NZ Statistical Association AGM 2023: Notice of Item for General Business

Topic: Oversight of use of artificial intelligence

Issues of the use of artificial intelligence for decision-making, especially about screening people where the resulting response can lead to surveillance or finding of non-compliance with some statutory obligation reflect the vulnerability of applying models estimated from groups of individuals to assess individual situations.

The statistical knowledge and experience of the members of the NZSA is a national resource that could be applied to ad hoc situations where public trust has led to doubts about any application of AI that is seen to be harming individual citizens. Government agencies are often weak on quality management, and communications teams tend to downplay the wider significance of negative individual experiences. Some models are deemed to be commercial and are kept secret from public and professional scrutiny.

There are many situations where this can expedite official processes and bring consistency to decision-making and challenge the variability of decisions made by people.

Robodebt in Australia is a recent case that highlighted the huge personal risks to the public unquestioning trust in such models, and the importance of regular validation of the models and databases behind them.

For several decades the NZ Statistical Association had a public questions committee. The NZSA is the ideal body to provide an oversight capability, at least in the early years of AI until the usual oversight bodies have developed the professional statistical expertise for such scrutiny.

Collaboration with the Māori data Sovereignty network should be sought by the proposed working group.

Motion

That the executive committee set up a working party to prepare a terms of reference for a special standing committee to appraise the statistical integrity of any models based on artificial intelligence where at least some of those targeted by the model have genuine concerns that need independent validation of the model.

Len Cook

Member of NZSA

Here is an article published this month in Significance by the RSS.

https://doi.org/10.1093/jrssig/qmad092   It is only available right now to RSS members.