

Media release

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Data centres can power Australia's AI future without increasing household bills: ENA

Data centres represent a significant opportunity for Australia's digital economy, but must be built on fairness, reliability and affordability.

Energy Networks Australia (ENA) has welcomed Climate Change and Energy Minister Chris Bowen's comments that data centres can be a pathway to delivering Australia's renewable future, provided they bring new energy to the system and do not add to household power bills.

In his National Press Club speech this week (5 August), Minister Bowen outlined a strong framework for large data centres, including requirements that they:

- bring their own additional renewable energy;
- pay the network costs they create;
- prove they have enough firmed power to back their load; and
- operate flexibly to help support the grid.

ENA Acting Chief Executive Dominic Adams said data centres represent a significant opportunity for Australia's digital economy, but the opportunity must be built on fairness, reliability and affordability.

"Data centres can be good for Australia, but only if they are good for consumers," Mr Adams said.

"The test Minister Bowen has set is the right one: a stronger energy system that does not cost consumers more. That must remain the benchmark as large new loads seek to connect to the grid."

Minister Bowen said Australia has a strong pipeline of data centre investment, estimated at more than \$150 billion, and acknowledged community concern that without the right policy response, data centre growth could push up prices or affect renewable energy goals.

He said data centres currently consume around 2 per cent of Australia's electricity, with that expected to grow to 6 per cent by 2030 and 10 per cent by 2050.

Mr Adams said the scale of the opportunity underlines why clear rules are needed now.

"Australia does not need to choose between building a renewable grid and building a

competitive AI industry,” Mr Adams said.

“Handled well, data centres can bring investment certainty and flexible demand into the energy system. The priority is making sure consumers are not paying the price,” Mr Adams said.

ENA looks forward to working with governments, regulators, technology companies, customers and the broader energy sector to ensure data centre growth supports Australia’s energy transition and delivers benefits for all Australians.

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- ENA is the national industry body representing Australia’s electricity transmission and distribution and gas distribution networks. Our members provide more than 16 million electricity and gas connections to almost every home and business across Australia.

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