

**SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE CRONULLA FISHERIES CLOSURE
QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Department of Primary Industries
Monday 6 August 2012 - 4.00 pm –6.00 pm
Answers due: 5pm, Friday 7 September 2012

QUESTIONS FROM THE HON CATE FAEHRMANN MLC

1. ***Please can Dr Sheldrake supply all correspondence between DPI staff and Treasury in relation to the decision to close the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre of Excellence.***

All correspondence relating to the decision in Attachment A.

2. ***Please can Dr Sheldrake supply all correspondence between DPI staff and the Auditor-General in relation to the decision to close the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre of Excellence.***

Correspondence provided in Attachment B, Meeting held between DPI, DTI and Audit Office held 26 March 2012.

3. ***Please can Dr Sheldrake supply all the costings prepared for the relocation to date.***

Actual expenses to date:

- Relocation costs 2011/12 (includes staff jobs skills and specialist training, transport costs from Cronulla to regional centres, staff inspections of regional centres, etc) - \$69,304
- Transferred officers entitlements - \$100,312
- Severance payments - \$633,000

4. ***Please can Dr Sheldrake supply a breakdown of the running costs of the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre of Excellence.***

Running costs for the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre for 2009/10, excluding staff costs and depreciation were estimated at \$455,000 (see Attachment C).

Running costs for 2011/12, including staff costs (\$523,000), all maintenance (\$100,000) but excluding depreciation were \$936,000 (see Attachment D).

All permanent and on-going temporary staff included in the budget associated with running the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre have been offered alternative positions at new locations.

5. ***Please can Dr Sheldrake provide a breakdown of all the research programs undertaken at Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre and provide details on the intended future of each of those programs following the relocation. This should include the programs done by or in collaboration with university students.***

See Attachment E.

6. ***In Dr Sheldrake's opening remarks he stated that 40% of the fisheries staff have indicated they would relocate. Is this 40% of the 138 people at the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre of Excellence? How many of the 138 staff have committed to being relocated?***

The total number of positions located at Cronulla affected by the relocation when the announcement was made in September 2011 was 138. This included 22 non-fisheries positions and 19 casuals or temporary positions.

In total, 97 permanent or ongoing-temporary fisheries positions are eligible for relocation. As of 24 August 2012, 36 employees have already transferred or accepted a transfer. Informal advice from employees who are yet to formally advise DPI management of their intentions, indicates that approximately 40% of the employees eligible for relocation positions relocated will transfer. This is a very positive result for Fisheries NSW and demonstrates the cooperation of the majority of staff, the effectiveness of the Working Group and Line Managers, the dedication of the Relocation Manager and PLC to individuals and the overall commitment to meet individual needs of staff wherever possible. Recruitment will occur locally for those essential positions that are not filled by current employees from Cronulla, offering new opportunities for graduate and post-graduate students and other qualified employees in regional locations.

7. *Is there a significant difference between marine water, such as at Cronulla, and brackish water that has been treated, such as at Port Stephens? Can all the experiments carried out in the marine water at Cronulla be replicated at Port Stephens as it stands today?*

Yes there is a difference. Yes all experiments currently carried out at Cronulla could be redesigned and successfully carried out at Port Stephens Fisheries Institute.

8. *Dr Allan has stated (page 6 of the transcript) that the breeding and rearing of animals is not work that can be done at Cronulla? We are led to believe from staff submissions that animals can and have been reared at Cronulla, including oysters. Is this true?*

Attempts to rear Sydney rock oysters and marine fish, including snapper and mullet, many years ago at Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre were met with very limited success. Breeding of marine species is successfully undertaken at Port Stephens Fisheries Institute. The absence of any facilities at Cronulla to rear live food or to adequately control water quality (including temperature and suspended solids), prevents successful breeding research or production.

9. *Emails in the GIPA documents obtained by the Sydney Morning Herald state that the relocation was originally going to happen over a 3 year period. This was changed to a period of 12-18 months – why?*

The timeframe of 12-18 months has been consistent since September 2011.

10. *Of the 40 scientists in NSW Fisheries overall, how many are experts in wild fisheries research? How many of these are based at Cronulla?*

The vast majority of scientists, managers and many technicians have had academic and practical training in fisheries research methods and the application of results. It is not uncommon for scientists to change specialities during their careers. There are already scientists in the Wild Fisheries Research group at Port Stephens and Coffs Harbour and, for those scientists who are unable to relocate, recruitment will be undertaken or contracts negotiated with other research providers to ensure essential functions are maintained.

11. *Does an aquaculture scientist have the same expertise in research and management of wild fish stocks as a wild fisheries scientist?*

Fisheries scientists employed in different disciplines often have similar academic training but then specialise in their chosen field. It is not uncommon for scientists to change specialities during their career.

