

## **Re: Inquiry into AI Data Centres in Tasmania (Government Administration Committee A)**

*The House of Assembly Standing Committee on Government Administration A has resolved to inquire into and report upon the construction and operation of AI data centres in Tasmania. Members of the public may use this form as a template to provide comment on the Committee Inquiry Terms of Reference. The Terms of Reference are set out below and comments should be limited to these areas. Submissions become Committee documents that may be published on the Committee website and quoted in the Committee's report to Parliament. Should you not wish whole or parts of your submission to be published, please clearly indicate this in your submission. Persons making submissions must not release them without the approval of the Committee. Submissions are protected by parliamentary privilege but the unauthorised release of them is not. Submissions should be received by the closing date of Monday, 21 September 2026 and should be emailed to [assemblygaa@parliament.tas.gov.au](mailto:assemblygaa@parliament.tas.gov.au), or posted to: Secretary, Inquiry into AI Data Centres in Tasmania, Parliament House Hobart, 7000.*

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(The above information is used by the Secretariate to verify submissions and to contact the submitter should the Committee wish to seek further information. Should you not provide the above information, the Committee may not accept your submission to the Inquiry.)

### **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

#### **1. Protect public resources and the environment;**

##### **Mitigate Technological Obsolescence and Remediation Risks via Bank Guarantees**

The Committee must introduce strict safeguards to protect Tasmanian taxpayers from inheriting abandoned data centres if a parent technology operator collapses or faces sudden insolvency.

While data centre building shells last for decades, the high-performance graphics processing units (GPUs) inside have an incredibly short lifespan, becoming completely obsolete every 3 to 5 years. Facilities require continuous, multi-billion dollar capital reinvestments to stay viable; without it, they rapidly degrade into standard, low-value digital warehouses. (The Economic Times; JLL).

Data infrastructure projects are routinely structured under proprietary limited (Pty Ltd) subsidiaries. If the venture fails, the 'shell' company defaults on its debts, is not liable for cleanup costs and leaves local communities to do so. (LSE International Inequalities Institute; Pinsent Masons).

This financial exposure is not theoretical. The 2026 liquidation of the Liberty Bell Bay (Tas) manganese smelter demonstrates exactly how corporate insolvency leaves the public vulnerable. Because the state lacked adequate, upfront financial protections, Tasmanian taxpayers were left

exposed to an unrecovered \$20 million government loan and a looming \$211 million environmental cleanup liability after the operator collapsed.(ABC News)

Without mandatory, legally binding remediation bonds or bank guarantees secured upfront, Tasmania risks repeating this disaster—leaving local taxpayers to pay for the demolition and cleanup of abandoned, high-voltage computing ruins.

## **2.Ensure Tasmania's Resource Management and Planning System adequately recognises and addresses the specific impacts of the development and construction of AI and data facilities;**

**Mandate Low-Frequency Metrics (dBC and dBG):** I am writing to express my severe concerns regarding the rapid rollout of AI Data Centres. Specifically the unmitigated, 24/7 low-frequency noise and infrasound emissions which will threaten local liveability—as demonstrated by the projects at Long Reach and Liberty Bell Bay—alongside the threats of residential property devaluation and massive financial remediation liabilities for Tasmanian taxpayers.

Current planning models rely heavily on A-weighted decibels (dBA) to project environmental impacts. However, dBA deliberately filters out low-frequency noise and infrasound (below 20 Hz), which are **the exact frequencies that cause severe health issues and travel unhindered over water to communities in Rowella, Kayena, Beauty Point, Kelso, and Clarence Point.**

I urge the Committee to address this regulatory gap by implementing the following points into state planning and EPA guidelines:

Standard dBA noise assessments do not protect residents from industrial low-frequency hums. The State Government must mandate that all data centre assessments include **dBC** (low-frequency) and **dBG** (the international standard for infrasound between 1 and 20 Hz) to accurately reflect the acoustic footprint felt by human bodies (*Stansfeld & Clark, 2015*).

**Account for Acoustic Bending Over Water:** Sound models must factor in the "sound channeling effect" of the Tamar River. Flat, acoustically reflective water surfaces combined with evening temperature inversions trap low-frequency noise and bend it downward, allowing the 24/7 hum to travel kilometres across the river into residential rooms without losing energy (*Lercher et al., 2003*).

**Recognise Architectural Penetration and Chronic Health Risks:** The Committee must recognise that data centre infrasound behaves as a structural vibration that easily penetrates standard building walls, roofing, and thermal double-glazing with minimal loss (*MDPI, 2026*). Traditional insulation cannot dampen it. Continuous exposure to this sub-audible low-frequency pressure triggers the autonomic nervous system 24/7, causing

severe sleep disruption, elevated cortisol (stress), and long-term learning and concentration deficits in children (*Lercher et al., 2003*)

### **Enforce Immediate Shutdowns for Non-Compliance and Real-Time Shoreline**

**Monitoring:** Parliament should direct data centre operators to fund and install permanent, continuous dBC/dBG monitors along the West Tamar shoreline, with live public dashboards. If noise limits are exceeded, the facility must be legally directed to shut down operations altogether until active noise cancellation systems, acoustic louvres, and industrial silencers are fully installed and proven to work. This prevents companies from exploiting supply chain, material, or labor delays to continue operating a non-compliant, disruptive facility.

