

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

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially Confidential

Submission to the Select Committee on Cronulla Fisheries Closure

The following is a submission to the Select Committee on Cronulla Fisheries Closure.

The main focus of this submission is in addressing the function of the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre's in monitoring of fisheries and research, however many of the points are also relevant to fisheries management.

The second half of this submission addresses the reasons given in government press releases for the closure of the Cronulla Fisheries Centre. Where an extract from these press releases was used as a heading, the extract is in italics.

This submission has a number of illustration that are best viewed electronically or as a colour printout (especially in the case of the illustrations relating to water quality).

Summary:

Prior to the announcement of the closure, NSW Fisheries had already achieved a level of regionalisation appropriate to the distribution of stakeholders and the business needs of NSW Fisheries. So I would like to suggest the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre retain its current function as a research centre and central meeting place for the regionalised staff. It makes clear sense to keep Sydney based research staff at an established, government owned research centre rather than rent and fit out new facilities in Sydney. From the material provided below, it can be seen that Cronulla is central to all regional staff and stakeholders. It can also be seen that many of the reasons cited for the closure are not valid. Without the Cronulla centre as a "headquarters" or meeting place regional staff will be isolated from both stakeholders and each other. Keeping the centre open would also reduce the loss of expertise, retain the recent investment in the facility, keep the linkages to universities, and maintain a centre recognised world wide as a research centre of excellence.

Submission to the Select Committee on Cronulla Fisheries Closure

Closure of the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre

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Loss of expertise:

The existing scientific staff at the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre have, between them, in excess of 450 years experience in fisheries research, 50 degrees (including 16 PhDs) and supervise 25 post graduate students.

Usually experienced staff come and go one at a time, usually due to retirements. When this happens, new staff are usually mentored by the experienced staff.

This proposed, sudden, relocation will result in so many staff leaving at once, that there will be no mentoring of new staff

In addition, staff here have unusual combinations of qualifications, having undertaken specialised training over the years, on top of the “basic” BSc, Msc or PhD. This training has matched them specifically to their jobs, it might be specific to the fishery they are responsible for monitoring.

While the loss of “basic” qualifications could be replaced, the current staff are not replaceable by “off the shelf” PhD students just out of university.

Add to this the fact that ours is such a small group, that we don’t have the staff to double up on duties. So, the skills of most staff are not interchangeable.

As a result considerable combinations of unique skills and corporate knowledge will be lost.

This will have a negative impact on our ability to ensure sustainability of fish stocks and the information base underpinning fisheries management decisions - at a time when there are great challenges to the effective management of our resources.

Waste of recent investment:

There has been substantial recent investment in site infrastructure by the NSW government (& people of NSW) and stakeholder groups (Recreational trust, Commercial trust) in recent years - approx. \$2 million during the past 5 years. This will have been wasted if the CFRCoE is closed.

This investment was partly the result of an Economic and Financial Evaluation by Sinclair and Knight (the “NSW Fisheries and Accommodation Project 1998”).

The conclusion from this evaluation was

“Both the economic and financial evaluations indicate that refurbish Cronulla Wollstonecraft and Taylors Beach (Port Stephens) provide the highest returns of all options. While this report is over 10 years old, little has changed that would affect the reasoning behind the conclusion.

As a result of this, the Cronulla site has now been refurbished, with new laboratories and aquarium facilities and upgrades to office space. One new laboratory cost over \$1,000,000 dollars, and upgrades to the aquarium facilities \$500,000 and a large which is a large investment in terms of fisheries budgets.

As a comparison, a \$1,500,000 upgrade for fisheries, is on par with the recent upgrades to Agriculture’s Elizabeth Macarthur Institute, as the Agriculture division of DPI, is 10 times as large as Fisheries.

As for the reason “limited scope for expansion”, there was already ongoing regionalisation where appropriate for the function. This is where expansion has been taking place, there was no need to expand the centre.

Regionalisation:

Maintaining the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre as the “hub” of scientific research does NOT preclude the further regionalisation of some research teams when and where this is strategically advantageous

We already have regional centres of research at Coffs Harbour, Port Stephens, Batemans Bay, Narrandera, etc. Many of the research projects based at Cronulla employ staff in regional areas.

Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre, the “birthplace of fisheries science in Australia”:

The Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre is the “birthplace of fisheries science in Australia”:

This centre has a long and distinguished history of scientific contribution to Australia and should be regarded and maintained by NSW as a “national treasure”.

The Cronulla Centre is a unique and iconic institution in terms of its scientific and fisheries management credentials, its heritage and cultural value. Fisheries research has been undertaken at the site for more than 110 years and it is the first fisheries (or indeed any sort of marine/aquatic institution) in the Southern Hemisphere. Today, the researchers at Cronulla are recognised as among the best in

the world in their fields of fisheries science. To fisheries professionals, it is as iconic a location as the Parkes Telescope and ANSTO are to astronomers and nuclear physicists, respectively.

To fisheries, the Cronulla centre is what Elizabeth MacArthur Agricultural Institute (EMAI) is to agriculture: (Belgenny Farm). However, that site is over 200 years old. I doubt the suggestion for closing EMAI because of its age (or using any other reasoning given for closing Cronulla) would be taken up by the agriculture division of DPI).

The Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre “Brand”:

The Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre is a locally, nationally and internationally recognised “brand” associated with leading-edge research.

This “brand” will be lost forever if the site is closed. Moreover, CFRCoE is considered as the “Heart of Fisheries” by management, research, compliance, and many recreational & commercial stakeholders in NSW.

Proximity of Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre to the Sydney population:

The proximity of Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre to the Sydney population facilitates education and mentoring of the next generation of natural resource scientists, managers, commercial and recreational fishers. (E.g. Science in the suburbs)

Staff at CFRC have linkages to 6 Universities,

Sydney University
University of NSW
University of Technology, Sydney
Wollongong University,
University of Western Sydney

Many of these students are able to do some or most of their work onsite.

This far exceeds the linkages to Universities at the Port Stephens Centre or Coffs Harbour (where the linkages are actually to the University of Qld, not a NSW one).

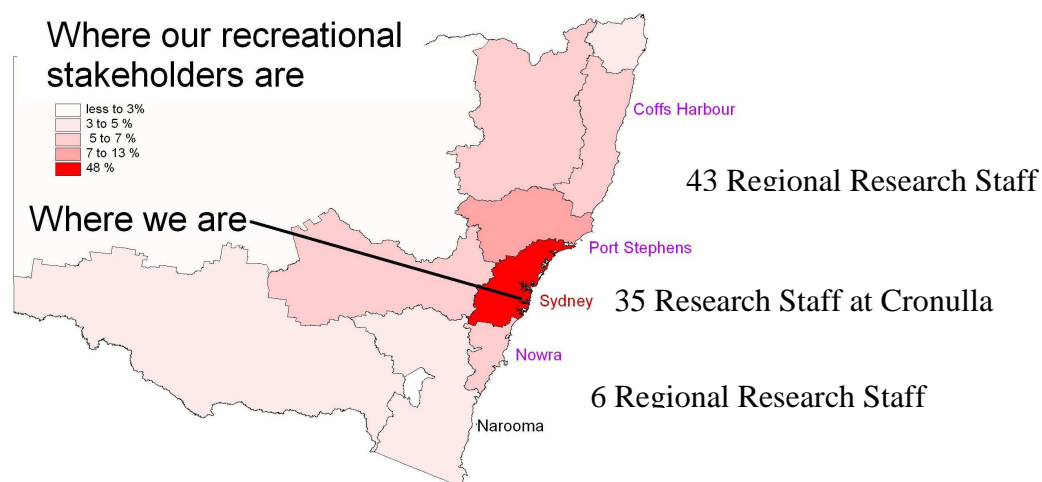
Obviously the linkages to University for fisheries research would be greatly reduced if the Cronulla site was closed.