12. ***Dr Allan has stated (page 6 of the transcript) that staff that currently use a laboratory at Cronulla will be relocated to Port Stephens, Coffs Harbour, and SIMS primarily at Port Stephens. Exactly how many of the 40 scientific staff that use the Cronulla lab have committed to relocate to Port Stephens?***

Please refer to answer to Question 6.

13. ***Dr Allan has stated (page 11) that the aquarium and tank facilities at Cronulla are not optimal and if they were building them again they would not build the same facilities. Is this statement based on an analysis □ could we have a copy of this analysis? Would you be able to work on big marine animals such as sharks without a large pool such as the one situated on the Cronulla site?***

This statement is based on decades of experience with designing, building and advising on design for marine facilities. Research on large animals is already done at Port Stephens. The vast majority of research carried out on large animals, such as sharks, is not done with captive animals.

14. ***Please supply any information or plans that demonstrate that the capital works associated with upgrades to the facilities at the Port Stephens site were being planned prior to the announcement of the closure of Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre of Excellence on September 8, 2011.***

Port Stephens Fisheries Institute Site Development plan 2007 (see Attachment F).

15. ***How would you compare access to the Cronulla site with access to the Port Stephens site?***

Access to Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre is through narrow suburban streets, access to Port Stephens Fisheries Institute is on rural roads. Water access to both sites is available, both have boat ramps for small vessels. The steep topography at Cronulla can present challenges to easy access for larger vehicles and trailer boats at Cronulla. Disabled access is better at Port Stephens.

16. ***Is the access road to either of these facilities currently subject to tidal inundation?***

Tidal inundation has not prevented access to either site.

17. ***How will the access to these facilities be affected by sea □ level rise in the future?***

The access to these facilities is not expected to be restricted during the life of the facilities.

18. ***How would you compare the ease of access to these 2 facilities for stakeholders travelling from all corners of the state and for international visitors?***

Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre and Port Stephens Fisheries Institute and SIMS at Chowder Bay are all accessible by road, air and water. Newcastle airport is 27 km south of Port Stephens Fisheries Institute and is one of the fastest growing regional airports in Australia. For details of the flights available see:

<http://www.newcastleairport.com.au/page345/Home.aspx>

19. ***I understand that some staff and projects will be relocated from CFRCoE to the SIMS facility at Chowder Bay, Mosman. How would you compare the access within the Chowder Bay site to that within the Cronulla site?***

SIMS at Chowder Bay is accessible by road, air and water.

20. No doubt you think strategically about the future of researching and managing the State's aquatic resources and fisheries. What plans for expansion do you have for the future? Staff numbers? Capital works?

Long term staff numbers will be influenced by industry and environmental needs. Capital works within DPI are subject to a rigorous process of application and evaluation. The current Fisheries NSW priority for capital works is for Port Stephens and will be guided by changing requirements for research.

21. I'm sure you will have been supplied by the Government with budget targets for 2012-13 and 2013-14.

DPI budget is available in 2012/13 budget papers.

22. In the absence of the closure/relocation project, in order to meet these targets, would you have had to contract staff numbers?

The decentralisation of staff the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre is about investing in regional NSW and moving Fisheries NSW staff closer to the industries, stakeholders and clients the agency services.

The cost of the move is being managed carefully and must be economically achievable and practical – which this decision is.

All permanent or ongoing temporary staff have been offered a position at the new locations.

23. Dr Allan stated that "... large proportion of recreational fishing licences are held in the Sydney region" and "but more people fish in the Hunter and Illawarra than in Sydney" and "people leave the city and go and stay and do their tourist activities and so it is with fishing" (page 21 transcript). Please supply the data / analysis upon which these statements are made?

The National Recreational and Indigenous Fishing Survey (2001) showed it was more common for those people with NSW recreational fishing permits who live in Sydney to fish outside the Sydney region than it was for them to fish in Sydney. This included significant fishing activity by Sydney residents in areas such as the Hunter, Illawarra and South Coast, and Coffs Harbour. This statement is based on an analysis of the postcodes of fishing permit holders and the postcodes of most common fishing locations for permit holders.

24. How have the local indigenous community been consulted regarding the future of the Site?

The first stage in determining the future use of the site is to understand community views. An independent consultant has conducted community consultation within the Sutherland Shire area, including with indigenous groups, staff members from Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre, the Sutherland Shire Council and other members of the community. A Heritage Report (included in Attachment G) has been considered by the consultant.

25. What plans have been developed for the preservation all aboriginal relics and archaeological sites? Has the development of any preservation plans included the local indigenous community? Do the preservation arrangements include a budget for the long term maintenance and preservation of the relics and heritage sites? Please provide these budgets or costings.

See answer to Q 24 above.

26. Are all Aboriginal archaeological and heritage sites contained within the Cronulla Fisheries site recorded and documented?

See answer to Q 24 above.

