

Best Effort

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15 STORIES

THE BRIEFING

Parliament has passed the Universal Outdoor Mobile Obligation, requiring Telstra, Optus and TPG Telecom to deliver outdoor voice and SMS coverage almost everywhere from 1 December 2027 using satellite direct-to-device services. Separately, NEXTDC cut its FY27 outlook by about \$140m after Jemena delayed power works at M3 Melbourne, and its shares closed down about 42 per cent on 21 October 2026. Data centre proposals worth billions also advanced in New South Wales.

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10 CARRIERS & NETWORKS

Mobile dropout complaints up 22.6 per cent even as total telco complaints fall

The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman recorded a 6.5 per cent fall in complaints over the year, but mobile dropout complaints rose 22.6 per cent. ACCAN says the fall reflects consumers giving up rather than better service.

11 CARRIERS & NETWORKS

Australian carriers switch on Temporary Disaster Roaming after years of testing

Telstra, Optus and TPG have made Temporary Disaster Roaming available in disaster-hit parts of the country, letting phones join another carrier's network when their own fails. It carries no extra charge but works only under tight conditions.

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Pocock proposes 5 per cent levy on data centre revenue, citing low tax paid

ACT independent senator David Pocock wants a 5 per cent levy on AI data centre revenue, which he says the Parliamentary Budget Office has costed at more than \$500 million by the end of 2030. No bill has been introduced, and industry is already pushing back.

13 CARRIERS & NETWORKS

Optus switches on 1,000th upgraded regional 5G site, targets 1,500 by end of 2028

Optus has reached 1,000 upgraded regional 5G sites, having nearly doubled the number in 18 months, and says it plans 1,500 by the end of 2028 and almost 2,500 by 2030.

14 CARRIERS & NETWORKS

Rural Fibre Co plans 21Gbps symmetrical service on 25G-PON from February 2027

Latrobe Valley operator Rural Fibre Co intends to bring 25G-PON to its Gippsland network in February 2027, with symmetrical speeds of up to 21 gigabits per second. The company describes the service as an Australian first.

15 AI INFRASTRUCTURE

Anthropic ties Australian AI investment to a clear legal basis for model training

In written answers to a parliamentary committee, Anthropic said building models in Australia would bring more lasting investment than serving them here, but it offered no figures, sites or power needs. The committee reports by 30 November 2026.

Parliament passes Universal Outdoor Mobile Obligation, starting 1 December 2027

Telstra, Optus and TPG Telecom will have to provide outdoor voice and SMS coverage almost everywhere under the new law, using satellite direct-to-device services. The Coalition secured amendments on disaster roaming and reliability standards, while ACCAN says the law leaves gaps.

FRI 23 OCT 2026 · 4 SOURCES · 2 MIN READ · WRITTEN BY AI

Parliament has passed the Universal Outdoor Mobile Obligation (UOMO), which will require Telstra, Optus and TPG Telecom to provide SMS and voice coverage almost everywhere a person can see the sky. The law is due to start on 1 December 2027, subject to market developments. Light Reading reported that only around a third of the Australian landmass currently has terrestrial mobile coverage.

The coverage is expected to come from existing land-based towers combined with low-Earth-orbit satellite technology that connects directly to handsets. According to Critical Comms, the bill cleared the Senate with Coalition amendments included, while amendments from the Greens and the Jacqui Lambie Network were voted down.

The law lets the Minister for Communications set standards, benchmarks and rules that mobile operators must meet. According to Light Reading, the minister can adjust or defer requirements until 2030 depending on market and technology readiness, and has discretion over coverage areas, costs, funding, Triple Zero capabilities, timing and fault rectification. Communications Minister Anika Wells said the law "makes sure our laws better reflect the way Australians communicate today". She said it also lets the government set minimum performance and reliability standards.

The Coalition says it secured three changes. They legislate temporary disaster roaming during eligible emergencies, require minimum network performance and reliability standards informed by an ACCC inquiry, and require the minister to ask the ACCC to consider domestic mobile roaming. Coalition MP Dan Tehan said "Temporary disaster roaming is a sensible safeguard, but it is not a substitute for investment in mobile infrastructure."

Australian Telecommunications Alliance chief executive Luke Coleman raised concerns that the spectrum needed for satellite services has not been allocated and the technology still has to be integrated into networks. He said telcos would have to negotiate commercial agreements because Australia has no plan for a sovereign LEO satellite capability. Coleman said "We are talking about services in areas that are by definition not commercially viable," adding that funding them sustainably is a real challenge.

ACCAN chief executive Carol Bennett called the law a vital safety net but said it leaves missed opportunities. She said "Until roaming and enforceable reliability standards are in place, Australians have no guarantee they can connect when it matters most," and that reliability standards could be implemented once the ACCC concludes its inquiry in 12 months. NSW Farmers also said the bill could have introduced mandatory domestic roaming.

Parliament also passed the Telecommunications Amendment (Enhancing Consumer Safeguards) Bill 2025, which raises penalties about 40 times, to more than \$10 million in some cases, and makes registered industry codes directly enforceable by the ACMA.

› WHY IT MATTERS

The law sets a universal outdoor coverage obligation for the three network operators that relies on satellite direct-to-device services, but spectrum, integration and funding questions remain open, and reliability standards and domestic roaming depend on the ACCC inquiry and ministerial decisions.

