

**Submission
No 61**

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

Name: Dr Jane Williamson

Date received: 30/07/2012



29th July 2012

Dear Select Committee

RE: CLOSURE OF THE CRONULLA FISHERIES RESEARCH CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE

I write in response to the call for submissions regarding the Upper House Inquiry into the proposed closure of the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre of Excellence (CFRCoE)

The proposed closure of the CFRCoE is a backward step towards research and management of our fisheries resources. Such a closure will result in a reduction of knowledge base through the attrition of scientists associated with the institution and a reduction in fisheries-facilities in general. The CFRCoE is one of the oldest fisheries research institutions of its kind and has benefited greatly from long-standing collaborations with scientists from other organisations such as external research institutions and Universities. Current steps towards the closure are already causing a cohesive and productive group of internationally recognised fisheries scientists to disband, which will have inevitable negative flow on effects to these long-standing collaborations.

While the concept of decentralisation *per se* can be a positive step for regional areas, the closure of the CFRCoE is not about decentralisation to benefit fisheries resources or service provision to such areas. The reality is that this decentralisation and proposed closure of the CFRCoE will result in moving more fisheries services away from the large fishing community within the Sydney region. It should be noted that only ~35% of NSW Fisheries scientific staff were based at Cronulla prior to the announcement of the closure. Recreational fisheries management staff were already regionally located in areas throughout NSW, such as Coffs Harbour, Port Stephens, Narrandera, Bateman's Bay and Eden.

I do not wish to re-list the enormous number of reasons as to why such a closure to the CFRCoE is a decision that will ultimately reduce the State's (and probably the Country's) excellent fisheries research capacity. There are already many letters providing eloquent rationales that reflect my argument as to why and how this will occur, along with the increased cost to taxpayers. In particular, I direct you to the letters written to The Hon Katrina Hodgkinson by Bruce Schumacher (Chairman, Advisory Council on Recreational Fishing) and Anthony Underwood (Emeritus Professor of Experimental Ecology and Fellow of the Australian Academy of Science); and the letter directed to The Hon Barry O'Farrell by Iain Suthers (Professor UNSW and SIMS). I also wish to direct you to the letters that I wrote to The Hon Katrina Hodgkinson outlining some of my concerns regarding equivalent facilities in regional areas and another in my capacity as Chair of the Fisheries Scientific Committee to the Hon Hodgkinson.

I urge the Upper House to look seriously into the Closure of the CFRCoE and to consider reversing this decision. At the very least, the Upper House should demand greater transparency as to the rationales behind this closure and release the information to the public.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you need further information.

Yours sincerely

Jane Williamson