27. Are there any employees at the Cronulla Fisheries site who have identified special needs or disabilities? If so, how have they been supported during this exercise? Has information been provided in a format or style that accommodates their specific circumstances?

Yes. As for all staff, staff with "special needs" have been supported through normal departmental policies and procedures, counselling services, peer support and one-on-one support with staff from People, Learning and Culture (PLC) and/or Relocation Project Manager. Where requested, special individual needs have been considered in close, confidential consultation with the Relocation Manager, and where required, senior managers and PLC.

28. What are the longer term management and maintenance arrangements for all heritage buildings at the site? Has this been costed? Please provide the budgeted coatings for the ongoing maintenance of the heritage buildings?

See answer to Q 24 above.

29. Has the local Shire Council been involved in determining the future of the site? Please state how they have been involved and who has been involved?

See answer to Q 24 above.

30. Are there volunteers impacted upon by the decision to close the Centre? If so, how many? What has been done to involve the volunteers in the relocation of each function at the Centre? How many volunteers will cease volunteerism because of the closure?

There are approximately 340 Fish Care volunteers (active and inactive) across the state. The Director, Recreational and Indigenous Fisheries has met with Fish Care volunteers to reassure them of ongoing support for the program after the relocation. The DPI staff who run the Sydney-based Fish Care volunteer program will remain based in the Sydney area and options to minimise impacts of the relocation on volunteers are being pursued.

QUESTIONS FROM THE HON STEVE WHAN MLC

Questions in relation to Stakeholder views

31. *And Question 33 and 34*

A number of submissions have been provided to the Inquiry showing commercial fishers that do not agree with this decision. What documentation do you have of any commercial fishers that actually support this decision?

The NSW Government is determined to ensure the long-term capacity to service all fishing stakeholders is maintained or enhanced.

Additional sectoral benefits include greater proximity to fisheries stakeholders located outside the Sydney Metropolitan area and the perception among many that the move will lead to a greater understanding of regional issues affecting fisheries stakeholders.

The majority of commercial fishers and commercial fishing is located north of Sydney and the decision was welcomed by the Professional Fisherman's Association, an Association which represents approximately 30 per cent of all commercial fishermen, in a press release (see Attachment H) and correspondence received by the NSW Government states that the announcement to move the commercial fisheries is strongly supported by the Professional Fisherman's Association. It states:

"Our support is based on a number of reasons John Harrison, Executive Officer of the PFA said. These include the: the need for a cultural change within fisheries management; and taking commercial fishing management closer to the clients i.e. fishers."

32. *With which specific recreational fishers or specific recreational fisher organisations did the Minister consult prior to the announcement to close Cronulla Fisheries? What is the role of the Advisory Council on Recreational Fishing? Prior to the announcement of a decision to relocate functions from the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre of Excellence, what advice did you seek or receive from that council about such a relocation? What comment have you received from that council since that announcement?*

The decision was communicated to the Chair of the Advisory Council on Recreational Fishing (ACoRF) on 8 September 2011 and the ACoRF was briefed at the next meeting. ACoRF is the Ministerially-appointed body which provides advice to the Minister on matters affecting recreational fishing, as well as being the formal body the Minister consults prior to approving expenditure from the Recreational Fishing Trust Funds.

33. *In the Parliamentary debate on 10/10/2011 the Minister defended the decision to move commercial management to Coffs Harbour by quoting the PFA that 80% of the commercial catch was taken on the north coast. In an email one week prior to this statement the Minister was told by Geoff Allan that the catch in the north of the state (including) Sydney was only 62%. Submissions by staff have since corrected this and shown that the catch in the northern half of the state (which does not include Sydney) is actually only 57%. Was the Minister's decision to move commercial management to Coffs Harbour in some way based on this incorrect information?*

No. The decision to relocate staff based at the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre was a key component of this Government's Decade of Decentralisation election policy initiative to ensure regional NSW plays a bigger part than ever before in the future of this State.

- 34. One argument given to justify moving management positions to Coffs Harbour is that they would be closer to the majority of commercial fishers. Isn't it the case that the majority of commercial fishers are actually based closer to Sydney than Coffs Harbour.**

See answer to Q 31 above.

- 35. Which location currently has more fisheries managers Cronulla or Coffs Harbour? In which location are the commercial fisheries catch records currently located? Why do you claim that transferring both units to Coffs Harbour will help with synergies between these two groups when the majority are already in Cronulla?**

Both groups are currently located in Cronulla. Once Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre is closed, co-locating both groups at Coffs Harbour, as opposed to locating the groups at different locations, will help with synergies between the groups.

- 36. Has your office, or have you been aware of concerns raised by Sydney Universities and overseas research partners about the closure of the facility?**

The decentralisation of the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre has enabled Fisheries NSW to work on building new collaborative partnerships with universities to achieve better research outcomes.

