

**Submission  
No 14**

**INQUIRY INTO CLOSURE OF THE CRONULLA  
FISHERIES RESEARCH CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE**

**Organisation:** Department of Primary Industries

**Name:** Dr Richard Sheldrake

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**Department of  
Primary Industries**

**Legislative Council Select Committee:  
Inquiry into closure of Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre**

Submission by  
NSW Department of Primary Industries

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The NSW Government's decision to relocate the Fisheries Centre at Cronulla ('the Centre') to a number of locations along the NSW coastline, including Port Stephens, Coffs Harbour and Nowra demonstrates its pre-election commitment to a 'Decade of Decentralisation'.

Since the announcement on 8 September 2011, senior Department of Primary Industries (DPI) management have worked through the logistics and details of the relocation project in close collaboration with the employees working at the Centre.

In 1991, the NSW Government relocated the former Department of Agriculture headquarters from Sydney to Orange. It was hailed as one of the most successful decentralisation projects undertaken by any Government, with increased efficiencies, greater interaction with rural and regional NSW, and more jobs for the local economy.

Nearly two decades later, it would seem odd in today's world to have the centre of agriculture located in the middle of the Sydney metropolitan area.

So too is the case with fisheries management and research.

This decentralisation project is being undertaken to:

1. maximise the benefits to the regional locations, including Coffs Harbour, Port Stephens, Nowra and Wollongong;
2. retain as much expertise as possible by being sympathetic and compassionate to the needs of our employees and their families, and accommodating special and compassionate needs;
3. ensure all recreational and commercial fishing stakeholders will continue to benefit from the expertise and knowledge capabilities of Fisheries' NSW employees; and
4. enhance collaboration between universities and Government to deliver better outcomes for aquatic resource management in NSW, including co-location of Fisheries NSW positions with universities in Sydney (including Sydney Institute of Marine Science) and Coffs Harbour (Southern Cross University).

The NSW Government insisted that the decentralisation project be undertaken with the highest regard for the needs of employees. Once the decision was made, employees located at the Centre were informed as soon as practically possible. Furthermore, a timeframe of 12-18 months was set for the relocation to ensure employees were not pressured to make a decision overnight.

As with any relocation project, there are specific issues to be addressed but these are not insurmountable. Fisheries NSW will continue to meet all responsibilities under legislation from existing and new locations. The project and associated costs are being managed carefully, and senior DPI management is working through the issues identified by the employees currently located at the Centre.

The decentralisation of the Centre is proceeding according to the plan outlined in late 2011. Eight staff elected to move early and have already relocated. As at July 2012, a further

nineteen employees have accepted an offer to relocate, and more employees will make a decision soon.

It is currently anticipated that approximately 80 per cent of positions from the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre will be decentralised to regional locations.

All employees currently based at the Centre at Cronulla are expected to have transferred or ceased employment with Government by early 2013, after which the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre will be closed as a Departmental facility and a new chapter at the site will commence.

The community has been consulted to determine the future use of the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre site. The site is of significant Aboriginal and post European settlement historical and heritage value. Protecting that heritage is of high priority in determining future use of the site.

The Legislative Council of NSW decided on 21 June 2012 to conduct a Select Committee Inquiry into the closure of the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre. Responses to the terms of reference are included in this submission.

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## THE BASIS FOR THE DECISION

***Terms of Reference A: The basis for the decision including the documents and other records that were considered by the Minister, including any economic or financial analysis.***

In implementing the 'Decade of Decentralisation' policy commitment, the NSW Government decided to decentralise the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre.

Relevant extracts from this policy include:

*"The NSW Liberals & Nationals will work with councils, shires and communities around NSW to ensure that regional NSW plays an even bigger part than ever before in the future of NSW and managing predicted population growth. We are determined to make the next ten years 'The Decade of Decentralisation'."*

*"In addition to other regional initiatives..., we will:*

- actively pursue strategies and policies to encourage **decentralisation** - steady and strategic growth in our regions;*
- identify more **public sector job opportunities** to locate in regional areas."*

Excellent and world-class research facilities are already in place at Port Stephens and Coffs Harbour, which are strategically located close to its stakeholders. The decentralisation of the Centre from Cronulla would ensure Fisheries employees could be more closely and strategically aligned with the industries they service.

