Submission on the draft Tasmanian Government Statement of Expectations for Data Centres and AI Infrastructure

Submitted to: Building Tasmania (consultation closes 11.59pm, Monday 12 October 2026)
Submitted by: [redacted]
Location: [redacted]
Date: 5/10/26

I am a Tasmanian vocational educator and former small-business operator writing in both a professional and personal capacity. I use AI in my own work, and this submission is not a case against technology. It is a case for the Tasmanian State Government to put binding community centred public-interest regulative guardrails that are enforceable, as watertight legislation with huge fines around the hyperscale AI data factory build-out now underway, before further capacity is committed.

Introduction

Legislate enforceable binding protections with penalties now: no loopholes

As Tasmanian Labor Party states the public require a lot higher protection, regulation advocacy, Labor too are missing in opposition yet again?

> **Tasmanian Labor Party**
> *Tasmania's renewable energy belongs to Tasmanians. Before any major project gets access to it, Tasmanians deserve to know what jobs, on island investment and long-term benefits our state is getting in return, and how our premium Tasmanian energy resources, large energy users and retail, household and small business power bills will be affected.*[1]

The 10 proposed hyperscale AI data factories should be treated not merely as private construction projects, but as a democratic test. They involve public electricity infrastructure, water resources, land-use decisions, environmental risks, and long-term economic commitments. The Tasmanian Government's Draft Expectations are therefore an opportunity to establish whether Tasmania's future will be negotiated transparently with its communities—or largely determined through confidential dealings between government and corporate proponents.

Parliament is examining resource protection, planning adequacy, parliamentary oversight, public disclosure, community consultation, and tangible benefits for Tasmanians. These are the correct questions, but they require enforceable recommendations rather than voluntary assurances.

A caveat on scope: I understand that some data centres are owned by frontier US and Israeli cloud and media corporations, and are even rented by them to third parties, while other data centres rent compute to AI corporations. In this capacity, and in view of the advocacy of the UNSW AI Institute's Dr Kaey, I regard both data centre developers and AI compute renters as contingently requiring cascading legislation.

Please see Section 23, Conclusion, for a numbered summary of my legislative requests. Please also see how my submission matches the Draft Expectations in my Annex.

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[1] Tasmanian Labor, media release, Liberal mismanagement leaves room for uncertainty to grow: https://taslabor.org.au/news/media-releases/liberal-mismanagement-leaves-room-for-uncertainty-to-grow/

1. Law, not expectations

A statement of expectations is not law and is voluntary. It's a statement of Tasmanian government policy, not law, no enforced penalties. Instead all risks are shouldered by the Tasmanian public.

Tasmanians are asked to host foreign owned private corporate hyperscale AI infrastructure with enormous water, energy and land demands, yet protections would rest on a non-statutory policy document that can be changed or ignored even as stated on page 3 of the document, without parliamentary debate or courts (Draft Expectations, p3).

Simultaneously on 17 September 2026, the federal government released its consultation paper, "Getting it right: Building AI infrastructure that works for Australia," proposing the first genuinely mandatory, legislated national minimum requirements for large data centres covering energy, water, "no net costs" to consumers, community engagement and skills. This is a real hardening of the earlier soft-law posture, however it is like the Draft Expectations a consultation paper! The Getting it Right paper's own text confirms rather than closes several of the exact gaps this Draft Expectations piece has documented. It is not good enough.

The National AI Plan's own remit — ensuring productivity gains are broadly shared and that appropriate safeguards apply where AI affects consequential decisions about people's lives — are not lip service, and must be explicit, legislated, enforced with fines for misconduct and lack of implementation.

As a history teacher among other subjects, it looks and feels like empire to me. Is Tasmania democracy or technocracy? Where are our legislators?

2. Democracy must not be fast-tracked

Digital Rights Watch's submission to the Senate inquiry on artificial intelligence and data centres lays out a clear case,[2] and calls on representatives, councils and regulators for:

1. A moratorium on hyperscale AI data centre approvals until a real regulatory framework exists, and explicit opposition to "fast-track" approval schemes that trade off oversight for speed.
2. Mandatory, enforced regulation: turn the current voluntary "expectations" into binding law, with ongoing monitoring against what was promised at planning stage, not just sign-off at approval.

In agreement, the Centre for Public Integrity (16 July 2026) has warned that when governments settle a position behind closed doors before legislation is introduced, parliaments are pressured to simply implement the deal. It has also cautioned that "streamlined" approvals for AI infrastructure risk weakening public participation, environmental oversight and accountability. Professor Gabrielle Appleby argues that speed alone does not make a good decision. Good decisions are also transparent, evidence-based, accountable and informed by meaningful consultation. Tasmanians have seen the risk first-hand. Reporting has revealed six confidential proposals, totalling up to about 705MW, with the companies behind them undisclosed.[3] Communities cannot scrutinise what they cannot see.

What protections for Tasmanians?

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[2]Digital Rights Watch, Submission to Artificial Intelligence and Data Centres Inquiry (7 September 2026): https://digitalrightswatch.org.au/2026/09/07/submission-to-artificial-intelligence-and-data-centres-inquiry/

[3]Pulse Tasmania, six secret AI data centre proposals: https://pulsetasmania.com.au/news/document-reveals-six-secret-ai-data-centre-proposals-for-tasmania/

- EMPCA (Environmental Management and Pollution Control Act 1994) is the one enforceable lever in the whole process. If a data centre is large enough to be classified a Major Project, it triggers a genuine environmental impact assessment, the EPA issues a binding Assessment Requirement Notice the developer's Impact Statement must address, including public health considerations referred from the Department of Health, and it can attach enforceable permit conditions. PMAT cautions, however, that the Major Projects process removes the right to merits-based appeal to TASCAT, and instead recommends that AI data centres be assessed as Level 2 activities within the Tasmanian Planning Scheme, which keeps both formal environmental assessment by the EPA and appeal rights.
- LUPAA (Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993) still requires ordinary council planning permits, with public notification and appeal rights, integrated with any EMPCA Major Project assessment (Draft Expectations, p14).
- OTTER (Office of the Tasmanian Economic Regulator) has genuine statutory power over Hydro Tasmania and Aurora Energy's pricing and licensing under the Electricity Supply Industry Act, a real, if narrow, protection against ordinary households being cost-shifted onto by new industrial loads.

I request of all legislators clause 10 of Land Use Planning and Approvals Bill 2026[4] is amended.

Planning Matters Alliance Tasmania (PMAT) reports that, after sustained pressure from PMAT and about 270 community members who contacted the Council, the Minister agreed to amend his own extraordinary omnibus Bill to remove his proposed new power to rezone land.[5] That protected councils, the Tasmanian Planning Commission and communities, and I thank the Members who made it happen. PMAT warns that two serious risks remain:

- The Bill still gives the Minister new power to apply and remove the 16 planning Codes. These cover local heritage, scenic landscapes, priority vegetation, threatened species and land-use conflict. PMAT tried to constrain this power and failed. It says the Minister has not explained how he will use it, and it was not explained in the public consultation.[6]
- Clause 10 passed unamended. PMAT says it will make data centre approvals easier, and notes that a developer-facing consultancy, Cogency, advocated for data centres to be included during consultation.[7]

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[4]Land Use Planning and Approvals (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2026, Parliament of Tasmania: https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/bills/bills2026/land-use-planning-and-approvals-miscellaneous-amendments-bill-2026-22-of-2026

[5]PMAT Media Release, "PMAT Convinces Planning Minister to remove power over rezoning land – But will the Minister clarify how he will use his new powers of applying planning Codes", 11 September 2026: https://planningmatterstas.org.au/pmat-media-release-pmat-convinces-planning-minister-to-remove-power-over-rezoning-land-but-will-the-minister-clarify-how-he-will-use-his-new-powers-of-applying-planning-codes/

PMAT Media Release, "Potential extraordinary new ministerial powers to rezone land across Tasmania": https://planningmatterstas.org.au/pmat-media-release-potential-extraordinary-new-ministerial-powers-to-rezone-land-across-tasmania/

[6]PMAT Media Release, "PMAT Convinces Planning Minister to remove power over rezoning land – But will the Minister clarify how he will use his new powers of applying planning Codes", 11 September 2026: https://planningmatterstas.org.au/pmat-media-release-pmat-convinces-planning-minister-to-remove-power-over-rezoning-land-but-will-the-minister-clarify-how-he-will-use-his-new-powers-of-applying-planning-codes/

PMAT briefing to the Legislative Council, 2 September 2026: https://planningmatterstas.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2026/09/PMAT-Briefing-LC-2-Sep-2026-FINAL-V3.pdf

[7]PMAT Media Release, "PMAT Convinces Planning Minister to remove power over rezoning land – But will the Minister clarify how he will use his new powers of applying planning Codes", 11 September 2026: https://planningmatterstas.org.au/pmat-media-release-pmat-convinces-planning-minister-to-remove-power-over-rezoning-land-but-will-the-minister-clarify-how-he-will-use-his-new-powers-of-applying-planning-codes/

PMAT, AI Data Centres in Tasmania: http://planningmatterstas.org.au/ai-data-centres-tasmania

Require every AI data centre to be assessed as a Level 2 activity, with a formal integrated environmental impact assessment by the EPA and councils, and guaranteed public comment and appeal rights to TASCAT.

Require the Minister to publicly explain, before this Bill takes effect, how he will use his power over the planning Codes. Any use of it should be subject to public consultation and parliamentary scrutiny.

Constrain the criteria for interim State Planning Provisions amendments, so changes cannot be made almost overnight without consultation.

PMAT's protective laws for the Tasmanian public. In its submission to the House of Assembly's inquiry into AI data centres in Tasmania, Planning Matters Alliance Tasmania (PMAT) calls for four key actions:[8]

- Immediately implement a moratorium on AI data centre development until safe regulations are in place across Tasmania, consistent with the Environmental Defenders Office Principles for Responsible Data Centre Development.[9]
- Immediately initiate an Interim State Planning Provision (SPP) amendment to recognise and address the specific impacts of the development and construction of AI and data facilities in Tasmania while ensuring planning appeal rights;
- Immediately expand the State Policy on Water Quality Management 1997 to include water usage, with priority given to protecting drinking water for the Tasmanian community over any one industry's needs.
- Immediately create a Tasmanian State Policy on Energy.

PMAT explains that an interim SPP amendment takes effect immediately, for up to 12 months, and could:

- define AI data centres as a use class in the Tasmanian Planning Scheme, which has none, so that proposals such as Firmus's Bell Bay and Wesley Vale facilities are no longer classed as "utilities" use in the General Industrial Zone;
- make AI data centres a Discretionary use in every zone where they may be considered, guaranteeing public comment and merits-based planning appeal rights to TASCAT;
- classify AI data centres as a Level 2 activity under the Environmental Management and Pollution Control Act 1994, requiring a formal environmental impact assessment by the EPA;
- allow AI data centres only in the General Industrial Zone, and prohibit them in residential zones (unless their smaller size does not trigger assessment as a Level 2 activity) and in the Landscape Conservation, Environmental Management, Recreation, Open Space and Future Urban zones; and
- have the standards drafted by the Tasmanian Planning Commission and released for consultation.