The decentralisation of Cronulla will ensure there is enhanced service delivery through stronger collaboration with Australia's finest universities, including those that comprise the Sydney Institute of Marine Science, which, with more than 100 researchers and PhD students has attracted the best minds in marine science.

The submission to this inquiry by Dr. John Keniry AO, Chairman of the SIMS Board, and Professor Peter Steinberg, Director and CEO, clearly articulates support for the co-location of DPI staff from Cronulla at SIMS: *"This co-location of NSW DPI and SIMS personnel is a very exciting development, and one which is expected to bring significant benefits to both SIMS and NSW DPI."* Specific benefits from the collocation, from the SIMS submission to this Inquiry, include:

"1. Research personnel being re-located to SIMS include those people whose research is directly based in and around Sydney and Sydney Harbour, viz research on sharks, fisheries resource estimation and stock assessment, and lobster resource studies. This research expertise adds significantly to the critical mass of fisheries knowledge that is based at SIMS, which will strengthen the overall research effort.

2. Fisheries management personnel being re-located to SIMS will add substantial hands on and commercial knowledge of fishing to the knowledge base at SIMS, thereby helping to inform future research, as well as provide a direct pathway for translating research outcomes into commercial fisheries management.

3. As indicated above, the recent up-grade of SIMS has led to world class research facilities which are not, and were unlikely ever to be available at Cronulla. For example, the new PC2 laboratory will allow cutting edge molecular biology and genetics – critical modern tools for understanding stock assessment, biomonitoring and pathogen detection - to be done in the context of near natural running seawater environments. NSW DPI Fisheries personnel will be able to access those facilities, thereby improving the productivity and scope of their research.

4. As indicated above, the SIMS campus at Chowder Bay houses many junior research personnel, as well as masters' students and conference attendees. By being co-located at SIMS, NSW DPI personnel will have the opportunity to see many young scientists at first hand, thereby improving recruitment opportunities.

5. Co-location also provides an enhanced opportunity to develop collaborative research grants that combine the expertise of the academic staff and student body at SIMS with the expertise of fisheries research and management specialists from Fisheries NSW.”

In relation to costs of Facilities and research capacities

37. What is the current quoted cost for the facilities in Mosman at the SIMS research centre? What is the capacity of the aquarium tanks at SIMS?

a. How does that compare with the facilities at Cronulla?

SIMS has recently completed a \$20 million upgrade providing those staff who transfer to SIMS with access to a range of sophisticated modern laboratory and aquaria facilities. The aquaria facilities include the only Physical Containment 2 (PC-2) facility in Australia as well as large numbers of aquaria with the ability to control environmental conditions. Much greater replication of smaller aquaria and PC-2 status will provide opportunities for research not possible in current facilities at Cronulla.

38. What role will the Wollongong facility play? Are there enough research facilities at this site for workers to continue their operations?

Employees who relocate to Wollongong will be accommodated in DPI facilities. Research undertaken by the research staff who will relocate to Wollongong is primarily field-based. In those rare occasions where laboratory or other research facilities are required, existing DPI facilities at other locations are available.

39. What are the current quoted rental costs for the proposed facilities in Nowra?

Office rent \$183,000 per annum ex GST
Storage facility \$38,000 per annum ex GST

40. How much does the government currently pay in rent for the Cronulla facilities?

See answer to Q4 above.

41. How much does it currently cost to run the Fisheries Centre in Cronulla? How much of this cost is recurrent and is not dependent on the location, eg. electricity, internet, telephones, paper?

See answer to Q4 above.

42. What has DPI estimated will be the total rent each year of all the alternative locations including Nowra, Wollongong, Newington, Wollstonecraft, Mosman and Coffs Harbour (an estimate will do)?

a. Are commercial and recreational trust funds to be used to pay for these increases in rent?

b. Will this additional drain on your budgets affect your service delivery?

- Nowra - \$221,000 per annum
- Wollongong - nil, utilising spare capacity in existing NSW T&I premises
- Newington - nil, utilising spare capacity in existing NSW T&I premises
- Wollstonecraft - nil, utilising spare capacity in existing NSW T&I premises
- Coffs Harbour DPI facilities - nil, utilising spare capacity in existing NSW T&I premises
- Contribution to SIMS for strategic alliance \$190,000 per annum

- Contribution to NMSC, Coffs Harbour will remain at a similar amount to that paid for staff who are already located in NMSC.

Trust funds will not be used to pay increases in rent. The DPI Budget will be sufficient.

43. *Given the modern, rent-free facilities already at Cronulla, would it not be more cost effective for the people that are to be relocated at SIMS, Newington and Wollongong to stay at the Cronulla site?*

Relocation to SIMS offers significant synergies with University academics and access to modern laboratory and aquaria facilities. Relocation to Newington and Wollongong offers new synergies with other DPI staff.

