PAUSE THE HYPERSCALE DATACENTRE ROLLOUT
Write to Minister Burgoyne

Letters for the Environment Central Australia

THE ISSUE

The NT government is secretly negotiating with datacentre companies, putting environments and communities at risk.

WHY THIS IS A PROBLEM

1. Hyperscale data centres involve enormous environmental risks

They involve huge amounts of energy, water and environmental damage. The recently announced plans show the extent of these risks. For example:

- **Greenhouse gas emissions** - the Beetaloo Digital hyperscale datacentre proposal near Darwin would be powered by 2GW of on-site power generation using fracked gas (enough to power 1.5-2 million homes) [1]
- **Water use** - Project Ares in the Beetaloo plans to take up to 4,000,000,000 litres of groundwater [2] (enough for a town of around 10,000 people)
- **Land clearing and species risk** Project Ares wants clear up to 191 square kilometres in a Greater bilby stronghold. [2] (The entire Alice Springs municipality is 330 square kilometres!)

Globally non-disclosure agreements are being used to silence public scrutiny and privately negotiate generous incentives[3]. ***The Government has entered into at least 12 non-disclosure agreements.***[4]

Data centres are built using different approaches with very different environmental impacts. Without rules, design decisions will be based on minimising cost.

2. Regulatory vacuum

<u>Northern Territory</u>

The NT has no environmental standards/guidelines for datacentres, only a brochure promoting the opportunity to investors [5].

The *Territory Coordinator Act 2025* lets Minister step-in to many NT statutory processes or statutory decisions which could mitigate environmental impacts.

Climate Change denial: the NT Government is actively spruiking gas from the Beetaloo Basin as a power source. All other states and territories (except Queensland) who have stated they will not power their centres with fossil fuels [6].

Supply of solar power at the scale required will also have terrible environmental consequences [6a].

Water risks: NT water allocation plans:

- Are not binding [7]
- Lack legal protection for water allocations for the environment [7].
- Give water away.

Decisions on data centres are being made *ad hoc*. Despite secret negotiations with companies there has been no public consultation on a plan or design standards.

<u>Australian Government</u>

Australian Government requirements are a voluntary "statement of expectations"[8]. The Government has promised legislative improvements, but these are not in place. It is unclear if they will be sufficient and written free from industry interference[9].

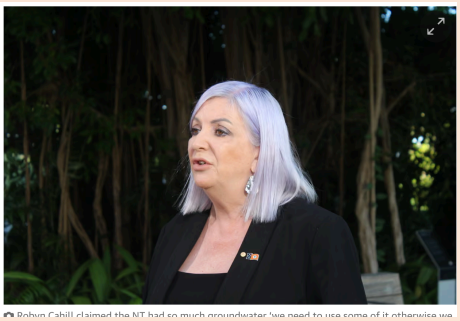
WHAT IS A HYPERSCALE DATA CENTRE

Large, centralised facilities designed to meet the needs of large cloud computing, IT and increasingly AI providers.

Either owned and operated directly by technology companies, or developed and managed by a data centre operator [10].

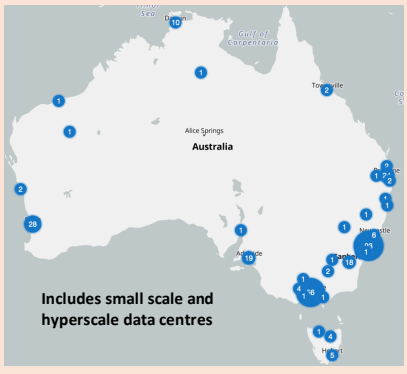
NT IS NOT TAKING RISKS SERIOUSLY

Robyn Cahill, NT Minister for Trade, Business & Asian Relations claimed 'the NT had so much groundwater we needed to use some of it otherwise we might risk flipping the poles again'. This is nonsense. [11]



Robyn Cahill claimed the NT had so much groundwater 'we need to use some of it otherwise we

DATACENTRE MAP [12]



WHAT WE NEED - ACTION REQUEST

1. **Transparency** – the Minister works for us - no backroom deals with industry and no non-disclosure agreements.
2. **No fossil fuels used to power datacentres**
3. A **moratorium** on hyperscale data centres until the rules and plans are in place. The idea that industry holds the cards and we will 'miss out' if we don't dance to their tune is ridiculous. We have what they want and we can make decisions in our own time.
4. A **public inquiry** into AI and datacentres, similar to the Pepper Inquiry on fracking.

