

**Submission  
No 73**

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

**Organisation:** Cronulla Fisheries Relocation Working Group

**Name:** Mr Peter Brown

**Date received:** 30/07/2012

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**Submission to the Legislative Council Select Committee on Cronulla Fisheries**

**From: Peter Brown, Staff Representative on the Cronulla Fisheries Relocation**

**Working Group, DPI NSW.**

I am making this submission in my capacity as a staff representative on the Cronulla Fisheries Relocation Working Group. I have attempted to provide a staff perspective on the management of the relocation process and the treatment of staff with respect to a range of issues. The issues raised in this submission primarily relate to items (a), (b) and (h) of the terms of reference.

I believe the general or prevailing view of the majority of staff is that this relocation has been very poorly managed and is unsatisfactory in a number of areas. This in turn has led to a great deal of anger at the predicament that staff find themselves. In my opinion, the primary source of dissatisfaction and anger stems from a fundamental failure of the department to establish and follow robust governance measures across a number of areas that would demonstrate and ensure openness, fairness and transparency in decision making.

This lack of transparency was evident in the way the initial decision was made and has continued throughout the process so far. This leaves many staff lacking any confidence in the fairness of decision making or the sharing of opportunities to minimise the impact of the closure.

I would like the committee to inquire into the matters raised below with a view to providing the transparency that is lacking so far and providing an assessment of the fairness of decision making together with any recommendations for how these ought to be improved or varied.

Areas of concern for the staff included the following:

## **1. Reasons for Closing the Centre.**

We still don't know the true reasons for the decision to close the centre. We do know the reasons provided are completely without foundation. The staff knows this, senior management know this and we both know each other knows it. Yet, whenever an explanation for the real reasons is sought, senior management parrot the official line – lack of access, old site, limited expansion, put the staff closer to the stakeholders etc etc. Staff cringe when they hear the Minister say these things because they know they are not true. Senior management up to the level of DG Trade and Investment have been asked to release background and briefing papers related to the decision to help staff understand and they refuse point blank. It is a source of real anger to the staff losing their careers that the department refuses to be truthful about the reasons for what is happening.

## **2. Relocation Working Group**

A working group was formed to oversight the closure and relocation. The department did not think it appropriate to include staff representatives on this working group until staff queried their lack of representation. I and another member of staff were eventually invited onto the working group in October 2011 as elected representatives of the staff.

Upon joining the working group we immediately raised issues of concern to staff that were being ignored and attempted to get these addressed. These included:

- Concerns over severance entitlements
- Concerns over permanency for staff classified as temporary
- Lack of transparency (minutes of the working group were not being released to staff)
- The lack of a Change Management Plan in accordance with Department of Premier and Cabinet guidelines.

Staff representatives were removed from the Relocation Working Group between November 2011 and late January, 2012 because concerns relevant to the staff were seen as interfering with the relocation.

### **3. Change Management Plan**

The relocation project was initiated with complete disregard for Premiers Directive D2011\_014 Agency Change Management Guidelines published 1 September, 2011. The staff saw it as important that the Change Management Plan be developed in accordance with the DPC Guidelines and that this plan should be the primary planning document for the closure and relocation project. Instead development of the plan was only done on the insistence of staff representatives and was delegated to staff in Orange under a structure called the "Industrial Relations Group" and removed from the jurisdiction of the working group. I believe this was inappropriate as the Change Management Plan dealt with many issues that were within the responsibility of the Relocation Working Group. This then led to the staff representatives being removed from the working group into the Industrial Relations Group where we were enlightened to be told that there would be no minutes taken of the meetings and that this was not unusual for "industrial meetings" (refer minutes of meeting #9 of the Relocation Working Group). We were also told there were no terms of reference. We were excluded from working group meetings from November 2011 until late January, 2012.

The Change Management Plan was eventually developed and promptly sidelined. The Plan itself has many shortcomings in the views of staff but it was made very clear that the final plan did not need the endorsement of the staff. The staff did not endorse the final version of the Change Management Plan.