Relocating staff and positions to regional communities in Coffs Harbour, Port Stephens and Nowra will deliver important economic and social benefits to those communities. The relocation of DPI staff to Orange in 1991 continues to provide benefits to regional stakeholders and to the economic and community fabric of Orange. Similar benefits will accrue to regional communities following this relocation of fisheries staff and positions.

44. *Have any contracts/leases been signed with any third parties and if so, what is the cost of these contracts and leases?*

59 Berry Street Nowra
RENT: \$182,747 per annum

180A Princes Hwy, South Nowra
RENT: \$38,000 per annum

Extension to the laboratory at Port Stephens Fisheries Institute: \$480,000.

The tender for the fit out for the Nowra office has now closed and some contracts have been issued, fit out has commenced. The specifications for the new aquaria at Port Stephens Fisheries Institute are being finalised. The specifications for the fit out of DPI offices in Coffs Harbour are being finalised. Agreement has been reached with SIMS Director and Chair and contracts are being developed. Contracts and agreements with University of Southern Cross are in advanced stages of development.

45. *Will the facility still be used for research post relocation? Will staff still be accessing the site from their relocated offices?*

The first stage to determine the future use of the site is community consultation.

46. *What is the general inclination of the department regarding the future prospects of the 12 staff identified in the "retirement zone" as stated in the Primary Industries Ministerial Briefing – (Closure of Cronulla) document?*

All eligible staff have been offered the opportunity to transfer regardless of their age. Entitlements for transfer are not affected by age. Entitlements for those staff who exit the NSW Public Service are based on a number of criteria, including length of service.

47. *What are the estimated transfer costs and redundancies from this relocation?*

Data not available until all decisions have been made and entitlements for those transferring or exiting calculated.

In relation to Ministerial Correspondence

48. In an email that the Ministers Chief of Staff Tim Scott sent you on 7/9/11, he asked for a breakdown of where the Cronulla Workers lived by suburb. The Department's advice was that 60 per cent of staff resided in the Shire area and another 20% in the South Sydney area. Would you agree that statements in the Departments Submission to this enquiry suggesting some staff will be moving closure to home are misleading?

No. Some staff are moving closer to their homes and some staff are returning to the "homes" where they grew up or where their parents live.

In relation to value of fisheries

49. According to NSW DPI figures the recreational and commercial fisheries of NSW are worth around 750 million dollars a year to the state. Do you agree with this figure? Would a 10% decline in fish stocks could therefore cost the NSW economy around 75 million dollars per year. Is there a risk of such a decline considering the potential loss of wild fisheries expertise from this closure?

Total value of wild caught commercial fisheries in NSW were reported to have a value of \$80 million in 2011, the value of recreational fishing activity in NSW is estimated to have been valued of approximately \$1 billion.

Loss of expertise through retirement or resignation is a risk that needs to be managed, irrespective of the relocation of Cronulla. This is managed through succession planning, training and recruitment. Many senior managers and researchers will remain with Fisheries NSW and the expertise of some of those who cannot relocate will be available through contracts with their new employers. Implementation of sustainable fisheries management practices will remain a priority for Fisheries NSW.

In relation to World Fisheries Congress

50. I am aware that the NSW Government won the hosting rights to the World Fisheries Congress in 2016. Prior to the announcement, Sydney was the favoured city host this event of some 1500 scientists and fisheries professionals. Is it the case that Sydney has now lost the right to host this event? Is it the case that the closure of the Cronulla centre was a key factor?

- a. Would this World Fisheries Congress have provided NSW and Australia an opportunity to showcase the state's international reputation in fisheries science and management?**
- b. Do you think that this reputation will be maintained through this relocation process given the international outcry against this closure?**

Korea will be the host for the 2016 World Fisheries Congress. Our scientists and managers are regularly invited to international conferences and our research and management expertise is showcased through the scientific and non-technical publications and resource assessments. The reputation of the Fisheries NSW will be maintained through continued contribution to the scientific literature. See also answer to Q 36.

51. Since the announcement of this Inquiry you have sent letters to staff requesting their intentions to relocate or take redundancy. Why have you not ceased this process until this Committee has completed the inquiry? What action will you take if this Committee finds that this has been a flawed process?

The relocation of Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre is so well advanced that suspending it now will have negative impacts on service delivery to stakeholders, those staff who have transferred, decided to transfer, accepted new positions in new locations or left the agency. Suspending the process is likely to incur considerable additional costs. To meet identified functional needs, it is important that the relocation progresses in an orderly and structured basis.

All staff have known their decision date and the move date for their position since February 2011. We have received advice from the vast majority of staff about their intentions regarding the relocation. As at 24 August 2012, 36 staff have accepted transfer and 46 have decided to exit Fisheries NSW. In total 38 staff have already left Cronulla. Recruitment action for 17 positions associated with the relocation has been completed or is underway. It would be an injustice to those staff who have moved, secured new positions in new locations, secured positions elsewhere or exited DPI, to reverse the decision.

