

SUBMISSION TO NSW PLANNING

Objection to Project Mars Data Centre

12 Mars Road, Lane Cove West

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I am a long-term resident of Wood Street, Lane Cove West and have lived in the area for over 20 years and I strongly object to the proposed Project Mars Data Centre at 12 Mars Road.

The NSW Planning Portal identifies the proposal as State Significant Development SSD-82052708 for the construction and 24-hour operation of a data centre, with overall power consumption of approximately 90MW. The project is currently on exhibition and is being assessed at state level rather than through the ordinary local development pathway.

(Source: NSW Planning Portal - Project Mars Data Centre).

<https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/projects/project-mars-data-centre>

My objection is based on the scale, intensity and continuous nature of this development, and the fact that it is proposed at a highly sensitive interface with residential homes, a primary school, childcare facilities, public open space, bushland, habitat areas and the Lane Cove Community Nursery.

1. Site suitability and proximity to sensitive receivers

While the land may be industrially zoned, the proposed use is not comparable to a typical industrial use. It is a hyper-scale, 24-hour facility with large mechanical plant, backup generators and significant infrastructure requirements.

The site is located at the edge of the industrial precinct and is in close proximity to residential streets, including Wood Street, Banksia Close and surrounding homes. The limited separation between the proposed development and surrounding residential land uses highlights the sensitivity of this interface and the potential for ongoing amenity impacts.



Figure 1: View from the north-western corner (looking north west) from the of 52 Wood Street from Lloyd Rees Drive, near Wood Street, illustrating the close residential properties.

boundary
proximity of the proposed site to surrounding

This visual proximity is central to my objection. A continuously operating 90MW data centre is not appropriate where it directly interfaces with homes, public open space, habitat areas and community uses. The proposed site sits on the E4 (General Industrial) however its boundary to the immediate east (represented also in Figure 1) is E4 Zoned land which is currently occupied by a long standing community nursery.

This proposal represents a failure of land-use planning at the interface of industrial and residential land, where the scale and intensity of the proposed use is inconsistent with the surrounding context, regardless of zoning permissibility.

2. Noise impacts, uncertainty and the natural amphitheatre

Noise is one of the most significant concerns for nearby residents. The facility would operate continuously, including overnight, when background noise levels are lowest and residential amenity is most sensitive.

The local topography reinforces this concern. The area between the Mars Road precinct, Lloyd Rees Drive and Wood Street forms a natural amphitheatre. This creates a real risk that mechanical plant noise, low-frequency noise and other operational noise may travel toward residential areas in ways that are not fully captured by modelling.

The following photographs illustrate the topography and the enclosed landform between Lloyd Rees Drive, Wood Street and Blackman Park.



Figure 2:
View from Lloyd Rees Drive looking east toward Wood Street,
illustrating rising topography and the potential for sound to travel toward
residential areas



Figure 3: View from near Wood Street looking down Lloyd Rees Drive toward Blackman Park, illustrating the downward slope toward bushland and the broader amphitheatre landform.



Figure 4: Additional view illustrating the enclosed amphitheatre landform between the proposed site, Lloyd Rees Drive and nearby residential areas.

The combination of topography and continuous mechanical noise creates a risk that sound will propagate beyond predicted levels into surrounding residential areas. I am particularly concerned that reliance on assumptions and predictive modelling may not reflect real-world operational conditions once the facility is built.

This concern is heightened by community experience with other data centres in the broader precinct, where residents have raised concerns that predicted noise outcomes have not necessarily matched lived experience.

For relevancy, the Airtrunk data centre (in the same industrial park), exceeded night time noise limits by 11dB(A). The Airtrunk data centre nearest receivers of this noise is 3 times the distance of what is being proposed for this data centre.

For a project of this scale, a 'predict now, resolve later' approach is not only unacceptable, but appears to not have resulted in further investigations, reviews or penalties. This approach places an unreasonable level of uncertainty on the surrounding community and highlights the need for greater clarity and accountability prior to determination.

3. Low-frequency noise and night-time disturbance

Low-frequency noise is a particular concern because it can travel further, penetrate buildings more readily, and be difficult to mitigate once operational plant is installed. The issue is not simply whether average noise levels meet minimum standards, but whether continuous, low-frequency or tonal noise will affect sleep, health and residential amenity over time.

