Digital Infrastructure
INSTITUTE

COMMUNITY INFORMATION SHEET

Data centres explained

What a data centre is, the different types, and how size is measured

What is a data centre?

A data centre is a building, or group of buildings, purpose-built to house networked computers — servers, storage and networking equipment — together with the power, cooling, fire protection and security systems needed to keep them running continuously. The computing equipment is the reason it exists; everything else supports it.

The main types

Type	What it is
Edge / micro	Small, close to users; sometimes a single room or container
Enterprise	Run by one organisation for its own use
Colocation	Leases secure space and power to many customers
Hyperscale	Very large cloud / AI campuses, often hundreds of MW

How size is measured

The truest measure of a facility's impact is its **IT load in megawatts (MW)** — the amount of power its computers draw — not its floor area. A modest-looking building can hide a very large electrical, water and cooling load, so the megawatt figure is the number to ask about.

Why they matter locally

Data centres support everyday digital life — banking, streaming, health records, government services — and attract investment. They also draw on shared local resources, which is why they are assessed through the planning system and why this series exists.

Want to know more? Your local council, the EPA Tasmania and ARPANSA publish further information. This sheet is general information, not medical, legal or planning advice; figures are indicative and a specific proposal is confirmed by qualified assessment.