An illustrated analysis of the reasons given for the closure:

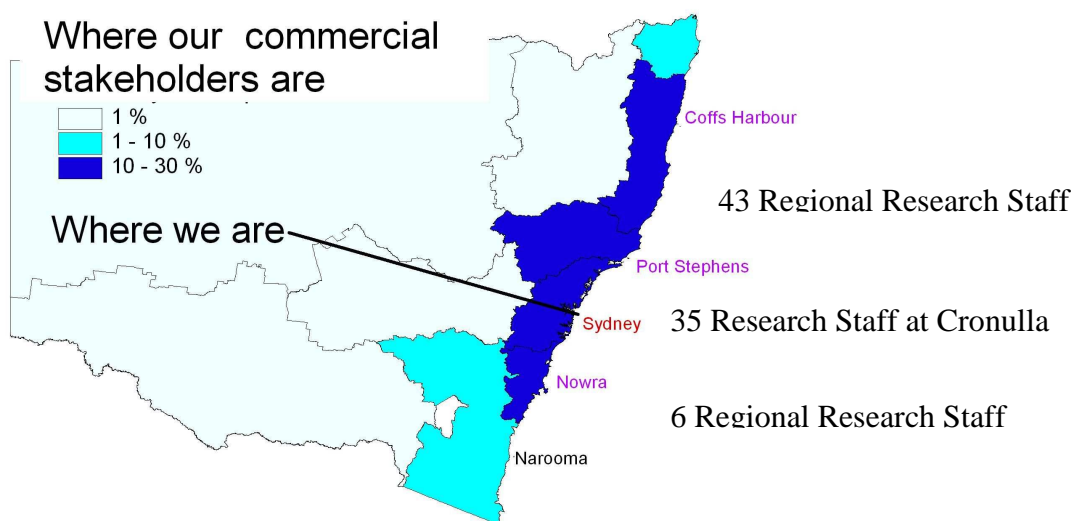
Proximity to our stakeholders

“It makes clear sense to re-position NSW’s fisheries specialists closer to where the vast majority of their work is – along the NSW coastline, such as on the Mid North Coast, the Central Coast and the South Coast,”

At the moment we already seem to be where the vast majority of our work is.



Source: National Recreational and Indigenous Fishing Survey



Source: NSW Fisheries Management Strategies

PERCENT STAFF IN LOCATIONS - based on staff list intranet 16 Sept 2011

	Research	Comm Mgmt	Comm Licencing	Rec Mgmt & Lic
Nth Coast	43	31	0	7
Sydney	35	69	100	57
Sth Coast	6	0	0	2
Country-West	16	0	0	34
Total no staff	135	13	25	58

Accessibility

“Decentralisation of the Centre will also ensure there is greater interaction between fishers, scientists and fisheries managers.”

From the look of the diagram below, we will be less accessible, and less able to interact

A Stakeholders meeting, Before and After Relocation

The case study:

- The committee, meeting at the research site
- 6 external stakeholders from 6 regions.
- 1 Commerical Manager
- 1 Recreational Manager
- 1 Research Scientist

Where we are now

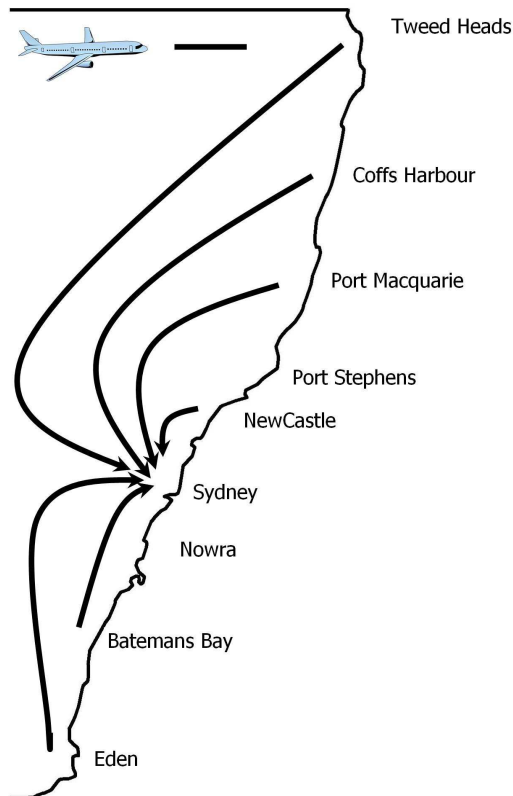
Travel Expenditure

Flying 6 stakeholders, each on 1 flight

Trip Duration

Getting to the meeting
At the meeting
Returning Home

} = 1 Day



After the "Regionalisation"

