TASMANIA

# LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

**SESSION OF 2025 – 2026**

(FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-SECOND PARLIAMENT)

# VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS

UNCORRECTED PROOF

No. 60

TUESDAY, 24 NOVEMBER 2026

**1 COUNCIL MEETS.—** The Council met at 11.00 o'clock a.m.

**2 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF TRADITIONAL PEOPLE.—** The President said:

"We meet today on Tasmanian Aboriginal land. We acknowledge and pay respect to the Tasmanian Aboriginal people and elders, past and present. We recognise them as the first inhabitants and the continuing custodians of this land."

**3 PRAYERS AND REFLECTION.—** The President read Prayers.

**4 ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) DATA CENTRES.—** Ms *Armitage* asked the Minister for Energy and Renewables —

(1) What are the approved or proposed capacities (in megawatts of critical IT load or total power demand, and physical footprint) of the Firmus AI data centres at St Leonards, Bell Bay/Long Reach and Wesley Vale, and of any other AI or data centre proposals currently under consideration in the state?

(2) Is there a direct relationship between the physical size/computing capacity of an AI data centre and the continuous power it requires to operate? If so, what is the typical power intensity for facilities of the scale being developed in Tasmania, and how does this compare with typical conventional/existing industrial/commercial loads?

(3) What is the present voltage and load-carrying capacity of the distribution and transmission infrastructure (including poles and lines) serving the areas around the approved and proposed AI data centre sites?

(4) By how much will those capacities need to increase to service the full demand of these facilities and will this require the construction or upgrade of taller or higher-voltage poles in or near residential streets?

(5) Who is responsible for the cost of any required upgrades to power poles, lines, substations or other network infrastructure needed to connect and supply these AI data centres?

(6) Are large-load users such as data centres required to pay one-hundred percent of connection costs upfront?

(7) Will any portion of these costs ultimately be borne by other electricity consumers or taxpayers, and what transparency and accountability mechanisms apply?

(8) What assessment has been, or will be, undertaken of any health implication for residents living near or under new or upgraded power poles required to service these AI data centres? This includes exposure to electric and magnetic fields, as well as any other relevant factors.

(9) What evidence exists of the long-term employment outcomes of these AI data centres for Tasmanians? Specifically:

    (a) How many full-time equivalent construction jobs are expected, and over what period of time?

(b) How many ongoing operational jobs (direct and indirect) are projected once these facilities are running at full capacity?

The Minister answered:

(1) It is on the public record that the Firmus projects are of a combined proposed installed capacity of 444MW, being 104MW for St Leonards, 52MW for Wesley Vale, and 288MW for Long Reach.

On 7 September 2026, the Office of the Co-Ordinator General (OCG) provided a list of proposed data centre projects that have engaged with the OCG. This included the three Firmus projects, a project from VIRIDIS in Burnie, and a further six deidentified proposals of varying sizes from less than 1MW up to 200-300MW. These projects are early in their development and are not as progressed as the Firmus projects, and it is noted that many of these proponents have not had any engagement with Hydro Tasmania or TasNetworks to understand what is possible from an energy supply perspective. It is important to note that this list was compiled at a point in time, based on the information at that time, and a number of projects identified on that list are now most likely on hold.

The OCG also notes that there may be other data centre proponents that are considering Tasmania that have not had any engagement with the OCG.

In terms of your questions of physical footprint, or size, for each project, this is unique for each project and is assessed through the planning processes.

(2) The nature of data centre operations and their power usage depends entirely on the developer's operating model. With regards to Tasmanian developments, should Firmus' centres be developed at the proposed installed capacity of 444MW, it would make Firmus the largest electricity customer in the State. Firmus has made public comments about its load being flexible to ramp up and down to ensure system stability and reliability.

(3) TasNetworks has confirmed that the Firmus projects will all be transmission connected. The St Leonards and Wesley Vale areas are, or will be, supplied from 110 kV transmission network, and Bell Bay will be supplied by the 220 kV transmission network. All proposed sites are close to existing substations (St Leonards and Wesley Vale) and transmission lines (Bell Bay). TasNetworks has confirmed the three Firmus sites are the only data centre proposals with active connection applications.

(4) TasNetworks has confirmed there is no requirement to install 'taller' high voltage distribution lines to support any of Firmus' three proposed sites. TasNetworks is currently assessing whether additional equipment will be required in Bell Bay to maintain system voltage performance requirements in a scenario where Firmus' Bell Bay site proceeds at its full 288 MW capacity.

