

Minister for Housing and Planning
Minister for Infrastructure and Transport
Minister for Local Government

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01 OCT 2026

Ms Cecily Rosol MP
Member for Bass

c/o haprocedure@parliament.tas.gov.au


Dear Ms Rosol

On 1 September 2026 you asked me the following constituent question in the House of Assembly:

My question is to the Minister for Planning on behalf of dozens of people in Bass who have raised concerns with me about AI data facilities approval processes. Last week, George Town Council approved the Firmus development application for an AI factory at Bell Bay. This approval came despite enormous levels of public concern and huge numbers of submissions opposing the development on many grounds, including energy and water use and considerable noise impacts of diesel generators. Concerns have also been expressed by councillors over such development assessments being beyond the ordinary expectations of local government decision makers. It's clear in the community's view that the current planning and environmental laws are failing in regard to the AI data facilities in Tasmania. Minister, how have you let this happen? What will you do to ensure community voices are genuinely considered in planning decisions on AI factories?

I appreciate the proposed AI data facility has generated significant community interest and many residents have genuine concerns about matters such as energy consumption, water use, noise, environmental impacts and the broader implications of emerging technologies. It is entirely appropriate these issues are raised and debated by the community. However, a number of the issues raised sit outside of the planning system.

Therefore I do not accept the assertion Tasmania's planning and environmental laws have failed, nor community views were ignored in this process. The purpose of the planning system is not to guarantee outcomes everyone agrees with, but to ensure proposals are assessed through a transparent, evidence-based process that considers community input, relevant expert advice and the requirements of the law. The fact some people disagree with the outcome does not mean the system has failed. Rather, it demonstrates that the system is required to balance competing interests and reach decisions based on planning merit, evidence and the law.

Community members have opportunities to participate in both the development of planning scheme provisions and the assessment of discretionary development applications. Those submissions must be considered by the decision-maker. However, planning decisions cannot be based on popularity alone. They must be

made in accordance with the planning scheme, relevant legislation and the evidence before the planning authority.

While some members of the community may disagree with the outcome, disagreement with a decision should not be confused with a failure of the system itself. In this case, community submissions were received and considered, relevant planning matters were assessed, and review and appeal rights remain available. These are the hallmarks of a planning system functioning as intended.

The Government's responsibility is to maintain a planning system that balances community interests, environmental values and economic development, while ensuring decisions are made on evidence and planning merit. I am confident Tasmania's planning framework provides a transparent, accountable and robust process for assessing development proposals, including emerging industries such as AI-related infrastructure.

The State Parliamentary Inquiry into AI Data Centres in Tasmania and the Government's consultation on a draft Statement of Expectations for Data Centres and AI Infrastructure will provide further opportunities for community input, and I encourage interested Tasmanians to participate

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kerry Vincent', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Hon Kerry Vincent MLC
Minister for Housing and Planning