**Legislate Strict Diesel Generator Bans and Overrule Industry Appeals:** Parliament must enshrine a permanent, state-level ban on data centre operators using diesel backup generators for non-emergency grid augmentation or peak-logging. This legislation must explicitly uphold the George Town Council's original restrictions and reject Firmus's current TASCAT appeal, ensuring that regular generator maintenance testing remains heavily restricted to standard daytime weekday hours to prevent massive, sudden spikes in low-frequency noise (*George Town Council, 2026*).

**Prevent Cumulative Multi-Directional Noise Pollution in the Tamar Valley:** The Committee must urgently evaluate the cumulative acoustic impact of multiple data centres co-locating along the East Tamar industrial zone. In addition to the 288 MW Long Reach facility, a new 50 MW data centre project is slated for the closed Liberty Bell Bay manganese smelter site. While proponents evaluate these projects as isolated facilities, their geographic clustering creates a multi-directional sound corridor. The flat, highly reflective water surface of the Tamar River acts as an acoustic mirror, allowing low-frequency hums from both Bell Bay and Long Reach to travel unhindered across the river. These continuous, 24/7 sound waves converge directly onto the West Tamar shorelines, impacting premium agricultural assets like the Rowella and Kayena vineyards, as well as established residential zones in Beauty Point, Kelso, and Clarence Point. Parliament must direct the EPA to mandate a Cumulative Regional Noise Assessment that accounts for the combined dBC/dBG output of all proposed facilities before any single site receives final environmental clearance

## **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

### **7. Any other matter incidental**

**Tasmania must not repeat the failures of overseas jurisdictions where data centre noise has resulted in community litigation.** In 2026, Microsoft and Elon Musk's xAI were hit with major class-action lawsuits in Wisconsin and Mississippi over 24/7 industrial noise and low-frequency vibrations that cause sleep deprivation, anxiety, and tinnitus (*Facilities Dive, 2026*). The proposed 288MW Long Reach facility is highly comparable in

scale to the 350MW facility currently being sued for noise pollution in New Jersey (*The Guardian*, August 2026). The physics of low-frequency noise means that any size facility running 24/7 cooling infrastructure will produce an identical, health-damaging structural hum if left unmitigated.

**Legislate Protections Against Residential Property Devaluation:** The rapid introduction of hyperscale data centres adjacent to residential zones represents an unmitigated financial threat to local home equity and regional primary producers. Empirical real estate industry data from the National Association of Realtors (NAR) explicitly warns that data infrastructure placements create severe localized strain, slicing 5% to 20%+ off a home's appraised value due to buyer aversion to 24/7 industrial humming (*NAR*, 2026). This financial asset damage is currently being contested in active class-action lawsuits against tech developers in both federal and state jurisdictions over property diminution (*Facilities Dive*, 2026). Given that Victoria's EPA has already step-intervened to object to data centre urban building parameters over residential noise concerns (*EPA Victoria*, 2026), the financial burden of industrial noise must not be borne by private Tasmanian citizens. The Committee must recommend a Data Centre Property Value Protection Framework holding operators legally and financially liable to compensate affected landowners in full if post-operational infrasound devalues their properties.

Thank you for considering this submission to ensure Tasmanian communities are protected from 24/7 industrial noise pollution.

#### REFERENCES CITED IN THIS SUBMISSION:

**Australian Federal & State Policy:** Environment Protection Authority (EPA) Victoria. (2026, September). *Regulatory Statement on Data Centre Urban Noise Interventions*.

**Building Penetration Physics:** MDPI Building Acoustics Journal. (2026, August). *Infrasound and Low-Frequency Noise Transmission Through Standard Building Layouts and Glazing*.

**International Lawsuits:** Facilities Dive. (2026, August). *Noise Lawsuits Hit US Data Centre Operations for Property Diminution*.

**Low-Frequency & Health:** Stansfeld, S., & Clark, C. (2015). Health Effects of Noise on Children and Communities. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 3(45).

**Noise Propagation:** Lercher, P., et al. (2003). Chronic Noise Exposure and Cognitive Deficits. *MDPI International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*. (Cross-contextualised tracking in *Frontiers in Psychology*).

**Property Market Study:** National Association of Realtors (NAR). (2026, September). *The Impact of Hyperscale Data Infrastructure on Localized Residential Property Appraisals*.

**Regional Planning Context:** George Town Council. (2026, August). *Public Presentation and Recorded Minutes: Firmus Long Reach Development Application* [Video/Audio Records].

**Social Video Briefing:** George Town Council. (2026). *Firmus Long Reach Project Development Approval Briefing* [Video]. Instagram/Social Media Records.

**Global Press Tracking:** The Guardian. (2026, August 28). *Data centre sound pollution sparks global lawsuits.*

**ABC News (2026).** *Liberty Bell Bay site remediation costs: Who pays?* Available at: [abc.net.au](http://abc.net.au)

**Jones Lang LaSalle (JLL) Global Infrastructure Insights.** *Why Data Centers Could Hit Obsolescence Sooner Than You Think.* JLL Industry Research Briefing.

**The Economic Times: Data Center Division.** *AI Compute Infrastructure: Data Centre GPUs' Physical vs. Economic Lifespan for AI.*

**London School of Economics (LSE) International Inequalities Institute.** *Global Resistance and Corporate Structures in the Expansion of AI Data Infrastructure.*

**Pinsent Masons Infrastructure Analysis.** *Australia's Shifting Data Centre Rules: Planning, Grid Constraints, and Environmental Feasibility.*