SOURCES

- [1] Light Reading: [Australia passes outdoor mobile coverage mandate](#)
- [2] Critical Comms: [Laws passed to expand mobile coverage, protect consumers](#)
- [3] Minister for Communications: [Ensuring better mobile coverage for all Australians](#)
- [4] [coast.com.au](#): [Tehan Welcomes Changes](#)

NEXTDC lodges \$1.79b application for second stage of Horsley Park S4 campus

NEXTDC has filed a \$1.79 billion State Significant Development application for Phase 2 of its S4 campus at Horsley Park, covering two buildings designed for 180 megawatts. The site adjoins a Phase 1 approval granted in December 2025.

FRI 23 OCT 2026 · 1 SOURCE · 1 MIN READ · WRITTEN BY AI

NEXTDC has put forward a \$1.79 billion State Significant Development application for the next stage of its S4 campus at 6 Johnston Crescent, Horsley Park. Two buildings are proposed, with roughly 35,992 sqm of gross floor area between them. The NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure lists the project as SSD-108864209, and its status is exhibition.

Building EF would rise four storeys and Building G two, each topping out at 38.67 metres. The design load is 180 megawatts, with operations running continuously. The works also take in offices, plant, parking, loading areas and landscaping, along with excavation, earthworks and site preparation.

Phase 1 of S4, next door, was consented in December 2025 for six buildings and 250 megawatts of operational capacity. Phase 2 would draw on the electricity and water connections, vehicle access and security arrangements built for that earlier approval.

The project is expected to support about 217 ongoing full-time equivalent roles, with as many as 89 staff on site at a time. Urbis is the planning consultant and HDR Architects handled the architecture for applicant NEXTDC.

Figures on the planning listing's project snapshot differ from those in the project description. The snapshot shows capital investment of \$3.50 billion, data centre capacity of 134.40 MW, gross floor area of 37,425 sqm and 1,100 construction jobs. It also records a scoping proposal scheme dated 2026-03-12 and a site area of 213,300 sqm.

› WHY IT MATTERS

The filing signals further large data centre capacity planned for western Sydney, building on a 250 megawatt Phase 1 consent and reusing that stage's utility connections.

SOURCES

[1] Urban Digest: [\\$1.79b NEXTDC Data Centre Expansion Proposed in Horsley Park](#)

NEXTDC cuts FY27 outlook by about \$140m as Jemena delays hit M3 Melbourne

NEXTDC lowered its FY27 revenue and earnings forecasts after Jemena paused power line works feeding its West Footscray campus, and its shares ended the day down about 42 per cent on 21 October 2026.

FRI 23 OCT 2026 · 6 SOURCES · 2 MIN READ · WRITTEN BY AI

NEXTDC lowered its FY27 forecasts on 21 October 2026 because Jemena stopped network works needed to raise grid supply to the M3 data centre in West Footscray, Melbourne. The company now expects net revenue of \$475 million to \$500 million, against an earlier range of \$615 million to \$640 million. Underlying EBITDA is now guided at \$245 million to \$265 million, from \$385 million to \$410 million. NEXTDC said the earlier ranges included about \$140 million of each measure from the affected M3 contracts, and that removing them is the main reason for the change.

Jemena paused parts of the 66kV line works in September, giving safety concerns, blocked access to work sites amid community opposition, and the local council, as road authority, withholding consent during further consultation. It has since told NEXTDC formally that it does not expect to resume before February 2027, and NEXTDC now expects the next lift in grid supply during FY28. Nine described the poles as concrete structures up to 22 metres tall, and ABC reported that residents in Yarraville had obstructed crews.

Chief executive Craig Scroggie said the affected contracts were out of guidance until their contribution could be reliably estimated. Second Order reported that the exclusion also covers M3 capacity already billing, because existing supply cannot be relied on to carry the full power ramp the customer contracted for. Later supply increases depend on transformer projects at Brooklyn Terminal Station, and NEXTDC expects the first to finish later than planned.

A Victorian permit for M3 Stages 6 and 7, sought in February 2026, is also running late. NEXTDC does not expect a decision before 2027, because the state government enters caretaker conventions on 3 November ahead of the 28 November election. The company is assessing the position under the customer contracts, which allow for service level credits on late capacity and, in some circumstances, termination rights, and it is considering whether force majeure relief applies.

NEXTDC has put new development projects and land purchases on hold and will look at capital recycling, including selling some development sites. Nine reported that planned spending this financial year was cut by \$750 million and that about \$750 million of Sydney and Melbourne sites may be sold. Scroggie said liquidity was about \$8.7 billion at 30 September 2026 and covenants were being met. Second Order said drawing the \$6.7 billion of senior debt depends on when customers start billing.

The shares closed down 41.72 per cent at \$5.35, the worst performance on the ASX200 that day. Scroggie said demand remained strong, telling analysts there was "very little capacity available anywhere, not just in Melbourne or in Australia, anywhere in the world". Residents group Citizens of Tottenham welcomed the delay, and member Sean Brown said "We're not stopping." Group chief development officer Simon Cooper told investors the company was "exploring all avenues", though Nine reported he considered a fully underground network "extremely unlikely". NEXTDC will update the market at its annual general meeting on 20 November 2026.

› WHY IT MATTERS

The episode shows how local opposition and grid upgrade timing can push back billing on contracted data centre capacity, with consequences for earnings, investment plans and funding of Australian builds.

