



COMMUNITY INFORMATION SHEET

Water use

How much water a data centre uses, and where it goes — a plain-English guide

What's the concern?

Keeping the computers cool is the biggest non-computing use of resources. Some cooling systems use large volumes of water; others use almost none. People ask how much water will be used, whether it competes with drinking water, and where the waste water goes.

The facts

The cooling technology is what matters most (see the Cooling systems sheet). Water efficiency is measured by **WUE** — litres of water per unit of computing energy, lower is better. Cooling water should be disposed of in a controlled way — to the sewer under a trade-waste agreement, or as a discharge meeting EPA limits — because warm or salty water can harm waterways. Evaporative cooling towers also need management to prevent Legionella.

What good practice looks like

- A low-water cooling design (a low WUE), suited to the cool local climate.
- Non-potable, recycled or rainwater used where possible — not drinking water.
- Circular water approaches that reuse water on site.
- A defined, controlled disposal route with limits on temperature, salinity and chemicals.
- Resilience to drought, transparent water reporting, and early engagement with the water utility, community and First Nations people.

Questions you can ask

- How much water will it use each year, and what is its WUE?
- Will it use drinking water, or recycled/non-potable water?
- Where does the cooling waste water go, and how will it cope in a drought?

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