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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.)

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 blessed with beautiful environments and plentiful resources. Politicians have a duty to protect and preserve these, so when a new development wants to set up shop, they must scrutinise its impact on long term sustainability of using those resources.

Hydro Tasmania says our current energy available for use can vary, depending on supply and demand, usage patterns and how much it rains. The scale of the cooling and backup power needs for recently proposed data centres is substantial, requiring more generation to be built. Data centres will also compete with other industries for land, planning approvals, grid capacity and staff, which can impact housing delivery and affordability, a key issue in Tasmania today.

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;

I agree with calls to replace the outdated frameworks which are currently in place, to instead specifically address and assess AI data centres. (eg. Latrobe Council advocating for a more appropriate framework)

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

Parliamentary decision-makers are accountable to the Tasmanians who they represent. The rush toward AI must be controlled so that data centre approvals don't outpace legislative and regulatory ability.

There have been reports that agricultural water resources may be used to support wider Tasmanian operations. Farming is an important part of Tasmania's economy and identity, therefore questions about future competition for water and electricity resources must be answered.

4. Ensure transparent public disclosure of resource consumption;

New developments can only be honestly assessed if there is truthful disclosure of their full cost. With 4 approvals and 6 more (confidential) applications, collectively these facilities could become one of the State's largest electricity consumers. It makes sense to delay the construction of such facilities until the renewable power sources are commissioned.

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

Decisions have been made, without community input, and we are being asked to accept assurances. It is reasonable for the community to expect to be listened to, about impactful issues, and so future large-scale proposals should require public consultation before approvals proceed.

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

The growing discontent of our community is being fuelled by the lack of tangible benefits in relation to the costs. We know there'll be short-term jobs for setting up a data centre, but long-term employment numbers are low.

7. Any other matter incidental.

AI data centres are massive and complex in terms of potential demand on resources and environment, so I believe a moratorium is crucial, until there is appropriate regulation and renewable energy infrastructure in place. My friends, family, and work colleagues are watching the actions (or lack of) of our elected representatives more closely than ever. Many Tasmanians are signing petitions, writing to politicians, and donating to appeals to fund legal challenges. This is an issue which impacts trust and confidence in those who have decision-making power.