

**Submission  
No 90**

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

**Organisation:** ECO Fishers NSW

**Date received:** 30/08/2012

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***“Conservation through sustainable use. Making people part of the solution”***

**“The voice of NSW recreational fishers”**

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24<sup>th</sup> July 2012.

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL: Inquiry into the closure of Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre.  
(Select Committee on Cronulla Fisheries Closure)**

NSW recreational fishers, through their representative organization, ECOfishers, welcome the opportunity to respond to several of the Committee’s Terms of Reference. (ToR.) We also thank the Committee for their invitation to respond, on behalf of NSW recreational fishers.

In this submission, we propose to address Terms of Reference, (ToR,) f; g; h; and i. It is these four (4) Terms of Reference which appear to be most relevant and applicable to recreational fishers for the Committee’s inquiry.

**ToR f. “The loss of scientific expertise held by staff who cannot relocate from Cronulla and the implications for sustainable fisheries management.”**

Science is a tested and documented discipline. ECOfishers doesn’t believe much of the science will be lost by the relocation of some scientific staff from Cronulla. Documented science certainly won’t be lost. Some scientific expertise/experience may be, (by those reluctant to relocate), but this is not considered by NSW recreational fishers to be a crucial issue in the long term. In fact a turnover of scientists which brings new blood to any scientific organization, or fields of enquiry and endeavour, is to be applauded in many instances.



I do an annual lecturing session with final year Environmental Sciences students at Southern Cross University. And each year I am mightily impressed with the calibre and quality of some of these final year students coming through the university ranks and being available to government departments and other organizations, as fisheries managers and marine scientists.

Hence ECOfishers, has formed the view that there will be no net loss or loss overall, in terms of scientific expertise. However, we do acknowledge that some employees may be unable to relocate for family and/or financial reasons. (Sadly, there are fewer opportunities for employment for wives and partners in regional communities when compared with the city.) While this is an unfortunate fact, it is an issue that is continually confronted by a myriad of public servants across the state and employees of large businesses.

However, ECOfishers believes some key staff, (especially the Chief Scientist, Fisheries NSW), need to be retained geographically close to ministerial advisors and in fact the minister herself, for ease of direct access and immediate advice and meetings, etc.. This is an issue ECOfishers strongly recommends, for close ministerial contact delivers better and more expedient outcomes for NSW recreational fishers. Experience has proven this to be so in the past.

**ToR g. “ the impacts of the decision on service delivery to stakeholders.”**

In my role as representing NSW recreational fishers, I was a fairly frequent visitor to Cronulla, from my home at Byron Bay. My trips involve return air travel from Ballina or the Gold Coast and accommodation in Sydney, all funded by ECOfishers. The Research Centre has always been a difficult site to access, once you leave Cronulla railway station. On behalf of NSW recreational fishers I was a regular visitor to the Thursday evening fisheries seminars at Cronulla. There is no public transport to or from the site and it involves me in cab fares, from the railway station. So the reality for NSW recreational fishers is that service delivery has now been further enhanced. The manager of NSW recreational fisheries with whom I used meet regularly at Cronulla, took the opportunity to relocate to



Coffs Harbour in December 2011 and is enjoying his tenure there immensely. It is much easier for me to get to and from Coffs Harbour, than to Cronulla and consequently much less expensive for NSW recreational fishers. The Director of Commercial Fisheries too, is located in Coffs Harbour and that provides easier access also for NSW recreational fishers.

Accessing Port Stephens was an initial problem for me, to meet with the new Executive Director, Geoff Allan, but we continue to meet by organizing our meetings in Sydney.

Landline, mobile phone and emails are also cheaper and this too enhances service delivery to recreational fisher stakeholders.

**ToR h. “the impact on staff and their families of the closure and the relocation.”**

Obviously there will be an impact on some staff and their families by the closure. And the degree of impact will vary from family to family and place to place. (It is much easier to relocate to Mosman than move the whole family to Nowra.) There are financial considerations too, for some families. Officers with family in Year 12 in city schools would understandably, be somewhat reluctant to relocate this year. However, staff who are rusted-on or cemented to Cronulla like barnacles, and can't relocate or don't want to relocate - won't relocate!

Yet ECOfishers is firmly of the view that the concept of relocation to put the fisheries managers and staff into regional areas where the fishing actually takes place, while retaining some key personnel (eg Chief Scientist etc..), is a sound one and is applauded.

**ToR i. “the impact on the heritage values of the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre.”**

ECOfishers doesn't believe there will be any negative impacts upon the heritage values of the Research Centre. After all heritage values are acquired and maintained by the architecture, the built environment and its environs – not the staff.

Last year I had the opportunity to be afforded a guided tour, by the Chief Scientist, of the new laboratory, housed in a heritage listed



building. It was going on 8 pm and two scientists were still working on projects at that hour of the night – such is the dedication of some scientific staff.

Unfortunately the new laboratory was described as not being big enough, because the expansion and development was constrained by the physical limits of the heritage listed building.

Maintenance of the site may be an issue for the Select Committee, but that in itself has no impact upon service delivery to stakeholders, nor the science developed and documented on site.

**SUMMARY:** NSW recreational fishers support and applaud the relocation. Already it is enhancing and expediting service delivery to NSW recreational fisher stakeholders.

We don't believe any loss of some scientific expertise will impact negatively upon sustainable fisheries management.

ECOfishers recommends the retention of some key senior personnel, geographically close to the minister, her office and staff.

ECOfishers also acknowledges there will be some impacts upon some staff and their families. However these impacts are no different from those faced by tens of thousands of other NSW public servants annually. The impacts are not terminal, nor insurmountable. And often they have beneficial outcomes in the long term.

The singular issue ECOfishers identifies in relation to impacts on heritage values, is the issue of ongoing maintenance of the Cronulla site. This issue is largely irrelevant to NSW recreational fishers.

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Healthy habitats = Healthy fisheries.