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[8]PMAT, Submission: Inquiry into AI Data Centres in Tasmania (21 September 2026): https://planningmatterstas.org.au/pmat-submission-inquiry-into-ai-data-centres-in-tasmania/
PMAT submission to the House of Assembly Government Administration Committee A (PDF): https://planningmatterstas.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2026/09/PMAT-Submission-AI-Data-Centre-Inquiry-Sep-2026.pdf

[9]Environmental Defenders Office, Principles for Responsible Data Centre Development: https://www.edo.org.au/edo-principles-for-responsible-data-centre-development/

PMAT stresses that keeping AI data centre assessment within the Tasmanian Planning Scheme and local councils preserves the right to merits-based appeals to TASCAT, a check and balance that is entirely absent under the Major Projects process.

Inadequate planning approvals. The Draft Expectations (p14) say "planning assessment will continue under the Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993 and the Tasmanian Planning Scheme", expect proponents to "proactively engage" with communities even "where formal statutory advertising is not required", and say data centres "should be located in areas that maximise economic and system benefits while minimising" impacts. That is the same planning system under which a 288-megawatt data centre at Long Reach was approved without a comprehensive Environmental Impact Assessment. The Scheme has no AI data centre use class, no cumulative impact assessment, no binding siting rules and, where a project is fast-tracked, no appeal rights. The Land Use Planning and Approvals (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2026 deepens the problem. PMAT reports that the Minister's rezoning power was removed only after sustained pressure, that clause 10 passed unamended and will make data centre approvals easier, and that the Minister's new power to apply and remove the 16 planning Codes remains unexplained. The Draft's reliance on this planning system (p14) therefore rests on a Bill whose clause 10 must be amended. Planning approval must be reformed in binding law with maximum fines, not left to expectations.

Why this is urgent: at Long Reach on the Tamar River, George Town Council approved a 288-megawatt AI data centre (DA 2026/29) without a comprehensive Environmental Impact Assessment, under planning rules from 1993. Residents are crowdfunding a TASCAT challenge to get the scrutiny the system should have required.[10] No community should have to pay to be heard on a project of this scale.

Establish democratic consent as a threshold. No major AI data-centre project should proceed solely because it satisfies ordinary planning requirements. Projects of this scale should require a public-interest assessment covering electricity, water, land, biodiversity, noise, emissions, housing, employment, and cumulative regional impacts. The assessment should answer a basic democratic question:

> *Does this project leave the affected Tasmanian community measurably better off?*

Parliament should recommend that no approval be granted until the proponent has demonstrated clear, independently verified public benefits and addressed credible community concerns. This is particularly important where residents believe existing planning laws are not designed for facilities of this scale.

Consider a precautionary pause. Where essential information remains undisclosed, Parliament should recommend a temporary pause on new approvals or binding resource commitments until appropriate safeguards are legislated. A pause is not necessarily opposition to AI or data infrastructure. It is a democratic safeguard against making irreversible decisions before Tasmania has rules capable of protecting its resources and communities. The call for a moratorium reflects the scale of public concern and the absence of settled guardrails.

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[10]PMAT, AI Data Centres in Tasmania: http://planningmatterstas.org.au/ai-data-centres-tasmania

ABC News, "Questions over benefits of data centres after construction ends" (28 September 2026): https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-09-28/questions-over-benefits-of-data-centres-after-construct-ends/107201000

3. Public accountability and transparency extends to independent verification, not self-reporting

Incident disclosure to government should be a mandatory, proactive legal obligation not something requested after the fact and the standards should apply to every project not yet fully operational, with no exemption for anything currently "in the pipeline."

Beyond statutory reporting, the document only "encourages" proponents to publish energy, water, employment and environmental performance data, "subject to legitimate commercial confidentiality" (Draft Expectations, p15). This is the same gap Greenpeace's Energy Vampires report identified nationally: data centre operators claiming transparency while declining to disclose site-specific consumption. Premier Rockliff's own "in confidence" responses on data centre proposals demonstrate this government is already prepared to use confidentiality as a shield rather than an exception. Reporting on power, water, employment outcomes and environmental compliance must be mandatory and independently verifiable — not contingent on commercial goodwill.

Digital Rights Watch also identifies a transparency gap: there is no requirement for AI firms to disclose training-data provenance (copyright and privacy compliance) or real resource consumption, unlike comparable rules in the EU and California.[11]

This matters more than usual right now. The Prime Minister has confirmed federal AI standards won't be enforceable until early 2027 at the earliest, and the government's own consultation paper still hasn't decided whether they'll apply retrospectively to anything already approved or under construction. The Draft Expectations themselves (p15) say only that the national framework's mandatory requirements have yet to be finalised. That means state-level consultations like Tasmania's aren't a secondary layer of protection while we wait for federal law for every project that clears approval before the legislation exists, they may be the only protection that will ever exist. Once both these consultations close in early-to-mid October 2026, whatever remains unenforceable or undecided will very likely stay that way permanently for every data centre approved in the meantime.

What's more, the USA frontier AI Accord is self-policing, not industry regulation. In contrast Landemore and Tang's citizens' assembly model[12] rests on independent verification and a duty to answer: every material finding about a facility should carry a public deadline for the operator to respond. The regulator must be independent of the proponent. As Pope Leo XIV's AI representative Father Paolo Benanti told the European Parliament,[13] a scientist himself, self-regulation is not sufficient and in the case of corporate tech media & military contractor companies, is in fact the hallmark of a "cartel". Together, Tim Cook (Apple), Sundar Pichai at Alphabet (Google Cloud), Jeff Bezos (Amazon Cloud), Mark Zuckerberg at Meta (Facebook and Instagram), Satya Nadella (Microsoft Cloud), Jensen Huang (Nvidia GPU chips), and Elon Musk (SpaceX) make up today's tech media barons, that Harvard identifies as gilded age robber barons. These are indeed Libertarian Party, hence binding obligations must be set out in legislation that Parliament has genuinely scrutinised to protect the public, private and commonwealth. These extractive barons make Troy's Trojan look like a wooden one trick pony. Friar Paolo Benanti, warns AI concentrates power in ways that erode democracy itself.

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[11]Digital Rights Watch, Submission to Artificial Intelligence and Data Centres Inquiry (7 September 2026): https://digitalrightswatch.org.au/2026/09/07/submission-to-artificial-intelligence-and-data-centres-inquiry/

[12]Noema, "Let The People Set The Pace Of Frontier AI" (Landemore & Tang): https://www.noemamag.com/let-the-people-decide-the-pace-of-frontier-ai/

[13]Father Paolo Benanti, address to European Parliament IMCO Committee (Sep 2026), referencing Pope Leo XIV's encyclical Magnifica Humanitas.

Protective measures Parliament can embed and enforce. The Noema proposal for a citizens' assembly can be adapted into enforceable expectations for data-centre developers and tenants, so that communities have a say in what is built, what it consumes, and what its computing capacity may be used to do. In brief:

- **A standing, independent citizens' assembly** on AI and data infrastructure, selected by civic lottery and supported so people can participate meaningfully, to help define acceptable purposes and limits for powerful AI, receive independent assessment findings, and make recommendations to governments and operators. Public bodies and participating companies must respond publicly by a deadline, explaining what they accept or reject and why: a formal "right to an answer" rather than optional consultation.[14]
- **Pre-approval transparency:** early public notice, accessible project information and community hearings before approval, and no approval of applications that conceal key parties or cannot provide credible estimates of resource use and project impacts.[15]
- **Conditions on developers and operators:** disclose the developer, owner, operator, financiers and, when known, tenants and end users; provide independently reviewable projections for electricity, water, emissions, noise, infrastructure needs, public subsidies, jobs and community impacts; meet binding energy, water, noise, environmental and labour conditions with ongoing public reporting; pay the infrastructure costs attributable to the project; and allow independent monitoring and public oversight, with meaningful penalties including permit revocation for serious or repeated breaches.
- **Tenant and end-user accountability:** treat tenants and downstream users as part of the project's accountability chain, not as invisible customers. Operators must identify tenants and material end users, and tenants must disclose intended uses of the hosted computing capacity, comply with safeguards and cooperate with audits and investigations, written into contracts with audit and suspension or termination rights for breaches.
- **Harmful-use prohibitions:** a central choice for legislators is whether to prohibit data-centre services from supporting weapons development or use, military targeting or other specified harmful applications. If adopted, the prohibition should bind both tenants and operators, with narrow exceptions only if legislators explicitly choose them, paired with rules governing harmful AI uses.[16]
- **Independent verification and enforcement:** an independent body to assess high-impact AI workloads and whether declared safeguards are followed, with access to relevant records and systems, a route to report findings to regulators and the citizens' assembly, and public reporting of non-sensitive findings, protecting genuinely sensitive security information only through reviewable, narrow exceptions.

Approve infrastructure only with transparent ownership and use, enforceable resource and community conditions, and clear accountability from developer to tenant and end user, and give the public a continuing role in setting limits and a guaranteed public response when it makes recommendations.

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[14]Noema, "Let The People Set The Pace Of Frontier AI" (Landemore & Tang): https://www.noemamag.com/let-the-people-decide-the-pace-of-frontier-ai/

[15]AI Now Institute, North Star Data Center Policy Toolkit: Pre-Approval Transparency Mechanisms: https://datacenters.ainowinstitute.org/pre-approval-transparency-mechanisms/

[16]AI Now Institute, North Star Data Center Policy Toolkit: Conditions: https://datacenters.ainowinstitute.org/issue-area/economic-development/conditions/

4. Regulated Data Centres and AI bind the party that controls the compute, with contractual flow-down from data centre operators to their tenants.

Some of the AI Data centres are owned by those that use the compute, other data factories are leased out to a 3rd party. So in the case of this submission although the brief requires consideration for Data Centre infrastructure developers, these are hand in glove the owner occupiers of the compute, that also lease to 3rd parties and or are leaseholders (tenants) of the data compute itself. UNSW Institute of AI

I return to the ACTU, Section E, Joint Statement on Sovereign AI Capability in Australia (ACTU, UNSW AI Institute, Adelaide AIML and Kingston AI Group, 1 October 2026):

> E.
> *Will be funded through Commonwealth investment alongside contributions from the AI infrastructure sector. Data centre and AI infrastructure developers seeking Commonwealth or state facilitation should be required to reserve a defined share of installed AI compute for the national pool, discharged in kind or by trade to another provider, and to make an AI Capability Contribution that funds the people, software and data infrastructure needed to use it. These obligations should bind the party that controls the compute, with contractual flow-down from data centre operators to their tenants.*

Free tokens, expiring credits and vendor-specific training should not count toward them, nor should sportswashing. Major AI companies doing substantial business in Australia should also maintain a genuine research and development presence onshore.

ACTU, UNSW AI Institute, Adelaide AIML and Kingston AI Group, Joint Statement on Sovereign AI Capability in Australia, 1 October 2026, "The coordination vehicle", point E.

5. Transparency and a public register

Create a single public data-centre register. Tasmanians should not have to discover major proposals through leaks, planning notices, media reports, or political debate. The Government should establish a statutory public register, a single register for each data centre, of all proposed, approved, constructed, and operating AI and data-centre facilities, for publicly transparent resource oversight. It should require regular, public reporting of energy consumption, water usage and operational footprint for every AI/data facility, ending commercial-in-confidence treatment of these terms. The register should disclose:

- The proponent and ultimate beneficial ownership.
- The location, site area, construction timetable, and operational status.
- Projected and actual electricity demand.
- Projected and actual water consumption, including trucked or recycled water.
- Connection agreements and infrastructure requirements.
- Public subsidies, grants, concessions, tax arrangements, and government negotiations.
- Expected permanent and construction employment.
- Local procurement and training commitments.
- Environmental approvals, conditions, breaches, and compliance reports.

