

Parry's heritage post faces fresh scrutiny

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Former Liberal senator Stephen Parry's appointment as the chair of the Tasmanian Heritage Council is set to come under fresh scrutiny after it was revealed he sent his CV to the office of Minister Madeleine Ogilvie before the position was advertised.

The move has been described as "highly unusual" by independent Nelson MLC Meg Webb, who has been raising concerns about the government's recruitment process, which she says should have been "purposefully at arm's length from the minister".

Mr Parry told the Mercury he "forwarded a copy of my CV to the office of Minister Ogilvie for information". He later formally applied for the chair role after it was advertised.

Ms Ogilvie, the state Heritage Minister, announced Mr Parry's appointment in February, saying he would bring to the role "deep experience in public service and a strong appreciation for Tasmania's heritage".

Mr Parry said his "applications have followed normal, independent and rigorous assessment and interview processes".

"I have a strong interest and passion for heritage in Tasmania, having frequently visited heritage sites and buildings over my lifetime in [the state]," he said.

Mr Parry cited his "substantial governance and board experience" as key reasons he was chosen for the role.

First elected to federal parliament in 2004, he was President of the Senate from 2014-17, before he had to resign after discovering he held dual UK-Australian citizenship.

He served in a number of other business leadership positions prior to his time in Canberra, including as director of the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Internal state government records obtained by the Mercury under Right to Information (RTI) laws have shed new light on Mr Parry's appointment to the Heritage



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Council (THC), showing that an earlier expression of interest process was commenced before being scrapped last September in the wake of the June state election.

The Mercury understands Mr Parry sent his CV to Ms Ogilvie in September, before the THC role was formally re-advertised on October 4. RTI documents show Mr Parry then emailed his application to the department on October 8.

Mr Parry, who will serve part-time as chair and receive \$35,000 per annum for the role, did not apply under the first recruitment round, which began in January last year, because he was then running as the Liberal candidate for the upper house seat of Montgomery.

The 65-year-old former police officer and funeral director was ultimately unsuccessful in his Legislative Council tilt but was tapped to stand for the Liberals in Bradon when the state election was called less than two weeks after the Montgomery count concluded. He again failed to win a seat.

Five weeks after the make-up of the new House of Assembly had been finalised, the initial EOI process to fill the THC chair was abolished and the new round approved.

A state government spokeswoman told the Mercury that the election had "interrupted the EOI process" and it was NRE Tas that recommended the role be re-advertised.

In a statement, Ms Ogilvie

said the role of THC chair was "broad and requires regulatory, corporate governance, and management skills", which Mr Parry possessed.

She added that "specific heritage experience" was not "a consideration requirement for the chair".

Recruitment notes kept by the department and released to the Mercury show that Mr Parry was one of two preferred candidates nominated for the minister's consideration by the selection panel, with both described as "highly suitable".

The Mercury asked the minister whether any government or Liberal Party representative had encouraged Mr Parry to apply for the position but an answer was not provided.

Ms Webb, who has been seeking further information about the recruitment process, said the government had "invited unavoidable questions" about the appointment.

"Community expectation is that key publicly funded roles are allocated with integrity ... It is time for the minister to come clean and fully explain this ... appointment," she said.

The selection panel consisted of two officials from NRE Tas and one from Infrastructure Tasmania.

An NRE Tas spokeswoman said it was a legislative requirement that the minister appoint four people with "heritage expertise" to the council and the "overriding" selection criterion for the chair was "senior leadership qualities".