There has never been a routine update from the project manager of progress against the Change Management Plan. Upon a review of the Change Management Plan for this submission I note there has been no or at best tokenistic attempts to address the following:

- Support for staff relocating under Section 4 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;
- Group visits to relocation centres under Section 4;
- Knowledge retention and transfer plans under Section 6;
- Impact on EEO Groups under Section 10;
- Impact on staff with Special Needs under Section 11;
- There have also been inconsistent approaches taken with respect to Sections 7 and 8 relating to changes to the organisational structure and processes for filling positions that have caused consternation among the staff.

#### **4. Placement of Functions and Positions in Sydney**

A process to deal with what positions, functions and staff would be located within Sydney seemed to emerge through some organic process that gradually revealed itself to all staff. The process adopted was for staff or groups of staff to prepare “business cases” making a case for staying in Sydney. There were no clear criteria established to govern how the relative merits of competing business cases would be assessed, there was no independent panel established to evaluate these, and the reasons for approving or rejecting business cases were not provided. In some cases staff were dissuaded from preparing cases. In my view, line managers were presiding over preparation and assessment of these

business cases in a conflicted position. There is a widely held perception that the process was unfair and vulnerable to abuse through cronyism or other inappropriate favouritism. Following the announcement of positions to be retained in Sydney through release of Organisation Charts, the staff sought to have the business cases released together with the reasons for why they were or were not approved. This never occurred. Instead, after several months of questioning at committee meetings, a heavily sanitised and abbreviated document was eventually released which is effectively meaningless and provides none of the transparency staff are looking for.

#### **5. Staff with Extenuating Circumstances**

Staff with extenuating circumstances were also invited to make submissions for their positions to be retained in Sydney. Again there were no criteria established and no independent panel formed to assess them. Staff with generally well known 'extenuating circumstances' were denied consideration whilst rumours abound of others with 'extenuating circumstances' of dubious validity succeeded in retaining their positions in Sydney. It is not clear due to the lack of transparency or process but it appears requests were dealt with inconsistently – some denied point blank by line managers, others referred to executive management. Again there is a widely held perception that the process was unfair and vulnerable to abuse.

#### **6. Treatment of Temporary Staff**

There are a large number of "temporary" staff employed at Cronulla Fisheries some with more than 20 years service. I have enclosed a letter to the Director General DPI and his reply which provides a concise summary of this significant issue which affects up to half of the staff at the Cronulla Centre. This became a major issue shortly after the closure announcement as it became known the government had made major changes to the severance entitlements for

temporary employees just 1 week before the announcement to close Cronulla Fisheries. The severance entitlements for the worst affected of these staff plummeted from 39 weeks pay to 16 weeks. When brought to the attention of the management a painful process began of trying to get fair treatment for staff which continues still. It has become clear that the department is ignoring government guidelines by retaining staff as temporary for excessively long periods when they should be made permanent. The department inconsistently raises barriers related to funding sources and ongoing work seemingly to avoid their obligations to staff under the guidelines. Temporary staff now being forced out are suffering substantial financial losses thanks to this callous approach from the department.

**7. Failure to answer legitimate questions or engage in any meaningful discussions regarding the reasons for the closure and employment conditions.**

In March, 2012 the Executive Director organised a staff meeting to discuss the relocation project and asked for the staff to provide questions on notice. On behalf of the staff, we requested the presence of the Director General, Trade and Investment to answer questions that were beyond the authority of the Executive Director. I facilitated a process to collate questions from staff. I grouped them into logical blocks to make it easier for our Executive Director and Director General to provide answers. The staff were very disappointed and offended when the Executive Director and Director General refused to answer the questions at the meeting. The questions are attached and the staff would welcome these questions being posed by the committee.

**Conclusion**

In summary, staff are angry at being forced to give up their careers or make drastic lifestyle changes for a decision that has no business case or foundation in delivering good government or improved services for the people of NSW. They

are further angered by the inept handling of the decision and seeming disregard for relevant government guidelines and accepted standards of governance in decision making.

The easiest and best means for redressing these issues is to have the decision overturned and a process begun to restore the confidence of the staff in departmental governance standards and its commitment to evidence based policy and decision making. Failing that, I request the committee to demand the release of documents and the answering of questions that would give staff the transparency they deserve. I also ask the committee to seek fair and reasonable treatment for staff with respect to permanency and severance entitlements.

