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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, including recommending future legislation and regulations necessary to:

Terms of Reference:

1. Protect public resources and the environment;

Tasmania is known and enjoyed for its natural environments and resources. People in elected positions have a duty to protect these from strain and overuse.

The electricity demand of data centres is well known, yet the means of supplying that level in the recent Tasmanian approvals and proposals isn't clear. Hydro Tasmania is yet to decide on Firmus' request for 450 MW energy, which is equivalent of up to 30 per cent of Tasmania's current energy use. Building the renewable infrastructure to support this need will take time, yet data centres are being approved and built faster than the supporting renewables.

The operation of continuous industrial cooling units and dozens of heavy backup diesel generators will create noise and exhaust emissions. Firmus' own noise consultants acknowledge that important aspects remain unresolved, and they recommend further measures. A data centre's cooling system reaches its highest output during hot weather, meaning peak noise is likely to occur during summer evenings and nights when people are trying to sleep and may have windows open. How can we be confident that noise standards will be met when an applicant's own experts say further work is needed?

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;

Written in 1993, Tasmania's Resource Management and Planning System (RMPS) was never designed to evaluate high-intensity AI megafactories and is widely considered to be outdated and inadequate for properly recognising and assessing the unique, large-scale impacts. It is lacking in areas such as risk assessment re diesel/lithium batteries, in handling heavy cooling-system noise and immense energy consumption, and environmental footprint. The Government's recent draft Statement of Expectations for AI framework is also inadequate, as it is simply about policies, and doesn't state where the massive amount of energy required will come from.

There is a dire need for AI-specific planning laws, and environmental protection standards. Government 'Expectations' should be that every new data centre is required to match 100% of demand with additional renewables and storage – not capacity that already exists – with timelines tied to grid connection. This is already happening with data centres in USA. ([Governor Matt Meyer Signs Energy Consumer Protection Legislation - State of Delaware News](#))

3. Provide Parliamentary oversight and accountability for new facility construction and resource allocation;

Projects with implications extending well beyond traditional planning considerations - energy demand, water resources, environmental impacts, infrastructure, land use, community health and wellbeing, and long-term economic benefits – should require accountability beyond traditional considerations, with a public register that measures, scrutinises, and regularly reports on the consumption, and operations, of these implications.

4. Ensure transparent public disclosure of resource consumption;

The public is only now being made aware of the cumulative resource impacts. While we know that the potential demand from ten data centres could be up to 1,150 MW, we only know of the potential location of four of these. With transparent public disclosure, there could be better understanding of any additional pressure on infrastructure and natural resources on our regions.

5. Provide the Tasmanian community with adequate opportunities for consultation;

The lack of community consultation by the Liberal Government and local Councils, so far, is disappointing, and has caused immense mistrust of government. Only recently have submissions from the public been invited. Where were these invitations before the approval of the St Leonards data centre?

6. Ensure the Tasmanian community receive tangible benefits from all AI and data facilities constructed in the state;

While some have suggested employment benefits, people are justifiably concerned over massive energy and water consumption relative to the low number of long-term jobs created. It has been reported that Bell Bay Aluminium supports roughly 20 times more jobs per MW of power used than the proposed Long Reach AI Data Centre. ([Bell Bay Aluminium faces uncertain future amid stalled power deal and subsidy debate; Bauxite Mining, Price, Ore, Mineral, Formula, Production.](#))

Data centres should have a significant positive impact on the whole community; a few sports sponsorships just aren't cutting it.

7. Any other matter incidental.

Responsible development of AI data centres is what is needed. Although the Georgetown council approved a proposal from Firmus Technologies, it included 15 conditions, such as restricting the use of 276 backup diesel generators to emergencies, power failures, and limited testing times. Firmus' appeal against this restriction fuels mistrust, and no amount of sports sponsorship will repair that.

Opposition to the rapid expansion of these facilities is gaining momentum. This issue is capturing the attention of voters who were previously content to leave decisions in the hands of the elected parliamentarians. Word is spreading about who is listening, and acting, to truly represent their community, and who is not. **People who have never signed a petition are signing. People who have never written to a politician are writing.**

Support of a moratorium on AI and data centre facilities, until guardrails are established, will gain our votes, our trust and our respect.