The majority of commercially harvested fish are taken from waters north of Sydney, with the Clarence River and Coffs Harbour being two of the major commercial fishing ports making Coffs Harbour an ideal new location for the Commercial Fisheries Management.

Fisheries NSW already has prominent scientists and managers based at its Port Stephens Fisheries Institute, who are highly qualified and specialised in aquaculture and aquatic ecosystems research and aquatic biosecurity. All technology, equipment and research currently used and undertaken at the Centre in Cronulla are transferable. This means that the vital research currently undertaken in the increasingly urbanised environment at Cronulla would be able to continue at Port Stephens, and in some instances it would be enhanced.

Furthermore, it is estimated that more than one million people across the State undertake recreational fishing at least once a year, making it one of the most popular sports enjoyed in NSW, not just in Sydney. While a large number of recreational anglers live in the Sydney area, there are many iconic and highly productive recreational fishing locations outside Sydney and in marine parks along the NSW coastline.

Travelling to new angling locations outside of Sydney will be even more exciting with two additional Offshore Artificial Reefs to be deployed outside the Sydney metropolitan area in the near future.

With the popularity and importance of recreational and commercial fishing to communities on the South Coast and North Coast, it was identified that the relocation would provide unique

opportunities for people living in those Coastal communities to pursue a career and Government employment in a field which provides much of the social fabric to their own communities.

Every angler in NSW will continue to be able to access the services currently available to him or her.

For example, anglers will continue to be able to pay their fishing fee anywhere and at any time, either through the 1,100 agents or online at: [www.licence.nsw.gov.au](http://www.licence.nsw.gov.au)

In making its decision, the NSW Government was determined to ensure the relocation project would be undertaken in a manner that meets the needs and demands of all fishing stakeholders.

## CONSULTATION

### ***Terms of Reference B: What consultation was undertaken prior to the decision with stakeholders, including commercial and recreational fishing groups, environmental groups and staff.***

The NSW Government insisted that the decentralisation project be undertaken with the highest regard for the needs of employees, whilst ensuring it meets the needs and demands of all fishing stakeholders.

Once the decision was made, employees working at the Centre were informed as soon as practically possible.

A working group was established by Senior DPI management to ensure the relocation project would progress in consultation with the employees. The working group includes representation from the People, Learning and Culture (PLC) (Human Resources) Branch and senior managers from each of the major functional work units based at the Centre.

The Terms of Reference for the Relocation Working Group are:

- To ensure the essential work of Fisheries NSW is maintained or enhanced during and following the relocation. This involves aligning functions and people with the new sites.
- To understand the circumstances of staff that impact on their ability to relocate and to consider those circumstances where possible in implementing the relocation whilst retaining as many staff as possible.
- To identify critical projects that might be at risk of not being completed or meeting their milestone schedules and facilitate the creation of individual plans to manage their completion (e.g. Fish Online).
- To identify opportunities for organisational restructure and ways to carry out functions more efficiently.
- To maintain service delivery to stakeholders.
- To ensure business processes are maintained or enhanced (e.g. licensing, communication).
- To identify the needs required for new sites and manage the development of those sites.
- To have input into the future use of the Cronulla site and ensure the historical importance of fisheries research and management at this site is recognised.



External stakeholders were also informed of the decision as soon as practicable. Members of Fisheries NSW advisory committees were all briefed on the decision during face-to-face meetings and Senior DPI Management have provided regular updates.

Extensive informal communication with internal and external stakeholders continues as the relocation project progresses.

## **COSTS AND BENEFITS OF THE DECISION**

### ***Terms of Reference C: The costs and benefits of the decision to close the Centre and relocate its functions to other locations.***

The decentralisation of the Centre at Cronulla is about more than just relocating the Centre from one site to another. While with any relocation project, there will be some initial relocation costs, the intent of the policy is to provide meaningful job opportunities throughout regional NSW, as well as servicing and improving the ongoing viability and relevance of our recreational and commercial fishing industry.

The relocation represents an important investment in regional NSW. The relocation of services, facilities, employees and their families from Cronulla to Port Stephens, Coffs Harbour and Nowra are expected to provide substantial socio-economic benefits to these local communities.

For example, based on previous relocation data, it is expected that for every relocated employee, 2.14 flow-on jobs will be created in the new locations.

