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22 January 2025

Minister Felix Ellis

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Dear Minister Ellis

**Re: Establishing the State Fire and Emergency Services Commission**

West Tamar Council appreciates the opportunity to respond to the November 2024 position paper in relation to the Establishing the State Fire and Emergency Services Commission.

The proposed establishment of the State Fire and Emergency Services Commission (SFESC) introduces a skills-based board to oversee Tasmania's fire and emergency services. This marks a significant shift from the current representative model, where local government has direct representation through two nominees from the Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT).

West Tamar Council suggest a 'representative and skills-based board' to ensure Local Government is at the table where important decisions are made.

Council's key concerns include:

- Transitioning to a skills-based board may reduce direct local government involvement in decision-making processes, potentially sidelining the unique insights and needs of local communities.
- Without local government voices, there's a risk that the SFESC's decisions might not fully reflect the specific requirements and challenges faced by diverse municipalities across Tasmania.
- Local governments currently play a crucial role in funding fire services, including the collection of the fire service contribution. Reduced representation could lead to decisions that don't align with local funding capacities or priorities
- Local councils like ours often have close relationships with volunteer brigades and SES. A diminished voice might affect the support and resources allocated to these essential community volunteers.


West Tamar Council also notes and agrees with LGAT's view in its submission to the Tasmania Fire and Emergency Services Bill 2023 that:

*"LGAT advocated that it should maintain a role on the (formerly proposed) committee, noting local government's role in collecting the Fire Service Contribution, emergency management, supporting community preparedness and building community resilience."*

If the government was to proceed with the proposed SFESC structure, we ask that there is a guarantee that local government perspectives are considered, even if direct representation is reduced.

Council appreciates this opportunity to provide its feedback on the Report and we are happy to meet with you to provide any detailed feedback.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized loop followed by a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

**Kristen Desmond**  
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**