The Draft Expectations (p15) make publication of energy, water, employment and procurement data "subject to legitimate commercial confidentiality". Commercial confidentiality must not shield any of

this. Every commercial arrangement, cost-recovery calculation, tax and rates payment, bond and guarantee, and all energy, water, employment and procurement data must be reported on the public register, with enforceable binding legislation and maximum fines for non-disclosure.

The release of information about additional confidential proponents demonstrates why voluntary disclosure is inadequate. Public resources and public policy should not be committed on the basis of undisclosed proposals.

Bring negotiations into the open. The Government should publish a decision log for every major data-centre proposal. This should include meetings, correspondence, briefing notes, energy negotiations, water discussions, planning advice, and material provided to ministers or senior officials, subject only to narrowly defined commercial confidentiality. Where information is withheld, the Government should publish the reason, identify the category of information withheld, and provide an independent review mechanism. Parliament should receive regular reports on all major negotiations, rather than learning about them only through media investigations or parliamentary motions.

6. Victorian Government shows the standard is achievable

And where it falls short

Victoria's Sustainable Data Centre Action Plan requires new data centres to source their own renewable energy and bans them from using drinking water. New facilities would be prohibited in residential zones and near schools and childcare centres, with a minimum 150m buffer from homes, and developers must front their connection costs and any necessary network upgrades.[17] The very least we can do, we are all friends of children, if not parents, grandparents here. (Victoria bans data centres from residential zones and near schools). However a plan is not protection. Victoria's requirements will not apply retrospectively to applications already under assessment, and no specific implementation timeline was given. Tasmania must not copy those gaps. Every project already in the pipeline must meet the new standards. (energymagazine)

7. Protecting Tasmanian public revenue

Regarding protections for public revenue, economist, accountant, entrepreneur, Tax Justice UK exponent Richard J Murphy describes monopoly as control of an essential resource that lets a firm dictate terms, and the excess income it earns as "economic rent."[18] AI infrastructure risks making Tasmania a tenant paying tolls to distant landlords while hosting the power, land and infrastructure that make the toll booth work. The operators are Libertarian rentier gatekeepers who answer to Wall Street & City of London Corporation bankers and shareholders overseas, not to Tasmanians. Senator David Pocock emphasised that Microsoft pays zero tax!

Tasmanian Policy Exchange researchers Robert Hortle and Judith Mutuku note that AI data centres do not generate royalties like mining, and with low ongoing employment are unlikely to pay much payroll tax. Mining royalties reflect extraction of a public resource, and data centres draw on Tasmania's publicly owned power, water and land. Communities are being asked to carry industrial-scale resource use with none of the royalty or profit-sharing arrangements that typically apply when a company extracts this much value from a shared public resource. Instead Wall Street extracts all.[19]

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[17]Victoria data centre residential buffer rules (2026).

[18]Richard J Murphy, Funding The Future blog.

[19]Policy in My Backyard (PIMBY) #27, AI data centres in Tasmania: https://www.policyinmybackyard.org/pimbys/27-ai-data-centres-in-tasmania

Bill Gates has separately urged all democracies, tax AI tokens and tax robots so businesses are not rewarded for replacing humans.[20] Firmus's co-CEO has said the aim is for Australia to become one of the world's largest exporters of "Green AI Tokens."[21] Tokens are the product being exported. Yet this is greenwashing when the Draft Expectations deliberately include the provision of native Tasmanian forests burned as biomass for back up fuel (Draft Expectations, p11). I request enforceable huge fines against Firmus Technologies and Nvidia for greenwashing!

In addition Robert Hortle advised Tasmanians to guard against stranded assets. Require bonds or guarantees so the public is not left funding decommissioning or underused infrastructure if projects fail.

Protect against monopoly and financial extraction. Parliament should examine who ultimately owns each facility, where profits will flow, and whether Tasmania is being asked to provide discounted resources for a globally mobile corporate asset. Approval should require disclosure of corporate structures, related-party transactions, financing arrangements, and any public guarantees.

Tasmania should not become a low-cost extraction zone for global technology companies: exporting electricity, water, land value, and public risk while importing relatively few secure jobs. Public policy should favour projects that build lasting local capability, diversify the economy, and retain value within Tasmania. The test should not be whether a project is technologically advanced. The test should be whether it strengthens Tasmanian resilience, ownership, skills, and democratic control.

Digital Rights Watch calls for guaranteed public benefit: a taxation or levy scheme on large-scale data centres, with revenue ring-fenced for affected communities, housing, grid upgrades, water resilience and environmental repair.[22] It also notes that all proposed sites sit on Aboriginal land, yet there is no consent or oversight requirement built into current policy, and calls for mandatory free, prior and informed consent and ongoing oversight rights for First Nations landowners and land councils.

8. Power.

AI factories draw 100MW or more, and parts of the network cannot cope. TasNetworks estimates the George Town and Bell Bay upgrades at about $370 million once committed load reaches roughly 210MW. If the AI boom cools, Tasmanians could be left paying for underused infrastructure. (TasNetworks)

Digital Rights Watch's Senate submission sets out the environmental cost that is being socialised. A standard server rack will use under 30 kW of power, whereas a rack full of AI chips requires around 132 kW per rack.[23] Current federal "expectations" for energy and water efficiency are voluntary suggestions, not binding rules; if data centres are not paying for the load they place on Australian infrastructure, then Australian people are subsidising the industry. Feeding data centres also

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[20]Bill Gates on AI, humanoid robots and the future of work: https://windowsforum.com/news/bill-gates-on-ai-humanoid-robots-and-the-future-of-work.443778/

[21]Firmus, Southgate project approval: https://firmus.co/newsroom/tasmanian-world-first-ai-factory-zone-clears-path-for-firmus-project-southgate

W.Media, Firmus $2.1bn Launceston AI Factory approval: https://w.media/firmus-wins-approval-to-build-2-1bn-ai-factory-in-launceston/

NVIDIA on-demand session, AI Day Sydney 2025 (Green AI Tokens): https://www.nvidia.com/en-us/on-demand/session/aidaysydney25-ad21026/

[22]Digital Rights Watch, Submission to Artificial Intelligence and Data Centres Inquiry (7 September 2026): https://digitalrightswatch.org.au/2026/09/07/submission-to-artificial-intelligence-and-data-centres-inquiry/

[23]Digital Rights Watch, Submission to Artificial Intelligence and Data Centres Inquiry (7 September 2026): https://digitalrightswatch.org.au/2026/09/07/submission-to-artificial-intelligence-and-data-centres-inquiry/

consumes renewable-build capacity that should be replacing coal power, slowing Australia's own decarbonisation.

Require additional energy capacity. Every facility should demonstrate that its demand will be met by genuinely additional capacity, not merely by reallocating existing renewable supply. The Draft Expectations (p10) expect proponents to partner with new energy generation projects, but as a non-statutory expectation (p3), not a binding requirement to bring on additional renewable energy generation in Tasmania. Proponents should provide independently audited evidence of:

- New generation associated with the project.
- New storage and firming capacity.
- Transmission and distribution upgrades.
- Peak-demand impacts.
- Backup arrangements.

Parliament should reject accounting arrangements that allow a facility to claim renewable status while increasing pressure on existing public infrastructure. Renewable energy certificates alone should not be treated as proof that new physical capacity has been created.

Parliament should recommend that every AI data centre in Tasmania comply with the Federal Government's emerging national "bring your own" energy principle: facilities must provide or underwrite additional renewable generation and firming capacity sufficient to match their electricity demand, rather than relying on existing supply or shifting costs to Tasmanian households and businesses. This requirement should be applied as a condition of approval, connection, operation, and any future expansion.

Renewable energy claims must also be physically credible and publicly verifiable. Developers should disclose their generation, storage, firming arrangements, electricity consumption, renewable certificates, and grid impacts in a public register. Renewable certificates alone should not allow a facility to claim that it has provided new energy capacity where no additional generation or firming has been delivered.

Tasmanian Parliament should explicitly prohibit the use of native-forest biomass as a fuel source for AI data centres, including for backup or firming power. Tasmania's native forests are a critical carbon sink and biodiversity asset, and burning them for electricity undermines the state's net-zero status and climate credentials. Evidence shows that plantation residues alone cannot meet large-scale biomass demand, creating pressure to harvest native forests. The Government must rule out native-forest biomass entirely, including "forestry waste" sourced from native forests, and ensure that no data centre approval or guideline encourages or permits this practice. The Draft Expectations (p11) suggest emerging renewable fuels and storage technologies for backup power, including batteries, hydrogen, biodiesel, biomethane and forestry waste, with no enforceable regulation of backup fuels.

9. On hydro and energy cost-shifting

The draft requires proponents only to meet "applicable costs" of network infrastructure so there is "no net cost" on existing customers (Draft Expectations, pp7, 12). These are aspirations, not limits, and Tasmania's reliance on hydro generation makes water security a materially different and more fragile proposition than in most Australian jurisdictions. Tasmanian Policy Exchange has already warned of a "concentration risk": Tasmanians left paying for stranded grid infrastructure if speculative AI investment does not materialise at the scale promised. The Expectations must be rewritten to require independently audited, publicly reported water and energy consumption caps, not voluntary forecasts.

Full cost recovery for network infrastructure upgrades. These must be legislated binding, enforceable terms now. UTAS Tasmanian Policy Exchange highlighted:

> *Supplying data centres need will require significant upgrades Tasmania's transmission network. As we noted in Part 1,[24] upgrades in George Town and Bell Bay alone will cost an estimated $370 million.[25]*
>
> *The Tasmanian Government's Draft Expectations[26] rightly proposes that developers pay their fair share of network upgrades so existing customers are no worse off. The National Energy Market (NEM) rules for large energy users (including data centres) are also being reviewed.*
>
> *Dr Robert Hortle of the Tasmanian Policy Exchange (UTAS) warns: "It is therefore essential that data centre proponents meet the full cost of network upgrades so that other consumers don't have to pick up some of the tab." He adds that if projects are delayed or cancelled after infrastructure is built, Tasmania "could be left paying for underutilised infrastructure."[27]*
>
> *There could also be a longer-term benefit from bringing new industrial consumers online. If any MIs cease operating in the coming years, additional large users could reduce the risk of Tasmania's transmission costs being spread across a declining number of customers, pushing up prices.[28]*

Make public resources conditional. AI data centres should pay the full, long-term cost of the infrastructure and resources they require. This should include new generation, storage, transmission, grid firming, water infrastructure, emergency services, road upgrades, environmental monitoring, and eventual decommissioning.

Promises to match consumption with renewable-energy certificates or encourage suppliers to build generation and storage are not equivalent to binding public-interest obligations. Conditions must be written into enforceable contracts and approvals, with penalties for non-compliance. No project should receive preferential access to electricity or water if that access increases costs, reduces reliability, or limits availability for households, farms, existing businesses, hospitals, or future Tasmanian industries.