### **Attachments**

1. Letter to DG, DPI and response regarding treatment of temporary staff
2. Questions on notice – All Staff Meeting 12 March, 2012



7 May, 2012

Dr Richard Sheldrake  
Director General DPI  
Richard.sheldrake@dpi.nsw.gov.au

Dear Dr Sheldrake,

I am writing to you in my capacity as a staff representative on the Cronulla Fisheries Centre relocation working group.

The purpose of this letter is to seek your intervention on two issues of serious, material and imminent concern to staff classified as temporary employees working at the Cronulla centre. As Director General I believe you have an obligation to these staff to ensure they are treated fairly and equitably, particularly at this difficult time.

These are iconic issues for the staff and are seen as emblematic of yours and the Ministers commitment to see that the Cronulla relocation project is made as easy as possible for the staff affected. As things currently stand it does not look good from a staff perspective. I have made repeated representations at the working group meetings regarding these issues and no progress has been made. The staff recently voted to impose work bans in a desperate attempt to have these issues taken seriously.

I believe you are aware of the issues but for the purposes of clarity in this letter they are:

1. Temporary staff who are departing the organisation in the next few weeks and months are entitled to severance payments that are up to 70% less than they would have received had they been permanent officers or had they been declared excess prior to September last year; and
2. There are temporary staff who are relocating and who meet any reasonable interpretation of the criteria for being made permanent under various provisions of the PSEM Act, yet the department is so far refusing to make these staff permanent. My understanding is that briefings recommending that these staff be made permanent are sitting with the Executive Director of Fisheries who is refusing to progress them. The issue is that these staff will also be subject to the newly reduced severance entitlements should they be declared excess in the future. In the current environment, staff can be forgiven for thinking that this is more likely than not over the coming years. They are also forced to endure the extra uncertainty that goes with their status as "temporary" employees.

Of most pressing concern is the first issue. Over 50% of the staff at Cronulla are classified as temporary with many having service exceeding 7 years. There are "temporary" staff who have service approaching and exceeding 20 years.

Many of these staff qualify for permanency. In fact, my view is that any reasonable application of the PSEM Act and the relevant guidelines ([http://www.dpc.nsw.gov.au/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0020/13259/Commentary and Guidelines on Temporary Employment and Casual Employment 2009 update.pdf](http://www.dpc.nsw.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0020/13259/Commentary_and_Guidelines_on_Temporary_Employment_and_Casual_Employment_2009_update.pdf)) would have seen many, if not all, of these people made permanent many years ago. I believe that the department has been negligent in not making these people permanent in the past by applying a contorted interpretation of the relevant guidelines to unfairly transfer financial risks from the department to the affected staff. In fairness to you, this situation prevailed prior to Fisheries becoming part of your

Primary Industries portfolio. However, from my observations, it seems to have continued under your watch. Now that it is having a material impact I believe it is up to the department to correct this past negligence so that these people are not out of pocket at this difficult time.

Notwithstanding the above, the proximity of the Excess Employees policy change affecting the severance entitlements for temporary staff to the announcement to close Cronulla, I believe, provides you sufficient grounds to provide an exemption to these staff from the adverse financial impacts of the policy change or to make some ex-gratia payment that negates its adverse impacts.

To further bolster the case, I would be very surprised if, when framing the new provisions related to severance pay for excess temporary staff, the government could have imagined the existence of so many temporary staff in this agency and the extraordinary length of service some of these staff have. Had they been fully apprised of the situation of these staff, they may have seen it as appropriate to accommodate their situations with more reasonable provisions. If you have not already done so you should advise the relevant authority of the problem and seek a remedy on behalf of the staff you lead. Perhaps they would like to meet one of my temporary colleagues of 20 years standing and a permanent colleague of, say 10 years standing, and explain to them their severance/redundancy entitlements and how the policy is fair and equitable given the widely disparate nature of their entitlements. The treatment of these temporary staff is indefensible. If you disagree, please explain why.

There is already one staff member who has left the department who I am advised is over \$40,000 out of pocket compared to what he would have received had the previous provisions applied or had he been made a permanent officer. By all accounts, he has been a valued and dedicated research scientist who has made a significant contribution to fisheries science over almost 20 years with Fisheries in NSW. He will receive a 16 week severance payment to help him transition to a new career. That is his reward for working diligently over many years, accepting the assurances of departmental representatives that he would be looked after, and not wanting to "rock the boat" for fear of his precarious employment as a temporary employee. A permanent officer in the same circumstance would receive a redundancy payment exceeding 40 weeks pay. You should pause and consider how this man feels his contribution to fisheries science and to the NSW community generally has been valued given the treatment he has received. He should have been made permanent 17 years ago.

