

Inquiry into AI data centres in Tasmania

It seems the media is very quiet about the number of data centres proposed for Tasmania and the resources they will bleed, with the community footing the bills!

People are being left out of the discussion and even the politicians are circling around the AI companies and supporting them no matter the cost to the Tasmanian community in the future.

Do we understand what is actually happening? Or are we being hoodwinked by the notion of being at the edge of new development. It does not stand up. There is no public awareness program or information in fact it is quite the opposite. One needs to delve into the system to try and find out what is actually happening.

These data systems are immensely power and water hungry, needing 280 MW of power for just one building and yet the Gordon Dam, is only 140MW, so where is the energy and power coming from? Currently our government is failing us and individual assessment needs to be made by the EPA, Planning Commission and Tasmanian Parliament and **MUST include** community information and consultation about what is happening and why!

Any statements about “commercial in confidence” is surely a ploy to keep this whole process free of community understanding and interest.

Are we leaving it to our politicians only to make these assessments with little or no knowledge as there is not any global regulations, guardrails or controls for an AI go slow process. Do we have the knowledge here in Tasmania to make informed decisions about the AI industry and **expertise** to lead the assessment of this new technology. Final costs will fall on the community now and in the future. This is not good enough and the Government should be ashamed of what they are doing.

My primary concerns are that

1 The Planning Frameworks such as the TPS was not designed for assessing massive developments like AI data centre. Tasmania does not have appropriate systems for the assessment of them and it appears that politics and politicians are pushing them for what community benefit?

2. The public economic value of the data centres has not been expressed and the community are just being left to accept the political decisions without clarity or justification. The potential impact on Tasmania’s power, water and environmental outcomes are left for the community to just accept without question? In the long term there will be very few jobs after construction.

Will the Hydro be able to continue to provide the amount of power required by the State and community as well as for this new resource hungry industry for minimal benefit to the State.

3. Is this project a back-room decision? There appears to be a lack of good governance and few details for the community to analyse.

4. Who in Tasmania has the technical and social expertise to lead the assessment of this new technology? The infrastructure requirements for the project are enormous and yet there is no regulation, no guardrails and no idea of the eventual outcome. Massive public resources will be required for our small state.

What exactly is AI? Do we really know and is there a danger to mankind? There is a possibility it could escape human controls and international expert Professor Geoffrey Hinton, says AI technology is already conscious and its massive speed of communications is of concern.

5. Hearing that Firmus is sponsoring our State's leading sporting codes, AFL, Basketball and Cricket reveals that they see the State as a very easy target and by providing these deals we should be so grateful. This is a very cynical outcome reflecting that Firmus sees us as not really having the wherewithal to understand fully what they actually doing to Tasmania. They are offering these crumbs from the table to keep us onside and our politicians have fallen for it. We need a proper social contract of value for all Tasmanians?

Proper regulations, rules and assessment processes need to be in place before the first data centre is approved and if this runs the risk of losing the proposed buildings here in Tasmania then so be it! That outcome will be better than trying to work out what to do with sites that impact highly on the environment in which they are located, and the resource allocations they will take.

The Parliamentary Inquiry must advise and insist on the following:

- The Hydro and Tas Water Companies to reveal their strategic plans for Tasmania's long-term power and water usage including for the proposed Data Centres.
- Open public debate on all aspects of the proposed Data Centres reinforcing good governance.
- A moratorium on the development of Data Centres until all environmental and social issues are resolved. This to be undertaken by a qualified person.
- Clear outlines of positive Economic and Long-term public benefits for the State.

Please call me if further information is required.

Thank you and regards,

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21 September 2026