

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

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:

1. **Mandate Low-Frequency Metrics (dBC and dBG):** 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*).
2. **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*).
3. **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*).
4. **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.

5. **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*).
6. **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.
7. **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.
8. **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.

9. 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.

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

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10 SEP 2026

Sikim Wan

[REDACTED]

Dear Sikim Wan

Thank you for your email of 26 August 2026 regarding the recent approval of a data centre by the George Town Council. I note your concerns with the project.

I can advise when Councils consider development applications, they apply the process set out under the *Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993* which requires decisions to be made on discretionary development applications within 42 days. The Act does not spell out what or where development can occur, but it provides for the making of the Tasmanian Planning Scheme, which is then applied by each Council in their area. The Act itself does not prescribe the matters to consider, as that is covered by the planning scheme. The Tasmanian Planning Scheme came into effect in the George Town municipality in October 2023.

The planning scheme includes a variety of land use zones setting out what developments can occur and where, including the General Industrial zone, various codes and unique local provisions. The General Industrial zone is intended to be used by larger scale industrial developments. The Bell Bay area, where the approved data centre is located, has been previously determined to be suitable for these types of uses with the application of this zone.

When councils make decisions regarding development applications, they are required to make those decisions in accordance with the planning requirements in the TPS. The council's assessment also involves referral to infrastructure providers and other regulators, where relevant, such as TasWater, TasNetworks and the Environment Protection Authority.

I understand the proposal was considered by TasWater who advised the site is adequately serviced by the necessary water infrastructure. I understand TasNetworks has been in discussion with the proponent and advised the proposal was not likely to adversely affect their operations.

Both TasWater and TasNetworks will be involved further in considering the development at the detailed design stage through legislation separate to the Act. Once a planning permit has been issued, proponents are still required to gain these separate approvals before they can commence development of the site, including any approval needed under Commonwealth legislation. These separate approvals would relate to some of the matters the Councillors referred to as being "out of scope".

You raise concerns with the proposal not being considered by the EPA. As Minister for Housing and Planning, I have no role in the referral of a proposal to the EPA. The EPA does have the ability to 'call in' projects and assess their environmental impacts. I can advise the EPA operates as an independent authority and in this case, I understand George Town Council did refer this project to the EPA. The EPA decided not to 'call in' this project as they determined there was a relatively low risk of environmental harm or environmental nuisance arising from this proposed development.

Alternative to the development application process operated by councils, a project can be considered as a major project under the Act. In this instance, I received no such request from the proponent, nor did I receive a formal request from the George Town Council to have the project considered as a major project.

In summary, when councils make decisions regarding development applications, they are required to do so in accordance with the Tasmanian Planning Scheme following the process set out in the Act. Also, proponents cannot commence their development unless they obtain all of the relevant approvals required under other State or Commonwealth laws. This means with a proposal of this nature the relevant issues will be considered through the various State and Commonwealth legislation, not just the Act and Tasmanian Planning Scheme alone.

I trust this is of assistance.

Yours sincerely,



Hon Kerry Vincent MLC
Minister for Housing and Planning