



Lane Cove Responsible Planning Group

1. Executive Summary

This submission is made on behalf of 132 residents of the Lane Cove Responsible Planning Group who are deeply concerned about the proposed data centre at 12 Mars Road.

Lane Cove is a green, well established and highly valued community, known for its bushland, wildlife and the Lane Cove River, which is actively used by rowers and the broader community throughout the year. It is not simply a suburb, but a way of life for many families who have chosen to live here because of its environmental character, open space and strong sense of community.

The proposal introduces large scale, continuously operating industrial infrastructure into a location defined by its proximity to homes, public open space and environmentally sensitive land adjacent to the site. Approval of this development would fundamentally and permanently alter the character of the area in a way that cannot be reversed.

This proposal also forms part of a rapidly emerging cluster of hyperscale data centres, yet the cumulative impacts of this concentration have not been properly assessed.

Critically, the Environmental Impact Statement relies on indicative design, assumed performance and future mitigation rather than confirmed and verifiable outcomes.

At the time of writing, a community petition opposing this proposal has received **1,127 signatures** and continues to grow. This represents clear, organised and sustained opposition from residents, families and local workers who will be directly affected by the development.

This level of community response is a relevant consideration in assessing the public interest under section 4.15 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 and should be given appropriate weight in the determination of this application.

A copy of the petition and supporting details can be accessed here:
<https://www.change.org/p/oppose-the-development-of-a-new-data-centre-at-12-mars-rd-lane-cove>

In its current form, the proposal does not demonstrate that the site is suitable, that impacts are acceptable or that the public interest is protected.

2. Cumulative Impacts

For the community, the issue is not a single development. It is the transformation of the precinct.

Lane Cove West is undergoing rapid intensification as multiple hyperscale data centres are introduced within a confined area. While each proposal is assessed individually, their impacts will be experienced collectively and continuously.

The documentation acknowledges cumulative impacts but relies on standardised methodologies rather than assessing the real world scenario of multiple facilities operating concurrently. This approach does not reflect the scale, intensity or permanence of the clustering occurring in the area.

Without a genuine cumulative assessment, the consent authority cannot properly evaluate long term impacts on residents, infrastructure or the environment. This is a fundamental requirement under section 4.15 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 and has not been satisfied.

3. Homes and School Proximity

The proposed site is located at the edge of the E4 General Industrial zone. However, this is not a remote or isolated industrial location.

The proposal sits in immediate proximity to sensitive receivers, including residential dwellings ranging from approximately 16 metres to 350 metres from the site, a primary school located approximately 160 metres away, and heavily used public open space directly adjacent to the site. This open space includes multi sport playing fields, tennis courts, a skate park and playground, all of which are used daily by families and children. These are defining features of the area, not peripheral uses.

Importantly, there are inconsistencies within the project documentation regarding the distance to residential receivers. Certain reports describe the nearest residential properties as being approximately 200 metres away, while other project information confirms that residential interfaces occur significantly closer to the site boundary.

This discrepancy materially alters the planning context.

It raises serious concerns as to whether key assessments, including noise, air quality and visual impact, have been based on an accurate understanding of the site's relationship to sensitive receivers.

There is also significant concern within the local school community. Lane Cove West Public School, located approximately 160 metres from the site, supports around 450 students and operates beyond standard school hours through an Outside School Hours Care (OOSH) program, with children present from 7am-6m weekdays and throughout school holidays.

Parents have raised concerns about the potential impact of continuous operational noise from large scale cooling systems and the routine testing and use of backup generators. Equipment of this nature typically produces persistent background noise, including low frequency sound, which can be present both day and night.

Research, including guidance from the World Health Organization, has identified that ongoing background noise, particularly low frequency noise, can disrupt sleep, reduce concentration, increase stress and negatively affect learning and wellbeing in children, who are more sensitive to environmental stressors than adults. These impacts are not limited to loud events, but also arise from continuous, low level noise that interferes with rest and cognitive function.

A development of this scale and intensity is fundamentally incompatible with such close proximity to homes, a school and community spaces.

4. Noise, Air Quality and Operational Risks Are Understated

The proposal involves continuous 24 hour operation supported by extensive mechanical plant and a large number of backup diesel generators. This is not a facility that operates occasionally or within limited hours. It is a permanent source of industrial activity introduced into an area where families live, children attend school and the community spends time outdoors.

For residents, and particularly for families with young children, the concern is not whether the development technically meets minimum criteria on paper, but what the environment will feel like on a daily basis. Children at Lane Cove West Public School and in surrounding homes and parks will be exposed to these conditions for extended periods of time, during learning, play and rest.

The Noise Impact Assessment concludes that impacts comply with relevant criteria. However, this conclusion is based on modelling using indicative equipment and assumed operating conditions. Predicted noise levels sit at or very close to allowable limits, leaving little to no margin once final equipment is installed and operating in real conditions.

There are also key areas of uncertainty that are particularly concerning to the community. Low frequency noise, which is known to travel further and penetrate buildings, has not been fully resolved. Generator operation during outages, when multiple units may run simultaneously, has not been comprehensively assessed. In addition, the combined operational noise from multiple data centres within the same precinct has not been realistically modelled.

