

# Tasmania AI Data Centres

## Key Concerns, Evidence and Questions for the Inquiry

Evidence summary prepared 13 September 2026

**Purpose.** This document summarises documented concerns surrounding Firmus Technologies and the broader expansion of AI data centres in Tasmania. It distinguishes established facts from questions that warrant investigation.

**Important:** The evidence set out here does not establish corruption, bribery, a sweetheart deal or other unlawful conduct. The concern is that the scale of the proposed use of public infrastructure, combined with confidentiality, documented errors and incomplete public information, warrants much greater scrutiny and disclosure.

### Executive summary

- **Firmus has an existing 104 MW electricity arrangement** involving Aurora Energy and Hydro Tasmania. The commercial price is not public.
- **Firmus has asked Hydro Tasmania for a long-term 444 MW arrangement.** Hydro says the request is significant and meeting it would require new generation.
- **Bell Bay planning material incorrectly stated 128 diesel generators when the correct number is 276.** Council required a new bushfire and emergency management plan.
- **Firmus accidentally published internal wording saying it did not want to highlight a possible Tasmanian Irrigation water supply yet.** Tasmanian Irrigation had not agreed to supply it.
- **Six additional data centre proposals are being explored confidentially.** If they proceed, they would use at least 500 MW. Government has not identified the proponents.
- **The Office of the Coordinator-General has assisted some unnamed proponents** with site identification, stakeholder engagement and introductions to energy developers.
- **Existing local planning processes cannot resolve every statewide energy and policy issue created by projects of this scale.**
- **Firmus has promoted grid flexibility using onsite generation, while Bell Bay approval conditions significantly restrict generator operation.**
- **Firmus entered major Tasmanian sporting sponsorships during the public controversy.** This is lawful corporate sponsorship, but social licence has been identified publicly as a potential benefit.
- **Firmus co-CEO Oliver Curtis has a previous insider trading conspiracy conviction.** This does not establish misconduct by Firmus, but it makes probity and governance scrutiny reasonable.

## 1. Electricity: 104 MW today, 444 MW requested

Hydro Tasmania states that Firmus has a three-year retail agreement with Aurora Energy to supply 104 MW to St Leonards. Aurora has a related wholesale arrangement with Hydro. Hydro also confirms Firmus has requested a direct long-term agreement supporting 444 MW for its proposed Tasmanian factories. As at 27 August 2026, Hydro had not decided whether to agree and expected an outcome by the end of 2026.

Hydro says 444 MW is a significant increase in demand and that meeting it would require more generation to be built in Tasmania. ABC reported that Hydro described the state system as currently "in balance" and that the requested load could be equivalent to up to about 30 percent of Tasmania's current energy use.

### Questions for the Inquiry

- What is Firmus paying under the existing 104 MW arrangement, and how does the commercial value compare with other large industrial customers?
- What terms, guarantees and risk protections are being considered for the 444 MW request?
- What generation, storage and transmission would be required, when would it be available, and who would pay?
- What modelling has been undertaken on household, business and industrial electricity prices?
- What is the opportunity cost of allocating this scale of new electricity demand to data centres?

Evidence: [Hydro Tasmania: Hydro Tasmania and Firmus Technologies](#)  
[ABC, 4 Sep 2026: Hydro to decide on Firmus power request](#)

## 2. Bell Bay: 128 generators became 276

George Town Council approved Firmus's 288 MW Bell Bay project subject to conditions. ABC reported that Firmus had incorrectly reported 128 diesel generators when the correct number was 276. Council required a new bushfire and emergency management plan before building work begins.

Council conditions also restrict generator operation to mains failures or interruptions, inspection, testing or maintenance, or genuine emergencies. Simultaneous operation of more than one generator is limited to a cumulative 24 hours in a year.

### Questions for the Inquiry

- Who supplied the 128 figure and when was the error discovered?
- Which fire, fuel, emergency, emissions and noise assessments relied on 128 rather than 276?
- Were any recommendations or decisions made before the error was corrected?
- Have all potentially affected assessments now been reviewed using the correct number?