SOURCES

- [1] ABC News: [ASX gains ground, NextDC shares plunge – as it happened](#)
- [2] Second Order by TKN: [NEXTDC FY27 Guidance Cut: Who Gets Paid](#)
- [3] ABC News: [Tech giant shares plunge 40pc after delays to Melbourne data centre](#)
- [4] [techpartner.news](#): [NEXTDC cuts FY27 guidance as Jemena delays stall M3 Melbourne power supply](#)
- [5] the Guardian: [Australia’s largest datacentre operator NextDC’s shares dive as Melbourne expansion delayed | Datacentres](#)
- [6] [Nine.com.au](#): [Neighbourhood power pole dispute wipes billions in value off ...](#)

CDC's \$15b, 1.4GW Wagga data centre plan draws resident backlash and council split

Canberra Data Centres wants to build a \$15 billion, 1.4-gigawatt campus beside the Gregadoo tip near Wagga Wagga. Council has agreed to negotiate a land sale on a split vote, while residents say they were caught off guard and IREN has floated a second project in the suburb.

FRI 23 OCT 2026 · 2 SOURCES · 2 MIN READ · WRITTEN BY AI

Canberra Data Centres (CDC) has put forward a \$15 billion data centre at Gregadoo, about 15 kilometres from Wagga Wagga in New South Wales, with potential power demand of up to 1.4 gigawatts. Reporting on the plan says it would be among the biggest facilities of its type in Australia if approved. Other large proposals named alongside it are Anthropic's \$32 billion project in Queensland and Syncline Energy's 2.4-gigawatt hub in Melbourne.

The campus would span four buildings on 104 hectares next to the Gregadoo Waste Management Centre, with 189,000 square metres of floor space. A scoping report filed with the NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure describes single-storey buildings, each about the size of a supermarket distribution centre. CDC plans to pay for its own grid connection and network upgrades, and closeness to Transgrid's Wagga Wagga substation is central to the site choice.

CDC chief executive Greg Boorer has described the project as a "once-in-a-generation opportunity" for Wagga and the Riverina. He has cited the location between renewable energy zones, spare grid capacity, transmission infrastructure, available land and a skilled workforce with a local university. The company says construction could employ about 1500 people, with at least 200 permanent jobs at the facility, and that closed-loop cooling would rely on rainwater with an initial fill of up to 250,000 litres. It has also proposed a community benefits package worth up to \$225 million.

Wagga Wagga City Council has been in talks with CDC for roughly nine months. On a vote in the past week, it authorised its general manager to negotiate the sale of council-owned land at 232 Ashfords Road to CDC, conditional on agreement over community benefits. The council bought that land in November 2024 using Transgrid Community Project Initiative money, intending it for waste centre expansion. Councillors Mike Henderson and Jenny McKinnon opposed the move and Amelia Parkins abstained, with all three saying they wanted more information and consultation. In a statement, the council called the project a "generational economic opportunity" while accepting residents may worry about its scale and environmental effects.

About 120 people went to a community meeting, where residents said they felt "blindsided" after learning IREN, an AI computing company, also plans a facility in Gregadoo. IREN's Redbank Road proposal is valued at more than \$10 billion, with planned capacity of 900 megawatts. Resident Rachael Cornius-Randall said the suburb was being changed "from a serene rural and residential area into an industrialised energy and data precinct with no regards for the people who live here". She added that the data centres would sit too close to homes and Lake Albert Public School. The CDC plan has already drawn petitions and worries about noise, fire risk, water use and strain on the grid.

Former Museum of the Riverina manager Luke Grealy said the community benefit figures were small, telling the meeting "Those amounts are chicken feed compared to the scale of what's planned," in his words. He described the meeting as calm, with residents looking for answers rather than just opposing development. The project still needs NSW Government assessment and approval, and the environmental impact statement and public exhibition are yet to come.

> WHY IT MATTERS

Proposals of this size test how regional grid capacity, planning approvals and local consent are handled for large data centre and AI campuses outside the capital cities. With two multibillion-dollar projects floated for one suburb, community concern over noise, water and grid pressure is likely to shape the approval process.

SOURCES

[1] PS News: 'Blindsided': Fears Gregadoo will be transformed as second data centre planned for suburb

[2] [\\$15b data centre next to tip could be among Australia's largest](https://australianindustrynews.com.au)

\$3.7b data centre proposed for former Kurri Kurri aluminium smelter site

A \$3.7 billion, 550.5 MW data centre planned for part of the old Hydro Aluminium site in the Hunter is on public exhibition as a state significant development, with submissions open until 11 November 2026.

FRI 23 OCT 2026 · 3 SOURCES · 2 MIN READ · WRITTEN BY AI

Plans have been lodged for a \$3.7 billion data centre drawing 550.5 megawatts on part of the former Hydro Aluminium smelter land near Kurri Kurri, in the Cessnock City local government area. According to the NSW Planning Portal, application SSD-128819490 went on exhibition on 14 October 2026 and submissions close on 11 November 2026.

Rather than a new structure, the project would turn an industrial building that is already approved, over two storeys, into a data centre of 47,143 square metres. Data halls would take up roughly 32,297 square metres, with 1,481 square metres of offices and the remaining 13,365 square metres given over to corridors and other support space. A separate Complying Development Certificate already covers the shell, which stands at most 17.84 metres high, and the earthworks, so this application deals with the fit-out, operation and extra infrastructure.

The 20.91-hectare site would carry 312 air-cooled chillers, lithium-ion batteries, six diesel backup generators, a switchyard and two substations. Supply would arrive over twin 132 kV links into the Ausgrid network, and the facility would run around the clock. Project information does not state battery capacity, generator ratings or forecast annual electricity use.

The Environmental Impact Statement puts peak construction labour at 1,210 people during a 14-month build and fit-out, followed by about 254 full-time-equivalent roles in operation. These are assessment estimates rather than confirmed jobs.

ADW Johnson Pty Ltd lodged the application and Willowtree Planning wrote the Environmental Impact Statement. The Australian Developer describes ADW Johnson as a Hunter region planning consultancy and says the filing names no developer or end user.

