I am very pleased to have the opportunity to provide feedback on the Draft Expectations for Data Centres and AI Infrastructure Developers: Tasmania (DRaft Expectations).

Before responding to the individual consultation focus questions, I would like to express from the outset that I see no outcome that will lead to anything close to self-regulatory management that the Draft Expectations imply is the goal. Setting aside the much wider historical context of the failures of relying on self-regulation in different industries, the conduct and actions of data centre development and use has already demonstrated a profound inability to accord with even the most basic consideration of human need.

Indeed, the conduct and behaviours of chief executives for AI-infrastructure companies and programs clearly demonstrate a disregard for social, health, economic and environmental impact on a community-wide level. Significant sacrifices are not merely expected, they are baked into the plans and strategies of AI infrastructure.

> “When it comes to life and death decision-making, I think that it is too morally fraught an area, it is too critical of an area, to not apply the best technology available to you, regardless of what it is... To me, there’s no moral high ground in using inferior technology, even if it allows you to say things like, ‘We never let a robot decide who lives and who dies.’”
>
> Palmer Luckey, CEO of Anduril Industries, making the case for AI-powered warfare in 2025

There is no pathway that delivers a sound, ethical and safe provision of AI infrastructure without legislation and the most stringent regulations, and an explicit regard for placing community safety at the forefront of any proposal, plan or plant.

In other words, the Draft Expectations represent something of an exercise in futility. Nothing in presentation here has the remotest chance of being applied voluntarily by an industry that is apparently devoid of any humanistic ability or ambition.

Furthermore, the Draft Expectations begin by establishing a contradictory approach, where the Tasmanian Government seems to be trying to keep it’s slice of cake while eating it.

This is most notable in comparing the opening sentence of the Draft Expectations purpose with the caveat provided under ‘How to have your say’:

> Artificial intelligence (AI) is part of everyday life, and as its use continues to grow, it will bring both significant opportunities and important responsibilities for governments, businesses and communities.

Purpose

While some proposed data centres developments may support AI-related activities, this consultation is focused on the infrastructure itself and its implications for Tasmania's economy, energy system, communities and environment.

Broader policy questions relating to AI are outside the scope of this consultation.

How to have your say

Setting aside the use of conditional terms such as 'some' and 'may' (which, by the way, are doing a lot of heavy lifting in that sentence), the inherent issue with this comparison is that by applying the caveat at the end, it means the opening assertion regarding 'part of everyday life' and 'significant opportunities' cannot be questioned.

AI can only become part of everyday life by consent, through either action or -in-action. It is neither a natural nor inevitable imposition on our lives. Furthermore, the notion that AI provides significant opportunities is a stretch of imagination that is not just unproven, but growing less and less plausible each day.

AI does not pass a better-off-overall test, with the most minor of positive outcomes being utterly subsumed by the continued and consistent stream of failures, risks and dangers. The infrastructure to support AI is as culpable in its manifest failures, and thus as likely to inflict the most serious harm on people as the technology itself.

I have endeavoured to answer the questions of the Draft Expectations as best as I can, but it is with the most critical perspective possible on AI infrastructure from the outset, and with much better reason to oppose than its proponents have to support.

Maximising benefits to Tasmania

At no point has the AI infrastructure proposed for Tasmania been undertaken in a manner that demonstrably would serve economic needs. Indeed, from what is already known about similar infrastructure around the world, the outcome for jobs is minimal, as is the development of localised skills-based support.

The Draft Expectations outline loose expectations for the industry to engage in a way that even regulated industries struggle to do so. Legislation for pay, conditions and health and safety exists precisely for the purposes of laying the groundwork so that employers are compelled to meet the needs of its workers, because there is a need to maintain a standard (whether these laws are sufficient is a whole other debate of course).

The developers of AI infrastructure have already highlighted that their intent is to use Tasmania as a springboard for developing connectivity across the rest of the world. They are not interested in developing a meaningful outlet for Tasmania, using the veneer of a hazy promise as an incentive to acquire community support.

Community benefits will not occur to any significant degree in comparison to the greatest means of compelling a multi-billion dollar industry to fully contribute - tax. Tasmania is being sold cheap if the expectation is that some basic sponsorship on a localised level is going to compensate for the excessive profit-making of the already uber-rich. If these companies are making the types of money that is anticipated by their investors, I am expecting nothing less than hospitals, schools, children centres, therapeutic services and the sustainable staffing to maintain them for generations. If the Tasmania Government thinks that a 'benefit' stops and starts with donating pocket change to local community groups it is living on another planet.