For children, these impacts are not limited to loud or sudden noise events. Continuous background noise, even at relatively low levels, can affect concentration in classrooms, interfere with outdoor play and disrupt sleep at home. Research, including guidance from the World Health Organization, shows that children are more sensitive to these types of environmental stressors, with impacts on learning, attention and overall wellbeing.

A further concern is the reliance on assessment approaches and thresholds that are typically applied to industrial developments within established industrial zones. While these may be appropriate in locations where sensitive receivers are limited or more distant, their application in this context is not appropriate.

This site is located in close proximity to homes, a primary school, areas used daily by children and environmentally sensitive land. The standard thresholds and allowances used in the assessment were not developed with this type of interface in mind.

In these circumstances, a more precautionary approach is required. Where young children are present for extended periods, including during school hours and outside school care, a lower and more conservative threshold for acceptable impact should be considered. This reflects both sound planning principles and broader responsibilities to protect children's health and wellbeing.

The current assessment does not adequately account for this. Instead, it applies standardised criteria that do not reflect the sensitivity of the surrounding environment, which risks understating the true impact on the community.

Similarly, the Air Quality Impact Assessment relies on dispersion modelling that is dependent on assumptions regarding generator use, operating frequency and background conditions. These assumptions are central to the findings, yet they do not account for future demand or the cumulative operation of multiple facilities within an already intensifying precinct.

Each of these technical reports is also subject to explicit disclaimers noting that the findings are based on available data, assumptions and a defined scope of work. This reinforces the level of uncertainty inherent in the assessment.

In this context, it cannot be concluded with confidence that the impacts on the community, and particularly on children, will remain acceptable over time.

5. Infrastructure Connections

The proposal assumes that the necessary infrastructure will be available to support a development of this scale. However, the Infrastructure Delivery Plan makes it clear that key elements, including electricity supply and water capacity, are still subject to further design and ongoing consultation.

For the local community, this creates a level of uncertainty that cannot be overlooked.

Families living in the area, and those with children attending nearby schools, have already experienced the impact of infrastructure works associated with surrounding developments. Road disruptions, service upgrades, construction activity and unplanned works have become part of daily life. These are not abstract risks, they are real, lived experiences.

The fact that essential infrastructure requirements are not yet fully defined means that the community cannot understand:

- whether existing systems can reliably support this development
- what additional upgrades will be required
- when those works will occur and how long they will last

For school children, this uncertainty translates into potential ongoing disruption to daily routines, including access to school, safety around increased traffic and extended exposure to construction environments. For families, it raises concerns about reliability of essential services and the cumulative strain placed on local infrastructure.

In an area already experiencing growing demand from multiple large scale developments, approving another high intensity facility without confirmed and coordinated infrastructure solutions places the burden of that uncertainty directly on the community.

This is not simply a technical issue. It is a question of whether the surrounding neighbourhood, including its families and children, can continue to function safely and reliably as essential services are pushed beyond their current capacity.

6. Construction Impacts

Construction is often described as temporary, but for the families who live nearby, it will be a prolonged and deeply disruptive part of daily life.

The geotechnical assessment confirms that the development will require extensive excavation, earthworks and significant modification of the site. This level of intervention shows that the site is not naturally suited to the proposed use and will need to be heavily engineered over an extended period.

For the surrounding community, this means ongoing exposure to construction conditions that are difficult to avoid. Noise and vibration will be present throughout the day, heavy vehicles will be moving through local streets, and dust will affect air quality in homes, schools and outdoor spaces.

For children, these impacts are particularly concerning. Students at Lane Cove West Public School, as well as younger children using nearby parks, playgrounds and sporting facilities, will be exposed to this environment during key parts of their day. Construction traffic increases safety risks around school drop off and pick up times,

while constant noise and disruption can affect learning, concentration and the ability to enjoy outdoor activities.

Families rely on these spaces as part of everyday life. They are not optional or occasional uses, but essential parts of how the community functions.

Importantly, this development is not occurring in isolation. With multiple projects progressing within the same area, there is a real likelihood that construction impacts will overlap, extending disruption across several years. What might be considered temporary on one site becomes long term when experienced across multiple sites at once.

This cumulative construction scenario has not been properly assessed, yet it is the reality that the community, and especially local children, are likely to experience.

7. Environmental Impacts

The Arborist Report confirms that the site and surrounding area contain a large number of established trees that contribute to a broader ecological network. For residents, these are not just trees on a plan. They provide shade, support local wildlife and create the green, natural environment that families value and use daily. Children play under these trees, walk through these areas on their way to school and experience them as part of growing up in Lane Cove.

The removal of vegetation and disturbance of these areas will reduce habitat and break ecological connections that are already limited in an urban setting. Once this natural environment is lost or fragmented, it cannot easily be restored.

The proposed mitigation measures do not provide sufficient certainty. They rely heavily on future management plans and performance based outcomes rather than clear, enforceable protections that can be assessed now. This means that key environmental safeguards are effectively deferred to later stages, leaving the community without a clear understanding of what the final outcome will be.