(For "Regionalisation" read "Marginalisation")

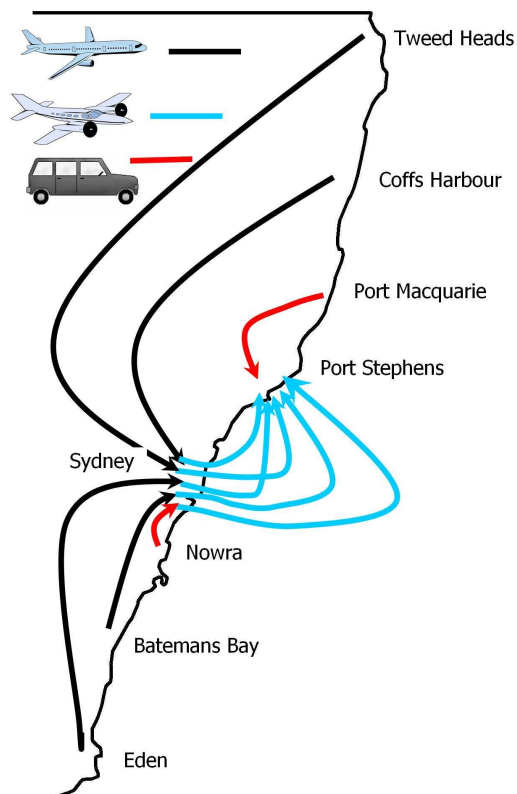
Travel Expenditure

Flying 6 stakeholders, 2 Managers, 1 Research Scientists, each on 2 flights

Trip Duration

Getting to the meeting = 1 Day
At the meeting = 1 Day
Returning Home = 1 Day

} = 3 Days



So, where are we more accessible to our stakeholders?????

Water Quality

“high-quality water at the Port Stephens centre”

Our water quality at the wharf
(suitable for supporting marine animals)



Port Stephens water quality at the wharf
(which would kill a marine animal)



So this is how we get our sea water
(Flow through system)



How Port Stephens gets their sea water (picture for illustration only).
(Requires recirculation of water)



Flow through systems far more effective for keeping marine animals for research than recirculating systems

And you cannot even drink the tap water at Port Stephens.



Site Access

“One of the downsides of the site is that it has limited access”
and
“high-quality water at the Port Stephens centre”

Cronulla site access

All buildings on the site can be access by a 20 tonne truck.

Note the water clarity.

Also note there is a modern wharf (with crane) for boat access.



Port Stephens site access.

Note the water clarity.

Also note the depth of water at the wharf severely limits boat access.



Maybe no difference in access (But note restriction at bridge at Port Stephens).
Compare the water clarity

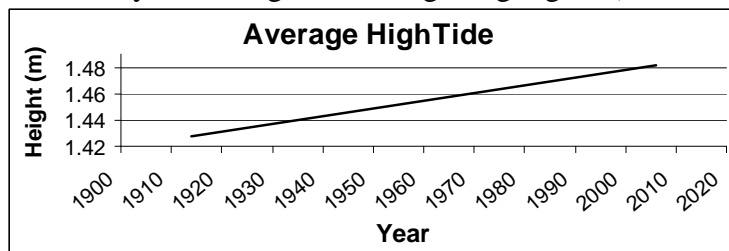
More on Site Access

Port Stephens entrance with one lane bridge.

At some high tides, this road is covered by salt water.



And each year the high tides are getting higher (based on tide readings from Fort Dennison)