(5) The Tasmanian Government's *Expectations for Data Centres and AI Infrastructure: Tasmania* requires data centre proponents to pay for all costs associated with network connection, along with their allocated share of existing network costs.

Under the current National Electricity Rules, any dedicated connection assets that need to be constructed and installed for the purpose of connecting a single customer to the transmission network, must be paid for solely by that customer. This includes all stages of a customer's project, from the initial connection enquiry to design, and commissioning. Firmus has agreed to pay for its electricity connection costs upfront, which de-risks the connections work for

TasNetworks.

It is also important to note that the connection of large new electricity loads such as data centres can have benefits to wider system resilience and network charges for other users. As existing network charges can be recovered from a larger customer base, new electricity loads like data centres can place downward pressure on charges for existing customers and insulate against any future major industrial changes.

(6) As above.

(7) As above.

(8) The Australian Government's expert authority on radiation protection and electromagnetic fields is the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA). ARPANSA advises that according to current research, there is no established scientific evidence to support that exposure to magnetic fields from powerlines, substations, transformers or other electrical sources causes adverse health effects.

(9) Available information suggests data centres provide significant employment through the construction phase and lower levels of ongoing direct employment through the operations phase. Progression of data centre projects will require new renewable energy generation projects, such as wind or solar farms, creating further employment. Firmus has publicly outlined anticipated employment associated with its proposed Tasmanian facilities and this includes the following:

- For Bell Bay, Firmus projects around 380 construction jobs and around 115 ongoing local full-time roles once operational. Once started, construction will generally take 12 months to complete.
- For Wesley Vale, Firmus projects around 70 construction jobs and around 20 ongoing local full-time roles once stage 1 is operational, which is anticipated to take approximately 6 months in construction.
- For the St. Leonards site, Firmus projects around 200 jobs during construction and around 40 ongoing local full-time roles once operational. The St Leonards site is presently under construction and operations are predicted in the first half of 2027.

The Tasmanian Government's *Expectations for Data Centres and AI Infrastructure: Tasmania* requires proponents to be transparent about the number and nature of jobs sustained after construction and the economic value flowing into Tasmania and local communities. It also sets expectations for local procurement, skills development and apprenticeship, trainee and graduate opportunities.

**5 PAPERS.—** The Clerk of the Council laid upon the Table the following Papers:—

(1) Audit Tasmania: Report of the Auditor-General No. 4 of 2026-27. Auditor-General's report on the financial statements of State entities. Volume 3 – General Government Sector, including Treasurer's Annual Financial Report. Audit of State entities and audited subsidiaries of State entities 31 December 2025 and 30 June 2026. Dated 24 November 2026.

(2) Audit Tasmania: Report of the Auditor-General No. 5 of 2026-27. Strategic management of port infrastructure. Dated 24 November 2026.

(3) Forest Practices Authority: Annual Report 2025-2026.

**6 REPORT OF THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON INTEGRITY.—** Ms *Armitage* presented a Report of the Joint Standing Committee on Integrity on the Establishment of a Parliamentary Privilege Protocol between the Parliament of Tasmania and the Integrity Commission.

*Ordered,* That the Report be received. (Ms *Armitage*)

*Ordered,* That the Report be printed. (Ms *Armitage*)

**7 ROYAL ASSENT TO BILLS.—** The President read a Message from Her Excellency the Governor as follows:

MESSAGE

Caroline Wells, Governor

A Bill for An Act to amend the *Sentencing Act 1997*
(Bill No. 29 of 2026; *Act No. 22 of 2026*)

A Bill for an Act to provide for the registration of teachers
(Bill No. 27 of 2026; *Act No. 23 of 2026*)

A Bill for an Act to amend the *Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993* and the *Local Government (Building and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1993*
(Bill No. 22 of 2026; *Act No. 24 of 2026*)

A Bill for an Act to amend the *Criminal Code Act 1924*, *Dangerous Criminals and High Risk Offenders Act 2021*, *Electoral Act 2004*, *Evidence Act 2001*, *Family Violence Act 2004*, *Forensic Procedures Act 2000*, *Gas Safety Act 2019*, *Health Complaints Act 1995*, *Justices Act 1959*, *Justices of the Peace Act 2018* and the *Occupational Licensing Act 2005*
(Bill No. 39 of 2025; *Act No. 26*)

A Bill for an Act to amend the *Local Government (Highways) Act 1982*, the *Retirement Villages Act 2004* and the *Tasmanian Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 2020* and regulations made under that Act
(Bill No. 12 of 2026; *Act No. 25 of 2026*)

having been presented to the Governor for the Royal Assent, she has in the name of His Majesty the King, assented to the said Bills.