I am concerned that current regulatory thresholds may not adequately protect residents from the lived impacts of continuous industrial noise, particularly where a large 24-hour facility is located so close to homes.

The assessment should demonstrate that low-frequency noise, tonal characteristics and night-time impacts have been fully and conservatively assessed.

4. Approval before critical design elements are finalised

A core concern is that critical aspects of plant, infrastructure and mitigation appear to be subject to final design or later confirmation. For a project of this scale, these details are not minor matters. They directly affect noise, air quality, energy demand, water demand, emissions, visual impact and operational intensity.

Approving the development before these elements are fully resolved introduces unacceptable uncertainty. The community should not be asked to accept a large-scale approval where the final operational impacts depend on decisions made after consent.

5. Cumulative impacts and lack of strategic planning

The proposal should not be assessed in isolation. There is an increasing concentration of data centres within and around the Lane Cove, North Ryde and Mars Road precincts. The cumulative impacts of multiple facilities are likely to be materially different from the impacts of any one facility assessed alone.

Cumulative impacts requiring proper assessment include:

- combined operational noise from multiple facilities
- combined generator emissions and air quality impacts
- combined construction traffic and disruption
- pressure on energy, water and stormwater infrastructure
- visual bulk and industrialisation of the precinct edge
- loss of vegetation and cumulative ecological pressure.

Lane Cove Council has publicly raised concerns about data centres, including noise, light spill, sediment runoff, construction impacts and pressure on local infrastructure. Source: Lane Cove Council - Data Centres, <https://www.lanecove.nsw.gov.au/Home/Tabs/Hot-Topics-and-Major-Projects/Data-Centres>

6. Construction impacts over an extended period

I understand that the construction period may extend for approximately three years and involve activity six days per week. If correct, this would represent a prolonged and significant disruption to the surrounding community rather than a short-term construction impact.

Construction impacts are likely to include:

- demolition noise and vibration
- construction noise over an extended period
- dust and air quality impacts from demolition, excavation and construction
- heavy vehicle movements and construction traffic
- increased parking demand from construction workers
- increased activity and congestion in streets that are currently relatively quiet.

The scale and duration of construction mean these impacts should be treated as a sustained amenity impact on nearby residents and community users, not merely a temporary inconvenience.

The duration and intensity of these works effectively represent a temporary industrialisation of the residential interface over a multi-year period.

7. Access, traffic and Banksia Close

The current business park access is primarily via Sam Johnson Way. The proposed data centre is the last building in Mars Road to the east and there is presently a dead end in this location to mitigate through traffic in the residential areas to the east. On the other side of Mars Road is Banksia Close which directly adjoins Mars Road but is currently closed off for through access as mentioned.

I am concerned that construction pressure or future 'scope creep' may lead to attempts to open or use the Banksia Close / Mars Road connection for construction or operational access. This would have a direct and serious community impact.

Banksia Close is a residential cul-de-sac used by local families. Children play in this environment because it is currently low-traffic and relatively safe. Opening this corridor to construction traffic, even temporarily, would:

- introduce heavy vehicle or construction traffic into a residential cul-de-sac
- increase safety risks for children and residents
- change the character and amenity of the street
- increase noise, dust and parking pressure in a residential setting.

Any approval should explicitly prohibit construction or operational access via Banksia Close and other residential streets, unless subject to separate public assessment and community consultation.

8. Tree loss, retained trees and landscape impact

The proposal involves the removal of mature trees and a significant alteration to the existing landscape character. Mature canopy cannot be replaced in any meaningful short-term way (even with established trees), and its loss has visual, ecological and amenity consequences.

Where trees are proposed to be retained along boundaries, I am concerned about whether this can realistically be achieved given the scale of construction, excavation, building proximity, soil disturbance and likely impacts to root systems.

From a professional perspective, as a qualified horticulturist (Cert III) and current landscape design student, the proposed planting strategy does not adequately respond to the functional requirements of the site.

It is my professional view that the proposed planting will not perform the critical roles required for:

- slope stabilisation
- sediment control
- effective screening and buffering
- long-term interface resilience

The landscape approach appears to be largely aesthetic rather than functional, and does not demonstrate integration with key environmental performance requirements.