Evidence: [ABC, 25 Aug 2026: Bell Bay approval and generator error](#)  
[ABC, 21 Aug 2026: Planning conditions for Bell Bay](#)

### 3. Wesley Vale water: "we do not want to highlight this yet"

Firmus inadvertently published an internal note about possible use of Tasmanian Irrigation water at Wesley Vale. ABC reported the wording included: "We will likely use Tas Irrigation, but we do not want to highlight this yet, as they are yet to agree to supply us, as we fall outside their normal customer base (agriculture)." Tasmanian Irrigation said it had given no undertaking to Firmus. Firmus said the information had been inadvertently published and that rainwater harvesting and onsite storage were its primary proposed solution.

ABC subsequently reported that allowing Firmus access to irrigation scheme water would require a legislative change, while the Government said it had received no proposal for such a change.

#### Questions for the Inquiry

- Why did Firmus not want the irrigation option highlighted?
- What discussions had occurred with Tasmanian Irrigation, ministers, advisers or the Coordinator-General before the internal note was written?
- Was any legislative or policy change discussed?
- Are there other material issues discussed internally by proponents or Government that were deliberately not highlighted publicly?

Evidence: [ABC, 22 Jul 2026: Firmus irrigation water plan](#)  
[ABC, 23 Jul 2026: Response to accidental disclosure](#)

### 4. Six additional confidential proposals

A document tabled in Parliament revealed six additional confidential data centre proposals. ABC reported that they would consume at least 500 MW if they all proceed. Two are at feasibility stage, meaning preferred sites have been selected. One feasibility project in north-west Tasmania requires 200 to 300 MW. Another concept-stage proposal also requires 200 to 300 MW. A 50 MW concept has expressed interest in the closed Liberty Bell Bay manganese smelter site.

The Government has not identified the proponents and would not confirm whether the six proposals come from one company or multiple companies. The same disclosure states that the Office of the Coordinator-General has supported some proponents with site identification and stakeholder engagement and has facilitated introductions to existing and proposed energy developers.

#### Why this matters

The confidentiality is no longer limited to companies making private preliminary enquiries. Some unnamed proponents have received substantive Government facilitation while potentially seeking access to hundreds of megawatts of Tasmanian infrastructure.

#### Questions for the Inquiry

- Who are the six proponents and who ultimately owns them?
- When did each first contact Government?
- What assistance has each received from the Coordinator-General or other public bodies?
- Which sites, landowners, electricity businesses and energy developers have been introduced to each proponent?
- What specific commercial prejudice would result from disclosure of each proponent's identity alone?
- What are the combined electricity, water, transmission and generation implications if several projects proceed?

Evidence: [ABC, 9 Sep 2026: Six confidential proposals revealed](#)

## 5. Government records and the need for documentary scrutiny

Tasmanian Treasury's Right to Information disclosure log shows that records have already been released concerning "Firmus Technologies Correspondence and Modelling" and the "Firmus Technologies power contract". Hydro Tasmania also maintains a public Right to Information disclosure page containing Firmus-related material.

This demonstrates that a documentary record exists across Government and state-owned businesses. The Inquiry should obtain the complete relevant record rather than relying only on retrospective public assurances.

### Documents the Inquiry should seek

- Ministerial and departmental emails, briefings, meeting records and calendar entries concerning Firmus and the six confidential proponents.
- Electricity price, risk and value modelling, with only genuinely sensitive details redacted where necessary.
- TasNetworks connection enquiries and modelling relevant to large data centre loads.
- Coordinator-General records showing assistance, introductions and site work for each proponent.
- Records concerning Firmus water options and any possible legislative or policy changes.
- Any internal risk warnings or advice that materially differed from public descriptions of the projects.

Evidence: [Tasmanian Treasury: Right to Information disclosure log](#)  
[Hydro Tasmania: Right to Information disclosures](#)

## 6. Planning framework concerns

ABC reported that Latrobe Council asked the State Government to assess the Wesley Vale proposal as a major project and that Mayor Peter Freshney said the planning scheme was not fit for purpose to appropriately consider data centre proposals. At Bell Bay, planning officers were required to assess the proposal under the existing planning framework, while broader energy and AI policy concerns sit outside ordinary local planning questions.

**Question:** Should very large electricity users above a defined threshold be subject to a dedicated statewide assessment covering cumulative electricity demand, water, transmission, generation, economic benefit, permanent employment and public risk?