*Government House, Hobart, 20 November 2026*

**8 SPECIAL INTEREST MATTERS.—** The President advised the Chamber of 5 Members who had indicated their desire to speak:—

(1) Ms *Glade-Wright* – Social Services

(2) Ms *Lovell* – Trent Fenton, winner of Alone Australia 2026

(3) Ms *Forrest* – MMG – 90 years of operation

(4) Ms *Armitage* – 40th anniversary of New Horizons Tasmania

(5) Ms *Rattray* – St Helens Marine Rescue Volunteer Association – 30 years

(6) Mr *Gaffney* – Australian Veterinary Association

At the conclusion of Special Interest Matters the Council proceeded to Orders of the Day.

**9 TASMANIAN MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY (TMAG) HERBARIUM CUTS.—** A Motion was made (Ms *Webb*) and the Question was proposed, That the Legislative Council:

(1) Notes with concern the Tasmanian government's intention to cut resourcing and staffing of the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery (TMAG) which holds internationally significant natural history collections, including vital educational, interpretative, promotional and senior curatorial roles;

(2) Acknowledges the considerable alarm and disbelief expressed by many in the Tasmanian scientific, cultural history and broader communities in response to the news of the threatened government funding cuts;

(3) Notes the range of urgent representations from local, interstate and international university-based and other professional research institutions expressing significant alarm over the proposed cuts and the impacts they will have on established research projects underway, the health and viability of the TMAG collections, current and future research and capacity, and the reputational damage to Tasmania;

(4) Acknowledges TMAG's collections management is not a passive administrative task but instead requires skilled and continual high-level research, classification and maintenance;

(5) Notes the government's intended staffing and resourcing cuts risks jeopardising the integrity of the TMAG collections and public assets, and also endangers:

(a) The collections' security and conservation due to inadequate oversight accelerating the physical degradation of vulnerable, unique and irreplaceable type specimens;

(b) Current and future research throughput as the absence of dedicated research risks collection stagnation, reduced active loans and innovation collaboration, exchanges, and cross-regional biosecurity support;

(c) Capacity to meet statutory obligations as set out in section 5 'Institutional objectives' of the *Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery Act 2017*;

(d) Tasmania's access to vital skills, knowledge and expertise.

Further, that the Legislative Council notes the motion passed at the Friends of TMAG public meeting of the 8th of October, and calls on the government to:

(6) Immediately reverse the intended job cuts at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery;

(7) Retain the skilled staff who care for and interpret Tasmania's TMAG state collections;

(8) Commit to providing TMAG with the secure, long-term funding needed to fulfil its public, cultural, scientific and legal responsibilities; and

(9) Reflect the long-term funding commitment in the 2027-28 state budget and forward estimates.

A Debate arose thereupon.

*Ordered,* That Ms *Webb*, have leave to Table Letter to Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Arts from Friends of the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery regarding TMAG funding reductions, dated 17 November 2026.

**10 SITTING SUSPENDED.—** It being 1.00 o'clock p.m. the Sitting of the Council was suspended.

The Council resumed the Sitting at 2.30 o'clock p.m.

**11 QUESTION TIME.—** The President called for Questions without Notice. There were 9 Questions asked.

**12 TASMANIAN MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY (TMAG) HERBARIUM CUTS.—** The Council resumed Debate on the Question, That the Legislative Council:

(1) Notes with concern the Tasmanian government's intention to cut resourcing and staffing of the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery (TMAG) which holds internationally significant natural history collections, including vital educational, interpretative, promotional and senior curatorial roles;

(2) Acknowledges the considerable alarm and disbelief expressed by many in the Tasmanian scientific, cultural history and broader communities in response to the news of the threatened government funding cuts;

(3) Notes the range of urgent representations from local, interstate and international university-based and other professional research institutions expressing significant alarm over the proposed cuts and the impacts they will have on established research projects underway, the health and viability of the TMAG collections, current and future research and capacity, and the reputational damage to Tasmania;

