

Submission
No 76

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

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially Confidential

Loss of expertise

The staff at Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre (CFRC) are specialists. The scientific staff have in excess of 500 years experience in fisheries research, more than 50 science degrees (including 19 PhDs and 1 DSc). Recreational & commercial management and associated licensing sections have over 300 years in fisheries management experience and 25 science degrees. It is estimated that more than 90% of staff will not be able to move to the proposed new locations and therefore specialised skills and experience will be lost from Fisheries.

Risk to sustainability of NSW fisheries resources

The wild fisheries resources of NSW belong to the citizens of NSW and must be maintained on their behalf by the government. CFRC is the home of the majority of wild fisheries expertise in NSW. The loss of so much specialised fisheries scientific and management expertise can mean only one thing for the fisheries resources of NSW – greater uncertainty and therefore greater risk of overfishing.

Cost to tax payers

Currently the Cronulla site costs little to run. There is no rent and maintenance costs are modest. It is estimated that staff relocation costs, plus moving costs and provision of facilities at new sites will be in excess of \$20 million. There will also be significant on-going costs of managing stakeholders and projects from sites less central and more difficult to access.

Loss of facilities

The facilities at Cronulla are amongst the most modern and effective for fisheries research in Australia. They are state-of-the-art and have had over \$1 million recently spent on upgrading and modernising the laboratory facilities.

Reduction in stakeholder services

Service to stakeholders will be significantly impacted. Fisheries work will be moved away from where stakeholders live and work. For example over 60 per cent of recreational anglers in NSW live in the Sydney area compared to less than 1% per cent at Nowra.

Impact on community

CFRC is the largest single employer in Cronulla with around 150 employees. Moving these jobs elsewhere will have a significant impact on the local community.

Loss of brand

The Cronulla fisheries site is a unique and iconic institution in terms of its scientific and fisheries management credentials, its heritage and cultural value, and is highly regarded by the national and international scientific communities as a research centre of excellence.

Conclusion

This is a very poor and ill informed decision. The announcement was made by a Minister who has not visited the staff at the Cronulla site and had virtually no consultation with the major stakeholders.

The decision has been supported by one group of commercial fishers that includes some self interested individual fishing businesses based on the north coast. There was no support sought from recreational fishing groups or recreational fishers (estimated to be over one million in NSW), environmental groups, the scientific community or the general public – evidenced by the 19,000+ petition signatures against the decision to relocate the site.