This is a conservative employment multiplier (government administrative employees), and the overall economic impact on regions is likely to be more significant.

An increase in the size of the community, including jobs, will result in economic opportunities through consumer spending and procurement of goods and services by agencies/business units, while at the same time relieving government budgets through lower accommodation expenses

The cost of the decentralisation project is being managed carefully. A cost-benefit analysis will be finalised as soon as possible. The final cost depends on a range of factors, including the number of staff who elect to relocate. While there will be some relocation costs, the decentralisation project will deliver much-needed jobs for regional communities and will inject millions of dollars in salaries into their economies. The long-term benefits of the relocation to these regional communities will far outweigh any relocation costs.

The NSW Government encourages employees currently located at Cronulla to relocate, however it is recognised that some employees may not be able to, and will choose not to relocate. In those instances, Fisheries' management will recruit new employees to ensure the long-term capacity to service all fishing stakeholders is maintained or enhanced.

For employees who do wish to be part of this project and who wish to continue to deliver valuable services to the NSW fishing community, generous entitlements are available under the *Crown Employees Transferred Employees Compensation Award 2009*.

Under the NSW Government's incentive to relocate to regional NSW policy, one-off \$7,000 grants will be payable to individuals or families who relocate homes from Sydney to regional NSW and meet the criteria.

These entitlements are all designed to make the relocation process easier for the employees and their families.

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.

While recreational fishing is a popular past time throughout NSW, the majority of recreational fishing havens are located south of Sydney and the majority of interactions with recreational fishers by Fisheries NSW staff occur in regional areas.

Benefits of the relocation also include greater synergies from new arrangements for co-location with universities. The most obvious example is co-locating some staff who work on Sydney-based activities at the Sydney Institute of Marine Science (SIMS). NSW DPI is already an associate partner of SIMS. The strengthened alliance between NSW DPI and SIMS, including co-location of staff at the SIMS campus at Chowder Bay, will increase opportunities for research collaboration to improve management of fisheries in NSW, increase transfer of knowledge and accelerate uptake of new technologies of potential benefit to NSW, and reduce the need for duplication of facilities and services. It will provide new opportunities for students from SIMS to work with DPI.

The new laboratories and very modern aquaria facilities at SIMS will allow existing research to continue and increase opportunities for new research not previously possible at the Centre at Cronulla. In addition, increased numbers of research staff will be co-located with the University of Southern Cross at the National Marine Science Centre at Coffs Harbour.

## **MINISTER'S RESPONSIBILITY UNDER FISHERIES MANAGEMENT ACT 1994**

### ***Terms of Reference D: The extent to which the decision satisfies the Minister's responsibilities under the Fisheries Management Act 1994.***

Fisheries NSW is able to meet all responsibilities under legislation from existing and new locations.

Fisheries NSW has primary responsibility for managing fisheries in NSW under the Fisheries Management Act (FMA) 1994.

- (1) The objects of this Act are to conserve, develop and share the fishery resources of the State for the benefit of present and future generations.
- (2) In particular, the objects of this Act include:
  - (a) to conserve fish stocks and key fish habitats, and
  - (b) to conserve threatened species, populations and ecological communities of fish and marine vegetation, and

- (c) to promote ecologically sustainable development, including the conservation of biological diversity, and, consistently with those objects:
- (d) to promote viable commercial fishing and aquaculture industries, and
- (e) to promote quality recreational fishing opportunities, and
- (f) to appropriately share fisheries resources between the users of those resources, and
- (g) to provide social and economic benefits for the wider community of New South Wales, and
- (h) to recognise the spiritual, social and customary significance to Aboriginal persons of fisheries resources and to protect, and promote the continuation of, Aboriginal cultural fishing.

A key objective of the Working Group is to ensure the functions of the agency can be carried out during and after the relocation. Careful planning undertaken by senior DPI management, including a new organisational structure based on the new locations, is ensuring that all legislative responsibilities are met and that service levels for stakeholders are met before and after the relocation.

The key functions performed at Cronulla and the impacts of the relocation on the ability to specifically meet legislative responsibilities are:

#### **Aquaculture, Conservation and Marine Parks**

One conservation manager, with responsibility for ensuring developments under the FMA are properly assessed, is based at the Centre at Cronulla. Other conservation managers are already based in the regions they service. The officer currently based at Cronulla with responsibilities for the southern Metropolitan area will relocate to Wollongong. All responsibilities under relevant sections of the FMA will continue to be met.