(4) Acknowledges TMAG's collections management is not a passive administrative task but instead requires skilled and continual high-level research, classification and maintenance;

(5) Notes the government's intended staffing and resourcing cuts risks jeopardising the integrity of the TMAG collections and public assets, and also endangers:

(e) The collections' security and conservation due to inadequate oversight accelerating the physical degradation of vulnerable, unique and irreplaceable type specimens;

(f) Current and future research throughput as the absence of dedicated research risks collection stagnation, reduced active loans and innovation collaboration, exchanges, and cross-regional biosecurity support;

(g) Capacity to meet statutory obligations as set out in section 5 'Institutional objectives' of the *Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery Act 2017*;

(h) Tasmania's access to vital skills, knowledge and expertise.

Further, that the Legislative Council notes the motion passed at the Friends of TMAG public meeting of the 8th of October, and calls on the government to:

(6) Immediately reverse the intended job cuts at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery;

(7) Retain the skilled staff who care for and interpret Tasmania's TMAG state collections;

(8) Commit to providing TMAG with the secure, long-term funding needed to fulfil its public, cultural, scientific and legal responsibilities; and

(9) Reflect the long-term funding commitment in the 2027-28 state budget and forward estimates.

And the Question being put,

It was resolved in the Affirmative.

**13 MIDWIVES HOMEBIRTH PROFESSIONAL INDEMNITY INSURANCE EXEMPTION.—** A Motion was made (Ms *Forrest*) and the Question:—

(1) That the Legislative Council notes:

(a) the exemption that enables privately practising midwives to attend homebirths without professional indemnity insurance ends on 31 December 2026;

(b) the only insurance product available is for endorsed midwives, and fewer than five per cent of midwives are endorsed;

(c) every homebirth needs a second midwife, and that midwife is usually not endorsed, so up to a third of Australia's private midwives who offer homebirth, may leave the profession;

(d) that Tasmania is the only state without a publicly funded homebirth program, so private midwives are the only option for Tasmanian women who want to give birth at home with registered health professionals; and

(e) losing these midwives will limit women's birthing choices, especially in rural and regional areas, and increase the risk of birth without a registered health professional attending.

(2) That the Legislative Council calls on the Tasmanian Minister for Health to urge the Australian Government to urgently extend the exemption so registered midwives can keep attending homebirths as second midwives from 1 January 2027, and to put in place a permanent, affordable insurance solution by the end of 2027.

A Debate arose thereupon.

**14 SITTING SUSPENDED.** — It being 4.00 o'clock p.m. the Sitting of the Council was suspended.

The Council resumed the Sitting at 4.30 o'clock p.m.

**15 MIDWIVES HOMEBIRTH PROFESSIONAL INDEMNITY INSURANCE EXEMPTION.—** The Council resumed debate on the Question:—

(1) That the Legislative Council notes:

(a) the exemption that enables privately practising midwives to attend homebirths without professional indemnity insurance ends on 31 December 2026;

(b) the only insurance product available is for endorsed midwives, and fewer than five per cent of midwives are endorsed;

(c) every homebirth needs a second midwife, and that midwife is usually not endorsed, so up to a third of Australia's private midwives who offer homebirth, may leave the profession;

(d) that Tasmania is the only state without a publicly funded homebirth program, so private midwives are the only option for Tasmanian women who want to give birth at home with registered health professionals; and

(e) losing these midwives will limit women's birthing choices, especially in rural and regional areas, and increase the risk of birth without a registered health professional attending.

(2) That the Legislative Council calls on the Tasmanian Minister for Health to urge the Australian Government to urgently extend the exemption so registered midwives can keep attending homebirths as second midwives from 1 January 2027, and to put in place a permanent, affordable insurance solution by the end of 2027.

An Amendment was proposed to be made to the Motion (Ms *Lovell)*:—

Paragraph 2, leave out all the words after *'*(2) That the Legislative Council calls on the Tasmania Minister for Health to' and insert instead ':' and the following subparagraphs:

(a) urge the Australian Government to find a temporary solution to ensure registered midwives can keep attending homebirths as second midwives from 1 January 2027 without unmanageable additional costs;

(b) work with the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia to reduce barriers to obtaining endorsement so that more midwives can access the Midwife Professional Indemnity Scheme as soon as practicable;

(c) implement a public homebirth program for Tasmanian women;

(d) ensure that permanent, practical solutions are in place by the end of 2027 to maintain and improve access to safe and affordable homebirth services for Tasmanian women; and

(e) bring this matter to the agenda for urgent discussion at the Health Minister's meeting scheduled for 11 December 2026.