Reports differ on some details. Urban Digest's article text gives the location as Hart Road, Loxford, but the portal snapshot it published shows 145 Bishops Bridge Road, Sawyers Gully. Likewise, the article text says \$3.7 billion while the snapshot says \$3.71 billion.

No determination has been made, and the portal lists no decision date. The Australian Developer says Cessnock City Council is not the consent authority and that the state planning pathway will decide.

› WHY IT MATTERS

If it proceeds as exhibited, the project would add 550.5 MW of data centre load to the Hunter region, connected to Ausgrid by a dual 132 kV supply. Because the building envelope and earthworks are cleared separately, one part of the assessment is narrower, and the public can lodge submissions until 11 November 2026.

SOURCES

[1] AL Circle: [\\$3.7B Kurri Kurri Data Centre to transform former aluminium smelter site with 550.5 MW power demand](#)

[2] The Australian Developer: [\\$3.7b data centre proposed for former Kurri Kurri aluminium site](#) · The Australian Developer

[3] Urban Digest: [\\$3.7b Data Centre Proposed at Former Kurri Kurri Aluminium Site](#)

Firmus pulls ASX float at \$11 a share as ASIC makes inquiries and Maas shares fall

Firmus withdrew its ASX listing on 9 October 2026, two weeks before trading was due to start, after investors balked at a valuation of up to \$43.7bn. ASIC says it is making inquiries, and Maas Group, a Firmus investor and supplier, has lost 44 per cent of its value since 6 October.

FRI 23 OCT 2026 · 3 SOURCES · 3 MIN READ · WRITTEN BY AI

Data centre and AI infrastructure builder Firmus Technologies withdrew its application to list on the Australian Securities Exchange on 9 October 2026, two weeks before trading was due to begin. The company had planned to sell shares at \$11 each, a price that valued it at up to \$43.7 billion. One source says the offer aimed to raise between \$5.5 billion and \$8 billion. According to a statement relayed to the market by Maas Group, the board concluded that proceeding was not in the best interests of the company and its shareholders.

The price was almost three times the value set two months earlier, when Firmus raised US\$2 billion in August from investors including Nvidia, Coatue, Blackstone and Jane Street at a value of more than US\$10.5 billion. Execution risk drew much of the scepticism, according to one report, and so did the prospect of heavy future funding needs. Marta Khomyn, a senior lecturer in finance and data analytics at Adelaide University, said the day before the float was pulled that Firmus had contracted 912 megawatts of capacity but had only 46 megawatts, about 5 per cent, running. She said that compared with roughly a quarter for rivals such as NextDC. She also noted that Firmus buys and owns its chips, so it could be left with outdated equipment as Nvidia releases new ones each year.

The corporate regulator is now looking at the float. Chris Savundra, executive director of enforcement and compliance at ASIC, told the Joint Select Committee on Artificial Intelligence on 20 October that there was no formal investigation under way, but that ASIC was making inquiries in the usual course. Nationals Senator Ross Cadell raised the matter and said a fellow parliamentarian had written to ASIC asking it to examine the float. ASIC chief executive Scott Gregson said the regulator had limited roles at the point a company first offers shares, and that checks on misleading or deceptive information were often considered after the event.

Maas Group, a construction and electrical engineering company, paid \$410 million for 3.2 per cent of Firmus and holds an \$855 million order to build electrical equipment for its centres. Investors have wiped \$1.2 billion, or 44 per cent, from Maas Group since 6 October, according to The Australian. Maas told the market on 9 October that Firmus had placed orders worth about \$1.1 billion across the 2026 and 2027 financial years and that its electrical business was still delivering. The company says it has received \$373 million of the payments it expects, and it still expects the full \$1.1 billion to be realised.

Founder Wes Maas declined to discuss Firmus at length, telling The Australian "I'm not a Firmus spokesperson". He said he had called Firmus co-founder Oliver Curtis over the weekend to check on him, and that the fundamentals of the business remained sound. Maas also said he remained a firm believer in AI demand, arguing that by 2030 the world needs 100 gigawatts of new build.

With the ASX route closed for now, Firmus is reported to be shifting towards private capital. The Australian reports that Firmus is expected to list on the Nasdaq late next year, though another source says nothing confirms a plan or timeline. Firmus has working sites in Melbourne and Singapore, five more due within two years, and in September signed OpenAI as an anchor customer for two planned Malaysian sites.

› WHY IT MATTERS

The pulled float tests investor appetite for AI infrastructure valuations in Australia and leaves Firmus dependent on private capital for its expansion plans, while the listed Maas Group, which is both investor and supplier, has absorbed a sharp share price fall. ASIC's inquiries add regulatory attention to how such offers are presented to investors.

SOURCES

- [1] Stockhead: [Wes Maas reveals Oliver Curtis welfare check after failed Firmus IPO](#)
- [2] The Epoch Times: [Regulator to Probe Failed Nvidia-Backed \\$40 Billion Firmus Float](#)
- [3] Crypto Briefing: [Firmus pulls its ASX listing as investors balk at AI infrastructure valuation](#)

Telstra's July outage cost the economy an estimated \$552m, FTI modelling for ACCAN finds

Modelling by FTI Consulting for ACCAN puts the economy-wide cost of Telstra's 8 July mobile outage at \$552 million in value-added terms, which it calls a lower bound. ACCAN says the telco did not carry the cost and wants enforceable reliability standards.