In particular:

- Canopy tree planting alone will not stabilise soils or reduce runoff velocity
- The proposal does not demonstrate how sediment will be filtered or intercepted through planting design
- The interface planting lacks a layered structure (groundcover, mid-storey, canopy) required for effective buffering
- The strategy results in a visually porous interface, particularly along the eastern boundary

The visual presentation of the actual proposal should not rely on existing vegetation that may be removed, compromised or unlikely to survive construction. The true post-construction visual impact should be assessed transparently, including a realistic view of built form, hardscape, plant, fencing, security infrastructure and lighting.

Also of note is the comments within the report on removal of trees that are senescing or are dead. While these trees may not be aesthetically pleasing or considered necessary in urban design, many of these trees are kept in place and are used as habitat trees. These trees should not be removed needlessly and require further investigation on the benefits of keeping them. This is particularly relevant when referring to the next section on Biodiversity.

9. Plant selection and suitability

From a horticultural perspective, the proposed plant selection raises further concerns regarding its suitability for the site conditions and intended function.

The site presents a challenging environment due to:

- sloping terrain toward the southern boundary
- exposure to wind and altered microclimate conditions post-construction
- proximity to hardstand, heat-generating infrastructure and reflective surfaces
- potential changes to soil profile and drainage following excavation

Despite this, the planting strategy appears to rely heavily on canopy species without clearly demonstrating how species selection has been matched to:

- soil conditions and likely compaction
- water availability and drainage patterns
- long-term viability under altered site conditions
- the need for rapid establishment to provide screening and stabilisation

In particular:

- canopy species alone will not provide effective short- to medium-term screening
- there is limited evidence of robust mid-storey or groundcover planting required for soil stabilisation
- there is no clear demonstration that selected species are appropriate for a disturbed, engineered site environment

Without careful species selection and a layered planting approach, there is a high risk that:

- plant establishment will be inconsistent
- screening outcomes will be delayed or ineffective
- soil exposure and erosion risk will persist
- long-term landscape performance will not meet the expectations presented in the proposal

This reinforces the broader concern that the landscape strategy has been developed primarily for visual presentation rather than functional environmental performance.

10. Local biodiversity and nocturnal species

I have lived in Wood Street for over 20 years and have regularly heard nocturnal owl calls in the area, including what I understand to be Powerful Owl vocalisations. I do not overstate this as confirmed nesting evidence, but it does indicate long-term use of the local environment by nocturnal species.

In addition, I have directly observed and photographed a Tawny Frogmouth within my front yard, demonstrating that the immediate residential area is actively used by native nocturnal wildlife. These observations are not incidental; they indicate that the residential-bushland interface functions as an active habitat corridor rather than an occasional wildlife presence.

Figure 5:
Tawny Frogmouth observed in front yard,
Wood Street, Lane Cove West - April 2026,
approximately 9:20pm.

These observations indicate that the site and surrounding area form part of a functioning ecological corridor connected to nearby bushland and parkland. A 24-hour industrial facility adjacent to this environment raises concerns regarding:



...e
spill
habitat
braging and movement
species from the residential-bushland interface.
...nmental Impact Statement has specifically assessed the presence and behaviour of nocturnal species in the
of continuous night-time operation on those species. Given the demonstrated presence of nocturnal wildlife,
assessment of night-time ecological impacts is warranted.

11. Impact on Lane Cove Community Nursery

The Lane Cove Community Nursery is located immediately to the east of the proposed development and represents an important community and environmental asset.



immediately east of the proposed site, looking west

and illustrating direct proximity to the proposed development.

The nursery supports local revegetation, habitat and biodiversity programs.

Lane Cove Council states that volunteers at the Community Nursery help propagate over 10,000 seedlings each year, and that well over 250,000 seedlings have been grown by volunteers since the nursery opened in 2005. Council also states that plants propagated at the nursery are used in Bushcare, Backyard Habitat, bush regeneration and revegetation projects, community plant giveaways and other programs.

Source: Lane Cove Council - Community Nursery, <https://www.lanecove.nsw.gov.au/Environment-Sustainability/Community-Nursery>

I understand approximately 26 volunteers regularly work in this environment. Its function depends on suitable environmental conditions and a safe, accessible and practical working setting.

The introduction of a large-scale, 24-hour industrial facility immediately adjacent to the nursery raises concerns regarding:

- continuous operational noise affecting volunteer amenity and usability
- dust from demolition and construction affecting plant health and nursery operations
- light spill and overshadowing affecting growing conditions, particularly in winter
- loss of amenity and volunteer participation
- land-use incompatibility between a high-intensity industrial facility and a community-based environmental use.