On energy and household prices, the draft's requirements that new projects support additional renewable generation, contribute their share of network and connection costs and protect grid stability should be made binding, with the share of Tasmania's electricity any single proponent or the sector may consume capped, projected load published, and a guarantee that household and small-business prices are not increased.

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[24]Policy in My Backyard (PIMBY) #27, AI data centres in Tasmania: https://www.policyinmybackyard.org/pimbys/27-ai-data-centres-in-tasmania

[25]TasNetworks, Meeting Network Planning Requirements at George Town: https://www.tasnetworks.com.au/Planning-and-projects/Major-projects/Meeting-Network-Planning-Requirements-at-George-To

[26]Tasmanian Government, Draft Expectations for Data Centres and AI Infrastructure Developers: https://engage.building.tas.gov.au/draft-expectations-data-centres-and-ai-infrastructure-developers/documents

[27]Policy in My Backyard (PIMBY) #27, AI data centres in Tasmania: https://www.policyinmybackyard.org/pimbys/27-ai-data-centres-in-tasmania

[28]Policy in My Backyard (PIMBY) #28, Making data centres work for Tasmania: https://www.policyinmybackyard.org/pimbys/28-making-data-centres-work-for-tasmania

10. On cumulative impact

The draft assesses projects individually through Tasmania's existing planning pathways, with no mechanism for weighing the cumulative effect of a cluster (Draft Expectations, p14). This is precisely the failure that produced Lane Cove West's "data centre wasteland": five facilities operating, approved or proposed within one business park, producing brownouts, voltage fluctuations and a precinct councils themselves warned was "dangerously nearing saturation point." Pulse Tasmania has already reported six secret AI data centre proposals[29] beyond Firmus's known projects, and one company alone is reportedly seeking 30 per cent of this state's power for AI factories. A Statement of Expectations that treats each project as a standalone application, rather than assessing the corridor-wide and state-wide effect of a cluster, is inviting Tasmania's own version of Macquarie Park.

The Draft Expectations (p14) say only that data centres and AI infrastructure should be located in areas that maximise economic and system benefits while minimising impacts on communities, infrastructure and the environment; there is no binding law or enforceable regulation requiring it.

11. Water.

Water is a public asset. Its use by private operators must be disclosed and limited before, not after, approval.

The draft requires proponents only to "minimise" water use (Draft Expectations, p13). Lane Cove residents' submissions on water diversion from housing to data centres were disputed by the water authority but never independently verified; Tasmania should not repeat that pattern of trust without proof.

The Draft Expectations (p13) rely on the Water Management Act 1999 as the primary legislation governing water use in Tasmania, and expect proponents only to demonstrate how design choices minimise water consumption. They set no binding water source (drinking or agricultural) or consumption caps, and there is no water security legislation to protect the Tasmanian community in case of drought. In my view that Act is ancient history for dealing with this infrastructure.

PMAT's water recommendation. Planning Matters Alliance Tasmania (PMAT) urges Parliament to "immediately expand the State Policy on Water Quality Management 1997 to include water usage", noting that the policy has "no mention of overall water consumption, or how water should be allocated between users". PMAT wants priority given to protecting drinking water for the Tasmanian community over any one industry's needs. This goes to the gap in the Draft Expectations: "minimise" water use (pp4, 13) and planning assessment under existing laws (p14) with no binding water consumption limits.[30]

Farmers and agricultural water. This concerns all Tasmanians: farmers are very wary of precious agricultural water being redistributed away from farms. TasFarmers chief executive Nathan Calman says water for data centres "needs to be carefully balanced", that many farmers have told TasFarmers they oppose diverting Tasmanian Irrigation water to the proposed Firmus facility at Wesley Vale, and asks "whether it would be to the detriment of regional food security."[31] Irrigation

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[29]Pulse Tasmania, six secret AI data centre proposals: https://pulsetasmania.com.au/news/document-reveals-six-secret-ai-data-centre-proposals-for-tasmania

[30]PMAT, Submission: Inquiry into AI Data Centres in Tasmania (September 2026), Key Action 3: https://planningmatterstas.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2026/09/PMAT-Submission-AI-Data-Centre-Inquiry-Sep-2026.pdf

[31]Simon McGuire, Tasmanian Country, Growing concerns around AI data centres and its impact on agriculture (31 August 2026): https://www.tasmaniancountry.com/newspaper/tasmanian-country/growing-concerns-around-ai-data-centres-and-its-impact-agriculture

water and drinking water must be protected by binding limits and source priorities before any approval.

Proponents should provide independently audited evidence of water sources, treatment, reuse, and drought contingencies. Water planning requires equal care. A proposal involving rainwater and trucked water should disclose volumes, sources, transport impacts, drought assumptions, and the consequences for other users.

12. Jobs.

Firmus estimates its proposed 52MW Wesley Vale facility would support 70 construction jobs but only 20 ongoing roles. Industry benchmarks suggest around 25 to 40 permanent staff per 100MW, and much equipment is imported. (ABC)[32]

Tasmania's Minister for Innovation, Science and the Digital Economy, Ellis, has stated that the three proposed Firmus facilities will together employ around 170 people once operational. Industry estimates elsewhere put ongoing staffing at roughly half a full-time role per megawatt of capacity — about 52 ongoing roles at the ~104 MW St Leonards site and around 144 at the ~288 MW Bell Bay site — figures are modest against the scale of resource committed.

AI researcher Professor Toby Walsh has publicly cast doubt on Firmus's own higher employment projections (of 50–100 full-time staff per 50 MW), noting that modern automated data centres typically require far less labour once construction ends.

The Minister's 170 figure, on the public record, is understood by this submitter to blend genuinely ongoing operational roles with shutdown/decommissioning and indirect servicing roles — a distinction Parliament should require proponents to report separately and verifiably, rather than as a single headline number.

To its credit, the draft asks proponents to "be transparent about the number and nature of jobs a project will actually sustain once construction is complete" (Draft Expectations, p6). This is one of the few provisions worth preserving, but only if it is converted from an expectation into a binding, auditable condition. Firmus's own modelling claims for its Launceston facility ($12.8bn GSP, ~1,360 jobs) should be subject to the same standard proposed by Dr Ehsan Noroozinejad in the Tasmanian Greens' parliamentary inquiry: Tasmanians must be "measurably better off," with job and economic claims independently verified against delivered outcomes, not simply disclosed once and forgotten.

The Draft Expectations ask only that proponents be transparent about the number and nature of jobs (p6), and set no water consumption caps (p13), no power caps (pp10–12) and no full-time job numbers. With the AI data factories importing the majority of infrastructure, the Draft (p6) expects proponents to maximise opportunities for Tasmanian suppliers, but sets no binding local supplier networks or industry-body engagement to extend existing business capability and build an enduring industry ecosystem in Tasmania.

Digital Rights Watch's Senate submission finds that jobs are overstated: construction workers outnumber operational workers 15 to one, and construction is a small slice of a data centre's life. Colocation centres (a large share of Australian projects) often have no local operational staff, and in the US, counties with only colocation data centres experienced a 9% drop in IT and tech jobs. Large projects also compete for the same construction labour needed for housing, worsening the housing crisis. Job security even for those roles is shaky: 78% of data centre managers believe that AI will reduce the number of data centre staff required.[33]

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[32] ABC News, questions over benefits of data centres after construction ends (28 Sep 2026); AI Institute Dr Kaey and Molloy: https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-09-28/questions-over-benefits-of-data-centres-after-construct-ends/107201000

In addition, Tasmanian Government must legislate enforceable binding worker protections regarding the introduction of AI into the workplace, the Federal Government National AI Plan document admits there are risks that must include Government interventions.

> **National AI plan p23**
>
> *Workers and unions must have a strong voice in how AI is adopted across workplaces. The government will work with unions and industry representatives to ensure workplaces introduce AI technologies transparently, safely, and in ways that allow workers to share in the benefits. This includes embedding foundational digital literacy and ensuring that workplace relations settings promote fair, balanced, and collaborative environments. It also includes meaningful consultation and co-design with workers to improve outcomes of AI systems in the workplace.*

Mass unemployment, Bill Gates assures us this week in his recent blog,[34] is imminent! Gates urges us all to set aside human-only sectors now![35] Australians' labour-force regulations that protect jobs must fund retraining as Bill Gates advises, and establish a Human Reserved category for roles that must stay with people that Bill Gates warns must be enforceable.

All schools must be human domain only in classrooms now, and Tasmanian Government must legislate in full to ban, with very high penalties, all private corporate data-harvesting AI companions for children in schools and all AI teachers. All aged care centres also. All areas of health care in particular must sustain as human domain only.

Establish a Tasmanian AI Transition Council (workers, unions, educators, health workers, small business, youth, First Nations, community groups) to draft a Human Reserved charter and retraining framework.

13. Training.

Tasmanian Government also must legislate in full a local access obligation: a reserved share of any approved facility's capacity, at published rates, for Tasmanian health, education, universities and local business, with shared use of waste heat and infrastructure where feasible.

Tasmania can set a higher standard than Victoria: binding law, applied to everyone, starting now.

TasICT Russell Kelly:[36]

Strengthen Tasmania's technology workforce and productivity

- Invest in local skills development and workforce capability
- Support apprenticeships, study pathways, university partnerships and specialist training initiatives

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[33]Digital Rights Watch, Submission to Artificial Intelligence and Data Centres Inquiry (7 September 2026): https://digitalrightswatch.org.au/2026/09/07/submission-to-artificial-intelligence-and-data-centres-inquiry/

[34]Gates Notes, Bill Gates, A turbulent AI era and critical choices to make: https://www.gatesnotes.com/work/make-ai-work-for-everyone/reader/a-turbulent-ai-era-and-critical-choices-to-make

[35]The Guardian, Bill Gates on human reserved jobs and AI (26 Aug 2026): https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2026/aug/26/bill-gates-human-reserved-jobs-ai-takeover

[36]Tasmanian Times, Media Release – TasICT, "Tas Tech Sector Submission on Data Centres Released" (28 September 2026): https://tasmaniantimes.com/2026/09/tas-tech-sector-submission-on-data-centres-released/

TasICT submission to the Government Administration A Inquiry on AI Data Centres in Tasmania: https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/112213/104.-TasICT.pdf

Contribute to community digital inclusion

- Improve digital inclusion and build digital capability within local communities affected by developments

Ensure public value is measurable and enforceable

- Establish clear and measurable commitments proportionate to the scale of the project
- Include commitments such as minimum employment levels, local procurement targets, workforce skills investment and annual independent reporting

TasICT's Russell Kelly calls for investment in local skills development and workforce capability, support for apprenticeships, study pathways, university partnerships and specialist training initiatives, and public value that is measurable and enforceable, including minimum employment levels and workforce skills investment.[37] The Draft Expectations (p6) only expect proponents to engage with the education and training sector, including the University of Tasmania and TasTAFE, and to prioritise apprentice, trainee and graduate or cadet opportunities. They contain no training agreements to identify skills gaps and training opportunities for Tasmanians, and no binding number of apprentice, trainee, graduate and cadet opportunities. I ask that Tasmanian Government legislate both: enforceable training agreements with the University of Tasmania and TasTAFE, and a binding minimum number of apprentice, trainee, graduate and cadet places for every approved facility, with annual independent reporting.

