

**Submission
No 89**

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

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Alexandra Schnell

Submission to the Select Committee

Revd the Hon Fred Nile MLC
Committee Chairman
Select Committee on Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre closure
Legislative Council
Parliament House Macquarie St
Sydney

Dear Chairman,

I am writing to you to convey my dismay and disappointment at the proposed closure of the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre of Excellence and relocation of the scientific experts and support staff to other regional facilities. Please take into your consideration the following submission as part of the inquiry into the closure of the Cronulla Fisheries research Centre. I hope that this submission will provide valuable insight into the effects of the closure and speak to the following impacts listed your terms of reference:

1. The ability to replicate the facilities at other locations,
2. The far reaching costs as opposed to the espoused benefits of the decisions,
3. And the implications of the decision to sustainable fisheries management,

1. The ability to replicate the facilities at other locations,

I am currently a PhD student at Macquarie University conducting research in collaboration with the University of Tasmania, the Sydney Institute of Marine Science (SIMS) and the Marine Biology Laboratory, Massachusetts USA. My project aims to provide insight into the mating behaviour of the Australian giant cuttlefish, *Sepia apama*. The research questions posed by this project require manipulations that can only be conducted in controlled laboratory-based experiments. There are a number of assets unique to the Cronulla fisheries research centre that enables research such as mine to take place.

- The most fundamental of these assets, is its *independent* aquarium system, that allows controlled experiments to be conducted free of misleading and confounding factors. This on account of the fact that the animals retained at the facility are housed in isolation, where water from one tank is not permitted to pass to water of another. This attribute gives the Cronulla facility a significant advantage over the alternative *integrated* aquarium systems, such as at SIMS.
- Another key attribute of the Cronulla facility is its capacity to house more and larger animals simultaneously. Intensive behavioural experiments such as mine, require both the number as sizes of tanks available at the Cronulla facility. This is on account of the size of my subject species, its predatory nature as well as the large number of individual animals needed to make such experiments statistically feasible. My experiments would not be possible at smaller lower capacity aquariums such as SIMS.
- The newly refurbished laboratory at Cronulla is a state of the art facility. It provides an invaluable resource that is essential to efficiency and effectively conducts crucial research. Further, Cronulla provides an environment where a large number of experienced scientists are able to effectively communicate, assist and support in an efficient manner. I have experienced how this environment has contributed to the strength and contemporary relevance of my own research.

2. the far reaching costs as opposed to the espoused benefits of the decisions,

- I am currently in my second year of my PhD experiment. In order to complete the project I will need to complete at least another year of laboratory based experiments. At this juncture, the closure of the Cronulla Fisheries facility would likely compromise my PhD research fatally. Currently no other facilities have the capacity or accessibility to enable my research to be completed.
- Furthermore, I fear that future implications of the closure will preclude any future Honours, Masters, PhD or Post Doc students from conducting vital experiments that will aspire to the sustainable management of fisheries as there are no other facilities capable of supporting the research in Sydney.

3. the implications of the decision to sustainable fisheries management,

- In South Australia, the annual Australian giant cuttlefish aggregation is an internationally recognised phenomenon drawing interest from researchers and managers globally. Such aggregations have been surveyed at around 250,000 thousand individual animals in the same place. Ongoing surveys in the last two years are having difficulty in locating more than 1% of its historic populations. The mechanisms leading to the tragic loss of this endemic phenomenon are wholly unknown. At this point in time, research that contributes to our understanding of cuttlefish behaviour is crucial to identifying the management steps needed to sustain future populations of this species.

I sincerely beseech you to ensure that this matter is debated in the State Parliament so that this reckless decision can be reversed.

Yours sincerely

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