

To: House of Assembly Standing Committee, Government Administration A,

Inquiry on AI Data Centres in Tasmania

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Terms of Reference: To inquire into and report upon the construction and operation of AI data centres in Tasmania, including recommending future legislation and regulations necessary to:

1. Protect Public Resources and the Environment: It is critical that the most stringent criteria possible are used to assess the impacts of AI data centres on the public resources and environment of Tasmania. And these must take into consideration the impacts of climate change, which are already leading to drying of the Tasmanian climate. For example, during periods of water shortage, data centres should not be given preference to water supplies and the energy derived from hydro-electricity over the needs of the public, agriculture and the natural environment. And the use of public resources by AI data centres must be fully accounted for and the information made available to the public.

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: Development applications for AI data centres must be required to meet the conditions of the current Resource Management and Planning System. There must be no 'watering down' of the current legislation or special consideration given to AI data centre applications. If necessary, tightening of legislation should be considered. Developments should be required to be located on previously used industrial land and should not be permitted on native bushland or land used for agriculture.

3. Provide Parliamentary oversight and accountability for new facility construction and resource allocation: This should be an essential requirement and I recommend should continue for the life of the AI data centre. Information on any concerns raised during the oversight process should be made available to the public. This must be properly resourced, so that thorough investigations can be undertaken by Parliament.

4. Ensure transparent public disclosure of resource consumption: This is absolutely critical. To date, transparency has been lacking and this must change. There is considerable public anxiety that use of public resources by AI data centres could lead to increasing electricity costs for domestic users and possibly restrictions in water supply during drought years if AI data centres are given preference in use.

5. Provide the Tasmanian community with adequate opportunities for consultation: It is currently impossible for the Tasmanian community to understand whether the location of AI data centres in our State will be beneficial or harmful as very little information has been released. This must change and opportunities provided for the community to provide feedback about issues of concern and, if necessary, for the community to take legal action if they believe their concerns are not being considered. One issue raised recently relates to the construction of an undersea cable linking Firmus data centres with the mainland – I understand they hope to bring the cable ashore at Bellbuoy Beach, causing considerable anxiety for the local community. It is also unclear who will pay for the construction of this undersea cable and the public needs to be kept informed and consulted if there is any consideration that public money may be used.

6. Ensure the Tasmanian community receive tangible benefits from all AI and data facilities constructed in the State: So far, this has been neglected, apart from promises of greater investment in the State, which, as far as I am aware, have not been backed up by data.

7. Any other matter incidental: Over the last couple of weeks there has been considerable attention in the media about the possibility that General Intelligence AI could lead to the extinction of the human race. Should this type of AI be

allowed to operate from data centres in Tasmania? This certainly needs to be carefully considered.

Patricia Ellison

(submitted as a private citizen)

(21st September 2026)