There are also broader environmental impacts that directly affect how the area feels and functions for families. Continuous operation of a large scale data centre introduces ongoing heat into the local environment, which may contribute to warmer surrounding conditions, particularly in already built up areas. Construction activity brings the risk of dust, sediment and runoff affecting nearby green spaces and waterways. These are the same spaces used by children, families and the wider community for recreation and daily activities.

In addition, nearby community and environmental assets rely on stable local conditions to continue operating effectively. Changes to air quality, temperature and surrounding vegetation can have unintended consequences for these spaces.

When these impacts are considered together, rather than in isolation, they point to a gradual but permanent shift in the character of the area. The combined effect on the

environment, and in turn on the people who rely on it, has not been fully assessed or clearly understood.

For families in Lane Cove, this is not just about environmental compliance. It is about preserving the natural setting that supports community life, children's wellbeing and the everyday experience of living in this area.

8. Public Interest and Community Impact

This proposal places a concentrated and lasting burden on a small, established community that has built its identity around liveability, green space and family life.

For residents, this is not an abstract planning decision. It is about what their everyday environment will become. Families are being asked to accept a gradual but permanent shift away from a quiet, community focused area toward one defined by continuous industrial activity, environmental change and ongoing uncertainty about future impacts.

For children, this change is even more significant. Their daily lives are shaped by their surroundings. They learn, play and grow in nearby schools, parks and streets. These spaces are not occasional destinations, they are central to their wellbeing. A shift in the character of the area affects how they experience their neighbourhood, how they concentrate at school, how they rest at home and how safe and comfortable they feel outdoors.

The Social Impact Assessment itself acknowledges that there will be changes to amenity, community character and wellbeing. However, it ultimately concludes that these impacts are acceptable. For many in the community, this conclusion does not reflect the reality of what is being proposed or the scale of change that will be experienced over time.

There is a clear disconnect between the impacts identified and the weight given to them in the final assessment.

There is also a material impact that cannot be ignored. Families have made long term financial and personal commitments to live in this area, often choosing it specifically for its environmental quality, access to green space and suitability for raising children. A development of this nature has the potential to reduce property values, limit future opportunities and create uncertainty for homeowners who may no longer feel secure in the place they intended to stay long term. For many, this represents not just a change in lifestyle, but a real financial loss and a loss of confidence in the stability of their community.

Community concern is not isolated or temporary. It is growing and consistent. It reflects a deeper concern not only about this development, but about the long term direction of the area and what it is becoming for the families and children who live here.

9. Business Park Public Interest

The Lane Cove West Business Park is a functioning and diverse employment precinct that forms part of the local community and local economy. It is not vacant or underused land waiting for a single industrial use. It currently supports a range of businesses that provide services, employment and economic activity connected to Lane Cove and surrounding areas.

Many of these businesses have invested significantly in their premises, equipment, staff and customer relationships over many years. They contribute to the day to day life of the area by providing local jobs, supporting suppliers and giving workers a reason to remain connected to Lane Cove West.

The progressive conversion of the business park into a data centre cluster risks displacing these existing businesses and replacing a diverse employment precinct with a single, highly specialised use. This is not a natural or balanced evolution of land use. It is a forced shift driven by the concentration of one high intensity industry.

The Social Impact and Engagement reporting does not appear to reflect the real experience of affected businesses. Many business owners and workers are not choosing to leave because they no longer want to be there. They are being forced to relocate despite long term investment, established operations and strong ties to the area.

This has consequences beyond individual businesses. It means local job losses, displaced workers, disruption to established business networks and a reduction in the economic diversity of the precinct. Workers who currently rely on this location may need to move elsewhere, travel further or lose access to employment connected to their local area.

Over time, concentrating the precinct around a single use reduces its flexibility, resilience and long term value to the broader community. A healthy business park should support a mix of businesses, services and employment opportunities. Replacing that diversity with a cluster of data centres weakens the economic role of Lane Cove West and is contrary to sound planning principles.

Final Position

This proposal seeks approval based on indicative design, assumed performance and future mitigation rather than demonstrated and verifiable outcomes.

It does not properly assess the cumulative impacts of multiple large scale developments operating together. It does not accurately reflect the true proximity to homes, a school and community spaces where children spend their time. It does not provide certainty that essential infrastructure can support this level of intensity. It does not adequately resolve the long term environmental and social impacts that will be experienced by the people who live and work here.

For families, this is about the kind of environment their children will grow up in. It is about their ability to learn, rest, play and feel safe in their own neighbourhood. For children attending nearby schools and using local parks, this proposal introduces a permanent industrial presence into spaces that are currently part of everyday community life.

For workers and businesses within the Lane Cove West Business Park, it represents the gradual loss of a diverse and functioning employment area, replacing it with a single use that displaces existing jobs and weakens the local economy.

This is not a balanced or responsible planning outcome.

On behalf of 132 members of the Lane Cove Responsible Planning Group, and the broader community of families and workers affected by this proposal, we strongly object to this development and request that it not be approved.

We also request that the proposal be referred to the Independent Planning Commission for independent review.