

Submission to the Inquiry into AI Data Centres in Tasmania

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Purpose of this submission

I am an independent researcher based in Tasmania. This submission addresses evidence, transparency and accountability mechanisms relevant to the Committee's Terms of Reference. Sections 1–7 follow the Committee's resolution of 5 August 2026.[1]

It does not take a position for or against any particular data-centre development and does not attempt to advise the Committee on electricity-market engineering, water engineering or planning matters requiring specialist assessment.

The central recommendation is that material claims made about the resource requirements and public benefits of AI data centres should be recorded in a form that allows Tasmanians, regulators and Parliament to distinguish forecasts from observed results and to identify when circumstances have materially changed.

1. Protecting public resources and the environment

Where significant public resources are involved, assessment should distinguish between projected, contracted and actually observed resource demand.

For material facilities, a common reporting framework could record, where applicable:

- contracted electrical capacity;
- observed peak demand;
- total electricity consumption over a defined reporting period;
- water withdrawals and consumption by source;
- backup generation and associated fuel use;
- material changes to cooling or computing technology;
- demand-response or curtailment commitments;
- material incidents affecting public infrastructure; and
- the methodology and reporting period used for each figure.

The purpose is not to predetermine what level of resource use is acceptable. It is to make the evidence used in that decision clear and comparable.

2. Resource Management and Planning System

Applications involving rapidly changing technologies can create a problem when the system ultimately constructed differs materially from the system originally assessed.

Approval and reporting processes should therefore identify which technical and resource assumptions were material to the original decision and specify changes that require reconsideration.

Examples might include major changes in electrical demand, water requirements, facility size, cooling architecture, ownership or operating purpose.

This would make change management part of the original approval evidence. These are recommendations for the Committee to consider, not assertions about the adequacy of existing planning law or the legal effect of any current approval.

3. Parliamentary oversight and accountability

For developments involving material public-resource commitments, Parliament should be able to trace significant claims to their evidentiary basis.

A project evidence register could record:

- the material claim;
- who made it;
- the source supporting it;
- whether it is a forecast, commitment or observed result;
- the relevant period and baseline;
- material assumptions;
- uncertainty or limitations;
- the party responsible for updating it; and
- the event or date requiring review.

This would be particularly useful for long-term commitments because claims that were reasonable when a project was approved may cease to be reliable after technology, ownership, load or market conditions change.

4. Transparent public disclosure of resource consumption

Public reporting should use comparable units and clearly separate:

- maximum or nameplate electrical capacity and peak demand, reported in MW, from energy consumed over a stated period, reported in MWh;
- forecasts from measurements;
- annual totals from peak demand;
- water withdrawals from water consumption, with each term, source, measurement boundary and reporting period defined;
- proposed employment from actual continuing employment; and
- announced investment from expenditure occurring in Tasmania.

Where a number is modelled rather than observed, its method and principal assumptions should be disclosed. Public summaries should be distinguished from detailed records available to authorised independent reviewers where privacy, commercial confidentiality or infrastructure security requires restricted access; the basis for any withholding should be stated.

Material revisions should preserve the historical number rather than silently replacing it. This would allow Parliament and the public to see how forecasts change over time.

5. Community consultation

Consultation is more useful when members of the community receive evidence in comparable form rather than incompatible claims made by different parties.

Consultation material should therefore identify:

- which facts are measured;
- which are forecasts;
- which are commitments;
- material uncertainty;
- the source of important numbers; and
- what remains unknown.

Where a material claim changes after consultation, the change and its reason should be recorded.

This would make consultation informative without requiring members of the public to reproduce technical due diligence themselves.

6. Tangible benefits for the Tasmanian community

Benefit claims should be subject to the same evidentiary discipline as resource-use claims.

Depending on the proposal, this could include:

- permanent Tasmanian employment;
- construction employment;
- local procurement;
- training and skills commitments;
- infrastructure contributed by the proponent;
- taxes or charges;
- research or education partnerships; and
- other specifically promised community benefits.

Forecasts should be compared with realised outcomes at defined intervals.

Where a public concession or long-term resource commitment is justified partly by an expected benefit, the evidence register should preserve the relationship between the commitment and the benefit used to justify it.

7. Other incidental matters: independent verification and change-triggered review

For particularly material claims, the Committee could consider whether independent verification should be required rather than relying solely on self-reporting.

Verification need not imply a new certification regime. Its purpose would be to establish whether the evidence actually supports the reported claim.

Material changes should trigger targeted re-evaluation of the affected claims rather than requiring an unnecessary reassessment of everything.

Conclusion

The Committee could account for both infrastructure impacts and material changes in technology over the life of a development.

Tasmania can improve decision quality without assuming either that these developments are inherently beneficial or inherently harmful.

The useful objective is narrower: important claims about public resource requirements, impacts and benefits should be sourceable, comparable, independently inspectable where appropriate, and revisited when the facts change.

A durable evidence register and change-triggered review process could give Parliament and the Tasmanian community a clearer basis for assessing those claims over the life of a project. Reporting requirements should be proportionate, use existing reporting channels where suitable, and be assessed for usefulness and administrative cost.

Drafting assistance and evidence boundary

AI tools assisted with drafting, source checking and revision of this submission. This disclosure does not attest to personal review of every statement by the submitter.

The reporting framework and expected benefits are policy proposals, not measured findings. This submission makes no facility-specific claim about energy or water demand, employment, investment, environmental harm or legal compliance, and claims no demonstrated commercial effectiveness for CRUX.

Reference

[1] Parliament of Tasmania, Standing Committee on Government Administration A, resolution of 5 August 2026, Terms of Reference 1–7, p.1 (accessed 11 September 2026).
https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0012/110055/Terms-of-Reference.pdf