#### **Recreational and Indigenous Fisheries**

Recreational and Indigenous fisheries management will be relocated to Nowra, with key staff also being relocated to Coffs Harbour and some positions remaining in Sydney. Over one million recreational anglers in NSW generate significant employment and tourism income. Key expertise in recreational fisheries management has been retained - all responsibilities under the FMA will be met.

#### **Commercial Fisheries**

Commercial fisheries catch records and commercial fisheries management will be relocated to Coffs Harbour. This group will be increased to undertake the restructure of commercial fisheries in NSW, guided by the independent review of commercial fisheries. Co-locating the commercial fisheries management and catch records in closer proximity to the majority of commercial fishers will improve service to commercial fishers and ensure that all responsibilities under the FMA can continue to be met.

#### **Wild Fisheries Research (Fisheries Research)**

Wild fisheries research will be reorganised into new groups following the relocation. These groups will be: stock assessment, sharks, surveys, enhancement and gear technology. Leadership of each group from experienced scientists will ensure rigorous science based information continues to underpin the management of wild fisheries in NSW and ensure legislative responsibilities continue to be met. Wild fisheries research provides critical information for stock assessments that assists in meeting primary objectives of the FMA 1994 to conserve fish stocks and populations.

A number of scientists in the stock assessment group will be based at SIMS, with proximity to the Sydney Fish Markets where fish from the commercial catch are sampled. Additional scientists will be based at Coffs Harbour to work closely with the commercial fisheries management group and with the catch records group (primary source of data on catch). A number of other positions (including casual positions) will continue to be employed in regional areas to sample fish landed at regional ports. Scientists in other groups will be based at SIMS, Port Stephens and Coffs Harbour.

## **ABILITY TO REPLICATE FACILITIES AT OTHER LOCATIONS**

***Terms of Reference E: Any advice received by the Minister on the ability to replicate the Cronulla facilities at other locations, including potential problems and other implications of the other locations.***

The Centre at Cronulla includes a good seawater source but there is limited storage, rudimentary water treatment, and negligible ability to manage abiotic conditions of influent seawater. There is no ability to treat or otherwise manage effluent prior to discharge into Port Hacking. There is limited ability to manage biosecurity within the pool, tank or aquaria facilities or in effluent prior to discharge. The pool and largest tank are not replicated, limiting their value for experimental research, and there are a limited number of smaller tanks inside and outside. There is negligible ability to manage the environment within the pool or tanks (e.g. temperature, salinity, photoperiod, light intensity, etc). Due to the topography of the site and its heritage value, upgrading and modernising the existing pool and aquaria facilities at Cronulla would be very difficult and expensive.

Following the relocation, aquaria facilities will be available at the following locations: Port Stephens Fisheries Institute (PSFI), SIMS and Coffs Harbour (National Marine Science Centre). The water quality of influent water at SIMS and Coffs Harbour is equal to or better than that available at the Centre at Cronulla and both institutions have just completed major improvements and refurbishments of aquaria facilities. These facilities include the only physical containment (PC-2) marine laboratory in the Southern Hemisphere at SIMS, and computer control of environmental conditions not available anywhere else in Australia.

The vast majority of research conducted by Fisheries NSW that relies on keeping animals or plants in seawater is conducted at the PSFI. The PSFI draws saltwater primarily from the Port Stephens estuary. The water quality at PSFI is of a high standard. In this context, high standard water quality refers to stable, high salinity, low concentrations of dissolved nutrients and suspended solids.

At both Port Hacking and Port Stephens, during periods of high rainfall, salinity can be reduced and concentrations of dissolved nutrients and suspended solids are temporarily elevated compared to oceanic conditions. This is more likely at Port Stephens but also occurs at Port Hacking. At Port Stephens, large storage facilities are available in those times and the PSFI also has the capacity to source some oceanic water via truck. This small volume of water is only used for larval stages of some mollusc and microalgal species. It is not needed for any breeding or research with finfish and it would not be needed for any research conducted at the Centre at Cronulla.