The nursery is not a typical commercial use plant supplier. It is a community-driven environmental resource that directly supports local biodiversity outcomes. It is unclear whether the EIS has adequately assessed impacts on nursery operations, volunteer use and plant production activities.

In addition, the nursery's function as a propagation and revegetation space relies on stable environmental conditions. The current landscape proposal does not demonstrate how planting, soil stability and microclimate conditions will be protected during or after construction.

From a landscape perspective, the proposal fails to provide a functional transition zone between industrial development and a community-based environmental asset. This represents a clear failure in interface design.

12. Southern interface, habitat and sediment runoff risk

The southern interface is a separate concern from the Community Nursery. To the south, the site falls toward bushland, habitat areas, Blackman Park and the broader ecological corridor.

From a landscape and environmental design perspective, there is a clear disconnect between the proposed planting strategy and sediment control requirements.

Planting has not been demonstrated as part of an **integrated erosion and sediment control system**, and there is no evidence that the landscape design will contribute meaningfully to:

- soil stabilisation
- runoff attenuation
- sediment capture

For a site with this slope profile, planting must be designed as functional infrastructure, not simply as visual treatment.

The topography slopes downward from the proposed development site toward this southern interface. This creates a clear risk that sediment runoff and stormwater discharge during construction may flow into adjacent bushland and habitat areas.

The proposed development involves demolition, excavation and large-scale earthworks. In this context, effective erosion and sediment control is critical. While erosion and sediment control measures may be referenced, the level of detail appears high-level, with more detailed plans deferred to later stages such as construction management plans.

This creates uncertainty regarding:

- the effectiveness of sediment controls during construction
- the management of runoff during peak rainfall events
- the risk of sediment migration into adjacent bushland and habitat
- the cumulative impact of exposed soils over a prolonged construction period
- the ability to monitor and enforce controls once construction has commenced.

The reliance on post-approval construction management plans limits the ability to fully assess environmental risk at the determination stage. Given the scale of earthworks and the direction of site fall, any failure of sediment controls has the potential to directly impact adjacent bushland and habitat areas.

13. Eastern Boundary – Inadequate Residential Interface Treatment

The eastern boundary sits approximately 50 metres from low-density residential properties, with only a landscape setback separating the development from these dwellings.

Despite this, the proposed planting palette is dominated by large canopy species (*Angophora costata*, *Eucalyptus mannifera*, *Eucalyptus haemastoma*), which:

- Do not provide **effective visual screening at eye level**
- Offer **minimal noise attenuation** from a 24/7 operational facility
- Create a **long-term safety risk** due to known limb drop characteristics

This results in a landscape outcome that is visually porous and functionally ineffective as a residential buffer.

A development of this scale and operational intensity would typically require:

- A **layered planting structure** (canopy, mid-storey, dense shrub layer)
- Species selection that prioritises **screening, containment, and low risk**
- A clearly defined **buffer function**, not simply tree planting

The current proposal fails to demonstrate these principles.

14. Air quality and backup diesel generators

The proposal includes backup diesel generators and associated infrastructure. Even if generators are used primarily for testing and emergency operation, their presence creates legitimate air quality concerns given the proximity to homes, school, childcare facilities, the Community Nursery and public open space.

The assessment should clearly address generator testing frequency, duration, peak emission scenarios, cumulative generator emissions, fuel storage and emergency use. For a sensitive interface like this, air quality risks should be assessed conservatively and transparently.

15. Water demand, stormwater and resource impacts

A 90MW data centre is a major infrastructure and resource-intensive development. Water demand, stormwater design, reuse opportunities and downstream impacts should be clearly addressed before determination.

I am concerned that resource and stormwater impacts may be treated as technical matters to be resolved later, when they are central to understanding whether the site can accommodate the proposed intensity of use.

16. Visual impact and presentation of the proposal

I am concerned that visual materials may understate the true built form and site impact if they rely on existing vegetation, superimposed landscaping, selective viewpoints or design narratives that distract from the scale of the structure and infrastructure.

The proposal should be assessed on realistic post-construction conditions, including any vegetation removed, compromised or unlikely to survive; the bulk and height of the building; plant, fencing, security infrastructure; lighting; and the cumulative visual effect when viewed from nearby homes, streets, parkland and the Community Nursery.