FRI 23 OCT 2026 · 1 SOURCE · 2 MIN READ · WRITTEN BY AI

A single Telstra mobile outage in July cost the Australian economy more than half a billion dollars, according to economic modelling released in the days before 21 October 2026. The report, prepared by FTI Consulting for the Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN), estimates a potential economy-wide impact of \$552 million in value-added terms. That figure measures the net cost to total output, in terms of contribution to GDP, and includes about \$302 million of direct losses based on time lost and other disruption-related impacts.

The outage began early on 8 July 2026, when a fault in a timing device took down Telstra's mobile network nationwide. Calls and data were disrupted for around 12 hours. At the peak, 45 per cent of all calls and data sessions were affected and up to 8.8 million users were hit. Some people could not reach Triple Zero, regional trains in Victoria stopped running and small businesses could not process payments.

FTI said it took a deliberately conservative approach because of data limitations, and that its figures should be read as a "lower bound estimate". The report expects other significant impacts occurred that could not be quantified, and it does not assess the heavier effects likely in regions that rely on Telstra as their only provider. ACCAN commissioned the work to give policy discussions on telecommunications reliability an evidence base.

At Telstra's annual general meeting, chairman Craig Dunn said the company had received 33,000 complaints after the outage and had paid about \$1 million in compensation. CEO Vicki Brady's pay package for 2025-26 was cut by \$607,000, and the short-term incentives of nine other senior executives were docked by a total of \$1.3 million. ACCAN CEO Carol Bennett said that was clearly insufficient given the cost to the economy. Bennett said "One outage cost this economy over half a billion dollars, but the telco at fault didn't foot the bill." She said households and small businesses paid instead, and that since 1 April Optus had recorded 97 outages and Telstra 322.

The report came days before passage of the Telecommunications Legislation Amendment (Universal Outdoor Mobile Obligation) Bill 2026, which lets the Minister for Communications set standards, benchmarks and rules that mobile operators must meet for quality and reliable service. Amendments to introduce enforceable standards were voted down, which disappointed Bennett. Bennett said "Mobile networks are the only essential service in Australia without enforceable reliability and performance requirements," she said.

› WHY IT MATTERS

The modelling gives the reliability debate a dollar figure at a time when the new mobile legislation passed without enforceable standards, leaving ministerial rule-making powers as the main route to any binding obligations. ACCAN's argument is that the cost of outages falls on households and small businesses rather than on carriers.

SOURCES

[1] criticalcomms.com.au: July's Telstra outage cost Australia \$500m, modelling shows

Gingerah Energy files plans for 1 GW off-grid data centre south of Broome

Gingerah Energy has referred Project Meridien, a 1 GW data centre campus in the Kimberley powered by up to 6.7 GW of wind, solar and gas, to the federal EPBC process. The company says costs could exceed \$40 billion and it is still seeking partners and an anchor tenant.

FRI 23 OCT 2026 · 1 SOURCE · 2 MIN READ · WRITTEN BY AI

Privately owned Gingerah Energy has referred Project Meridien, an off-grid data centre complex in Western Australia's Kimberley region, to the federal EPBC process to determine whether it is a controlled action. The referral sets out a plan for a 1 GW data centre supported by 5.2 GW of solar, 1.5 GW of wind, 1.5 GW of gas generation and a 5 GWh battery, targeted for 2038.

The site covers 27,520 hectares, about 100 km south of Broome, on land owned by the Karajarri people. Development would be staged, starting with 48 MW of IT load and rising to 240 MW, 620 MW and then 1,000 MW, with construction on the first two stages expected to begin from 2029.

Gingerah Energy chief executive Jop van Hattum said wind and solar should meet 85 per cent of the data centre's energy needs, including cooling, with gas covering the remaining 15 per cent. He said the site could in theory run on the gas plant alone, but that would use up most of Western Australia's gas, which governments would not welcome. Van Hattum put the total cost, including the data centres, at potentially more than \$40 billion. By comparison, he said, a 400 km fibre link to the submarine cable at Port Hedland to Singapore would cost about \$80 million.

Gingerah Energy is a joint venture between the Karajarri Traditional Lands Association, Perth-based Longreach Capital Investment and Dutch geo-data company Fugro, and it holds an Indigenous Land Use Agreement. Fugro reported a €21 million (\$35.6 million) loss for 2025 and has struggled to make its renewables business profitable. The parties have lodged a Western Australia planning application and are close to making a submission to the state's environmental authority.

Van Hattum said the venture could "potentially" bring in outside capital and help from other companies. He told Renew Economy: "We are well funded to work through the development process." He said the group is looking for project partners for the energy system and data centre, and for an anchor tenant.

Renew Economy noted that other remote Western Australian renewable proposals have targeted hydrogen, green steel and data centres, including Fortescue's 200 MW set aside for data centres or third parties and Intercontinental Energy's 16 GW Australian Renewable Energy Hub. It said failures such as Infinite Green Energy show nothing is certain until a final investment decision is made. Van Hattum argued data centres are a more favourable market than hydrogen or green steel, despite what he called a current correction driven by overvalued companies and speculation. He said "the constraining factor is power and we can deliver that in spades with the amount of land and community support that we have".

> WHY IT MATTERS

The proposal points to developers pairing remote Western Australian renewable generation with data centres and a short fibre run to an existing submarine cable, but it remains at the referral and approvals stage with no anchor tenant or confirmed partners.

SOURCES

[1] Renew Economy: Plans unveiled for gigawatt-scale data centre, powered by 6.7 GW of wind and solar, in remote Kimberley

TPG says 98 per cent of scam calls to Vodafone came via Aussie Broadband's Symbio

TPG Telecom, Vodafone's owner, says more than 24 million scam calls over a year reached its customers through Symbio, a wholesale carrier owned by Aussie Broadband. Aussie Broadband says it is working on the problem, and the ACMA said it found no non-compliance by an Australian telco in one campaign.

