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'Diabolical': Huge AI call, 24/7 sound warning as Blue



Melbourne's water supply buckling under population growth, AI

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noise intrusion”.

Eerie videos from the US show what residents living near data centres in America are facing, as so emit a constant high-pitched droning noise at all times of the day.

Three cities in the US are now even suing the AI companies behind the data centres in their backya noise becomes unbearable.





American records what it's like to live...

A US resident has captured the 24/7... [more](#)

New York state this month passed a one-year moratorium on large data centres. At least four other states have brought in temporary bans on construction.

However, as the power-hungry AI industry expands at a rapid rate, Australia is emerging as a hot destination for new centres, and Australians across the nation are pushing back against them.

Australia currently has at least 162 operational data centres, with another 90 or more in the planning and development pipeline, with the vast majority heavily clustered along the eastern seaboard in Sydney and Melbourne.

Over the weekend, a Sydney-based civil engineering and construction company, MAK Urban Group, has pulled back in its plans to erect a \$4.8 million development in the heart of the Blue Mountains.

MAK's application proposes the facility on a residential street in north Katoomba, a block from a school and bordering a park. It's about an eight-minute drive from one of Australia's most iconic sights, the Three Sisters in the Blue Mountains. The centre is expected to employ two to five members of staff.



The site would be an eight minutes' drive from the Three Sisters lookout.

Furious residents started the Stop Data Centres Blue Mountains campaign, which described the de “threat to peace”, citing 24/7 low-frequency noise intrusion, concern for pressures on electricity and potential PFAS exposure and insufficient bushfire protections.

The concerns of a 24/7 noise coming from the site would be a stark contrast to what residents expe

“Katoomba at night is genuinely quiet. The night-time Rating Background Level is just 25 dBA – an acoustic environment,” the residents wrote in the petition. “Their own noise report modelled three di equipment scenarios. In every single one, low-frequency noise was still significantly above that bac night. Even the ‘best case’ scenario – the one they’re calling compliant – still produces low-frequen report says ‘is likely to be audible.’



Data centres like this one in the US are causing headaches for residents. Picture: AP Photo/Jenny Kane

“The E4 General Industrial zone in the Blue Mountains must be interpreted in its local context: a Wc adjacent city, with sensitive bushland, riparian corridors, quiet residential areas and serious bushfire

“It was not designed for energy-hungry digital infrastructure drawing 1–2 megawatts, generating cor mechanical noise from chillers, cooling towers and ventilation systems, and placing battery banks a generators on Flame Zone land — infrastructure that runs continuously regardless of stated busine:

The Katoomba campaign is part of a growing national movement. Some 60,000 Aussies have signe petitions opposing data centre and AI infrastructure proposals.

‘Diabolical idea’

On Friday, it was revealed the Blue Mountains campaign had been successful. MAK Urban Group c manager Mohammad Hammoud confirmed the developer would be withdrawing the application, for

“We remain confident that data centre infrastructure can deliver significant economic. employment a

connectivity benefits to regional communities," he said in a statement.

"However, throughout the assessment process we have listened closely to the views expressed by community groups and other stakeholders ... Rather than continue with the current application, we step back and undertake further consideration of the proposal."

The Blue Mountains City Mayor Mark Greenhill welcomed the call, saying it was a "diabolical idea" in Australia that's a city within a World Heritage National Park. "Council made its concerns clear, and made its concerns clear," Cr Greenhill said. "This was the wrong proposal in the wrong location."



Blue Mountains Mayor Mark Greenhill said the idea was 'diabolical'.

"Data centres are intensive developments. They place significant demands on power and water, and serious questions about noise, amenity, air quality, fire risk and environmental impact."

"In this case, those concerns were heightened by the site's proximity to homes, a public school and watercourse."

Cr Greenhill said the withdrawal showed the importance of community voices being heard through the process.

"I want to thank the residents who took the time to engage with this issue and raise their concerns," said.

"The Blue Mountains is a city within a World Heritage Area. Any development proposed here must fit into its setting, be respectful of nearby residents, and properly tested against the environmental and infrastructure constraints of our city."

A NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into data centres is currently underway, with findings and recommendations released.

“That inquiry reflects the fact that data centres raise complex issues for communities across NSW,” said.

“Until those issues are properly understood and addressed, a cautious approach is needed.”

MAK is now revisiting the plans, saying the centre would be a “significantly reduced-scale, commun development ... designed with its surroundings in mind”. It said it would reduce the environmental ir measures such as low-carbon construction materials and heat capture.

AI giants spot data centre opportunity in Australia

The call comes as AI behemoths look to build increasing numbers of centres in Australia due to its clean energy resources and stable society.

Recent construction numbers released by the ABS show there has been a [whopping \\$83.4 billion s construction in the space of three months](#). It's the second-largest quarterly outlay in Australia's histo



A map shows where data centres are in Australia. Picture: Data Center Map

For comparison, the value of residential building work is falling sharply and accounts for just \$27 bil overall number.

OpenAI co-founder Sam Altman told a Sydney conference in May that Australia would “be in the ve places in the world in terms of what’s possible”.

“Australia has among the best natural resources and abundant clean energy [stores] in the world, a wanted to become a data centre capital of the world, it would certainly be able to,” he said.

The Australian government has been working with OpenAI and its major rival Anthropic over the pa attract data centre investment. OpenAI has said it will be the major customer of a \$7 billion data cer

constructed by ASX-listed NextDC, which will be the biggest in the southern hemisphere.

However, the pushback has been significant amid the massive demand the centres will place on the energy over the next 15 years.

You only need to look to the US, where at least \$4.2 trillion will be spent on AI infrastructure by 2025, as residents are reacting to having data centres in their backyards.

Residents in three small US cities have filed lawsuits against data centres, alleging they suffer from vibration akin to the low-frequency thrum of an air conditioner and the rhythmic pulse of a subwoofer. The *York Times* has reported.

New York state this month passed a one-year moratorium on large data centres. At least four other states have brought in temporary bans on construction to give governments time to establish guidelines.



CEO of OpenAI Sam Altman. Picture: AP Photo/Julia Demaree Nikhinson

A [shocking report in May](#), commissioned by Greenpeace Australia Pacific and an independent expert, warned that the rollout of power-hungry data centres needed to sustain AI will derail the country's transition to renewable energy, with experts calling for an urgent moratorium on new centres.

"Australia is completely unprepared for the magnitude of impacts of the AI-driven data centre frenzy," said Rafalowicz, Head of Climate and Energy at Greenpeace Australia Pacific.

"Data centres are being rolled out at a feverish pace, with some of the largest planned for Australia consuming as much energy as Adelaide."

The report said Australian Energy Market Operator data shows that data centres will double in their proportion of total energy demand by 2040, growing from three to six per cent of the country's total energy use in a low growth scenario.

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energy use in a low-growth scenario.

In a high-growth scenario, the demand for energy will surge six and a half times, soaring from two to 13 per cent of the country's total energy use by 2040.

This is more than the total load from electric vehicles or all electrification of connected households.



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