Contractual commitments have been entered into to lease facilities at Nowra and to fit out the new facility for staff. Contracts to extend the laboratory at Port Stephens Fisheries Institute are being finalised and a new tender for additional aquaria facilities prepared. The library transfer from Cronulla to Port Stephens will occur within weeks.

All sites where staff from Cronulla will be located are owned by the Government except Nowra (leased by State Properties Authority), SIMS and National Marine Science Centre at Coffs Harbour (for research staff only – total numbers at the Centre will remain similar to existing numbers).

52. Given the complete lack of any business case or economic analysis for this decision and given the high costs and considerable risks associated with this relocation □ would it not be prudent for this relocation to be put on hold until such an analysis have been undertaken? Has DPI given this advice to the Minister?

See answer to question 51 above.

53. Can you tell this committee if there are any costs or risks associated with putting the relocation on hold?

See answer to question 51 above.

54. How many of the relocation sites are owned by the Department of Trade and Investment or the State Government?

See answer to question 51 above

In relation to meetings with Staff

55. Given the staff's repeated attempts to contact the Minister why did the Minister only agree to meet privately with 3 selected workers? Do you think it was appropriate for the minister to act in this way?

From the outset, the Minister insisted that the decentralisation project be undertaken with the highest regard for the needs the employees at Cronulla and their families.

The process has involved extensive consultation with staff to help ensure functional needs for Fisheries NSW and where possible, individual staff circumstances are taken into account.

The employees have had ample opportunity to voice their concerns to the Minister through various channels, including direct correspondence, media interviews, their local members, the petition that was debated in Parliament and a meeting with the Minister.

All-staff meetings have been arranged with the Director General, Department of Trade and Investment the Director General for DPI, the Executive Director of Fisheries NSW on separate occasions at Cronulla to hear staff views. A comprehensive list of questions have been addressed in writing, the Relocation Working Group has met on 44 occasions, with staff representatives present at almost all meetings, and a committee was established comprised of a majority of staff representatives to help develop the Change Management Plan.

In relation to staff experience in relocations

56. How many years experience has either Geoff Allan or Kevin Cooper had specifically with wild fisheries management – not aquaculture?

Dr Geoff Allan has been Acting Executive Director or Executive Director Fisheries NSW for 15 months. Kevin Cooper is managing the relocation project to ensure staff needs are taken into account.

57. Is it true minutes of the relocation working group were kept from the staff until representations from staff reps that there was a lack of transparency were heeded?

No. All members of the working group discussed the best way to convey information to staff and a collective decision was made to make minutes available.

a. Why were staff representatives removed from the Relocation Working Group in November and not reinstated until late January?

During that period, the two staff representatives were engaged in a separate process to develop the Change Management Plan. Additional staff representatives were involved in that process. Once the Change Management Plan was finalised, the two staff representatives rejoined the working group.

In relation to employee consultation and relocation

58. In the process of deciding which positions would be retained in Sydney – did DPI establish any criteria that would be used to evaluate which positions would stay in Sydney?

- a. What were they?**
- b. Did you document these somewhere?**
- c. Was this document shared with the staff before they prepared cases to stay in Sydney?**
- d. Did you establish an independent committee to evaluate cases for positions to stay in Sydney?**
- e. Who conducted the evaluation and made the decisions?**
- f. Were the reasons for approving or rejecting individual cases documented? How did you evaluate the relative merits of different cases for staff to stay in Sydney?**

Criteria were established in consultation with the working group and senior managers. These are articulated in the Operational Plan (see Attachment I) and a “principles” document and discussed with most individuals during one-to-one discussions. The Operational Plan (updated periodically) is available to all staff on the intranet. The principles relate to function, position, place and person. Line managers in consultation with their staff and members of the Working Group made the evaluation. Senior Management made the decision. Staff were placed according to their function and position in the first instance. Individual circumstances, including special needs, were considered.

59. In dealing with staff with extenuating circumstances did you establish any criteria to establish how these cases would be assessed?

- a. What were they?**
- b. Did you document these somewhere?**
- c. Was this document shared with the staff before they prepared cases?**
- d. Did you establish an independent committee to evaluate cases for positions to stay in Sydney?**
- e. Who conducted the evaluation and made the decisions?**
- f. Were the reasons for approving or rejecting individual cases documented?**
- g. How did you evaluate the relative merits of different cases?**
- h. Is it true staff were told by their line managers not to make cases?**
- i. On whose authority was this done?**
- j. Did DPI decide these cases fairly and without bias?**

The broad principles were discussed at Working Group, team meetings and all staff meetings. Individual cases were discussed confidentially at one-on-one interviews with Relocation Manager. Examples of special needs include on-going specialist medical requirements, maternity leave requirements, special family needs, etc. A confidential register of people with special needs has been retained. To the best of my knowledge no-one was told by their line managers not to make a case, in contrast, all staff were encouraged by Senior Managers, Relocation Manager, PLC staff and Line Managers to discuss their individual circumstances with the Relocation Manager and PLC staff.