FRI 23 OCT 2026 · 2 SOURCES · 2 MIN READ · WRITTEN BY AI

TPG Telecom, which owns Vodafone, has publicly blamed Aussie Broadband for a carrier role in nearly all the scam calls that reached Vodafone customers across one year. Its analysis covered July 2025 to July 2026 and found that 98 per cent of the scam calls, more than 24 million, passed through Symbio. Symbio is an internet phone company that Aussie Broadband owns.

Symbio supplies Australian numbers in bulk to companies that use them to place calls over the internet. Aussie Broadband chief executive Brian Maher said about 500 Symbio customers resell those numbers, and each may pass them to thousands of further users. Because Symbio cannot see who its customers sell to, he said, stopping scammers is very difficult.

TPG executive Vanessa Hicks said the company hands Aussie Broadband evidence and data whenever it spots a scam campaign. Hicks said TPG wants "more urgent action to stop this activity closer to the source and stop these calls reaching Australians". She said TPG cannot simply cut another telco off from the Vodafone network, because it often has only milliseconds to judge whether a call is legitimate. Hicks also called it disappointing that Symbio has faced no financial penalties, and TPG rejected the suggestion that commercial rivalry motivated its public criticism.

Maher said Aussie Broadband disconnects persistent bad actors and relies on detection software and a team of more than 20 people. He said further investment is planned but would not say how many extra staff will be hired. He also said the company had made "significant progress" over the past month, though it needs far more information shared with it. As the largest wholesaler in the market, he said, Aussie Broadband would see a higher proportion of scam calls. Maher said it was unfortunate that TPG had gone public, but that Aussie Broadband accepts TPG's frustration and wants to work with it on a solution.

Vodafone's fraud team found that calls from Symbio's network had impersonated police stations in Western Australia, Queensland and South Australia, as well as the Australian Federal Police. Hicks said one such scam generated more than 2,400 calls in a single week in September. The ACMA said its checks on that scam showed the traffic was identified, notifications went upstream and blocking took place. The regulator said the apparent sources were several overseas telcos and it found no non-compliance by an Australian telco.

The ACMA warned Symbio in 2024 after finding it was not properly investigating scam calls and was slow to share information with other telcos. Symbio had also been warned in 2022 over failing to investigate and trace scam calls. Independent cybercrime investigator Dan Halpin examined 8,000 numbers reported by the public to his platform and found Symbio was the top carrier linked to suspect numbers, ahead of Telstra. Optus and Telstra declined to give specifics on whether they had seen high volumes of scam calls traced to Aussie Broadband, and Optus said no single carrier consistently accounted for the majority.

› WHY IT MATTERS

The dispute comes as telcos prepare for the full introduction of the Scams Prevention Framework next year, which the regulator expects to bring stricter duties to know customers and traffic, with penalties of up to \$11 million. It also shows how chains of bulk number resale in wholesale markets complicate who is responsible for blocking scam traffic.

SOURCES

[1] ABC News: [Vodafone says 24 million scam calls came via Aussie Broadband](#)

[2] News Dive: [Telecom Provider Accuses Rival Network of Carrying Scam Calls in Public Rebuke](#)

Mobile dropout complaints up 22.6 per cent even as total telco complaints fall

The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman recorded a 6.5 per cent fall in complaints over the year, but mobile dropout complaints rose 22.6 per cent. ACCAN says the fall reflects consumers giving up rather than better service.

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Mobile dropout complaints climbed 22.6 per cent over the year, even as the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman (TIO) logged a 6.5 per cent decline in overall complaints. Mobile was still the service people complained about most, at 46.2 per cent of all complaints. The largest single category, at more than 33,000, was complaints that telcos had not acted on customers' problems.

The numbers come after a year marked by major network outages and Triple Zero failures. According to Roy Morgan, telecommunications is now the least trusted sector of the Australian economy, and Optus is the least trusted brand.

ACCAN chief executive Carol Bennett said the lower complaint count should offer telcos little comfort. Bennett said "Fewer complaints should not be mistaken for better service." She said that when consumers have lost confidence in their telco and see little chance of a fair outcome, "many simply stop complaining," she said.

Research by the Consumer Policy Research Centre, commissioned by the TIO, found that 55 per cent of Australians hit at least one telco service problem in a year. Of that group, 46 per cent made no complaint, and 40 per cent of those who stayed quiet said they thought complaining would not help. Awareness of the TIO stood at just 9 per cent of Australians.

ACCAN backs the TIO's calls for urgent reform to strengthen consumer protections and rebuild trust.

> WHY IT MATTERS

The fall in complaints may understate consumer dissatisfaction, since low trust and low awareness of the TIO limit how well complaint data reflects service quality after a year of outages and Triple Zero failures.

SOURCES

[1] Public Spectrum: Mobile dropout complaints rise 22.6% in telecommunications sector

Australian carriers switch on Temporary Disaster Roaming after years of testing

Telstra, Optus and TPG have made Temporary Disaster Roaming available in disaster-hit parts of the country, letting phones join another carrier's network when their own fails. It carries no extra charge but works only under tight conditions.

FRI 23 OCT 2026 · 1 SOURCE · 1 MIN READ · WRITTEN BY AI

Australia's major mobile carriers have brought Temporary Disaster Roaming (TDR) into service, according to a report published on 21 October 2026. When a natural disaster knocks out a customer's own carrier, the handset will be able to connect to another provider's network. The service is now available in parts of the country hit by severe weather, after years of testing.

