

Submission
No 63

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

Name: Name suppressed

Date received: 30/07/2012

Partially Confidential

29 July 2012
Reverend the Honourable Fred Nile,
Select Committee on Cronulla Fisheries Closure
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

RE: Closure of the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre of Excellence

Dear Honourable Member Rev. Nile,

I write in regard to the recent decision by the NSW Government to close the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre of Excellence (CFRCoE). Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the closure of the CFRCoE. I will not highlight again here the many reasons why this decision is impossible to justify on anything other than political grounds, nor do I wish to go into intricate detail regarding the numerous reasons why this decision defies logic on many levels as such detail has been provided by my colleagues and others' submissions to your Inquiry. I simply wish to add my voice to the chorus of condemnation of this ill-conceived, poorly planned and appallingly managed decision. I urge you to carefully consider the logical justification for this decision in terms of its unconcealed financial wastefulness as well as the responsibility the NSW Government has to the people of NSW to ensure the continued sustainability of the states fisheries resources via the research undertaken by globally-recognised fisheries scientists at an unique world class research institution.

This world famous research station was the first centre for fisheries research in the southern hemisphere and has employed some of the world's finest marine scientists over its 110 year history. It is one of just four (4) centres of marine research to operate continuously since the 19th century. It has earned an internationally recognized reputation for excellence in scientific contribution to marine research. The historical significance and research reputation of this centre are irreplaceable.

The heritage-listed buildings (laboratory) and aquaria facilities have only recently been the subject of a multi-million dollar tax payer-funded upgrade. These facilities are now the most modern and effective for fisheries research in Australia and remain amongst the best in the world. The capital infrastructure of CFRCoE is unique in Australia. It is not available at any of the proposed relocation sites and any attempt at duplicating facilities even approaching the quality of the ones already existent at CFRCoE would cost further millions of tax payer dollars.

Most of the research staff at the centre, of which I am one, have indicated that they will not be able to transfer out of Sydney because they have built their lives here. This will ensure that NSW will lose an estimated 500 years worth of scientific experience and expertise in this very specialized field. NSW's fish stocks are some of the most sustainably managed in the world. It will not be possible for this to remain the case if NSW loses some of the finest fisheries scientists in Australia.

The location of the site is also logical as it is centrally located in relation to the extent of the state's commercial and recreational fisheries. This permits logistically simple access to managers and researchers for all stakeholders in the state because Sydney is a major transport hub. The proximity of CFRCoE to the population of Sydney also facilitates the education and mentoring of the next generation of natural resource scientists through the centre's close alliances with Sydney's major tertiary institutions.

I am quite willing to accept that, given my specific situation, I simply cannot relocate away from a family who rely upon me heavily. What I simply cannot accept is that I can no longer undertake a much loved and essential job for the benefit of all the people of this state as a result of an obviously ill-informed decision justified by a suite claims which are at best, the result of very poor advice, and at worst, intentionally misleading. If this decision was going to "improve services to stakeholders", as claimed, then I would be forced to accept a sensible decision based on logic and need. However, as has already been highlighted in a multitude of correspondences and submissions from concerned stakeholders, it is impossible to imagine how relocating scientists and managers away from a centralised location within the extent of the NSW's commercial fisheries; away from the majority of recreational fishers in NSW; away from one of the finest marine research facilities in the world; away from important community and university alliances; away from the state's major transport hub; and the consequent loss of 500 years of expertise in fisheries research and management, will possibly achieve this. In fact, the only very certain effect that the proposed closure will have is the exact opposite of the one this decision claimed it would achieve. Services to stakeholders will suffer catastrophically and detrimentally.

This is not a sensible or logical decision. If this closure goes ahead, it will be to the great detriment of the state's multi-million dollar commercial and recreational fisheries. The tax payers of NSW will have to fund relocation costs, redundancies, construction of new capital infrastructure and financial incentives for staff to move, which is likely to run into tens of millions of dollars. Given the current state NSW's finances, I urge you to examine the use of the government funds required to bring it about.

Most importantly however, this decision will negatively impact on the government's ability to ensure the sustainability of NSW's precious marine resources at a time when their effective management is facing its greatest challenges.

Yours sincerely,