The idea that AI infrastructure might utilise localised supply chains is naive and incongruent. In terms of local resources, such as building materials, there is already a significant limitation on available supply for badly needed housing. Where does the Tasmanian Government think the local supply will come from, except to diminish house building?

Specialist requirements for materials are not likely to be found in Tasmania to a sufficient degree. Similarly, in viewing the likely outcome that 'firming' will be provided by diesel, I am not aware of many crude oil wells located around the state from which AI infrastructure could source the significant levels of diesel for generators.

Maximising opportunities is meaningless if it is maximising very little to begin with. Worse still is the overall negative impact that could set back house building in the state by years, if not decades.

The expectations around commercial contribution and full cost recovery are delusional to the extreme. There is no example of a company voluntarily providing such contributions without more serious consequences (either through regulatory requirements or direct legal action).

Indeed, it is laughable that the Draft Expectations outline an expectation that proponents will meet their obligations of State taxes, local government rates and applicable charges. They are required to do this by law. The fact that these obligations are placed in the frame of expectations makes me wonder to what degree AI infrastructure might be given latitude when it comes to legal requirements.

Early engagement with community and stakeholders

The best predictor of future action is past action. The existing proposals for data centres have not come with public consultation except in the context of a PR control process.

The planning proposal for a data centre at St Leonards, agreed by Launceston City Council in 2025, came only with the limited provisions of planning consultation. It did not come with a wider consultation about the strategic goals of the initial planning request.

Virtually the day after planning permission was granted, the proponents were immediately able to pursue wider financial investment from around the world (most notably from Nvidia). It was only with revelations about negotiations with Tas Hydro that awareness of plans for Long Reach/Bell Bay entered public consciousness.

The demonstrated behaviour of AI infrastructure proponents is a divide and conquer mentality, using vulnerable and poorly integrated planning and development laws to exploit public consultation.

The recent revelations that intended use of firming on a more regular basis than advertised, suggests an instinct of duplicity over veracity that fatally undermines any trust in a voluntary system of information sharing.

Engagement with Tasmania Government

I could not give ‘two jeffs’ about what the Tasmanian Government can do to assist proponents. They have the means and money to afford their own legal advisors. I am far more interested in what the Tasmanian Government can do to safeguard the people of the State from the exploitation of inadequate planning laws, and duplicitous behavior by the proponents.

Supporting Tasmania’s energy system

It is highly unlikely that the AI industry, at any level, is intending to engage in renewable investment, except in some greenwashing capacity. The behaviour of AI infrastructure across the globe has been a repeated set of pro-fossil fuel investment actions. On mainland Australia, AI infrastructure principally seeks to use gas as ‘firming’ (probably as the primary means of powering its sites). The only reason this is not suggested for Tasmania is because we do have ready access of gas. This is why every infrastructure proposal will almost certainly include provision of diesel generators, with the burden of noise and air pollution.

The impact on Tasmanian energy goes beyond the “mere” parasitic draining of electricity. It is also the increased burden on maintaining extra infrastructure and supply. That burden will translate in only one way: increased costs for taxpayers.

AI infrastructure represents a clear and present danger to the cost of living for Tasmanian’s, who are already subject to impacts of existing pressures.

Nothing less than the most stringent regulatory controls and constraints will force AI infrastructure to operate in a manner that has no impact on costs for domestic ratepayers, and invest in localised (i.e. state-based) renewable energy.

Sustainable water usage

Water management in this state is already a dogs’ dinner. Applying an ‘expectation’ to an industry that can’t be trusted with a bottle of mineral water is exhausting in the implications of consideration.

Approval pathways

Legislate. Legislate. Legislate. Regulate the industry in every sense. ANy gap will be to the cost of Tasmania.

Transparency and reporting

Again, the explicit declaration of expecting proponents to comply with existing statutory reporting and information sharing obligations makes it sound like an opt-out exemption being considered.

Furthermore, the idea of the Tasmanian Government exercising an expectation of transparency, when the culture of secrecy is so ingrained as to be mutually dependent, is fool’s errand for a premise.

It is a mockery of democracy that commercial confidence takes priority to the public expectation of transparency to have confidence in the operations being conducted right on its doorstep, especially when those operations hold such significant consequences (virtually all negative).