

From: [Bob Brown](#)
To: [House of Assembly - GAA](#)
Subject: Dear Members of the House of Assembly Standing Committee
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Dear Chair Mitchell and Members of the House of Assembly Standing Committee
Inquiry on AI Data Centres in Tasmania.

This submission asks the Committee to evaluate the role data centres in Tasmanian will have in the overall threat to humanity of states or corporations creating artificial superintelligence (ASI).

I am concerned by the evidence of this threat.

I am not an expert on artificial superintelligence and do not know of one in Tasmania.

Using AI was inescapable in formulating this submission.

ASI is relevant to your committee's deliberations because, taking each term of reference in order:

1. Protect public resources and the environment; ASI threatens to overtake human management of resources and has no inbuilt empathy for humanity or the environment.
2. Ensure Tasmania's Resource Management and Planning System adequately recognises and addresses the specific impacts of the development and construction of AI and data facilities; the biggest single specific impact may be these facilities' contribution to ASI.
3. Provide Parliamentary oversight and accountability for new facility construction and resource allocation; Parliament should assess and be responsible for the potential for ASI before any data facilities proceed.
4. Ensure transparent public disclosure of resource consumption; including the potential for ASI to benefit itself at the expense of public wellbeing.
5. Provide the Tasmanian community with adequate opportunities for consultation; including re ASI.
6. Ensures the Tasmanian community receive tangible benefits from all AI and data facilities constructed in the state; including insurance that ASI will not be fostered by such facilities; and
7. Any other matter incidental. ASI may be regarded as a 'matter incidental' but is a really matter in direct relationship with the creation of data facilities.

DEFINITION OF ASI:

Artificial superintelligence is a projected AI system that vastly outperforms the best human brains across every intellectual domain, including creativity, general wisdom, and social skills.

ITS KEY CHARACTERISTICS ARE

- **Universal superiority:** ASI excels beyond human capacity not just in single tasks, like chess, but in practically all fields of interest, including the strategic use of armaments.
- **Autonomous self-improvement:** ASI is capable of redesigning and upgrading its own software and hardware at an accelerating pace.
- **Novel problem solving:** ASI generates independent innovations and scientific breakthroughs that humans cannot achieve.

THE CURRENT STATUS OF ASI:

- ASI does not exist yet and remains a future projection, though recent events have raised concerns that artificial intelligence is already breaking out of human control.
- ASI represents the stage of development that comes after Artificial General Intelligence (AGI), which is AI that merely matches human-level capability across the board. That is, it will be super-human. There is no assuring evidence that the development of that super-human intelligence is being or will be restrained by human ethics or morals or a guarantee for life on Earth.

A HISTORY OF AI AND ASI:

1.

In a 1951 lecture, the ‘father’ of artificial intelligence, British scientist Alan Turing, noted that once machine thinking methods had started, it wouldn't take long for machines to outstrip our feeble powers. He stated that machines "would be able to converse with each other to sharpen their wits," leading to them eventually taking control. Turing foresaw that a super-intelligent machine would be the final invention that man need make, provided the machine is docile enough to keep us under control.

2.

The late theoretical physicist Stephen Hawking repeatedly warned that the development of full Artificial Superintelligence (ASI) could spell the end of the human race. While Hawking acknowledged the monumental benefits of basic AI, he was highly vocal about the existential risks of a machine intelligence that surpasses human capabilities. His core warnings about ASI centred on several key concepts:

The Threat of Self-Improvement (The Singularity):

Hawking cautioned that once an AI system reaches a human level of intelligence, it won't stop there. He warned that ASI would "take off on its own, and re-design itself at an ever-increasing rate". Because humans are constrained by slow biological evolution, Hawking noted that we simply wouldn't be able to compete and would be "superseded".

Competence, Not Malice:

Hawking said that the real danger of AI isn't malice, but absolute **competence**. *"A superintelligent AI will be extremely good at accomplishing its goals, and if those goals aren't aligned with ours, we're in trouble."*

He used the analogy of an anthill: if humans build a hydroelectric dam and flood an anthill, it isn't out of hatred for ants—the ants are simply collateral damage. An unaligned ASI could view humanity the same way.

Direct Societal and Military Risks:

Beyond the long-term existential threat, Hawking highlighted immediate problems that would arise as AI advanced toward superintelligence:

- **Autonomous Weapons:** He fiercely advocated for bans on military AI, warning about autonomous weapons that could select and eliminate targets without human intervention.
- **Economic Disruption:** He noted that automation would severely disrupt middle-class jobs, leaving large segments of the population economically vulnerable.

A Nuanced Perspective:

Despite his stark warnings, Hawking had a deeply complex relationship with the technology. He relied heavily on a predictive communication system developed by Intel and SwiftKey—a basic form of AI—to speak and write.

- Because of this, his message was not to abandon AI entirely, but to **govern it with extreme caution**. In 2015, Hawking alongside Elon Musk and other researchers signed an [Open Letter on Artificial Intelligence](#) calling for rigorous safety research to ensure humanity reaps the benefits of AI without losing control.

3.

Geoffrey Hinton, the Nobel Prize-winning computer scientist now known as the godfather of AI, warns there is a 10% to 20% chance that superintelligent artificial intelligence could eliminate humanity, saying that AI will soon surpass human intelligence.

- Once machines are smarter than us, we cannot control them if they decide humans are unnecessary. Hinton notes recent instances where advanced AI models have shown the ability to develop complex intentions and escape sandboxed testing environments. Current risks include widespread cyberattacks, bio-engineered viruses, autonomous military weapons, and political manipulation through deepfakes.
- Hinton points out that AI will replace routine intellectual and administrative work—such as paralegal and legal assistant jobs—faster than the economy can adapt, widening the gap between rich and poor.
- He sees competition between global companies and nations making slowing down AI development nearly impossible, as no major power wants to fall behind.
- For a closer look at Geoffrey Hinton discussing why he believes advanced artificial intelligence poses an existential risk to humanity, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xTiTdlCWzw>

CONTRARY ARGUMENT:

A contrary argument to the above may be seen at <https://iac.gatech.edu/news/item/687527/powerful-existential-threat-according-georgia-tech-research>

However, this adds up to the author being comfortable that human institutions will put up the necessary guardrails for keeping artificial intelligence under human control. That is not happening.

OVERVIEW:

I recommend the Center for AI Safety's 'Overview of Catastrophic Risks' which can be found at <https://safe.ai/ai-risk>.

SUMMARY:

The advantages of artificial intelligence must be weighed against the disadvantages. My submission draws attention to the latter and maintains that the development of data centres in Tasmania, interconnected as they are or will be with networks, cannot be separated from the risks of artificial superintelligence.

Tasmania did not get involved in the development of nuclear technology. Tasmania does not allow commercial genetically modified (GM) crops, with a state-wide moratorium remaining in place until November 16, 2029. Tasmania should also stay clear of fostering the development of artificial superintelligence, unless and until it is shown to be safely within human control.

The drive for data centres in Tasmania by private individuals is for their monetary gain.

The committee will, I am sure, look at the potential social, environmental, employment and economic gains and losses for the Tasmanian public, which is not pushing for such centres. I ask committee members to also seriously consider the risks posed by the out-of-control advance of artificial intelligence and halt our involvement unless and until it is safely guardrailed and kept within human control, for the benefit of humans generally.

Robert (Bob) Brown.

Former Senator and Member of the House of Assembly.

Patron, Bob Brown Foundation.



Sent from my iPad