Before anyone makes the argument that the provisions for permanent staff are unreasonable, you should also consider that staff currently being made redundant at the Caltex refinery at Kurnell (another big and shrinking employer in the Cronulla area), will receive payments of up to 120 weeks pay to help in their transition to new employment. I suspect Caltex employees of 20 years standing would qualify for the maximum 120 weeks and I am even more certain they would not be classified as "temporary". It makes for an interesting comparison to see how that workforce is treated compared to ours.

I am aware of another "temporary" staff member who works in the Fisheries Business Services section. She has worked in the section for around 20 years and sits alongside colleagues performing exactly the same work who are classified as permanent. None have more years of service than she does! All of these staff are unable to relocate and will be losing their jobs. Her severance entitlement will be less than her "permanent" colleague with 10 years service. It is impossible to argue that an employee performing the function of licensing for the commercial fishing industry has no prospect for ongoing work yet after 20 years service she is still a temporary

employee. The phrase "a temporary employee of 20 years standing" speaks volumes for the mismanagement of these staff over many years.

If you feel unable to directly remedy these issues, I would urge you to point out some of these problems in the strongest terms to the Minister and/or the relevant authorities in the office of the Premier to obtain reasonable treatment for these people.

I respectfully request you to do the following as a matter of urgency:

1. For temporary staff being declared excess, direct that the department ensure a restoration of the severance entitlements applicable prior to the change of the Excess Employees Policy in September 2011. Failing that, direct the making of an ex-gratia payment to those staff suffering a monetary loss as a result of the policy change given its proximity to the decision to close Cronulla.
2. For temporary staff relocating, including those relocating within Sydney, direct an immediate re-assessment of their employment status with a view to making them permanent officers and applying the spirit and intent of the guidelines rather than seeking to circumvent them. (Now that the Excess employee policy changes have relaxed the provisions for declaring permanent officers excess, I believe there is scope for the department to take a more reasonable interpretation of the guidelines with limited downside risk.)
3. Make a detailed response to the issues raised in this letter and articulate the actions you have taken or intend to take to remedy them and provide an explanation of how they reconcile with your commitment to ease the impact of the closure of Cronulla for the affected staff.

Yours Sincerely,

Peter Brown  
Staff Representative  
Cronulla Fisheries Centre Relocation Working Group

Cc: Cronulla Relocation Working Group Members  
Myra Milton – Staff Representative  
Shane O'Brien – Assistant General Secretary, PSA



# Department of Primary Industries

Office of the Director General

11/5020#7

29 MAY 2012

Mr Peter Brown  
Staff Representative  
Cronulla Fisheries Centre Relocation Working Group

Dear Mr Brown

I refer to your letter dated 7 May 2012 regarding the treatment and entitlements of temporary employees affected by the relocation of the Cronulla Fisheries Centre.

I have identified in your letter that there are two issues that you are seeking me to address. These are:

- the nature of severance payments for temporary staff and
- opportunities for temporary staff to be made permanent.

As you know, these two issues have been raised in various meetings with both myself and the Minister. I have also discussed these matters with departmental officers with a view to exploring what is possible in the circumstances. Ultimately however the department must meet its obligations under the relevant legislation and NSW Government policies, and ensure that these are applied in a consistent manner across DPI. Accordingly my responses to these two issues are as follows:

- Firstly, the level of severance pay entitlements for temporary employees affected by the Cronulla Fisheries Centre relocation cannot be altered. The Department must comply with the current NSW Government policy on Managing Excess Employees (D2011-07). This policy makes it clear that temporary employees are covered by the NSW Employment Protection Regulation 2001 in respect to severance payments and conditions
- Secondly, the Department has always committed to consider cases for making temporary staff permanent on a case by case basis as long as those staff relocate to a new location outside of Sydney. In assessing these cases the Department believes that it complies with the provisions contained within Section 31 of the Public Sector Employment and Management Act 2002 and the related policies associated with temporary employees that currently exist with the NSW public sector. As you are aware, a number of staff have already had their cases considered. One staff member has already been made permanent under Section 31. We are currently waiting for approval from the Public Service Commissioner to make another three staff permanent in the same way. Approval has also been granted to advertise the positions of several staff who do not qualify for permanency under Section 31 as permanent positions in the new locations.