PSFI was established to develop technology for breeding aquatic species. All marine and estuarine species require very high quality water, particularly for sensitive larval stages. The majority of fisheries research conducted at the Centre at Cronulla does not use the aquaria facilities. Very little research is conducted in the pool at the Centre at Cronulla, partly because of the limitations of that facility. All existing research that does use the Cronulla aquaria facilities can be conducted at PSFI. Additional facilities have been designed and will be constructed at PSFI to accommodate additional research requirement but the recently upgraded supply and treatment systems will be more than adequate.

By comparison, the aquaculture research group at PSFI use seawater for every research and production program. The PSFI boasts one of the largest and most successful aquaculture and aquatic ecosystems research programs in Australia. Depending on the intended use, water can be used directly (all ponds and large tanks), filtered through large sand filters, sterilised using state-of-the-art ozone treatment or stored for future use. Through appropriate storage and treatment, sensitive, marine species have been held continuously for decades on site. Effluent water can also be treated, including ozone sterilisation prior to release.

PSFI scientists lead the country in temperate marine fish breeding research. The Institute houses one of three Australian government hatcheries involved in the breeding program for the iconic Southern Bluefin tuna. Larvae have been reared to juveniles in a world first under this program, including at PSFI. This species has extremely sensitive larval stages, requiring the highest quality water and environmental conditions.

Scientists also rear a range of mollusc species and are the most successful mollusc hatchery in Australia (in terms of the number of species reared and success with the most sensitive and demanding species). There are no better marine facilities with the scope and flexibility for research and aquaculture production anywhere in NSW or Australia.

The world class facilities PSFI include:

- A mollusc hatchery and a quarantine mollusc hatchery, for developing and improving hatchery and nursery techniques for Sydney rock, Pacific, Pearl and Flat oysters, as well as other molluscs (e.g. pipis). These hatcheries have the capability to produce very large quantities of mollusc spat (juveniles) for industry as well as the capability to run rigorous research experiments in highly replicated facilities. These are the facilities used for one of the most successful oyster breeding programs in the world. Oyster lines have been bred that grow much faster and are resistant to the major production limiting disease, QX.
- A large-scale marine fish broodstock centre housing broodstock of yellowtail kingfish, mulloway and snapper in the only facility in Australia allowing environmentally-controlled manipulation of spawning for all species.
- A specialised marine finfish hatchery, nursery facilities and grow-out tanks and ponds for improving methods for hatchery production of mulloway, Australian bass, yellowtail kingfish and southern bluefin tuna
- A number of separate experimental rooms with replicate aquaria and tanks, linked with environmental controls (temperature and photoperiod).
- A greenhouse with 16 x 10,000 l tanks for aquaculture research and;
- A large tank farm for nutrition experiments including three banks, each with 24 x 200 L tanks (72 in total), all with temperature control.
- 12 large, plastic-lined outdoor ponds, six with greenhouse covers for passive heating.
- A new, aquatic ecosystem Laboratory.
- Specialist facilities for shark autopsies.

- Aquaria facilities for growth and reproduction experiments with seagrasses.

## **RETENTION OF SCIENTIFIC EXPERTISE**

### ***Terms of Reference F: The loss of the scientific expertise held by the staff who cannot relocate from Cronulla and the implications for sustainable fisheries management.***

The decentralisation of the Centre is going ahead as planned, and the process is well underway. Eight staff elected to move early and have already relocated. As at July 2012, a further nineteen employees have accepted an offer to relocate, and more employees will make a decision soon – rejecting the assertion that 95% of the employees will not or cannot move.

The NSW Government understands that the decision to relocate or not, is a personal matter for all employees.

In terms of the Cronulla relocation, functional areas have been reorganised, recruitment action for new staff has already commenced and a knowledge transfer process has been planned.

Employees have been involved at all stages of the planning process to ensure functions are located in the best places to meet the needs of the agency, stakeholders and staff.

Succession planning has involved training younger scientists, including through supporting work-related post-graduate studies and providing on-the-job training and opportunities for career development.

The co-location with SIMS and Southern Cross University (National Marine Science Centre) will help ensure new under- and post-graduates are closely linked with Fisheries NSW, facilitating specific training and assisting with recruitment. This will benefit both Fisheries NSW and provides additional opportunities for students.

