine learning, and supporting aspects of regulatory processes. These tools are typically used by defined groups of staff with relevant roles or expertise. In particular

- Databricks AI capability will be used by our data products and monitoring teams.
- Subsense submissions analysis tool will be used by our policy teams

How will it be used?

AI is not being used to replace the functions of any staff at the Authority. Rather, it will be used to streamline repeatable tasks so that staff can focus more on higher value activities.

In addition to capacity benefits, the Authority expects AI to enhance the quality and depth of its analysis. For example, AI can support the review of large volumes of information, identify patterns or trends in data, and provide more consistent analysis of consultation submissions and regulatory issues.

We maintain strong governance and risk management over AI with all AI tools being introduced with a human-in-the-loop approach. This means staff must review and verify all AI-generated outputs before they are used and that decisions are only taken by staff and the Board.

More detail on this is provided in the answer to question 4.

3. Will its implementation reduce the workload or staff numbers?

The Authority's AI programme is intended to support staff capability and help manage workload. It is not being implemented to reduce staff numbers.

AI tools may automate or streamline some routine tasks, enabling staff to complete work more efficiently and focus their time on higher-value activities such as analysis, decision making and engagement.

4. What safety and security protocols has it had to pass to be considered acceptable for implementation?

The Authority applies formal governance, security, and risk management processes before any AI tool is approved for use. These are also governed by the Authority's AI policy and procedures.

As part of this process, AI tools are subject to the Authority's cybersecurity assurance process and must meet relevant New Zealand Government security and privacy requirements. This includes controls over:

- how Authority data is accessed, stored, and used
- restrictions on inputting sensitive or confidential information into AI systems
- assurance that data is not inappropriately retained or used to train external models

Further protocols are in active development as the Authority matures its AI capabilities, which are being designed to ensure AI is used safely, responsibly, and in a way that maintains public trust and supports the Authority's role as a regulator.

Specifically, all AI tools and use cases will be assessed and approved through an information governance group in line with its AI policies and procedures. This includes a structured assessment framework covering privacy, security, data protection, and ethical use. Higher-risk tools or use cases are escalated to senior leadership or the Board for additional oversight.

The Authority also requires a human-in-the-loop approach, where staff remain accountable for decisions and must review and verify all AI-generated outputs before they are used.

Once deployed, AI tools are subject to ongoing monitoring and periodic review to ensure they are operating as intended, risks are managed, and use remains consistent with policy and regulatory obligations.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

As this information may be of interest to other members of the public, the Authority may proactively release a copy of this response on our website. All personal data, including your name and contact details, will be removed before publication.

If you'd like to discuss this response with us, please feel free to contact us by emailing oia@ea.govt.nz.

Nāku noa, nā,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Airihi Mahuika', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Airihi Mahuika
GM Legal, Monitoring and Compliance