

**Submission  
No 29**

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

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**Selection Committee on Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre Closure  
Legislative Council  
Parliament House  
Macquarie St  
Sydney NSW 2000**

I currently work at the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre of Excellence. I have worked in the Fisheries Business Services section for 12 years. My position is to be relocated to Nowra and unfortunately I am unable to move. I am against the Ministers decision to close the Cronulla Centre. I am dumbfounded at how such a major decision could be made without proper consultation with stakeholders and staff and without any financial or economical analysis. I firmly believe this relocation will have a massive negative impact to fisheries management and research and delivery of services to stakeholders.

The closure will have massive impact on fisheries management and fisheries research through the massive loss of expertise and suitable research facilities. I'm sure you will receive many submissions addressing this issue. I wish to express my concerns on how it will affect my section, Fisheries Business Services (Licensing). My section is the first point of contact for Commercial fishers, stakeholders and charter boat operators. We process licence transactions, payments, transfers and all other business transactions, debt recovery, conduct internal reviews upon request, implement management arrangements, we provide information support to Compliance Officers and much more. Our section has an enormous workload.

I have been in this section for 12 years now. Working within this section requires a thorough knowledge of current processes and management arrangements as well as management arrangements from the past. The management of fisheries has undergone some major re structures during the 12 years I have been here. It feels like upper management is of the view that all we do in this section is process licences therefore the staff could easily be replaced. This is certainly not the case!!!

Prior to the Ministers announcement regarding the closure we had 11 staff in our office. Since the announcement 4 staff have already left as they could not re-locate to Nowra due to various reasons. A further 2 have been successful in gaining other employment and are due to leave the office within the next 2 weeks, 5 (including myself) are currently seeking other employment as none of us can re-locate to Nowra and have already advised the Director of this. One staff member has been introduced into the team since the Ministers announcement. She is the only person from this entire section relocating to Nowra. 1 person who has less than 12 months experience within this section, 1 person who has little or no knowledge on many duties performed by various office staff, 1 person to train a whole new office of people, when she herself does not know the work herself!

Although it has been extremely sad and emotional for us staff at the thought of our section crumbling, we feel for the commercial fishers and other

stakeholders. We feel guilty for 'abandoning' them. Over years, we have built up great rapport with many stakeholders. They are the ones who are going to pay for the Minister's bad decision. It is hard to understand how this section is going to function, how it is going to provide a service to the stakeholders with all the experience lost. The Minister claims that service functions will be replicated at the new site. In regards to the Fisheries Business Services section, the Minister is greatly mistaken! The services cannot be replicated when she is taking away all of the experienced staff, all of the knowledge for the section, all the skill and replacing it with one inexperienced staff member (of course, no disrespect is intended to her personally) and a team of new staff.

The Minister claims she has support from the stakeholders regarding the relocation of Cronulla. The vast majority of stakeholders are furious. They do not support this decision! They too know how it will affect them. They know they will no longer have knowledgeable staff, they know how it will affect their business transactions, research and fisheries management. They are not happy at all. We have received many comments from the stakeholders that **'they were not consulted'** like the Minister has advised.

From the day of the Minister's announcement, it has been extremely disappointing with the complete lack of interest by the Minister to listen to staff regarding their concerns over the closure. The staff here have made a massive effort to try to speak to the Minister to answer some questions and to listen to our concerns. We have made submissions, turned up to parliament, written many letters, travelled to her electorate. She has made no effort to address our concerns, respond to letters, it has been extremely disappointing.

The impact of this closure has been massive to staff and families. With the cost of living in Sydney, obviously job security is a major issue for many people. On top of this many of us truly love our work here at Cronulla. It has impacted my family immensely. Unfortunately I am unable to relocate due to family and personal issues. However, as my income covers our monthly mortgage repayments – I considered the possibility of commuting to Nowra for a period of time. I am currently seeking other work, which too has taken a huge toll.

It has been extremely stressful coming to work since the announcement. Each week, you bump into someone on site in tears as they are having a 'bad day' trying to work out what they will do. People are angry, stressed and depressed. It has been really hard. So when the Minister does not seem to care, will not address any of the issues, it certainly makes things harder.

One factor that has made this process so hard is the complete lack of information, or changing of information. It has been a joke and extremely frustrating. On the day of the announcement, my section was going to Coffs Harbour, then that changed to a choice of Coffs Harbour or Nowra, then just to Nowra. We were told to see the Project Manager if we were applying for other State jobs as we would get priority, now we are told this is not so. It seems like every week, something changes, some 'compensation' which was

originally promised has been taken away, finishing dates are moved. Information is not been circulated properly. It has been over 10 months and sites are not even confirmed! The whole thing seems to have been made up as they have gone along.

The thought of the state of my section in 12 months time truly upsets me. There is over 100 years of combined service within a section, lost in one clean sweep by our Minister. Over 100 years of experience in this section to be replaced by 1. Our stakeholders do not deserve this, my fellow staff do not deserve this and most of all, NSW fisheries does not deserve this. The Ministe's poor decision desperately needs to be reversed!!!!

Donna Tugnett  
27 July 2012