## **SERVICE DELIVERY**

### ***Terms of Reference G: The impacts of the decision on service delivery to stakeholders.***

The NSW Government is committed to ensuring that all of the services currently delivered by NSW Fisheries will continue and are relevant to the needs of all our fisheries stakeholders.

The Department is determined to retain the valuable expertise and knowledge of the staff and considerable effort continues to be made to minimise loss of valuable expertise.

The process has involved extensive consultation with staff to help ensure functional needs for Fisheries NSW are met, and to help ensure stakeholders receive high levels of service once the relocation project is complete. Individual staff circumstances have been taken into account where possible.

This project is about investing in regional NSW and moving Fisheries NSW staff closer to the industries, stakeholders and clients the agency services. The process has involved extensive consultation with staff to help ensure functional needs for Fisheries NSW continue to be met.

What this means for NSW Fisheries experts working on Sydney-based fisheries programs is that they will remain based in Sydney. The Sydney-based Bather Protection Shark Meshing Program and the Sydney Harbour Bull Shark Tagging Program, along with key recreational education services, will remain based in the Sydney area.

The NSW Fishcare Volunteer Program, which is delivered across the State by a number of Education Officers, will also continue to have a presence in Sydney.

The decentralisation project will also lead to greater affiliations with Universities which in turn will deliver improved outcomes for the Department's world-class science and research programs.

For example, fisheries licensing and catch records are being relocated to Nowra and Coffs Harbour respectively. Some key staff have already moved, others who can move have been identified and recruitment action commenced to fill positions where staff have indicated they cannot relocate.

The relocation of licensing services to a new facility in Nowra will for the first time allow all commercial and recreational licensing to be delivered from a single office. The transfers of staff have been staged to correspond with seasonal periods of less customer demand.

Commercial fisheries catch records and commercial fisheries management are being relocated to Coffs Harbour. An independent review into the management and administration of commercial fisheries in NSW commissioned by the Government in 2011 has recommended significant reform to the way commercial fisheries operate. The key reform is to establish an explicit link between the shares held by commercial fishers, and the amount of fish they are able to catch or the amount of effort they may employ. The commercial catch records provide much of the information, which will inform this reform program. Critically it informs the management decisions affecting appropriate amounts of commercial fishing gear able to be used and the appropriate levels of harvest for individual species. There has always been a high level of interaction between staff in the commercial fisheries management and commercial catch records teams, and this will increase due to the restructuring of commercial fisheries in NSW. Co-locating the majority of commercial fisheries managers and the catch records group at Coffs Harbour will ensure service to the fishing industry is maintained or in most instances it will be enhanced. Several wild fisheries science positions will also be located at Coffs Harbour, helping to cement the critical relationship between research, management and administration.

The majority of commercially harvested fish are taken from waters north of Sydney, with the Clarence River and Coffs Harbour being two of the major commercial fishing ports. Coffs Harbour is an ideal location for these services to be delivered from.

Recreational fisheries management will generally be relocated to Nowra, with some key staff also being relocated in Coffs Harbour and some positions remaining in Sydney. Recreational fishing is a popular pastime and generates significant employment and tourism on the NSW south coast. Thirty Recreational Fishing Havens were created in 2002 during which

commercial fishing effort was bought out in significant estuarine areas and the waters set aside for recreational fishing. Of those 30 areas, 20 are south of Sydney on the NSW south coast, one in Sydney (Botany Bay), and nine are located on the north coast. Two additional Offshore Artificial Reefs are to be deployed outside the Sydney metropolitan area in the near future. These artificial reefs will attract not only fish species from near and far, but it will also deliver more exciting fishing opportunities for the people of NSW.

All recreational fisheries management functions specific to or centred around Sydney will be retained in the Sydney area. These include the Sydney based education officer, the schools officers, as well as officers who provide information on elevated dioxin levels in Port Jackson.

The relocation will for the first time see senior and key staff involved in the management of recreational fishing based on the south coast (Nowra), Sydney and the north coast (Coffs Harbour). This regional presence will provide the platform for strong working relationships between staff and stakeholders along the coast.

All relocations of fisheries licensing, recreational fisheries management, commercial fisheries management and catch records functions from Cronulla to Nowra and Coffs Harbour will be in a staged manner to ensure there is continuity in both service delivery and staff numbers.