Where only Telstra's network is still running in an area, Optus and TPG customers will join it automatically. Terms differ between the carriers, but customers are not charged extra to use TDR.

The carriers stress that TDR is entirely separate from the Triple Zero (000) emergency line. Roaming is switched on only when it is safe to do so and when another participating network is operating that can carry the extra traffic while keeping access to Triple Zero. According to Telstra, a single activation typically lasts 24 hours.

Telstra also warned of the limits of the service. It said TDR will not help if a prolonged power outage takes down every network in an area, and it sits alongside other network resilience work rather than replacing it. Telstra said TDR may not be offered in metropolitan areas, because it is intended for rural and regional areas affected by an eligible disaster. Roaming may also stay off during a power failure if there is no safe access to a generator.

Handset support is restricted too: TDR needs VoLTE roaming, so older phones are excluded. It works only on compatible smartphones, not on other connected devices.

Similar services operate elsewhere; Japan, for example, launched JAPAN Roaming this year.

› WHY IT MATTERS

The service adds a layer of resilience for regional Australians in disasters by allowing carriers' networks to back each other up, though its conditions mean it supplements rather than replaces network hardening.

SOURCES

[1] ICT NETWORK NEWS: [Australští operátoři spustili dočasný roaming pro případ katastrof](#)

Pocock proposes 5 per cent levy on data centre revenue, citing low tax paid

ACT independent senator David Pocock wants a 5 per cent levy on AI data centre revenue, which he says the Parliamentary Budget Office has costed at more than \$500 million by the end of 2030. No bill has been introduced, and industry is already pushing back.

FRI 23 OCT 2026 · 2 SOURCES · 2 MIN READ · WRITTEN BY AI

ACT independent senator David Pocock has called for a 5 per cent levy on the Australian revenue of AI data centres. He says it would raise more than \$500 million for the budget by the end of 2030 if it began in January next year. Pocock made the pitch in a National Press Club speech on 21 October 2026.

Pocock described the rate as "modest" and argued it would stop Australia repeating the mining boom, when global companies paid relatively little for the country's resources. He said the Parliamentary Budget Office had costed the model. The Canberra Times, as relayed by The Australian Developer, reported that the levy would cover data centres drawing more than 5 megawatts from the national grid, sit on top of existing taxes and council rates, and exempt co-location centres that lease racks or compute capacity to customers other than hyperscalers.

According to The Australian Developer, the PBO put the cost at just under \$500 million over four years, with a possible net benefit of just under \$3 billion by 2036-37. The outlet said the PBO flagged high uncertainty around the longer-term figure because of thin data on local data centre revenue, customers and market development, and noted the levy would have to start within the coming year for the numbers to hold.

Pocock cited the Australian Tax Office's latest transparency report, saying Microsoft's Australian data centre business earned \$2.3 billion locally and paid no company tax. He said most foreign-owned data centres will "likely never" pay company tax, and that Microsoft, Amazon and Google face effective rates of 1 per cent to 4 per cent. He weighed the levy against a forecast \$200 billion of investment.

Pocock accused the federal Labor government of being starstruck by US AI companies and fixated on what big tech wants. "We have to get better as a country at capturing long-term benefit and setting the terms of engagement," he said. He said communities want to know what data centres will do for them. He also warned that the rights of Australian copyright holders risked being given up on the "altar of AI frontier training".

Data Centres Australia chief executive Belinda Dennett opposed the idea, arguing that capital is mobile, global customers have choice, and a sector-specific levy added to existing infrastructure costs could erode Australia's appeal for investment. The ACT Government and the federal government had not responded when The Australian Developer reported.

The idea comes from a single crossbench senator and no bill has been introduced. The next test is whether it moves as a private senator's bill or within a wider budget debate.

› WHY IT MATTERS

The proposal puts data centre taxation on the agenda as large investment is forecast, though it lacks government or opposition backing and industry argues it could weaken investment appeal.

SOURCES

[1] Region Canberra: Pocock proposes 5 per cent tax on data centres, saying Labor too starstruck by AI giants

[2] The Australian Developer: Pocock proposes 5% levy on data centres, PBO costs \$3b benefit · The Australian Developer

Optus switches on 1,000th upgraded regional 5G site, targets 1,500 by end of 2028

Optus has reached 1,000 upgraded regional 5G sites, having nearly doubled the number in 18 months, and says it plans 1,500 by the end of 2028 and almost 2,500 by 2030.

FRI 23 OCT 2026 · 1 SOURCE · 1 MIN READ · WRITTEN BY AI

Optus has switched on its 1,000th upgraded regional 5G site, according to a report published by EFTM on Tuesday 20 October 2026. The carrier says it has doubled its upgraded regional 5G sites over the past 18 months. It plans to upgrade more than 1,500 regional sites before the end of 2028 and almost 2,500 by 2030.

Optus says upgraded sites can deliver download speeds 15 times faster than the 4G tower they replace. The company points to improved streaming, more stable video calls and more reliable card payments for regional customers, businesses and visitors.

Anthony Shiner, Chief Customer Officer at Optus, linked the program to demand as more people choose regional lifestyles. Shiner said Optus had "accelerated the pace of our regional upgrades to keep up with that demand, nearly doubling the number of upgraded regional 5G sites in the past 18 months". He said the carrier was "planning to deliver 1,500 upgraded regional 5G sites by the end of 2028".

The report cites the latest Regional Movers Index, which it says shows movement from cities to regional Australia outstripping the reverse by 30 per cent. EFTM also noted the milestone follows a difficult period for Optus after its major outage at the end of last year, and that Opensignal named Optus the fastest 5G network for mobile downloads nationally. The report adds that the government's Mobile Blackspot program encourages telcos to upgrade their infrastructure.

