

**Submission
No 99**

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

Organisation: Fisheries Business Services

Date received: 30/07/2012

30 July 2012

To the members of the Legislative Council Select Committee on Cronulla Fisheries – NSW Parliament

The Reverend the Hon Fred Nile,
The Hon Marie Ficarra,
The Hon Nial Blair,
The Hon David Clarke,
The Hon Cate Faehrmann,
The Hon Mick Veitch and
The Hon Steve Whan

Dear Members

Please find enclosed an imovie produced by the staff from Fisheries Business Services at Cronulla Fisheries. We wanted you to meet us and hopefully understand the work that we do. We welcome any meeting with you either on site at Cronulla or in Macquarie Street.

Our team up until 2 weeks ago consisted of 11 staff members. Because of the inability to relocate to the nominated site of Nowra, we have already lost 3 colleagues through their own merits in gaining further employment. Another 2 staff members are leaving within the next 2 weeks, leaving our unit very under managed. Of our initial 11 team members, only 1 member is relocating to the Nowra site.

The impact on the commercial fishing industry will be profound. Commercial licensing is a complex and challenging area with one Act and nine subordinate regulations. The supporting database is complex and has been designed to meet the legislative requirements that surround the legislation.

In addition to the various regulatory instruments, policy documents and the various processes to support commercial licensing are also numerous and complex.

Knowledge required for legislation, policy and processes is not able to be learnt or experienced or replaced in a short time frame. To have the necessary skill sets to support the licensing requirements takes many years to ensure that service delivery to our client base is met to a high (and expected) standard.

Service delivery is a core function of the commercial licensing role and the loss of the majority of staff is overwhelming (all except one staff member) and will severely impact on the quality and timeliness of work required.

The Fisheries Business Services Unit not only deals with current commercial fishers but also interacts with those that have previously left the industry and are considering re-investment and returning to commercial fishing. Historical knowledge has importance in this regard as questions asked in relation to the past and how the current licensing arrangements now differ allows staff the opportunity to give in-depth explanation. This knowledge will be unable to be replaced.

Further, should there be a legal requirement to give information on past issues, it would be extremely difficult to obtain that information as to the whereabouts or decipher and clearly articulate what previously occurred and reasons behind those actions/decisions.

It is unknown how the State Government is intending to replace all that knowledge or have considered the impact on the commercial fishing industry and charter boat sector.

The staff within the commercial licensing section have voiced strong concerns regarding on-going service to stakeholders to all levels of the department up to and including the Director General and in person with the Minister.

In conclusion, as you would imagine we are incredibly concerned as to the future service on behalf of the department to the commercial fishers. Our commercial fishers deserve better. They deserve us.

Yours sincerely

Robert Harris, Manager, Fisheries Business Services
Matt Fowler, Acting Co-ordinator, Commercial Licensing
John Curtis, Team leader
Donna Tugnett, Team Leader
Laura Seymour, Fisheries Management Officer
Luz Villegas, Fisheries Management Officer
Leanne Curtis, Fisheries Management Officer
Nicole Hams, Fisheries Management Officer
Trish Dawes, Admin Officer
Kath Farag-Page, Fisheries Management Officer
Sam Dawes, Fish Receiver