Most wild fisheries research positions are being relocated to Port Stephens, SIMS (for Metropolitan-based research) or Coffs Harbour and planning is underway to ensure all on-going project milestones are met.

With the popularity and importance of recreational and commercial fishing to communities on the south and north coasts, the relocation will provide opportunities for local people to pursue a career and Government employment in a field which provides much of the social fabric to their own communities.

## **SUPPORTING STAFF AND FAMILIES**

### ***Terms of Reference G: The impact on staff and their families of the closure and the relocation.***

Considerable efforts have already been made to reduce the impact of the functions transfers from Cronulla on employees and their families. These efforts are supporting both those who are accepting the offer of transfer and also those who are unable to transfer. The Change Management Plan developed in consultation with staff had a primary objective of reducing any negative impacts on staff.

There are many employees who will benefit from the decision to close the Cronulla site because of benefits to their career, lower costs of living in regional locations and, in some cases, because of the chance to move closer to their families. Employees who have relocated previously within the Department of Primary Industries, including when Fisheries staff relocated from the Sydney Fish Markets to Port Stephens, are overwhelmingly positive about the impact the transfers have had on them and their families.

The following key strategies have underpinned the approach to mitigate the impact of the relocation on staff and their families.



### **Emotional support and counsel**

Emotional support and counsel has been provided through on-site counselling at key times, and access to counselling off-site at any time, information and encouragement to support colleagues, and support on-site from the Relocation Project Manager.

### **Information and support to aid decisions**

The weekly Working Group has facilitated rapid information sharing among staff.

An intranet site was developed to be a central point of information for staff affected by the relocation. All staff have had the option of discussing their individual entitlements and possible severance or redundancy payments with the HR Manager.

### **Time and space to make decisions**

The relocation plans and Gantt Charts were first released in November 2011. These showed destinations for each role and the planned timing for relocations. The early release of this information was timed so every staff member could consider their options and discuss plans with their families.

Provided it is consistent with work function, employees have been able to time their physical move to suit needs for schooling, housing, etc.

### **To operate flexibly to accommodate individual needs**

All employees were invited to communicate specific needs and preferences to Relocation Manager and to the HR Manager and flexible options and plans have been agreed with staff with special needs, preferences for change of location identified and accommodated wherever possible, preferences for timing of relocation identified and accommodated wherever possible, preferences for last day of duty for staff choosing not to relocate identified and accommodated wherever possible.

### **To actively help people relocate, or secure a new job.**

Relocation assistance has been made available to eligible staff in accordance with the Crown Employees (Transferred Employees Compensation) Award 2009. The intent of this Award is to provide reimbursement towards expenses of employees members transferred to work in a new location, which, by necessity of that transfer, requires them to relocate their principle place of residence. Employees have been encouraged to organise individual visits to their new location authorised as an official trip by their manager.

## **PROTECTING THE HERITAGE VALUES OF CRONULLA FISHERIES RESEARCH CENTRE**

### ***Terms of Reference 1: The impact on the heritage values of the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre.***

The NSW Government recognises the cultural and social values of the Centre at Cronulla.

Apart from ad-hoc visits and very irregular open days, the public are currently denied access to the site to visit any areas of heritage value.

The NSW Government is committed to re-empowering local communities by involving people in the decisions that affect them. To help deliver on this objective, a community consultation process, lead by an independent consultant, is currently underway to determine the future of the site.

The terms of reference for this consultation are:

- To engage with Sutherland Shire Council (Councillors and the executive) to discuss and consider their aspirations for the site in the short, medium and long term.
- To engage with all relevant community representatives including the Cronulla Chamber of Commerce, La Perouse Aboriginal Land Council and the Local Member to discuss their views on the future use of the site.
- To meet with DPI's Crown Lands' staff to gain a full understanding of the constraints and opportunities potentially available for the site.
- To identify any 'off site' issues which may need to be taken into consideration in the future use of the site.
- To identify in consultation with Council business studies which may be necessary to assist in the future viability of the site.
- Based on the consultation with the local community and the NSW Government, make recommendations for the future use of the site.

The Centre is on a site with significant Aboriginal and post European settlement historical and heritage value. Protecting this heritage is of high priority in determining future use of the site, and the decision to relocate the Centre was not driven by potential financial gains of property development.