

**Submission
No 24**

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

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Closure of the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre of Excellence (Inquiry)

As an ex-employee of NSW Fisheries/DPI/I&I at the Cronulla site, I was extremely disappointed when the NSW Government decided to close the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre of Excellence. The closure was poorly considered and will have long term impacts on the quality of fisheries science and management undertaken in NSW. The reasons for this are three-fold:

Firstly, the co-location of researchers, managers and licensing staff at Cronulla enabled fisheries issues to be tackled from the joint perspective of industry, science and administration. For example, I worked closely with staff from the other divisions on revisions to the catch-effort logbooks for commercial fishermen. This complex process involved frequent meetings (often held at short notice) that would have been difficult or expensive to organise if the key staff were based at different regional locations in NSW.

Secondly, Cronulla enabled the development of strong links to University-based researchers at The University of Sydney, University of NSW, UTS, University of Western Sydney and Macquarie University. Numerous research degrees (funded by Commonwealth Scholarships) had projects which were directly linked to issues from fisheries in NSW because of the close proximity of these top-tier universities to the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre of Excellence.

Finally, there are numerous staff from the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre of Excellence who will either move on from fisheries or retire when the Centre closes. The loss of this depth of understanding of the complex issues in NSW fisheries will be felt for years. Incremental turnover of experienced staff is inevitable and healthy for an organization, but the departure of a significant number of experienced people at the same time will be damaging to fisheries science and management in NSW.

In closing, the decision to close the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre of Excellence was poorly considered. There will be few benefits and the costs will be large. Many of the costs will be unquantifiable. There would have been alternative strategies to regionalise some of the functions of fisheries research and management in NSW, without the personal and institutional impacts that this decision has caused.