Evidence: [ABC, 9 Sep 2026: Confidential proposals and Latrobe Council concerns](#)  
[ABC, 21 Aug 2026: Bell Bay planning assessment](#)

## 7. Grid support claims versus generator restrictions

Firmus previously said it could respond to grid signals every five minutes by cutting its load, including switching to onsite backup generation or shifting non-urgent computing work. Bell Bay's approval subsequently restricted diesel generator use and imposed the 24-hour cumulative annual limit on simultaneous operation of more than one generator.

**Question:** How much of Firmus's claimed grid-support capability depended on diesel generation that cannot be routinely used under the Bell Bay permit?

Evidence: [ABC, 2 Jul 2026: Firmus energy commitments](#)  
[ABC, 25 Aug 2026: Bell Bay conditions](#)

## 8. Governance and public confidence

Firmus co-founder and co-CEO Oliver Curtis was convicted in 2016 of conspiracy to commit insider trading. ASIC states that the conduct involved 45 trades and that Curtis personally profited \$1,433,727.85. He was sentenced to two years imprisonment with a minimum term of 12 months. This was an insider trading conspiracy conviction, not a fraud conviction, and it does not establish misconduct by Firmus.

Given the scale of the proposed dealings with state-owned businesses and public infrastructure, the Inquiry should establish what probity, financial capacity, governance and background assessments were undertaken on Firmus and its principals.

Evidence: [ASIC: Insider trading case involving Oliver Curtis](#)

## 9. Sporting sponsorship and social licence

Firmus entered a six-year major partnership with the Tasmania Devils during the period of intense public controversy around its data centre expansion. It subsequently announced a community partnership with the JackJumpers and Tasmania Jewels. Corporate sporting sponsorship is not evidence of wrongdoing. However, public discussion of the Devils agreement included the potential for sponsorship to build visibility, legitimacy and social licence.

**Question:** Do Firmus's communications, government-relations or community-engagement plans identify sporting sponsorship as part of a strategy to improve acceptance of its Tasmanian developments?

Evidence: [Tasmania Devils: Firmus partnership announcement](#)  
[ABC, 9 Sep 2026: Firmus Devils sponsorship](#)

## Recommendations to the Inquiry

- **Create a public register** for large data centre proposals once they receive substantive Government facilitation. It should identify the proponent, ultimate ownership, region, approximate MW load, water demand, development stage and Government assistance.
- **Require cumulative energy assessment** rather than assessing each very large load in isolation.
- **Publish a public-value summary for major state-owned electricity contracts**, showing enough information to demonstrate value and risk allocation without disclosing genuinely sensitive pricing mechanics.
- **Require disclosure of Government facilitation**, including introductions, site assistance, concessions, guarantees and infrastructure commitments.
- **Establish a dedicated assessment pathway** for very large data centres so statewide energy, water, infrastructure and economic consequences can be considered.
- **Audit the Bell Bay generator discrepancy** to identify every assessment affected by the 128 versus 276 error.
- **Obtain the underlying records** and compare internal advice with public statements made at the same time.

## Core request

**Get the emails. Get the meeting records. Get the electricity modelling. Identify the confidential proponents. Establish what assistance has been provided. Establish what has been promised. Establish who pays for the required infrastructure and who carries the downside risk.**

There may be satisfactory answers to all of these questions. If there are, transparency will strengthen the case for the developments. Tasmania is potentially considering an entirely new industrial sector with electricity demand large enough to materially alter the state's energy system. The public should not be required to take the claimed benefits and risk protections on trust.

## Source list

1. [Hydro Tasmania, Hydro Tasmania and Firmus Technologies](#)
2. [Hydro Tasmania, Right to Information disclosures](#)
3. [Tasmanian Treasury, Right to Information disclosure log](#)
4. [ABC, 4 Sep 2026, Hydro assessment of Firmus electricity request](#)
5. [ABC, 9 Sep 2026, Six confidential data centre proposals](#)
6. [ABC, 25 Aug 2026, Bell Bay approval and generator discrepancy](#)
7. [ABC, 21 Aug 2026, Bell Bay planning assessment](#)
8. [ABC, 22 Jul 2026, Firmus irrigation water disclosure](#)
9. [ABC, 23 Jul 2026, Response to Firmus irrigation disclosure](#)
10. [ABC, 2 Jul 2026, Firmus response to public concerns](#)
11. [ABC, 9 Sep 2026, Firmus Tasmania Devils sponsorship](#)
12. [Tasmania Devils, official Firmus partnership announcement](#)
13. [ASIC, insider trading case involving Oliver Curtis](#)