Our Entrance

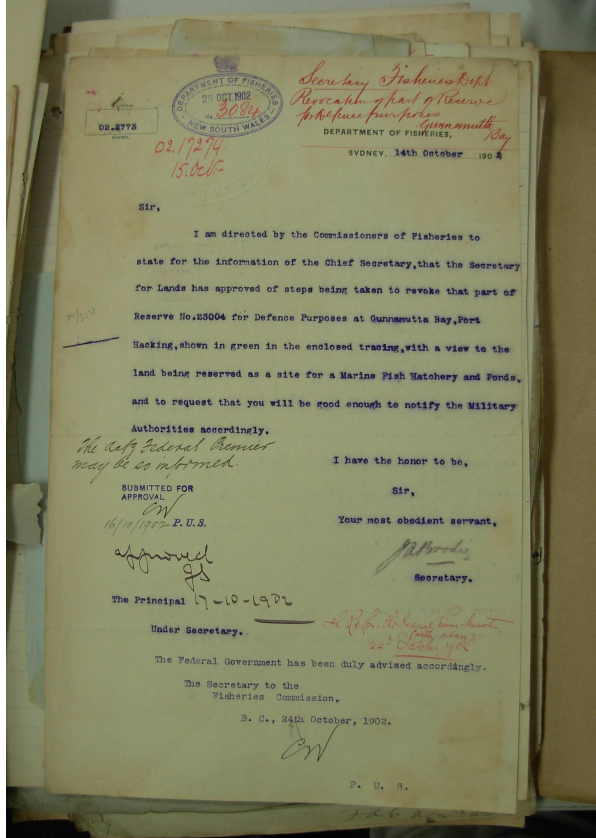


History

“the Cronulla Fisheries facility,, was earmarked to close because it was an aged building”

Yes it is an old building, but most institutions with a bit of history have at least some old buildings, which are retained as part of the heritage of the institution.

And this institute is made up of several buildings, and some old and some new.



The original handover of the site in 1902



Some buildings are heritage listed

And this does not stop the facilities been modernised, which they have been (see below and the next page).



1905



Now: after recent upgrade

Recent Upgrades

“The Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre is an old facility.”
“constrained modernisation and expansion capacity”

One of the Cronulla facilities after a \$1,000,000 recent upgrade.
Same heritage listed exterior, but with state of the art laboratory inside.

Heritage listed exterior



State of the art interior



The laboratory cont.



The laboratory cont.



The Fish Aging Facility with modern microscopes, cameras and computers.



Visitors Centre Library and Meeting\Conference Room



Aquarium Facilities



Aquarium Facilities cont.



Additional notes on flaws in the reasoning for the closure:

“large and regular injection of salaries in the local economy.” (quote from the press release).

You may find that many of the staff who relocate are only “following their jobs”: they are only relocating in the short term. That is, instead of selling their home and buying at their new employment location, they will simply rent out their, and rent at their new location, with a view to moving back in the future.

It may be worthwhile looking at whether this somewhat reduces the “injection of salaries in the local economy”. In addition, the commitment of these people to the local community may be somewhat less than expected, as they are only “temporary residents”.

I personally know of some relocatees who intend commuting to the region they are relocated to on a Monday, then returning to their metropolitan homes Thursday or Friday. Again, these people will not exactly be “regionalised”.

In addition, the whole logic is biased towards particular regions, why isn't the local area here (Cronulla) equally entitled to “large and regular injection of salaries in the local economy”.

“greater interaction, a higher understanding of the regional environment, jobs” (paraphrased from the press release)”.

There is already sufficient decentralisation of fisheries management and research to give fisheries staff a sufficient understanding of the regional environment. In addition staff from the centre itself regularly travel to regional areas as part of their field work, where they meet with regional stakeholders along the entire coast.

On a personal note, I live in an isolated suburb which has been classified as an isolated community in the past. The main road in is regularly cut off during heavy rain, and the main public transport (the ferry) often stops operating in bad weather. I found it ironic that I was to be relocated to a region less isolated than my current community so I would have a “higher understanding of the regional environment”.

“careers for the (regional) community” (paraphrased from the press release)”.

Our work is so specialised, that it is unlikely that jobs advertised in regional areas will be able to be filled by locals. More likely these jobs will be filled by applicants who are willing to relocate from outside the area. An example of this is the make up of the current research staff at Port Stephens, where it appears that no more than 20% of the research staff employed there came from the local community.

Possible Negative impacts on Regional Communities

In the past, relocations did not always produce positive results for regional areas. For example, the relocation of staff in agriculture to Orange in the late 1980s produced some negatives. Agriculture staff looking for rental property in Orange went to the top of the real estate agents waiting list for rental property, as public servants in full time permanent employment were considered a safe bet as tenants. So locals were given lower priority for rental property.

Also, some of the people who move will have partners who will be looking for work, and so competing with locals for jobs.