You would be well aware of the numerous consultative meetings that have been undertaken with the PSA and the staff at Cronulla since the Minister's announcement on 8 September 2011 to discuss the relocation plans and how to ease the impact of the closure on the affected staff. The Director Industrial Relations Mr Simon Kempson has made it clear that should the PSA and the staff representatives wish to meet on any specific industrial matter there is an open invitation to do so. Whilst these matters have previously been discussed the department is happy to meet with you again.

If you wish to avail yourself of this opportunity, please contact Mr Simon Kempson, Director Industrial Relations, on (02) 6391 3341 who would be happy to meet with you and any other PSA representatives.

Yours sincerely



**RICHARD SHELDRAKE**  
**DIRECTOR GENERAL**

# QUESTIONS ON NOTICE - ALL STAFF MEETING 12 MARCH 2012

## RE: CRONULLA FISHERIES CLOSURE

### Employment Security/Permanency/Redundancy/Severance

1 Why are Sydney-based staff being treated differently and unfairly regarding making their positions permanent? On what basis/authority is the department treating Sydney based staff differently to regional based staff with respect to the permanency issue?

2 Is there any guarantee that after relocating staff will not be sacked due to budget downfalls?

3 What guarantees do temporary staff have that their contracts will be continued after they relocate?

4 As a practical demonstration of the concerns expressed by the Minister for the difficulties faced by staff in this process, will you (DG) see to it that temporary staff with between 10 and 20+ years service that are unable to relocate receive severance payments that are commensurate with their permanent colleagues and consistent with what their entitlement was under the previous excess employees policy that got altered one week before the decision to close Cronulla. Do you think it is reasonable treatment of a staff member of 20 years standing to receive a severance payment of only 16 weeks pay when their permanent colleague of 10 years standing receives approx. 40 weeks? Do you think it is reasonable to treat these people in this way when any reasonable interpretation of the policy for making staff permanent would have seen these people made permanent years if not decades ago? Do you see anything wrong with the phrase "temporary employee of 20 years standing"?

5 As a practical demonstration of the concerns expressed by the Minister for the difficulties faced by staff in this process, will you DG intervene on behalf of the staff at Cronulla to see that they receive fair consideration for any vacancies in your department prior to them being advertised? Why are jobs repeatedly advertised externally without any consideration for the staff suffering dislocation as a result of the decision to close the Cronulla Centre.

6 Please explain why this move cant happen over a period of 5-10 years? This would allow staff to adjust their lifestyles, including mortgages, family circumstances etc, in a realistic timeframe, and still be in line with the national governments 'decade of decentralisation policy'. Families may be more willing to move to regional areas and passionately continue their job if given the time and the courtesy of not been pressured into such a life changing circumstance in such a short time frame. Why the rush?

7 Mr Patterson: Can you please explain Ms Bivianno's actions in not approving requests to fill positions permanently when the applications CLEARLY satisfy s.31 of the Public Sector Employment and Management Act.

8 Can you please provide details on the specific 'work functions' that have been identified for those positions/staff being relocated to within the Sydney area? This should include the assessment criteria and decision making process that was undertaken when deciding where all positions will be relocated and why certain 'work functions' were identified to be critical enough for those positions to be based in Sydney while other positions are being relocated to regional areas.

It has been advised from senior management staff that a number of positions that are being relocated from Cronulla have recently been made permanent. Can you please clarify, which positions these are, their funding source and if these positions will be advertised at their new locations or will the staff members currently in these positions simply be made permanent?

Can also you please explain why other staff that meet the NSW Govt criteria for permanency have not been made Permanent? NSW DPI staff request this information is provided to ensure there is transparency and consistency in the decisions making process (which is a key NSW Government commitment) and that all staff are treated equally (another key NSW Govt commitment).

### 9 Project Management/Execution

10 It is now 6 months since the announcement to close Cronulla. What resources, i.e. people, have you employed to find accommodation at the sites chosen to relocate staff? Why has it taken so long if this was such a high priority for the Department?