A Debate arose thereupon.

Motion made and Question put, That the Amendment be agreed to.

It was resolved in the Affirmative.

Debate resumed on the Question that the Motion as amended be agreed to.

And the Question being put.

It was resolved in the Affirmative.

**16 BILL NO. 45.—** The Order of the Day was read for consideration in Committee of the Conversion Practices Prohibition Bill 2026 as amended in the Committee of the Whole Council.

And the President having left the Chair, the Council resolved itself into the said Committee.

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(In the Committee)

Ms *Forrest* in the Chair.

Clauses 1 to 3 agreed to.

Clause 4, Amendment proposed (Ms *Rattray*)

Page 10, subclause (1), definition of ***injury***, after paragraph (b), out-text of definition, before "whether temporary or permanent".

*Insert* "that is serious or substantial,".

Question put, That the Amendment be agreed to.

It passed in the negative.

Clause 4, Amendment proposed (Ms *Rattray*)

Page 12, same subclause, after the definition of ***statutory authority***.

*Insert* the following definition:

***suppress***, in relation to a person's sexual orientation or gender identity, means to cause or seek to cause the person to deny, conceal, repudiate or cease experiencing their sexual orientation or gender identity, but does not include, of itself, a person's decision to refrain from sexual conduct or the fact that a person does not engage in sexual conduct;

Question put, That the Amendment be agreed to.

It passed in the negative.

Clause 4 as read agreed to.

Clause 5, Amendment proposed (Ms *Rattray*)

Page 12, subclause (1), after "means a".

*Leave out* "practice or conduct".

*Insert instead* "sustained practice or course of conduct".

Question put, That the Amendment be agreed to.

It passed in the negative.

Clause 5, Amendments proposed (Ms *Rattray*)

**First amendment**

Page 13, subclause (4).

*Leave out* "For the avoidance of doubt, the".

*Insert instead* "The".

**Second amendment**

Same page, same subclause, after "does not".

*Leave out* ", of itself,".

Question put, That the Amendments be agreed to.

It passed in the negative.

Clause 5 as read agreed to.

Clauses 6 to 11 agreed to.

Clause 12, Amendments proposed (Ms *Rattray*)

**First amendment**

Page 20, subclause (1), paragraph (c), after "the person".

*Leave out* "is negligent".

*Insert instead* "intends to cause injury to the recipient by engaging in the conversion practice, or is reckless".

**Second amendment**

Same page, subclause (2), paragraph (c), after "the person".

*Leave out* "is negligent".

*Insert instead* "intends to cause injury to the recipient by engaging in any or all of the conversion practices, or is reckless".

Question put, That the Amendments be agreed to.

It passed in the negative.

Clause 12 as read agreed to.

Clause 13 agreed to.

Clauses 14 to 81 agreed to.

Schedule 1, Amendments made (Ms *Rattray*)

**First amendment**

Page 84, amendments to the ***Anti-Discrimination Act 1998***, item 1, proposed new definition of "sexual orientation", paragraph (a).

*Leave out* ", or intimate or sexual relationship with,".

**Second amendment**

Same page, same amendments to the ***Anti-Discrimination Act 1998***, same item, same proposed new definition, paragraph (b).

*Leave out* ", or intimate or sexual relationship with,".

Amendments agreed to.

Title agreed to.

Bill reported with Amendments.

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The Council being resumed, Ms *Forrest* reported that the Committee had gone through the Bill, and directed her to report the same to the Council with Amendments.

*Ordered,* That the Third reading of the Bill be made an Order of the Day for tomorrow. (Ms *O'Connor*)

**17 ADJOURNMENT.—** *Resolved,* That the Council will, at its rising adjourn until 11.00 o'clock a.m. on Wednesday, 25 November 2026. (Ms *Rattray*)

*Resolved,* That the Council do now adjourn. (Ms *Rattray*)

The Council adjourned at 6.56 o'clock p.m.

C.L. VICKERS, *Clerk of the Council*.

*Briefings:*

- *Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery (TMAG) Herbarium Cuts*