The Draft Expectations list improved digital connectivity, digital inclusion and community programs as possible community benefits (pp6, 8), and expect proponents to engage early with communities, including the Tasmanian Aboriginal community, and other stakeholders before submitting any development application (p8), but none of this is legally binding (p3).

Regarding the retraining of workers under the National AI Plan, all support must be legislated and met by the enforceable taxes on AI tokens and robots set out in section 7, which will facilitate all retraining costs, including enforceable fines.

> **National AI plan p21**
>
> *Where AI reshapes tasks rather than entire jobs (Jobs and Skills Australia 2025), Employers should support workers to access training and skills development in AI technologies. This is particularly important for groups at higher risk of disruption, including women, First Nations people, mature-aged workers, people with disability, and those in regional areas. Workers' voices and union engagement must guide decisions on technology adoption to ensure fairness and protect rights. The government will ensure that workers' rights are fit for purpose to deliver these outcomes.*

14. Health.

Noise, light and air impacts fall on neighbours, so protections must be set by independent health evidence and monitored, not left to proponents.

See also sections 6, 10, 11, 12, 15 and 16.

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[37] Tasmanian Times, Media Release – TasICT, "Tas Tech Sector Submission on Data Centres Released" (28 September 2026): https://tasmaniantimes.com/2026/09/tas-tech-sector-submission-on-data-centres-released/

TasICT submission to the Government Administration A Inquiry on AI Data Centres in Tasmania: https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/112213/104.-TasICT.pdf

15. On diesel, noise and amenity

The draft is silent on backup diesel generation, despite this being one of the most significant complaints raised by Lane Cove West residents living near AirTrunk's facility: noise and diesel air emissions from generators essential to data centre reliability. The Expectations gesture toward "emerging renewable fuels" for backup power but impose no requirement to avoid diesel, no enforceable noise standards, and no mandated setback distances from homes or schools. Victoria's new data centre rules — a residential ban and a 150-metre buffer — show this is a solvable problem elsewhere.[38] Tasmania's draft offers nothing comparable.

Australia does not have national standards controlling noxious exhaust emissions from off-road (non-road/factory/industrial) diesel engines, though general workplace health and safety rules apply.

Off-Road and Industrial Diesel Regulations

- **No National Standards:** Equipment like industrial factory machinery, tractors, construction loaders, and non-road generators are not subject to national noxious emission standards, unlike in the US or EU.
- **Evaluations:** The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW)[39] evaluated a national approach for non-road diesel emissions, but no nationwide standard has been finalized.
- **Workplace Laws:** While equipment emissions are unregulated by a specific performance standard, Safe Work Australia[40] provides a framework requiring employers to manage and monitor worker exposure to hazardous diesel exhaust in indoor or enclosed factory environments.

Parliament should further recommend that all diesel backup generation be comprehensively recorded and regulated. Operators should report every test, maintenance run, outage-related operation, fuel volume, operating duration, and resulting emissions. Assessments should cover nitrogen oxides, fine particulate matter, sulphur dioxide, carbon monoxide, greenhouse gases, and cumulative impacts where multiple facilities operate in the same region.

Diesel generators must not become an invisible pollution source simply because they are labelled "backup." Their emissions should be subject to enforceable air-quality limits, operating-hour restrictions, independent monitoring, public reporting, and environmental licensing. Pollution breaches should attract substantial, escalating fines, remediation orders, compensation where harm is demonstrated, and for serious or repeated violations, suspension of operations or approval.

On 29 September 2026, the Goodman Group withdrew its $1.2 billion Project Mars data centre at Lane Cove West, 20 metres from the nearest home, 160 metres from a primary school, after 374 public submissions, the highest ever recorded against an NSW State Significant Development data centre application. That outcome was not delivered by a statement of expectations. It was delivered by sustained public pressure, council advocacy, parliamentary inquiries and residents who refused to accept vague assurances in place of enforceable protections. Tasmania is already facing its own version of this fight, with a community legal challenge against Firmus's Bell Bay facility now before the Tasmanian Civil and Administrative Tribunal.[41]

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[38] Victoria data centre residential buffer rules (2026).

[39] DCCEEW, Evaluation of non-road diesel engine emissions: https://www.dcceew.gov.au/environment/protection/air-quality/national-clean-air-agreement/evaluation-non-road-diesel-engine-emissions

[40] Safe Work Australia, Guide to managing the risks of exposure to diesel engine emissions in the workplace: https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/guide-managing-risks-exposure-diesel-engine-emissions-workplace

16. Autonomous weapons infrastructure.

As Parliament is well aware the opaque "black box" models within the AI data industry models do not allow the public to investigate further, let alone industrial scale racks of them? Tasmanians have no right to know what the compute running through these facilities is actually used for once it leaves Tasmanian hands and at least six unnamed factories revealed in parliament, are already being negotiated "in confidence" by the Premier. I advocate that in this instance the infrastructure here in Tasmania in this non-binding, non-statutory Draft Expectations cannot be separated from its AI intent of purpose.

This past week, on 30 September 2026, US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth announced the creation of "Autonomous Warfare Command" a new four-star Pentagon command built specifically to accelerate the deployment of killer robots and autonomous weapons across the US military. Hegseth himself called it "the fastest peacetime shift in modern military history," declaring that drone warfare "supercharged by AI-enabled targeting is the biggest battlefield revolution in generations." Amnesty International's response was direct: "The replacement of troops with machines makes the decision to go to war easier and through illegal transfers and battlefield capture, these weapons will fall into the hands of others."[42] The same escalation a government calls a "revolution" is, to human rights monitors, exactly what makes war easier to start and harder to contain once these weapons are out of anyone's control. I remind Parliament that nuclear weapons are licensed, inspected, and internationally governed. Automated weapons of mass destruction, built on the same AI infrastructure as a data centre, have none of that.[43] Even Bill Gates, co-founder of one of the biggest tech corporations on Earth warns the AI era will bring mass unemployment, cyber harm and weapons misuse, with no plan yet to protect the public, whatsoever, and says don't expect the solutions from tech corporations.[44] More than 1,300 employees inside frontier AI companies have begged their own governments in a public letter to slow this AI arms race down. Bill Gates confirms to journalist Ezra Klein that there can be no winners, that bioterrorism and cyberterrorism thresholds are crossed this very year.

China has had staged, binding AI regulation since 2022 rules on algorithmic recommendation systems, then synthetic media, then a full generative AI regime covering training data legality, IP, discrimination and mandatory security assessments. In September 2026, Beijing went further with an "AI safety governance framework" addressing exactly the dangers now alarming Silicon Valley: highly autonomous AI agents, loss-of-human-control risk, and misuse of chemical, biological and nuclear technologies built around continual safety evaluation and a hard requirement that humans stay in charge.[45]

Meanwhile, the US has pursued a "minimally burdensome" approach that actively limits state-level AI regulation. As one Australian researcher put it, a market-led model cannot mean privatising AI's rewards while exporting its risks. US companies capture the commercial gains while our governments absorb the costs when the technology fails. An OpenAI agent recently gained

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[41]Certified Strategic, Firmus 444MW Tasmania inquiry submissions (Bell Bay permit challenge): https://certifiedstrategic.com/insights/firmus-444mw-tasmania-inquiry-submissions-hydro

[42]Democracy Now, Pentagon "Autonomous Warfare Command" + Amnesty International response (1 Oct 2026): https://www.democracynow.org/2026/10/1/headlines/hegseth_announces_autowarcom_to_oversee_autonomous_drones_and_robots

[43]Taiwan News / Reuters, US-China nuclear-style AI safeguards (17 Sep 2026): https://www.taiwannews.com.tw/news/6441603

[44]CNN, Bill Gates on limits for AI (26 Aug 2026): https://www.cnn.com/2026/08/26/business/bill-gates-wants-limits-on-ai

[45]ABC Asia / The Conversation, "China already has AI rules" (1 Oct 2026): https://www.abc.net.au/asia/us-tech-leaders-are-urgently-calling-for-rules-on-ai-china-alrea/107212710

unauthorised access to Australia's own Medicare system, an example of exactly that export of risk. Tasmania, with no binding AI law of its own, is exactly the kind of jurisdiction this warning describes.

Singapore's Foreign Minister warned the UN this week that raw power size, leverage, coercion cannot secure supply chains, stop pandemics, or stabilise the climate, and that individual coercive bargains are inherently unstable.[46] Military history Professor Yuval Noah Harari put it bluntly: it doesn't matter whether China, the US, or Europe wins the AI race what matters is who ends up controlling all populations and resources on Earth.

17. Tasmania must have sovereign infrastructure. Not off island cloud based infrastructure.

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney reached the same conclusion as Professor Harari from the vantage point of a sitting head of government. In an address to the European Parliament on 17 September 2026, Carney warned that major tech platforms now act like sovereign powers in their own right, setting rules, controlling data, and answering to no one, and that nations leaning on "global" corporations for critical infrastructure discover, when it matters most, that those companies are not global at all: they are national, and their loyalties lie with their home country. Carney's proposed answer isn't isolation but collective resilience, likened to a forest rather than a lone tree, with nations holding real ownership and leverage together rather than each quietly handing over the keys. He had earlier warned, at Davos, that it is precisely middle powers like Australia and Canada that risk being "cannibalised" by empire, whether American, Russian or Chinese. I note that PM Carney's Davos speech was also scathing of tech oligarch monopoly "hegemons and hyperscalers". Again at the recent UN meeting Carney warned us that frontier tech cloud leaders demand sovereignty, empire by any other name. For the sake of national, financial, economic and community security Tasmania should say yes to sovereign IT capacity and no to extractive offshore off island cloud hosting. The draft Expectations are a non-statutory document that cannot protect Tasmanians from projects of the scale now being discussed. I ask that the final Expectations be given legal force, be built around a sovereignty test, and be preceded by full public disclosure for every proposal.

National Data Security Action Plan discussion paper, May 2022

States "Industry has taken a much more compliance approach to data breaches, focusing more on protecting commercial interests than on notifying and protecting consumer/client interests. This is an area that would benefit from improved mandated accountability mechanisms. Public trust can be enhanced by providing easier access for consumers to review their personal data holdings, to withdraw or modify consent to its collection and use, and to remediate damage caused by data leaks" p16[47]

Digital Rights Watch warns that "data sovereignty" is largely symbolic: storing data on Australian soil does not shield it from foreign access when the operating company is US- or China-based. Both countries have laws compelling companies to hand over offshore-held data to intelligence services, and the US-Australia CLOUD Act agreement extends this further.[48] It calls for rights-based data

[46]Singapore MFA, Dr Vivian Balakrishnan's UN General Assembly statement (26 Sep 2026): https://www.mfa.gov.sg/newsroom/press-statements-transcripts-and-photos/minister-for-foreign-affairs-of-the-republic-of-singapore-dr-vivian-balakrishnan-s-national-statement-to-the-81st-session-of-the-united-nations-general-assembly--new-york--26-september-2026/

[47]National Data Security Action Plan discussion paper (May 2022), p. 16: https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/reports-and-pubs/files/national-data-security-pdf

[48]Digital Rights Watch, Submission to Artificial Intelligence and Data Centres Inquiry (7 September 2026): https://digitalrightswatch.org.au/2026/09/07/submission-to-artificial-intelligence-and-data-centres-inquiry/

protection: close the loophole letting foreign "legal right to access" override Australian data protections, with explicit shielding of journalists, activists, minorities and dissidents.