60. Staff representatives were moved to an “industrial committee” Is it true staff were told that it is standard departmental practice for “industrial meetings” not to be minuted?

- a. Is it true there were no terms of reference for this industrial group?**
- b. Is this consistent with the departments code of conduct with respect to transparent and open decision making?**
- c. Is it true that senior line managers seeking a position in Sydney for themselves were involved in negatively assessing the cases for staff under their management and that these managers have retained their own positions in Sydney?**

An industrial relations committee was established with a clear objective to develop the Change Management Plan. The output from this meeting was the Change Management Plan, available on the intranet to all staff (see Attachment J). There is no evidence that senior line managers negatively assessed the case for staff seeking to remain in Sydney.

In relation to the Change of Management Plan

61. What information was provided to staff under Section 4 of the Change Management Plan (CMP) with respect to background information on new locations such as real estate trend information, school information, job market information, hospital and other health services information, information on employment agencies to support relocating spouses?

- a. When was this provided?**

An offer was made to provide a suite of information for everyone to access on regional locations (as described in S 4 of the Change Management Plan) at staff meetings and at working group meetings and on an individual basis. When the offer was made initially, most staff were not interested in that information and those individually who were keen to transfer were provided with specific information. This has continued and every effort has been made to provide custom information when requested to each individual. Visits have been supported, usually on an individual (or family) basis and local contact people identified.

62. What did you do about organising group visits to relocation centres under Section 4 of the CMP? I imagine this would have been done around Feb 2012 when staff were receiving their initial letters of relocation – Is this correct?

All staff were offered and continue to be offered the opportunity to visit new locations. Working group members have regularly reported limited interest in group tours and that staff preferred to undertake individual visits. The Relocation Manager and Line Managers continue to work with individuals who have chosen to transfer to arrange individual site inspections.

63. What Equal Employment Opportunity Groups are represented at Cronulla Fisheries? How many staff are in each of these groups? What plans have you put in place under S10 of the CMP?

All staff have been supported through normal departmental policies and procedures, counselling services, peer support and one-on-one support with staff from People, Learning and Culture (PLC) and/or Relocation Project Manager. Where requested, special individual needs have been considered in close, confidential consultation with the Relocation Manager, and where required, senior managers and PLC.

64. How many staff are there with special needs at Cronulla Fisheries? What plans have you put in place under S11 of the CMP?

See answer to Q 59 above.

65. How many staff that have left the organisation have been through the knowledge retention processes documented under S6 of the CMP?

a. How many of these staff have created “knowledge capsules” under the “Wise Ones” project?

Many of the staff who have left have contributed to knowledge transfer process through working hand-overs, transition arrangement, documentation of processes (where this had not previously been done), cross-training and assistance with recruitment of new staff. The timing for transfers was also designed to facilitate knowledge transfer. In some cases departure dates have been delayed to encourage knowledge transfer.

66. Were any scientists that have left the department since the decision was announced in charge of current research projects?

Yes.

a. Has this loss of staff impacted on the delivery of the research milestones for these projects?

Some milestones are expected to be delayed. Almost all milestones will be delivered. The relocation will have other impacts on some projects, including on costs. Those impacts have not yet been quantified. (See Attachment K for a list of projects and their future following the relocation).

b. Have you ever asked for a routine written update on progress against the CMP?

All working group members, including staff representatives, report on their groups each meeting.

In relation to the Port Stephens Facility

67. What purpose was the Port Stephens originally built?

Prawn farming research.

a. Was this site ever known as the Brackish Water Research Station?

No. It was called the Brackish Water Fish Culture Research Station.

68. Would it be correct to say the Port Stephens facilities were built for aquaculture research whereas the Cronulla facilities were built for wild fisheries research?

No. While most facilities at Port Stephens Fisheries Institute are for aquaculture research, laboratory and aquaria facilities have been constructed on that site specifically for fisheries research in the aquatic ecosystems research group. The large pool at Cronulla, tanks and aquaria were originally constructed for aquaculture research.

69. Is the fresh water at the Port Stephens site potable?

a. What would be the cost of providing potable drinking water at this site?

Port Stephens Fisheries Institute has several sources of freshwater, including non-potable bore water and potable rain water. Potable town water is being connected to the site as part of long-standing site development plan (see Site Development Plan 2007 in Attachment F). Total cost estimate for this planned capital upgrade is approximately \$218,000.