17. Economic and social benefit

The claimed economic benefits of the proposal should be weighed against the direct local impacts borne by nearby residents, community users, volunteers and environmental assets.

A large capital spend does not necessarily translate into proportional local community benefit, particularly where the completed facility may generate relatively limited ongoing local employment compared with the scale of amenity and environmental impact.

The social benefit case should be clearly demonstrated, not assumed.

18. Community consultation and transparency

For a development of this scale and potential local impact, affected residents and community users should have been engaged in a transparent and meaningful way.

The complexity of the EIS and the number of technical appendices make it difficult for ordinary residents to understand the full implications of the proposal within the exhibition period. This is particularly concerning where key issues appear to be deferred to later design or construction management stages.

The community should not have to rely on piecing together risks from multiple technical documents. The proponent should be required to clearly explain impacts, assumptions, mitigation measures and residual risks in plain language.

19. Landscape design as environmental infrastructure

For a development of this scale and sensitivity, landscape design should function as **environmental infrastructure**, not simply visual treatment.

This includes:

- stabilising soils on sloping land
- managing stormwater and runoff
- protecting adjacent habitat areas
- providing effective buffering to residential and community interfaces

The current proposal does not demonstrate that landscape elements will perform these functions.

This represents a fundamental gap in the Environmental Impact Statement, particularly given the reliance on deferred construction-stage controls for sediment and environmental management.

20. Fundamental planning concern

This submission is not based on a single issue, but on the cumulative effect of multiple unresolved risks at a highly sensitive interface.

Even if individual impacts are assessed as “acceptable” in isolation, the combination of:

- continuous industrial noise
- proximity to residential and community uses
- environmental and habitat risk
- impacts on the Lane Cove Community Nursery
- multi-year construction impacts
- uncertainty in final design and operational outcomes

creates an overall outcome that is not appropriate for this location.

This proposal represents a fundamental failure to appropriately reconcile industrial development with surrounding residential, environmental and community land uses.

The cumulative impact of these factors cannot be mitigated through conditions alone and instead requires reconsideration of the suitability of the site for this scale and type of development.

Conclusion

This proposal represents an over-scaled, high-intensity 24-hour industrial development at an inappropriate and sensitive interface.

Key concerns remain unresolved, including:

- site suitability and land-use conflict
- noise impacts, including low-frequency and night-time noise
- topographic amplification and the natural amphitheatre effect
- approval before critical design elements are finalised
- cumulative impacts from multiple data centres
- tree loss and uncertain landscape outcomes
- impacts on nocturnal wildlife and biodiversity
- impacts on the Lane Cove Community Nursery
- sediment runoff risk toward southern habitat land
- air quality impacts from backup generators
- multi-year construction impacts
- access risks involving Banksia Close and residential streets
- insufficient transparency and consultation.

Given these factors, I do not consider the site suitable for a development of this scale and intensity.

Request

I respectfully request that the proposal be refused. If the project is not refused, it should at minimum be subject to substantially more rigorous assessment and strict, enforceable conditions, including:

- independent review of noise modelling, including low-frequency and night-time noise
- specific assessment of topographic noise propagation toward Wood Street
- clear prohibition on construction or operational access via Banksia Close and residential streets
- detailed construction traffic, parking and worker management controls
- specific assessment and protection of the Lane Cove Community Nursery
- targeted assessment of nocturnal species and night-time ecological impacts
- detailed erosion and sediment controls assessed before approval, not merely deferred
- strict generator testing limits and air quality controls
- transparent final design information before determination
- ongoing monitoring, public reporting and enforceable compliance mechanisms.

Sources and supporting references

1. NSW Planning Portal - Project Mars Data Centre, SSD-82052708:
<https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/projects/project-mars-data-centre>
2. Lane Cove Council - Data Centres: <https://www.lanecove.nsw.gov.au/Home/Tabs/Hot-Topics-and-Major-Projects/Data-Centres>
3. Lane Cove Council - Community Nursery: <https://www.lanecove.nsw.gov.au/Environment-Sustainability/Community-Nursery>
4. Photographs supplied by the author of this report, taken from Wood Street, Lloyd Rees Drive and the Lane Cove Community Nursery interface, May 2026.