PAUSE THE HYPERSCALE DATACENTRE ROLLOUT
Write to Minister Burgoyne

WRITE TO:

Minister for Lands, Planning and Environment; Corporate and Digital Development; Water Resources

Hon Joshua Burgoyne
GPO Box 3146, Darwin, NT 0801
Email: Minister.Burgoyne@nt.gov.au
Phone: (08) 8999 8624

LETTER WRITING TIPS

Dear Joshua,

PAUSE THE HYPERSCALE DATACENTRE ROLLOUT

Introduce yourself

Example - I live in the Northern Territory and care about the environment.

Identify the issue you are concerned about Example:

- I am very concerned that your government is negotiating with at least 12 datacentre companies under non-disclosure agreements, yet you are not talking to the public about whether we want them.
- I am concerned that there are no rules in place for data centres, yet they are being rushed ahead.

Include some facts to support your concerns Examples:

- **greenhouse gas emissions** - the Beetaloo Digital proposal near Darwin wants to use enough fracked gas to power 1.5-2 million homes annually.
- **water hungry** - Project Ares in the Barkly wants up to 4,000,000,000 litres of water per year (enough for a town of 10,000 people).

Explain in your own words why this issue is a concern Example:

- You must be aware that we are at global tipping points for carbon emissions and that our water allocation plans are not binding and water allocations for the environment are not protected in law.
- In places like Alice Spring we know our groundwater is rare. It is already being taken faster than it is replaced.

Tell the government what you want them to do Example:

Do not leave us with a toxic legacy. I want

- A moratorium on hyperscale data centres until the rules and plans are in place;
- Transparency – no new non-disclosure agreements on datacentres;
- No fossil fuels used to power datacentres
- A public inquiry into Datacentres and AI in the NT.

Signed…

RECOMMENDED READING

https://www.greenpeace.org.au/static/planet4-australiapacific-stateless/2026/05/1032fdf5-data-centres-report-greenpeace.pdf

REFERENCES

1. https://www.ecnt.org.au/dirty_dozen_data_centres_planned_for_the_nt
2. https://ntepa.nt.gov.au/consultation/project-ares
3. https://www.governing.com/infrastructure/data-centers-and-the-abuse-of-secrecy
4. https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-07-13/data-centre-hyperscalers-target-northern-territory/106898282
5. https://australiasnorthernterritory.com.au/_resources/documents/invest/investment-opportunities/digital/hyper-scale-data-ai-centres-flyer.pdf
6. https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2026/jul/29/queensland-northern-territory-reject-ai-datacentre-renewable-energy
7. https://assets.pc.gov.au/2025-10/Water%20refrom%20overview.pdf?VersionId=4HZvgnWAJvJDrFyvLgTepv1suFCHO6D_&_gl=1*v06kqg*_gcl_au*NzQ1MzE1MTY4LjE3ODUxMjg3Njg.*_ga*MTMwODM2NDEyNy4xNzg1MTI4NzY4*_ga_XNW84J8HF8*czE3ODUxMjg3NjckbzEkZzAkdDE3ODUxMjg3NjckajYwJGwwJGgw (p18)
8. https://www.industry.gov.au/publications/expectations-data-centres-and-ai-infrastructure-developers
9. https://www.pm.gov.au/media/ai-australias-interests-0
10. https://www.greenpeace.org.au/static/planet4-australiapacific-stateless/2026/05/1032fdf5-data-centres-report-greenpeace.pdf (p6)
11. https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2026/jul/23/australia-politician-claims-northern-territory-water-could-flip-earths-magnetic-poles
12. https://www.datacentermap.com/australia/