11 Have you achieved any memorandums of understanding/contracts with any of the proposed locations to house staff?

12 **Service Delivery**

13 Does the executive and minister still guarantee that all positions and services will be maintained after the Cronulla relocation. Does this mean that where people do not relocate their positions will be advertised and where these are permanent positions, they will be refilled in a permanent capacity?

14 As your current plans contain NO commitment to provide ongoing staffing and support for the Wild Fishery Resource Assessment Program, why do the Department and the Minister continue to imply that there will be little loss of service delivery in this core functional area? [The closure of Cronulla and the associated relocation or retrenchment of staff WILL bring to an end the annual Resource Assessment process, and consequent to this there will be no ability to regularly update the "Status of Fisheries Resources" report.]

15 Do you still believe that the closure of the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre represents the best way forward for Fisheries NSW to address its legislative responsibilities with regard to the sustainable management of wild fishery resources in NSW? How does the Dept plan to address its legislative responsibilities with regard to the sustainable management of wild fishery resources in NSW once the CFRC is closed?

16 Given that over half of the staff will be leaving this department starting from mid-April onwards what systems and processes will be in place by mid-April to ensure we minimise the loss of expertise and corporate knowledge? At present this "knowledge transfer" is nothing more than a line-item on a project schedule. With timelines having been recently shrunk this must be one of the highest priority issues that has yet to be addressed.

17 What realistic plans are in place that will enable us to maintain services in the short-to-medium term when approximately half the staff are lost in the relocation. How will the remaining staff realistically be able to go through a stressful relocation; take on twice their current work load and train any new staff that are hired (who will have virtually no experience with our current systems and processes). Where will this training take place - Cronulla or Regionally? Has the Minister been made aware of the backlash that she will experience from commercial and recreational fishers unable to undertake their daily transactions with fisheries licensing and management staff.

18 If permanent staff do not relocate, will those positions be filled? [These positions have obviously been identified as necessary given that they will be relocated]

19 1. Given that the decision to close the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre WILL lead to a substantial loss of expertise, staffing numbers and even the ability for some core functions to operate, what commitment will the Government make to securing key personnel, functions and funding so that NSW commercial fisheries can continue to operate under state and Commonwealth legislation?

20 If the government wishes to 'expand' fisheries as repeatedly said, why not retain the Cronulla Fisheries Centre and seek to expand by creating additional jobs in the regions?

21 Is the current government aware that destroying the Cronulla Fisheries Centre, losing expertise and decimating integrated management networks (research, recreational /commercial management & licensing) WILL adversely affect the departments ability to meet its statutory obligations of ensuring sustainability of fisheries resources?

22 1 Silo effect: The staff structure at Cronulla Fisheries Centre is generally consistent with a decision made in 2000 to break down 'silos' between research, policy and administration

The proposed relocation of staff will result in Research, Policy and Administration officers being located away from each other and the one compliance position currently based with those officers being located elsewhere.

This will create greater management silos than we had pre 2000 and flies against all current management philosophy.

It is widely accepted that the distance decay in communications is never fully addressed by modern technology.

23 The Minister, Director General and Deputy Director General has repeatedly stated there will be no net job losses as a result of the relocation of Cronulla. Can you confirm that, if an employee declines to move to a new location, that the vacancy created by their decision will then be available to be filled?

24 To be directed to the DG.

1. When are you going to address/advise the Commercial Fishers of this State on your proposed closure of this site? And how do you propose to do this? Remembering that the PFA and John Harrison only represent less than 25% of Commercial Fishers.

25 **Code of Conduct/good governance/transparency/value for money**

26 Please explain the thinking behind the DGs decision to send an email (with a threatening tone) to all staff having a go at the whistle blower for straying from departmental protocol by leaking information yet someone high up clearly has made a decision to subvert procedure to ensure Treasury would not request a Business Case because they'd broken up the relocation project into smaller financial amounts. Which is considered the greater breach of appropriate standards of conduct and ethical behaviour?

27 Can you please tell us the real reason that Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre is to be closed? [It is apparent you are having great difficulty finding affordable and appropriate accommodation for up to 40 Cronulla staff who are to remain in the Sydney / Wollongong / Central Coast area - surely the most economic and efficient location for these staff to be located in the future is the Cronulla site?]