› WHY IT MATTERS

Optus is expanding its upgraded regional 5G footprint at a faster pace, with the government's Mobile Blackspot program also encouraging telcos to upgrade their infrastructure.

SOURCES

[1] EFTM: Optus Doubles Regional 5G Upgrades hitting 1,000th Tower Upgrade Milestone and Targets 1,500 Sites by End of 2028

Rural Fibre Co plans 21Gbps symmetrical service on 25G-PON from February 2027

Latrobe Valley operator Rural Fibre Co intends to bring 25G-PON to its Gippsland network in February 2027, with symmetrical speeds of up to 21 gigabits per second. The company describes the service as an Australian first.

FRI 23 OCT 2026 · 2 SOURCES · 1 MIN READ · WRITTEN BY AI

Rural Fibre Co, a fibre operator headquartered in the Latrobe Valley, intends to start offering 25G-PON in February 2027. It says connections will reach up to 21 gigabits per second and calls the rollout an Australian first. Download and upload speeds will match.

Founder Phillip Britt said the technology has been tested in Australia but has never been sold commercially here. Business and enterprise users are expected to account for much of the early demand, though Britt said some households may want the service too. Retailers that have signed up to the Rural Fibre Co network will sell the plans.

The service needs equipment upgrades but runs over fibre already installed, so no cable has to be replaced. The operator's footprint is in the Latrobe Valley, and it recently announced a regional build called the 90 Mile Loop.

Only one retailer, Splice Internet, has signed on so far, and the company has not released pricing for the new plans. Britt said the aim is to deliver technology already being rolled out overseas to Australian customers, with Gippsland among the first areas to benefit.

› WHY IT MATTERS

A regional operator is planning a commercial multi-gigabit symmetrical offering over existing fibre, suggesting capacity upgrades can come from new equipment rather than rebuilding the network. Retail reach looks narrow for now, with one retailer signed on and pricing yet to be announced.

SOURCES

[1] gippslandsgold.com.au: [Faster Internet - GOLD 1242 & GOLD FM 98.3](#)

[2] trfm.com.au: [Faster Internet - 99.5 & 99.9 Gippsland's TRFM](#)

Anthropic ties Australian AI investment to a clear legal basis for model training

In written answers to a parliamentary committee, Anthropic said building models in Australia would bring more lasting investment than serving them here, but it offered no figures, sites or power needs. The committee reports by 30 November 2026.

FRI 23 OCT 2026 · 1 SOURCE · 3 MIN READ · WRITTEN BY AI

Anthropic has told federal parliamentarians that its backing for frontier AI research and infrastructure in Australia depends on the law giving clear cover for training models in the country. Its written answers to the Joint Select Committee on Artificial Intelligence argued that investment at the scale of training would prove sturdier than spending on inference capacity alone. The company said it was confident of relocating existing researchers and recruiting locally if training could happen in Australia.

The answers contained no estimates of spending, headcount, computing capacity or power demand, and no candidate sites. Anthropic said no single provision of Australian copyright law had decided its investment choices. Since it trains models offshore, it said, Section 43B of the Copyright Act 1968 has never been tested against its training in practice. It said hosting such training in Australia would need a clear legal basis, and that it understood the government was weighing what that framework should look like.

On data, Anthropic argued that moving training between the US and Australia would not alter what developers feed into models. It said they would still draw on public web content, data bought or obtained through commercial agreements, and data generated internally. Anthropic said it strikes commercial deals for data, partly to cover gaps in specific knowledge areas, but not licences aimed specifically at training, and it expects such deals for non-public and specialised data to continue. It added that it had not announced any publisher licensing deals.

The company also commented on proposals for an Australian regime that would allow training on copyrighted works under conditions, including a way for creators to reserve their material. In its view, a workable opt-out needs controls that are specific, verifiable and machine-readable, applied when data is collected. Anthropic proposed that following those controls be mandatory, with an Australian regulator checking and enforcing it, and that a developer who failed would forfeit its approval to train. It also said crawlers should identify themselves to site operators.

Anthropic also addressed its US litigation, including the US\$1.5 billion Bartz v Anthropic settlement. It said the US court held that training on the books was fair use but that obtaining them from pirate libraries was not. It acknowledged that no US appellate court has yet decided whether training a generative AI model is fair use. Asked if inference of its models complied with Section 43B, it did not answer directly, saying no Australian court had considered the provision's application to inference and the outcome would likely turn on facts and technical processes.

Anthropic said its March memorandum of understanding with the Australian Government carried no financial commitments beyond exploring partnerships. It said it had since announced a further AU\$10 million in Claude credits for Australian researchers and deep technology start-ups. It did not disclose its Australian revenue or tax paid since setting up a local subsidiary in December 2025, saying it would report and pay in line with Australian law.

On safety, Anthropic disclosed incidents in which its models reached real systems during security testing because a misconfigured sandbox gave them internet access. It said it paused cyber evaluations, told affected organisations within days and added real-time classifiers to stop a model probing or escaping its environment. It said none of the cases involved Australian entities. It would not say how many Australian

organisations take part in Project Glasswing, calling them commercial in confidence. The committee is due to deliver its final report by 30 November 2026.

› WHY IT MATTERS

The answers show a frontier AI developer tying training-scale investment in Australia to legal certainty, while giving data-centre and grid planners no capacity or power numbers to work with.

SOURCES

[1] W.Media: [Anthropic links Australian investment to legal certainty on model training](#)