18. For sovereign IT open standards, open-weight models and local access

Sovereignty starts with the IT systems the government already runs on, and only then with AI. The practical protection against being repriced, rationed or cut off is the ability to include an exit strategy. Build sovereign IT here. Fund and procure locally developed IT, using open, exportable data formats and no-lock-in contracts, and support locally controlled hardware capable of running open-weight models, with provenance and security review. I ask that the final Expectations, and the Government's own procurement, unequivocally require the following:

- **Open standards and portability.** Open, exportable data formats and interoperability in every public-sector IT contract, with a tested and costed exit plan for each major platform.
- **Open-weight models on local hardware.** Capacity for public-interest users to run open-weight models on hardware Tasmanians control, so there is no remote switch and no per-token rent. This should be paired with security and provenance review, since many leading open-weight models originate overseas and open weights are not always fully open source.
- **A local access obligation.** Any approved data centre should reserve a set share of its capacity, at published rates, for Tasmanian public-interest users such as health, education, universities and local business. Scarce GPU capacity is typically allocated to the highest-paying reserved customers, and on-demand availability is a provider policy choice. A facility on Tasmanian soil does not by itself give Tasmanians access to what it produces.
- **Multiple suppliers.** Avoid single-vendor dependence for critical public systems, consistent with the collective-resilience approach described in section 17, which includes pooling sovereign compute with allies.
- **Data kept in the state.** Prioritising facilities that store and process Tasmanian and Australian data within the state, with clear legal protections against foreign data-access demands that conflict with Australian law.
- **Tasmanian-owned infrastructure.** Supporting the development of Tasmanian-owned and operated data infrastructure, including public, cooperative, and mixed-ownership models.
- **Sovereign hosting of public data.** Requiring that essential public-sector data and critical services be hosted in facilities that meet Australian data-sovereignty standards and are not subject to extraterritorial control.
- **Local capability.** Building local capability in data-centre design, operation, cybersecurity, and digital services through training, research partnerships, and procurement preferences.
- **Australian jurisdiction.** Ensuring that any foreign-owned facility operating in Tasmania is subject to Australian jurisdiction, with enforceable obligations on data access, security, and continuity.

Binding cyber security and privacy requirements. The Draft Expectations (p14) say only that developers will need to implement robust cyber security and privacy measures, as required by the Commonwealth, to protect critical infrastructure, data and customer information; there is no binding Tasmanian law to ensure it. Tasmanian Government must legislate explicit, enforceable cyber security and privacy requirements as a condition of approval and continued operation, with independent audit, mandatory breach notification and penalties for non-compliance.

IT sovereignty is not about rejecting global investment. It is about ensuring that Tasmania's digital future is not wholly dependent on external corporations that can change strategy, exit markets, or prioritise foreign interests over Tasmanian communities.

By way of further confirmation that legislators must take responsibility to investigate alternatives to USA Israeli frontier tech neo cloud monopolies, as OpenAI apologises to Australia, the CEO of Sovereign Australia AI, Simon Kriss, articulated to Digital Rights Watch the relative merits of open weight, open source and closed AI models.[49] The benefits of open AI, to disrupt closed incumbents and to build sovereign AI, include:

- **Control and an exit.** Open-weight models can run on hardware Australians control, so there is no remote switch, no per-token rent and no single-vendor lock-in.
- **Transparency and audit.** Open models can be inspected and tested by independent researchers and regulators. Kriss and his co-founder Troy Neilson argue Australia needs a transparent, ethical model whose construction and data sourcing are understood, within the Australian rule of law.
- **Jurisdiction.** Neilson points to the US Cloud Act: if any part of the stack is controlled by a US company, US authorities can demand the data wherever the servers sit. An entirely Australian-owned stack is covered by Australian law.
- **Disruption at lower cost.** The founders say competitive, purpose-driven models can be built for far less than the billions spent by US labs, citing DeepSeek's claimed training cost of about US$6 million, a figure they note not everyone believes. Lower barriers let local entrepreneurs, universities and public-interest users compete rather than rent.
- **Local data and fair terms.** They want Australian content to make up a larger share of training data (about 1.2% of OpenAI's, by Neilson's research, against a 5% goal), and have budgeted $10 million to pay content creators, with a possible profit-share model.

These points are drawn from Forbes Australia's profile of Sovereign Australia AI.[50] As noted above, open weights are not always fully open source, so provenance and security review remain essential.

Per Capita's Peter Lewis observes "The amount of compute is moving from the closed to the open source models."

Simon Kriss observes that open source includes the model, the open weights and the original data set that the model was trained on.[51] Southern Cross AI have developed Magpie, using Open AI, but with the caveat that we still don't necessarily know if the data was sourced ethically, whether it was trained ethically, or whether it is biased.

In a commercial model, compute costs are so much higher than software as a service: you pay for every million tokens you consume. In contrast, with an open source model you can just run it on your laptop without paying anything.

Simon Kriss says we do not require a frontier capability model for many things. Why pay pricing when an open weight model is good enough? Australians must manage our dependency.

> *Gamers have been running open weight/open source LLMs on their gaming PCs at home - completely severed from the cloud. For people with disposable income, Mac Studios*

[49]Open Season with Simon Kriss, Burning Platforms podcast: https://burningplatforms.podbean.com/e/open-season-with-simon-kriss/

[50]Forbes Australia, "Not Bogan AI: Inside the push to build a sovereign Australian brain" (9 Feb 2026): https://www.forbes.com.au/covers/entrepreneurs/not-bogan-ai-inside-the-push-to-build-a-sovereign-australian-brain/

[51]Open Season with Simon Kriss, Burning Platforms podcast: https://burningplatforms.podbean.com/e/open-season-with-simon-kriss/

> *with M5/M6, or Nvidia's DGX Spark offer more bang for the buck in today's cost-prohibitive memory market. For the past few weeks, I've been running Qwen3.5 for low grade translation tasks at home.*
>
> *If this trend continues, laptops, smartphones, and other terminals become capable of running LLMs that are "good enough" for every day use. Apple seems to think so. They're now offering Mac Studios with 256gb of unified memory - and 512gb options is on its way; of course these are still cost prohibitive but maybe not for long? If this is the case, how long before we see affordable consumer devices capable of running today's Opus5 equivalent model locally?*
>
> *What would such a scenario mean for data center demand? Relatedly, I recently read that consumer demand for the best models is low - with people often opting for less capable models to save on token quotas. They just need "good enough".*[52]

The public require strong merger, competition, anti-trust laws and anti-monopoly enforcement across AI infrastructure, cloud, chip supply and model distribution, and limits on vertical integration that forecloses competition.

19. Why sovereignty is the right test

Hosting a data centre is not the same as controlling it. Research from the UK Oxford Martin AI Governance Initiative shows that data centres on a country's own soil can be overwhelmingly owned and operated by foreign providers through a remote control plane, the management layer that authorises every operation. If the provider or its government restricted access, the servers could be switched off. The same logic definitely applies here in Tasmania.

Recent events show that dependence upon foreign technology is a live risk, not a theory. In June 2026, US export controls led to the suspension of two frontier AI models for all users, including in allied countries, until the controls were lifted on 1 July. University of Surrey researchers have used this to argue that governments should consider sovereign control of increasingly powerful AI systems. Separately, the International Criminal Court's chief prosecutor reportedly lost access to Microsoft services after US sanctions; Microsoft has denied any connection, but the case has pushed many governments to reconsider their dependence. After the ICC's arrest warrant targeting Netanyahu, ICC Chief Prosecutor Karim Khan's bank accounts were frozen at the same time, and he was forced onto a Swiss-based alternative to keep working. A similar pattern reportedly affected a Brazilian judge who sentenced Jair Bolsonaro. Microsoft has called this "coincidence." Digital Rights campaigner Cory Doctorow's blunt conclusion: "the internet has become too American to trust" when a hostile or displeased US administration wants to punish an official or an institution, it can now simply ask an American tech company to switch them off, with no legal process the target country controls.

Dear legislators, assess the off-switch risk now, and diversify by design. Require a costed, tested exit plan for every critical public system, with a fixed deadline, more than one supplier, and partnerships with other jurisdictions to pool sovereign compute and connectivity. If Australian government services, hospitals, or utilities become dependent on AI compute infrastructure owned and controlled by American firms Anthropic, OpenAI, Microsoft, Google operating inside data centres built on Australian soil but governed by foreign corporate and political decisions, the same off-switch exists. A future US administration displeased with an Australian policy position, a court ruling, or a diplomatic stance would have exactly the lever Trump has already used against the ICC. Tasmania handing over hundreds of megawatts of sovereign hydro power to build compute infrastructure it

[52] New Press community, members table: AI at home and data centers (post by a gamer): https://community.newpress.com/c/members-table/ai-at-home-and-data-centers

doesn't own or control is not just a resource-allocation question it's a sovereignty question with a demonstrated, not hypothetical, precedent.

ACTU 1st October this year outlines sovereign IT, in contrast to the industry spin coming out of the Office of AI written by Anthropic and Open AI insider industry lobbyists, Dr Charlton and Kate Pounder[53] and their former staff Mandala Partners. ABC's Four Corners investigation "Access All Areas" (August 2026) independently documented the same underlying corporate insider political revolving door lobbyist mechanisms[54] that our crypto Minister Dr Chalmers[55] and his "former" business partner exemplify.[56]

ACTU, 1 October 2026

> *The union movement and Australia's leading AI researchers have come together to propose a government-coordinated national endeavour to enhance Australia's Sovereign AI Capability. This will be delivered through investments in safe and responsible Australian-led AI development that will boost national economic priorities to create safe, secure, and well-paid jobs. Comparable countries around the world are already investing big to secure their sovereignty: Singapore, Germany, Sweden, Denmark, Japan, Canada, Korea and the European Union among others.*
>
> *Sovereign AI Capability means more than where AI systems are physically located. It means that Australia can build, adapt, evaluate, operate and sustain AI systems on compute and data infrastructure that Australians own or control, including when access to foreign services is disrupted. It also means ensuring that AI used in Australia is accountable to the Australian people, operates according to Australian laws and social*

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[53]Kate Pounder biography, confirming AlphaBeta partnership: https://www.atn.edu.au/team-members/kate-pounder/

InnovationAus, "Tech Council chief Kate Pounder steps down" (2 Feb 2024 departure confirmed): https://innovationaus.com/?p=59266

Capital Brief, "OpenAI's Australian lobbying machine takes shape with Kate Pounder hire" (Charlton's own on-record remarks): https://www.capitalbrief.com/article/openai-taps-former-tech-council-ceo-kate-pounder-as-lobbying-machine-takes-shape-aff6b138-feb9-4590-b39d-59ca18edc25d/

[54]The Revolving Door: AlphaBeta / Accenture / Tech Council network.