70. How far away is the Fisheries centre at Port Stephens from the nearest public transport?

a. How frequently does that public transport presently run?

b. What plans are there to upgrade those public transport services upon relocation of functions from the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre of Excellence to Port Stephens?

www.131500.com.au provides information on public transport in NSW

71. How many lanes are there on the road leading to the Port Stephens site? What is the weight capacity limit on the one-lane bridge through which traffic must go to enter the fisheries centre at Port Stephens?

a. What plans (including estimated cost) are there to upgrade this bridge?

Access for heavy vehicles, including articulated trucks and large cranes is not restricted by the one-lane bridge. Questions relating to roads are more appropriately directed to the Minister for Transport and the Minister for Roads.

72. How many staff members have so far agreed to relocate from the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre to Port Stephens?

See answer to Q 51 above

73. What is the total cost of the new capital works being undertaken at Port Stephens as a result of this relocation?

\$1.17M. Note: Extension to laboratory and aquaria facilities are not just for relocation but to increase future research capacity at Port Stephens.

In relation to Ministerial consultation and future site use

74. On what date was any proposal to close Cronulla Fisheries first raised either with or by the Minister either informally or in a written brief?

Please refer to transcript, this information was provided in evidence during the hearing from senior DPI management.

75. Did the Minister at any time prior to 8 September 2011 require either verbally or in writing that the Department identify a section of the Department suitable for decentralisation?

Please refer to transcript, this information was provided in evidence during the hearing from senior DPI management.

76. Dr Sheldrake acknowledged that he had been contacted by the Auditor General regarding the Cronulla Closure, what was the nature of the contact and detail any required Auditor General has made for information?

Please refer to transcript, this information was provided in evidence during the hearing from senior DPI management.

77. Who will be the long term owner of the site at Cronulla, who will administer the site in the long term?

See answer to Q25 above.

78. Evidence provided in the hearing have made it clear that this decision has been driven by the decentralisation policy – does the department classify all of the Sydney basin as the same when it comes to decentralisation?

No.

79. How is moving from Cronulla to Newington decentralisation?

Consistent with our commitment to ensure the current level of services is maintained in the future, the decentralisation project is being conducted in a measured way to suit the needs and demands of our stakeholders. Functions that will be based at Newington primarily deliver service in the Sydney metropolitan area.

80. What are the 'generous relocation packages' that the Minister has spoken about for staff relocating?

Transferred Employees (Crown Employees) Award.

81. What was your initial advice when discussing a relocation of Cronulla with the Minister?

Please refer to transcript, this information was provided in evidence during the hearing from senior DPI management.

82. Did the Minister ask DPI to identify facilities to move or did she suggest Cronulla?

Please refer to transcript, this information was provided in evidence during the hearing from senior DPI management.

83. What other facilities were identified?

The department is continuing to look at all opportunities to ensure the department's running costs are minimised and service delivery to customers maximised.

In relation to the Relocation Working Group

84. Have copies of minutes of for all the Working Group meeting's been made available to the workers?

Yes for all meetings before 8 July 2012. Subsequent meetings will be available soon.

85. How many staff on this working group reside at the Cronulla Fisheries site and will be relocated to a regional area?

There are no staff who reside on-site at the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre.

86. How many are not based at Cronulla?

Members of the working group are listed in minutes, see Attachments L(a) & L(b). The choice of positions represented on the Working Group was based on Functional Position. Excluding ED Fisheries, the relocation manager and PLC representatives, the majority of working group members were based at Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre.

87. What is the number of research project milestones that been missed according to the working group meeting minutes?

Working group minutes provided.

In relation to the site visit

88. On page 6 of the Transcript Dr Geoff Allan stated that "there are a some small tanks at Cronulla which are useful but they are not replicated" – what was it meant by this statement as the Inquiry saw may rows of replicated tanks on the site at the aquarium?

There is only one bank of small tanks at Cronulla. The tanks in that bank are replicated in that there are a number of similar size tanks but as they are subject to different light conditions, replication is inadequate for some purposes. There are several larger (approximately 5,000 l tanks) but these are not effectively replicated because they are subject to different "location" effects, particularly light. They are currently used mainly for holding animals rather than for experimental research.

In relation to a business case

89. Dr Geoff Allan has stated on page 12 of the Transcript that the work units locations were determined to try to minimise fragmentation. The DPI submission shows that business units such as recreational management are in three locations and resource assessment are in three locations. How is this not fragmentation?

Locations for functions were chosen to maintain and develop synergies between functional areas at the new locations

In relation to research service deliver

90. Dr Richard Sheldrake stated in the Inquiry on 6/8/12 that relocating licensing and commercial staff into locations which probably allow efficiencies and improved service delivery. Aren't licensing and commercial staff already located together at Cronulla?

Recreational and commercial licensing staff are currently located in different buildings at Cronulla.

a. How would locating them to different locations allow efficiencies and improve service delivery?

Recreational and commercial licensing positions will be located at one location, Nowra, presenting new opportunities for cross-training and sharing new procedures, etc.

End.