
Second Reading Speech

Tasmanian Community Fund Amendment Bill 2025

Madam Speaker, I move that the Tasmanian Community Fund Amendment Bill 2025 be read a second time.

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the outstanding work undertaken by the Tasmanian Community Fund.

I would also like to thank the insightful contributions of members regarding the previous version of this Bill that came before the House earlier this year.

The Tasmanian Government is committed to ensuring accountability of the Tasmanian Community Fund and its processes.

To this end, we are proposing targeted amendments that provide enhanced transparency and community confidence in the governance, decision-making structures, and processes of the Tasmanian Community Fund.

The amendments address several issues and concerns identified in the Auditor-General's August 2024 Report – *Tasmanian Community Fund referendum support and assessment of grant funding to Australians for Indigenous Constitutional Recognition Ltd*.

The Amendment Bill before us seeks to improve the rigour and transparency of the statutory framework that applies to the operation of the Tasmanian Community Fund, through requiring the Tasmanian Community Fund Board to:

- Conduct and document due diligence.
- Adopt a better practice grant management framework.
- Provide regular guidance, training, and clear direction to assist with remaining apolitical and impartial.
- Adopt better practice record management.

The Amendment Bill provides explicit direction that the Tasmanian Community Fund Board must undertake actions apolitically and must act in a professional and impartial manner in performing its functions and exercising its powers more generally.

As apolitical is not defined under the *Tasmanian Community Fund Act 2005*, the ordinary dictionary meaning is deferred to. This defines 'apolitical' as:

- Having no interest in political issues.
- Not involving obligations to a particular political party.

I believe this amendment will provide greater public confidence in the Tasmanian Community Fund and an understanding that the TCF Board's duties will remain apolitical and consistent.

This, I hope, will help in consolidating the important role the TCF Board holds within the Tasmanian community.

The Amendment Bill makes it explicit that the TCF Board is to comply with the requirements of the *Archives Act 1983* and the *Audit Act 2008*, ensuring accurate and accountable record keeping is maintained as should be expected.

The inclusion of this amendment highlights the importance of accurate record keeping into the future.

Importantly, the amendments ensure that the TCF is complying with a contemporary, best practice grants management framework.

As required under the *Public Accounts Committee Act 1970*, the amended Bill highlights that public funds provided to the TCF Board for the distribution of grants are considered grant expenditure.

This amendment allows for these grants to be scrutinised by the Public Accounts Committee, as and where it is considered necessary and appropriate. This will provide rigour surrounding TCF Board process and peace of mind that public funds are appropriately expended.

The Amendment Bill seeks to enhance the grants management process of the TCF on an ongoing basis, including the need for the TCF Board to conduct an independent, external audit of its compliance with its grant management framework every four years.

It will also enable the public to be consulted on the Tasmanian Community Fund's Strategic Plan and ensures accountability by directing the TCF Board to prepare, publish and annually report against the Strategic Plan.

The principles of these amendments strengthen accountability and build an important framework for the expenditure of public funds by the TCF

Board, while ensuring they remain apolitical, independent, and transparent.

The proposed amendments do not seek to limit the independence of the TCF Board, rather, they are intended to explicitly articulate the Parliament's expectations in relation to the prudent and appropriate management of public funds the Tasmanian Community Fund administers on behalf of the Tasmanian community.

The amendments bring the Board's accountability and governance obligations into line with those of other statutory boards with similar responsibilities for public funds.

In essence, the Tasmanian Community Fund provides a service to the Tasmanian community, and the proposed Bill will allow the Tasmanian community to have more oversight and input into the functions of the Fund, its Board, and the way it distributes grants to the community.

This Amendment Bill will enable us to conclude matters in relation to the Auditor General's report, and I commend the Board for actioning the recommendations stipulated in the report.

The Tasmanian Government has consulted with the TCF Board Chair on the revisions in the Tasmanian Community Fund Amendment Bill 2025 and has been advised that the proposed amendments are supported by the TCF Board.

It is my belief that we must proceed with the Bill to provide Tasmanians with surety that we have acted on the Auditor-General's recommendations and support the continued work of the Tasmanian Community Fund.

It is my hope that this Bill will become a driver of change through which Tasmanians can be provided surety surrounding the transparency, independence, and equity in the TCF Board and processes going forward.

Madam Speaker, I commend the Bill to the House.