

Submission
No 84

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

Name: Name suppressed

Date received: 30/07/2012

Partially Confidential

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

The Director
Select Committee on Cronulla Fisheries Closure
Parliament House
Macquarie Street

30 July 2012

I would like to submit my comments on the proposed closure of the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre of Excellence, for your consideration.

With reference to the Terms of Reference Establishing Committee:

1 (a) There was patently no analysis of the financial implications of closure of the CFRC. Currently the CFRC is a world-class marine research facility that costs the State of NSW very little to run & maintain. Closure of this site and establishment of new facilities (or upgrading of existing facilities) at an alternate site will cost the NSW taxpayer millions of dollars.

(b) No consultation was taken with staff based at the CFRC prior to the announcement of its closure. In fact, staff had been invited to attend a Fisheries Strategic Planning Workshop hosted from 5 – 6 September 2011 at Salamander Shores, Port Stephens. No mention was made of the impending announcement, with CFRC Wild Fisheries staff committed to establishing stronger links with the Fisheries management and Compliance wings of DPI. Only a few weeks later were we informed of the closure of the site, negating the efforts of the workshop.

(c) Although there may be some benefit to creating stronger linkages between the Universities and NSW DPI Fisheries research staff, Universities usually require more 'blue-sky' research while government agencies conduct more 'run-of-the-mill' research and monitoring programs that contribute to long-term datasets allowing important issues (such as impact of climate change) to be assessed. Research staff not allocated to stay in the Sydney region will battle to maintain strong linkages with University colleagues. Splitting of the various Fisheries staff (Research, Fisheries Managers, Licencing, Recreational Fishing) will not allow the close collaboration and cross-fertilisation that currently exists through having all portfolios based on one site.

(d) The loss of expertise and fragmentation of the various Fisheries groups (as noted above) will negatively impact on NSW Fisheries staff to effectively advise the Minister and her staff.

(e) The belief that the facilities currently at CFRC can be replicated at other sites is spurious. Merely the one example of the CFRC Aquarium facilities which currently include a large in-ground pool (tank) without steel reinforcing will not be possible to replicate elsewhere. This facility is unique in that experiments with electrodes and or magnetic bycatch mitigation measures can be conducted without fear of data

contamination through the faraday cage affect through steel reinforcing in walls of 'modern' pools.

(f) The loss of scientific expertise is substantial. Already three key staff have left the department, one of which has taken early retirement without having had the opportunity to pass on his knowledge (including a 37 year corporate knowledge). Additionally, our most promising young scientist has left, plus the scientist responsible for our observer programs in the commercial fishing fleets (again, a scientist with over 15 years corporate knowledge and an internationally recognised understanding of fisheries observer work).

Should an alternative and suitable Sydney-based site not be found (the current Sydney Institute for Marine Science are incapable of providing facilities remotely suitable for our research) there will be a decimation of science capabilities by the Department through likely loss of all three scientists slated to stay in Sydney.

(g) The impact on service delivery to stakeholders will be substantial through inability to react to emerging issues, inability to attend meetings with minimal cost implications (Sydney is a central location with regular transport servicing it from both rural and metropolitan areas). The dissection facilities and ability to handle large animals from the Shark Meshing Program (SMP) at CRFC will need to be replicated to enable DPI to uphold their component of the Joint Management Agreement through which the important shark meshing (bather safety) program is administered. The inability to conduct research on the SMP could result in major implications for continuation of the shark meshing program, an important NSW government initiative safeguarding the NSW tourism industry.

(h) The impact of this closure has been enormous on staff and their families. At least 50% of the staff are unable to relocate, and with many staff holding specialist jobs it will be extremely difficult to find alternative employ.

(i) The loss of Australian marine science heritage is permanent and irrevocable. After over 100 years of continuous marine science delivery from the oldest marine research facility in the southern hemisphere, the closure of this site for this important component of Australian marine environmental and resource will be devastating.

With thanks for your consideration of my concerns.

Sincerely,