28 How and when will you fulfil your earlier commitment to make public the costs associated with transfer and accommodation of Cronulla staff at all the new locations, as soon as these costs are reliably known?

29 ED, What have you told the senior staff about the Fisheries NSW budget in 2012/13? What are your reasons for your plan to transfer permanent staff onto trust or external funding sources wherever possible?

30 This relocation is undoubtedly one of the most significant changes the fisheries department has undergone in many years. The decisions being made on the losses and relocation of staff and facilities will profoundly affect all projects, responsibilities and services within the department. Why then is it that the two people that are making most of the decisions regarding this relocation, namely K. Cooper and G. Allen, have virtually no wild fisheries experience? How can they possibly make decisions that are in the best interest of this department and the services we provide if they do not understand what we do and how we do it! This is particularly problematic given that any advice they may be receiving from staff and managers at Cronulla is most likely completely compromised by staff's own personal and family needs and responsibilities.

31 What is happening with the Water Police housed on the Cronulla site - what is their date of vacating the site?

32 One argument given to justify moving policy positions to Coffs Harbour is that they would be closer to the majority of commercial fishers. However, the majority of commercial fishers are actually based closer to Sydney than Coffs Harbour. Is the executive prepared to accept the impacts of the closure of the CFC on the majority of commercial fishers?

33 Does the Agriculture based executive and minister really care what happens to fisheries? Is this a case of shafting fisheries to save agriculture positions?

34 Do you Geoff Allan truly believe that shutting the Cronulla facility is in the best interest of fisheries future in NSW? If not why haven't you voiced your opinion? If yes, give us the reasons!



35 In your message to staff of 20 June 2011 you indicated that "All of our activities should also be measurable to ensure that success can be demonstrated and activities that are not effective nor efficient can be modified or in some cases ceased. .... We must have the data to enable rational decisions to be taken by government. We must build this into our everyday practice."

Given that there is no business case for the closure of the Cronulla site are you willing to modify or cease the proposed relocation program where it can be shown to be neither effective or efficient?

Further, do you believe that the blind and unthinking application of a broad Government decentralisation policy, despite the obvious inefficiencies created with its application in this case, is inconsistent with a public service responsible for providing frank and fearless advice?

36 Mr Patterson: In this climate of organisational change, what is your vision for natural resource management in NSW?

37 Mr Patterson: What is the state Government's policy and plans concerning decentralisation? Is there a detailed plan for decentralisation of Government services? Is there a Minister for decentralisation?

38 Please explain how taking 30 jobs from Cronulla (Metropolitan Sydney) and relocating them to Nowra will benefit this State and Fisheries?

39 Would the decision to break up the costings of the Cronulla relocation in to smaller 'projects' and financial amounts to avoid Treasury scrutiny pass the Ethical Practices test as outline in the recently released DTIRS Code of Conduct? Under the Ethical Practices section it states:

"Can the decision or conduct be justified in terms of the public interest? Would it withstand public scrutiny?"

Would this decision meet this requirement?

40 Of all the government departments represented in Sydney, particularly in the CBD, why was a fisheries research specific site on the outskirts of Sydney chosen as the first choice in the "decade of decentralisation"? Surely moving an office floor of 100 staff from a department in the CBD would have made infinitely more sense?

41 The reasoning for closing Cronulla Fisheries has changed from "limited access and no room for improvement" to meeting an election promise of the Nationals. The Nationals policy was put out to advocate improved essential services to regional areas of the state. As an overseer of this policy can you please explain how you reached the conclusion that closing the Cronulla Centre would provide much needed improved essential services to regional areas of the state.

42 "Given that the State Treasurer has consistently advised that the state of NSW is in such a parlous state economically, how do you justify spending around \$20 mill (estimated) on the closure, relocation, building/outfitting new premises, paying out staff who are unable to move to regional locations? The Minister for Education states that the budget does not allow for the \$300 mill to replace unflued heaters in classrooms - I am sure that parents in these regional centres would rather replace those heaters that a handful of jobs for their respective areas."

"With the massive flooding currently all over the state of NSW, this will impact \$100's of millions of dollars to repair infrastructure especially in Primary producing areas, why are you spending untold millions on the closure and re-location of the centre and staff? Shouldn't those funds be put to better use to assist those areas of flood?"