

Submission: Objection to Project Mars Data Centre (NSW Planning Portal)

Project: Project Mars Data Centre

Application: Construction and 24-hour operation of a ~90MW data centre

1. Position Statement

I strongly object to the proposed Project Mars Data Centre.

This development is fundamentally incompatible with a residential neighbourhood due to its industrial scale, 24-hour operation, and the unavoidable environmental, health, and amenity impacts it would impose on surrounding homes. No amount of mitigation or technical compliance can resolve the inherent conflict between a high-intensity industrial facility and the reasonable expectations of residents for quiet enjoyment, safety, and quality of life.

The project should be refused.

2. Key Grounds for Objection

A. Fundamental Incompatibility with Residential Amenity

A 24-hour, high-intensity industrial facility has no place in or near a residential area.

The proposal introduces:

- Continuous mechanical noise from cooling systems, plant, and transformers
- Persistent low-frequency noise (“hum”) known to penetrate homes and disrupt sleep
- Round-the-clock operational activity

Even if nominal compliance with guidelines is claimed, such standards do not account for the lived experience of residents exposed to constant industrial noise.

The loss of quiet enjoyment of one’s home is a material and unacceptable impact.

B. Acoustic Impacts and Sleep Disturbance

The risk of sleep disturbance is significant and ongoing.

- Night-time background noise in residential areas is low, making industrial noise more intrusive
- Low-frequency noise travels further and is harder to mitigate

- WHO guidelines link chronic noise exposure to sleep disruption and long-term health effects

There is no convincing evidence that this facility can operate continuously without materially affecting nearby residents.

C. Risk to Children and Sensitive Receivers

As this proposed development is located near a school & childcare facilities, the risks are unacceptable:

- Noise impacts on learning environments
- Exposure to industrial activity during critical developmental stages
- Increased vulnerability to environmental stressors

Children are not an acceptable buffer for industrial infrastructure.

D. Air Quality and Public Health Concerns

The Applicant documents indicate 49 diesel generators are proposed.

The use of diesel generators introduces:

- Fine particulate matter (PM2.5)
- Nitrogen oxides and other pollutants
- Intermittent but potentially concentrated emissions during testing and outages

There is no clear, transparent evidence that these emissions will not affect surrounding residents.

In the absence of definitive proof of safety, the risk must be considered unacceptable.

The Centre for Safe Air (NHMRC Centre of Research Excellence) identified that data centres remain reliant on backup diesel generators that require regular testing and can emit significant pollutants including **PM10, PM2.5, carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide (NOx) and sulphur dioxide (SO2)**. Their submission notes long-term exposure to diesel-related pollution is associated with higher rates of cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease and cancer.

This is highly relevant to Project Mars.

Generator testing is stated as quarterly during business hours, but annual testing hours appear inconsistent across reports:

- 122.5 hours in the EIS
- 155.2 hours in the Air Quality Impact Assessment

The Applicant must reconcile the 122.5 vs 155.2 annual testing-hour discrepancy, justify emergency-operation assumptions, and respond to Centre for Safe Air's PM2.5/NOx health concerns.

Without transparent dispersion modelling, health impacts remain unresolved.

E. Excessive Energy Consumption and Broader Impacts

A 90MW facility represents an extraordinary and disproportionate demand on infrastructure.

- Equivalent to the consumption of tens of thousands of homes
- Contributes to broader environmental and energy system pressures
- Raises serious questions about sustainability and resource allocation

This level of industrial consumption is inappropriate in proximity to residential communities.

F. Construction Impacts and Community Burden

The construction phase alone will impose substantial disruption:

- Prolonged noise, dust, and vibration
- Heavy vehicle movements on local roads
- Loss of amenity for an extended period

Residents are expected to absorb these impacts without justification for why such a facility must be located here.

G. Traffic and Safety Risks

The proposed development will increase traffic pressures:

- Heavy vehicle movements during construction
- Ongoing servicing requirements
- Increased risk near residential streets, pedestrians, and school zones

This introduces avoidable safety risks into the community.

H. Visual and Character Degradation

Data centres are large-scale, industrial structures:

- Bulky, visually dominant forms

- Minimal architectural integration
- Blank façades inconsistent with residential character

Industrial-scale blank façades, security fencing, substations and plant areas can materially alter neighbourhood perception and residential desirability.

I. Urban Heat and Environmental Impact

The facility will generate significant waste heat:

- Contribution to localised temperature increases
- Potential exacerbation of urban heat island effects
- Reduced outdoor comfort for residents

These impacts are ongoing and cannot be meaningfully eliminated.

J. Property Value Impacts

The presence of a large industrial facility will:

- Negatively affect property values
- Alter the perception of the area
- Undermine long-term residential desirability

Residents should not bear financial loss as a result of inappropriate planning decisions.

K. Public Interest

The proposed development has generated significant interest in the community. A public petition called “Oppose the development of a new Data Centre at 12 Mars Rd Lane Cove” has already gained over 1,000 responses against the proposed development.

<https://www.change.org/p/oppose-the-development-of-a-new-data-centre-at-12-mars-rd-lane-cove>

These submissions must be considered by the Department and responded to by the Applicant.

Some of the matters raised in the petition include the following:

“I object to this development as it will impact the whole area especially local homes and Lane Cove West School. Noise is a BIG issue and this facility will be in operation 24/7 all year round. Fumes from the generators is another BIG issue. Also the increased traffic within the area which is already struggling, Lane Cove West is a wonderful suburb to live in, why destroy it?. My husband and I have lived happily in the area for 47 years, so you could say

that we are long time residents. I for one is very upset that this sort of development could even be considered. NO, NO to the DATA CENTRE DEVELOPMENT.”

“This is definitely not the right location for a data centre. It is proposed to be right in the heart of a residential area, and a very popular park for the community. The impact will be absolutely huge. Unfortunately we are already experiencing all the terrible impact from Apollo 1 data centre, it’s been years in construction. The noise the disruption is so disruptive.”

“As a local resident and parent, I am deeply concerned about placing a large industrial facility directly next to homes, a school and Blackman Park. The scale of this development and the loss of trees will have lasting impacts on our community. I ask that decision makers carefully reconsider this proposal.”

““This proposed development is in the wrong location. It’s surrounded by residential property, major sporting fields and bushland amenity, and hence would effectively be operating in a residential, bushland and community area.”

3. Critical Information Gaps (Unresolved Risks)

The application fails to provide sufficient evidence in key areas, including:

- Detailed acoustic modelling demonstrating real-world impacts
- Air quality dispersion modelling for generator emissions
- Comprehensive traffic impact assessment
- Heat emission and microclimate analysis
- Clear operational details (including generator testing frequency)
- Evidence of meaningful community consultation

These omissions reinforce the conclusion that the project’s impacts are not fully understood or disclosed.

4. Conclusion

This proposal represents a clear and unacceptable intrusion of industrial infrastructure into a residential setting.

The scale, intensity, and continuous nature of the operation create impacts that cannot be reconciled with residential living. These are not minor or manageable issues, they are fundamental conflicts.

The community should not be required to accommodate infrastructure of this nature.

This project should be refused.