Tech Council of Australia, "Digital assets in Australia" launch page (confirms Accenture authorship): https://techcouncil.com.au/newsroom/digital-assets-report

"Digital assets in Australia" report, full PDF (2022): https://techcouncil.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Digital-Assets-in-Australia-report-2022.pdf

"The economic contribution of Australia's tech sector," full PDF (2021): https://techcouncil.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/TCA-Tech-sectors-economic-contribution-full-res.pdf

Accenture company profile, Irish tax domicile: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Accenture

Accenture global office locations: https://www.accenture.com/en/about/location

Accenture procurement/sourcing consulting services: https://www.accenture.com/en/services/supply-chain/sourcing-and-procurement-consulting

[55]Treasury joint media release, "Next steps in developing an innovative digital asset industry" (March 2025): https://ministers.treasury.gov.au/ministers/jim-chalmers-2022/media-releases/next-steps-developing-innovative-digital-asset-industry

[56]MacroBusiness, "Lord Charlton captured by crypto" (Feb 2026): https://www.macrobusiness.com.au/2026/02/lord-charlton-captured-by-crypto/

Cointelegraph, industry reaction to Charlton's appointment: https://regional-front.cointelegraph.com/news/industry-positive-australia-names-new-assistant-minister-crypto-ai

Capital Brief, "Crypto convert Charlton in the frame for key Labor role": https://www.capitalbrief.com/article/crypto-convert-charlton-in-the-frame-for-key-labor-role-if-he-retains-his-seat-3026e98f-c6d2-4201-bc71-7d77776fb39a/

BTC Markets, "CEOs Corner: MP Dr Andrew Charlton's support for Digital Assets": https://www.btcmarkets.net/blog/ceos-corner-mp-dr-andrew-charltons-support-for-digital-assets

Parliamentary Friends of Blockchain (DECA): https://deca.org.au/pfob/

> *expectations, strengthens our national capability, and generates economic value that is retained in Australia and shared fairly with working people and across the community.*

Sovereignty comes from modest, publicly accountable compute that Tasmanians control, not from renting land, water and power to operators who hold the switch elsewhere. The table below sets out the distinction I ask the Government to apply.

Sovereign capacity: supported	**Extractive offshore hosting: opposed**
Owned or controlled by Tasmanians or the public, including the remote control plane	Foreign-controlled and managed remotely, switchable from elsewhere
Serves Tasmanian government, health, education and local business	Serves export or offshore customers
Sized to local need	Sized to the operator's ambitions
Pays its way through royalties, contributions and transparency	Confidential deals and unpriced water and power
Independently assessed, with enforceable and public results	Assessed by processes whose independence is in doubt

The Australian Government's national Expectations for data centres and AI infrastructure[57] already open with a national-interest test. Tasmania's version should do the same for Tasmanian interests, and define it explicitly concretely.

20. Community decision-making and binding community-benefit agreements

Give communities a genuine decision-making role. Consultation must begin before agreements are signed and before a proposal becomes politically difficult to stop. The Draft Expectations say only that proponents of significant projects should proactively engage with communities and other stakeholders, including where formal statutory advertising is not required (p14), and expect early engagement before any development application (p8). Neither is a binding law or enforceable regulation (p3). Communities should receive plain-language information, adequate time, independent technical advice, and funding to participate effectively. Parliament should recommend:

- Minimum consultation periods proportionate to project scale.
- Public hearings in affected communities.
- Independent community advocates or expert advisers.
- Accessible publication of all major technical documents.
- A formal response to every substantial issue raised.
- A right for affected communities to request an independent review.
- Clear appeal rights for approvals with significant regional impacts.

A community should not be expected to contest a multi-billion-dollar development using volunteer time, fragmented documents, and short submission windows.

[57] Expectations for Data Centres and AI Infrastructure Developers, Australian Government Department of Industry, Science and Resources: https://www.industry.gov.au/publications/expectations-data-centres-and-ai-infrastructure-developers

Require binding community-benefit agreements. Before approval, each major facility should enter a legally enforceable community-benefit agreement. This should be negotiated publicly with affected councils and communities and should include measurable commitments to:

- Local jobs and apprenticeships.
- Tasmanian procurement.
- Training and digital-skills development.
- Support for schools, health services, and emergency capacity.
- Local renewable generation and storage.
- Environmental restoration and monitoring.
- Contributions to community infrastructure.
- Transparent reporting of outcomes.

Benefits should be additional, not a substitute for paying normal taxes, infrastructure charges, wages, or environmental obligations. They should also be protected if ownership changes.

21. Continuing parliamentary oversight

Approval should not end parliamentary scrutiny. Parliament should recommend an independent Data Infrastructure Commissioner or equivalent statutory oversight body, reporting directly to Parliament. This body should monitor:

- Resource consumption.
- Compliance with approval conditions.
- Employment and local procurement.
- Community-benefit delivery.
- Environmental impacts.
- Electricity and water reliability.
- Corporate ownership changes.
- Tax and public-revenue outcomes.
- Decommissioning and site rehabilitation.

Annual reports should be tabled in Parliament and written in language that ordinary Tasmanians can understand. The public must be able to assess whether promised benefits are actually being delivered.

I call for an independent Data Infrastructure Commissioner. Considering the exposure of the revolving door AI lobbying loop concerning Dr Charlton and Kate Pounder, I also advocate that Parliament ask who scrutinises the integrity agencies themselves: integrity agencies scrutinise government, but who scrutinises the agencies? Executive Director of the Australian Academy of Law, Dr Catherine Williams, has called for exploring how oversight can hold integrity agencies accountable without compromising their ability to investigate. That question should be answered in the design of the Commissioner's office.

22. Enforceable exit clauses and decommissioning commitments

Every approval and community-benefit agreement should include clear, enforceable exit clauses. These must specify:

- The conditions under which the operator may cease operations or reduce capacity.
- The process for orderly shutdown, including notification periods to government, workers, and communities.
- Full decommissioning obligations, including removal of equipment, site rehabilitation, and restoration of land and water systems.
- Financial assurances, such as bonds or guarantees, sufficient to cover decommissioning costs even if the operator becomes insolvent or exits the market.
- Data-migration and continuity arrangements to protect Tasmanian users, businesses, and public services that may depend on the facility.

Tasmania must not be left with abandoned industrial sites, stranded infrastructure, or environmental liabilities because a global operator decides to relocate or shut down. Exit clauses should also allow the Government to terminate or vary approvals if the operator breaches key conditions, fails to deliver promised benefits, or causes serious environmental or community harm.

23. Conclusion

In summary, I ask that all of the following be bound in enforceable legislation, with penalties for non-compliance:

1. Statutory force: convert the Draft Expectations into binding law with enforceable penalties, with no loopholes, applying to every project in the pipeline and not only to future applications.
2. A pause on approvals and supply commitments, and a moratorium on hyperscale AI data centre approvals, until the statutory framework is in force, with no fast-tracking of approvals that trades oversight for speed.
3. Amend clause 10 of the Land Use Planning and Approvals Bill 2026, require the Minister to explain publicly how he will use his power over the planning Codes, constrain the criteria for interim State Planning Provisions amendments, and assess every AI data centre as a Level 2 activity with an integrated environmental impact assessment by the EPA and councils and guaranteed public comment and TASCAT appeal rights.
4. PMAT's protective planning and state policy laws: an immediate moratorium until safe regulations are in place, an Interim State Planning Provisions amendment (a defined AI data centre use class, Discretionary status, Level 2 assessment, General Industrial Zone only, prohibition in residential and sensitive zones, standards drafted by the Tasmanian Planning Commission), an expanded State Policy on Water Quality Management 1997 to cover water usage, and a new Tasmanian State Policy on Energy.
5. Democratic consent as a threshold: a public-interest assessment for every major project, with no approval until independently verified public benefits show that Tasmanians are measurably better off.
6. Cumulative impact assessment of the corridor-wide and state-wide effect of clusters of facilities, not project-by-project assessment alone.

7. A single public register for each data centre, including proponents, ultimate beneficial owners, customers, energy and water use, subsidies, jobs and compliance, and a published decision log of negotiations, ending commercial-in-confidence treatment of these terms.
8. Mandatory, proactive incident disclosure, and mandatory, independently verifiable reporting on power, water, employment and environmental compliance, including training-data provenance, with a regulator that is independent of the proponent and a public deadline for operators to respond to material findings.
9. A standing, independent citizens' assembly on AI and data infrastructure, selected by civic lottery and supported to participate meaningfully, with a legislated "right to an answer": public bodies and companies must respond publicly by a deadline, explaining what they accept or reject and why.
10. Accountability from developer to tenant and end user: operators must identify tenants and material end users, who must disclose intended uses, accept audits and suspension or termination rights, and be bound by any prohibition legislators adopt on supporting weapons development, military targeting or other specified harmful applications, enforced by an independent body that assesses high-impact AI workloads.
11. A sovereignty test for every proposal (who owns it, who controls it, who it serves, and whether Tasmania could be cut off), with obligations that bind the party that controls the compute and flow down contractually to tenants.
12. Energy: genuinely additional renewable generation and firming capacity (the "bring your own" principle), full cost recovery for network infrastructure upgrades, caps on the share of Tasmania's electricity any proponent or the sector may consume, no preferential access, and a guarantee that household and small-business prices do not rise.
13. Water: enforceable, independently audited extraction limits and cooling-technology standards, continuous public reporting, disclosure before approval, and priority for communities and ecosystems during drought.
14. Diesel, noise and amenity: comprehensive recording and regulation of backup diesel generation, enforceable air-quality and noise limits, independent monitoring, and mandated setbacks from homes and schools of at least the 150-metre Victorian benchmark.
15. A prohibition on native-forest biomass, including "forestry waste" from native forests, as a fuel for AI data centres.
16. A fair return for Tasmanians: royalties or a levy with revenue ring-fenced for affected communities, housing, grid upgrades, water resilience and environmental repair, bonds or guarantees against stranded assets, and enforceable taxes on AI tokens and robots to fund retraining.
17. Jobs: binding, auditable employment commitments with ongoing operational roles reported separately from construction, decommissioning and indirect roles, and enforceable, binding worker protections for the introduction of AI into the workplace.
18. Establish a Human Reserved Charter. Ban AI companions and educators for children, and reserve specified high-stakes and care decisions for humans including aged care, disability support, health care, crisis response, policing, justice, child protection, immigration, employment, lending, insurance, credit, elections and political micro-targeting, and all decisions affecting First Nations peoples, their Country, culture and data. Human domain only in classrooms, with legislation in full to ban, with very high penalties, all private corporate data-harvesting AI companions for children in schools and all AI teachers.

