

DRAFT SECOND READING SPEECH

HON. M. T. (RENE) HIDDING MP

Fire Service Amendment Bill 2016

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Madam Speaker – I move that the bill now be read the second time.

The purpose of the *Fire Service Amendment Bill 2016* is to amend the *Fire Service Act 1979* to remove the requirement that the Chief Officer, Tasmania Fire Service, is the Chair of the State Fire Commission. A provision has also been included to enable the appointment of an independent Chair of the Commission by the Governor on my recommendation.

Under the current arrangements, Madam Speaker, the Chair of the State Fire Commission is the Chief Officer of Tasmania Fire Service. It is the considered view of the Commission, supported by this government, that the governance provided through the Commission would be significantly improved with the appointment of an independent Chair. This bill will achieve that aim. The Chief Officer would remain a member of the Commission as the Chief Executive Officer.

There are a number of advantages in having an independent Chair of the Commission. The Commission has a leader for whom its functioning is a top priority including proactive management of the Board agenda, the adequacy of information provided and the quality of debate.

The Commission is also directly responsible for the general oversight of TFS' affairs and their management. As a result, having the CEO, the one person directly responsible for that management, could be interpreted to be a conflict of interest.

An independent Chair can add significant value in representing the Commission to government bodies, trade associations, employees and suppliers as well as assuming other responsibilities. Although strategy formulation is a core executive responsibility, in the domain of the CEO, an independent chair could provide valuable input into the strategy discussion prior to any proposal being presented to the Commission.

Madam Speaker, the Corporate Governance Principles published by the Department of Treasury and Finance also state that the person holding the role of Chief Executive Officer, in this case the Chief Officer of Tasmania Fire Service, should not concurrently hold the position of Chair of the organisation.

All costs associated with the independent chair will be absorbed by the State Fire Commission.

Madam Speaker, I commend the bill to the house.