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Submission to the Inquiry into AI Data Centres in Tasmania

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I am a resident of [REDACTED] and I want to explain what this proposed AI data centre at Long Reach has meant for me, my family and our community.

How we found out

We first found out about the data centre totally by chance.

At first I thought it was at Bell Bay because that is what kept being said. It was only later that I realised the proposed site was actually at Long Reach, right across from my farm. This picture is from my front door. The tower on the hill is the whole length of the AI factory.



Long Reach is not "Bell Bay" in fact it's 8km away . And it is an area that I believe should be considered to be returned for conservation rather than having a huge industrial development put there.

What has upset me so much is that we did not get information or a letter drop telling us what was being proposed.

I honestly felt like this was coming in under the radar.

How can something this enormous, which has the potential to change people's lives, homes and businesses, get to this stage without the people living closest to it properly knowing what was coming?

I feel completely blindsided.

I never expected that something on this scale could be put so close to my home without us having a proper understanding of what was being planned.

My home is our safe haven

I moved to this property because of my health and because I needed a quieter environment.

For six years I have enjoyed the quality of life that living here has given me.

I have worked hard for it. I can no longer work, and our family depends on the fact that we own our home so that one income can keep us going.

I cannot simply sell up and move somewhere else if living here becomes unsuitable.

I have spoken to a real estate professional who advised me that our property could potentially lose 40–50% of its value because of the development.

I understand that this is an estimate, not a formal valuation, but even the possibility is terrifying.

If we were forced to move because the environment around our home had changed so much, we could potentially be unable to afford another property like the one we already have.

That could mean going back into debt and me having to try to work again when I am no longer able to do that. How is that fair?

What we are actually getting

As the project became more clear, I started reading about what was actually proposed.

This isn't a small building.

We are talking about a huge AI facility with hundreds of pieces of industrial infrastructure, cooling equipment, fans, lighting and 276 diesel generators.

The generators particularly concern me.

We now understand that Firmus is also seeking through TASCAT to have greater ability to run the generators than we originally understood.

That matters enormously to the people living nearby.

These are not just numbers on a planning document.

They mean noise.

They mean industrial activity.

They mean diesel emissions.

They mean light pollution.

They mean that something which is currently a quiet rural environment could have industrial infrastructure operating beside it.

I want the Inquiry to properly examine the real-world impact of these facilities on the people who live around them, including generator testing and operation, noise, emissions, lighting and the cumulative effect of all of these things together.

Rowella seems to have been overlooked as we are a different council to gorge town council.

I feel that Rowella was not properly considered as an affected community.

Being in west Tamar council.

The impacts of a facility like this do not magically stop at the boundary of the development.

Noise travels.

Light travels.

Air pollution travels.

The visual impact changes the landscape.

And the character of an area matters enormously to people who live there and to businesses that depend on that landscape.

We live in a rural area, not an industrial estate.

There are farms, vineyards, tourism accommodation, cellar doors, wedding businesses and other tourism operators around us.

The Tamar Valley has a significant wine and tourism industry, and the landscape is part of what people are coming here for.

Putting a large industrial AI facility into that environment needs to be considered in that wider context. Our own plans for a goat dairy and flow farm with tourism in mind is now going to be put on hold. We wanted people to be able to come to our property and experience a rural farm, the animals and the environment. That was something we were genuinely excited about building for our future. But I don't see how we could realistically develop that kind of tourism business with a huge AI data centre and its industrial infrastructure across from us. The environment is part of the experience. People don't come to a rural goat farm tourism business to look across at a massive industrial facility, hear industrial equipment and see lights and generators. This is not just about the value of my house. It affects the future we were trying to build on our farm.

OUR WILDLIFE

Our farm and the surrounding area are also home to significant wildlife. Rowella is unique as it is a point out in the river so we are surrounded on three sides by water and are part of the east Asian Australasian flyway. We have white-bellied sea-eagles visiting our property. We have goshawks. We have seen masked owls, swift parrots, wedge-tailed eagles and other birds around our farms and the surrounding area. These aren't just things I have read about in a report. We actually see these birds where we live. I believe the presence of these species and the wider environmental values of the Rowella deserve proper independent consideration. I am particularly concerned about the combination of industrial lighting, noise, infrastructure, emissions and changes to the surrounding landscape. I don't believe these impacts should simply be considered one at a time.