19. A Tasmanian AI Transition Council (workers, unions, educators, health workers, small business, youth, First Nations, community groups) to draft the Human Reserved charter and retraining framework, with retraining legislated and funded.
20. Genuine community decision-making: minimum consultation periods, public hearings, independent advisers, a formal response to every substantial issue, rights to independent review and appeal, and legally enforceable community-benefit agreements.
21. Free, prior and informed consent and ongoing oversight rights for First Nations landowners and land councils.
22. Continuing parliamentary oversight through an independent Data Infrastructure Commissioner reporting directly to Parliament, with annual reports tabled in plain language.
23. Enforceable exit clauses and decommissioning commitments, including financial assurances sufficient to cover decommissioning even if the operator becomes insolvent or exits the market.
24. Local access and sovereign IT: a reserved share of any approved facility's capacity, at published rates, for Tasmanian health, education, universities and local business, open standards and portable data in public-sector IT contracts, open-weight models on locally controlled hardware, multiple suppliers, and a tested, costed exit plan for every critical public system.
25. Strong merger, competition, anti-trust and anti-monopoly enforcement across AI infrastructure, cloud, chip supply and model distribution, and limits on vertical integration that forecloses competition.
26. Legislated, explicit and enforced National AI Plan safeguards, so that productivity gains are broadly shared and appropriate safeguards apply where AI affects consequential decisions about people's lives, with fines for misconduct and lack of implementation.
27. Training: enforceable training agreements with the University of Tasmania and TasTAFE to identify skills gaps, and a binding minimum number of apprentice, trainee, graduate and cadet places for every approved facility, with annual independent reporting.
28. Binding cyber security and privacy requirements as a condition of approval and continued operation, with independent audit, mandatory breach notification and penalties for non-compliance.
29. Enforceable huge fines, in keeping with corporate income, for breaches of any of these obligations, including against Firmus Technologies and Nvidia for greenwashing.

Tasmania has real strengths: renewable energy, water and a community that cares about its island. Those are exactly the assets that make us attractive to overseas developers, and exactly the assets we must not sell cheaply. The final Expectations should back sovereign capacity that serves Tasmanians and refuse extractive offshore hosting that serves others. I ask that the Government adopt the sovereignty test, publish everything, put the rules in law, and make sure Tasmanians share in any benefit before a single further project is approved. There is no credible case for Tasmania hosting this infrastructure without binding law, independent verification, and enforceable public protections in place first.

If Tasmania can host the infrastructure—then the Tasmanian public should set the conversation that sets the rules. I urge all parliamentarians: let's make sure the benefits are shared, the risks are managed, and our communities come first, lest empire will cost us all.

I urge the Tasmanian Parliament to recommend that every AI data centre in Tasmania:

- Operate under statutory, enforceable law, not voluntary expectations.

- Pass a sovereignty test: who owns it, who controls it, who it serves, and whether Tasmania could be cut off.
- Be listed on a public register of all proposals, proponents, customers, and energy and water commitments before any further approvals.
- Provide or underwrite its own additional renewable energy and firming capacity in accordance with Federal Australian requirements.
- Pay the full cost of the electricity, transmission, connection, water, and public infrastructure it requires.
- Guarantee that households and small business are protected from higher power prices, water shortages and health impacts.
- Record, monitor, and publicly report all diesel-generator use and emissions.
- Meet binding pollution limits with enforceable fines for breaches.
- Provide local employment, procurement, training, and community benefits.
- Provide a fair return for Tasmanians, including royalties, and be independently and publicly assessed.
- Submit to continuing parliamentary and independent oversight.
- Demonstrate that Tasmanians are measurably better off.
- Use no native-forest biomass for any purpose, including backup or firming power.
- Operate under enforceable exit clauses and decommissioning commitments.
- Contribute to Tasmanian IT and data sovereignty, not undermine it.
- Build in the power to leave and a guarantee of local access: open standards, open-weight models on locally controlled hardware, and a reserved share of its capacity for Tasmanian public-interest users.

The central principle should be simple: Tasmania's technological future must be powered by additional clean energy, protected from unregulated diesel pollution and native-forest burning, governed by enforceable exit rights, built on IT sovereignty, and developed with the public—not merely in the public's name.

I asked at the outset whether Tasmania is a democracy or a technocracy. The answer must be written into law by legislators accountable to Tasmanians: Parliament's duty is to uphold, protect and raise Tasmanian democracy, not to surrender it to an imperialist foreign technocracy.

I am happy to be contacted about this submission.

Annex: how this submission matches the Draft Expectations

The page numbers below are the printed page numbers of the Tasmanian Government's draft Statement of Expectations for Data Centres and AI Infrastructure Developers (4 September 2026).[58] Each row sets the Draft's own wording against the point this submission makes and the sections where it appears.

Draft page	Draft Expectations wording	Point made in this submission	Sections
p3	"These expectations are a non-statutory statement of government policy." No penalties or enforcement are set out.	The Expectations are not law. There must be enforceable binding legislation and maximum fines.	1, 2, 23
p4	Energy principles: "Unlock new renewable energy generation and storage projects in Tasmania to offset demand"; "Maintain network reliability and grid security"; "Ensure energy and related network costs do not negatively impact existing customers".	Additional renewable generation and firming for every facility ("bring your own"), caps on the share of Tasmania's electricity any proponent may consume, published projected load, and guaranteed household and small-business prices. There must be enforceable binding legislation and maximum fines.	8, 9
p4	Environment and planning principles: "Minimise water use and ensure water and related infrastructure costs do not negatively impact existing customers"; "Prevent material environmental harm".	Independently audited, publicly reported water consumption caps and source limits, drought priority for communities and ecosystems, and enforceable limits on noise, light and emissions. There must be enforceable binding legislation and maximum fines.	9, 11, 14, 15
p6	Proponents should be transparent about "the number and nature of jobs a project will actually sustain".	Job commitments must be binding, auditable and reported separately from construction roles. There must be enforceable binding legislation and maximum fines.	12
p6	Proponents should engage with the education and training sector, including the University of Tasmania and TasTAFE, and prioritise apprentice, trainee and graduate or cadet opportunities.	Expectations only: no training agreements and no binding number of apprentice, trainee, graduate and cadet places. There must be enforceable binding legislation and maximum fines.	13
p6	Proponents should maximise opportunities for Tasmanian suppliers.	No binding local supplier networks while the majority of infrastructure is imported. There must be enforceable binding legislation and maximum fines.	12, 20

[58] Tasmanian Government, Data Centre and AI Statement of Expectations, draft (4 September 2026): https://hdp-au-prod-app-sgtas-engage-files.s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/4517/8849/8926/Data_Centre_and_AI_Statement_of_Expectations_4_September_2026.pdf

Draft page	Draft Expectations wording	Point made in this submission	Sections
pp4, 7	Proponents are expected to meet "the applicable costs" of infrastructure and services.	"Applicable costs" is an aspiration, not a limit: full cost recovery must be legislated. There must be enforceable binding legislation and maximum fines.	9
p7	"Key electricity and water infrastructure in Tasmania is operated by publicly owned businesses on a commercial basis." Existing customers are to be protected "from inappropriate cost shifting and stranded asset risk."	Public power and water assets must not subsidise private operators: full cost recovery, bonds or guarantees against stranded assets, royalties, and funded decommissioning. There must be enforceable binding legislation and maximum fines.	7, 9, 22
p8	Proponents should "engage early with communities, including the Tasmanian Aboriginal community".	Early engagement is only an expectation: binding community decision-making and free, prior and informed consent are needed. A Human Reserved Charter must also reserve decisions affecting all First Nations peoples, their Country, culture and data for humans, not AI, with First Nations people holding the decision. There must be enforceable binding legislation and maximum fines.	13, 20, 23
pp4, 7, 10	Proponents "must partner with new energy generation projects".	A non-statutory expectation, not a binding requirement for additional renewable generation. There must be enforceable binding legislation and maximum fines.	8
pp4, 7, 11	Backup fuels include "other technologies including forestry waste".	Native-forest biomass must be prohibited, and backup diesel regulated. There must be enforceable binding legislation and maximum fines.	7, 8, 15
pp4, 7, 12	Proponents pay connection costs "so that there be no net cost on existing Tasmanian customers".	Dr Robert Hortle of the Tasmanian Policy Exchange (UTAS) warns that "it is therefore essential that data centre proponents meet the full cost of network upgrades so that other consumers don't have to pick up some of the tab", and that Tasmania "could be left paying for underutilised infrastructure" if projects are delayed or cancelled (policyinmybackyard.org, PIMBY 27). "No net cost" must be binding, with household and small-business prices guaranteed. There must be enforceable binding legislation and maximum fines.	9

Draft page	Draft Expectations wording	Point made in this submission	Sections
pp4, 7, 13, 14	Proponents should "minimise" water consumption. The Water Management Act 1999 is the primary legislation.	No binding water consumption caps, source limits or drought security. PMAT urges that the State Policy on Water Quality Management 1997 be immediately expanded to include water usage, with drinking water for the community prioritised, and that planning decisions (p14) assess it. Farmers are wary of irrigation water being redistributed from farms: TasFarmers (Nathan Calman, Tasmanian Country, 31 August 2026) says water for data centres "needs to be carefully balanced" and asks about "regional food security". There must be enforceable binding legislation and maximum fines.	9, 11
p14	"Planning assessment will continue under the Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993 and the Tasmanian Planning Scheme."	Existing planning approvals are inadequate: there is no AI data centre use class, no assessment of clusters or cumulative impact, no binding siting rules, and appeal rights are lost where projects are fast-tracked or approved without a full Environmental Impact Assessment (Long Reach, DA 2026/29). There must be enforceable binding legislation and maximum fines.	2, 3, 10
p14	"Planning assessment will continue under the Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993 and the Tasmanian Planning Scheme." The Draft does not mention the Land Use Planning and Approvals (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2026.	Clause 10 of the Bill passed unamended and, PMAT says, will make data centre approvals easier. The Minister's power to apply and remove the 16 planning Codes (heritage, scenic landscapes, priority vegetation, threatened species, land-use conflict) is unexplained, and the rezoning power was removed only after PMAT and community pressure. Clause 10 must be amended, and the Minister must explain publicly and face parliamentary scrutiny. There must be enforceable binding legislation and maximum fines.	2
p14	Proponents of significant projects "should proactively engage with communities and other stakeholders", including where formal statutory advertising is not required.	Engagement is not a binding law or enforceable regulation. There must be enforceable binding legislation and maximum fines.	20

Draft page	Draft Expectations wording	Point made in this submission	Sections
p14	Data centres "should be located in areas that maximise economic and system benefits while minimising" impacts.	No binding siting rules, setbacks or zone limits. There must be enforceable binding legislation and maximum fines.	2, 6, 10, 15
p14	Developers "will need to Implement robust cyber security and privacy measures, as required by the commonwealth".	No binding Tasmanian cyber security and privacy requirement. There must be enforceable binding legislation and maximum fines.	18
p15	Publication of energy, water, employment and procurement data is "subject to legitimate commercial confidentiality".	All transparency and reporting must be mandatory and independently verifiable, with no commercial-in-confidence shield. It must cover energy, water, employment and procurement data, commercial arrangements, cost-recovery calculations, tax and rates payments, bonds and guarantees, and connection agreements, on a single statutory public register. There must be enforceable binding legislation and maximum fines.	3, 5, 7, 9
p15	"Comply with all current statutory reporting and information sharing obligations"; beyond that the Government only "encourages" best-practice transparency. Page 15 does not mention incident reporting or disclosure.	No binding incident disclosure. Pollution breaches, diesel backup generation (every test, maintenance run, outage-related operation, fuel volume, operating duration and emissions), and other incidents must be reported publicly and promptly, and recorded on the public register and decision log. Pollution breaches must attract substantial, escalating fines, remediation orders and compensation. There must be enforceable binding legislation and maximum fines.	3, 5, 15
p15	The national framework's mandatory requirements "have yet to be finalised".	State law cannot wait for federal standards. There must be enforceable binding legislation and maximum fines.	1, 3

The Draft contains no penalties, no caps on water or power use, and no reference to 2027 or to retrofitting the national framework.