TOURISM AND VINEYARDS

There is also a much bigger economic issue here. The Tamar Valley has a substantial wine and tourism industry. There are vineyards, cellar doors, accommodation, farms, wedding venues and tourism businesses that depend on the character of this area. People come here because it is beautiful. They come for the rural landscape, the wildlife, the water, the vineyards and the experience of being in the Rowella. We need to ask what happens when you start putting large industrial AI facilities into these landscapes. The economic impact shouldn't just be measured by how much money the data centre brings into Tasmania. We also need to consider what existing businesses and industries could potentially lose. I mean our wine industry here from Rowella is over 100 million to Tasmania.

WHAT WORRIES ME MOST

What worries me most is that this seems to be happening faster than the protections for the people already living here. I am not against technology. I understand that Tasmania wants investment and new industries. But I don't understand how an AI factory of this scale can be put so close to people's homes and other already established tourism business without the community having a much bigger say in whether this is an appropriate location. I don't understand how the people living closest to it can feel like we found out about it almost by accident. And I don't understand how the impacts on our homes, our businesses, tourism, wildlife and quality of life can be treated as secondary to the development itself. My trust in government has been affected.

This process has changed the way I feel about government and Tasmania. I actually wonder if it is where I want to raise my kids.

Before this, I believed that if something this significant was going to happen beside our homes, there would be a proper process where we would be informed and our concerns would genuinely be considered. Instead, I feel like we were blindsided.

The more I have learned about the project, the more difficult it has become for me to trust that the system is protecting ordinary people who already live here.

I don't want to feel that way about my own government.

But that is honestly how this process has made me feel.

What I am asking the Inquiry to look at

I am asking the Inquiry to look at:

Why communities closest to proposed AI data centres are not being more directly informed from the beginning.

Whether the current planning notification system is adequate for developments of this enormous scale.

Whether Long Reach is an appropriate location for a major AI industrial facility.

The conservation and environmental history of Long Reach.

The impact of 276 diesel generators, including how often they can operate and what is being sought through TASCAT regarding their operation.

Diesel emissions and potential impacts on surrounding properties.

Noise from generators, cooling systems, fans and other infrastructure.

Light pollution and the effect on nearby homes, wildlife and the rural landscape.

Whether independent acoustic and air-quality assessments should be required.

Whether Rowella has been properly considered as an affected community.

The potential impacts on the Tamar Valley wine and tourism industry.

Diesel emission and air quality testing all the time.

The potential impacts on vineyards, cellar doors, accommodation, farms and other tourism businesses.

The potential impact on property values and what protections exist for affected residents.

The impact on wildlife, including the birds regularly seen in the area.

Whether the cumulative impacts of large AI facilities are being properly considered rather than looking at each impact separately.

Whether Tasmania needs stronger specific rules for AI data centres before more projects are approved.

Finally

I worked hard for my home.

For six years it has been my safe place and the place where I have been able to build a life that works for my family.

We had plans for our farm.

We wanted to develop a goat dairy and tourism business.

We wanted to continue living here and enjoying the environment around us.

Now we are facing the possibility that the character of the place we chose to live could be fundamentally changed by a development that we didn't even properly know was coming.

I don't think ordinary Tasmanians should have to find themselves in this position.

If Tasmania wants to become a major destination for AI infrastructure, then we need to get the rules right first.

We need proper community consultation.

We need proper environmental assessment.

We need independent information.

We need to consider the people who already live here, the businesses already operating here, the wildlife already living here and the future of the communities themselves.

Technology can move forward without leaving the people who live beside it behind.

I was also told that if I had a complaint about the AI factory noise or heat or air quality after it was running . I was to ring firmus?

Surely we should not be complaining to the person making the noise ect.

Please at least make the rules for noise and air quality tight and a place we can go to that will enforce these rules on firmus. They can't just govern themselves.

Thank you.

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