

Submission
No 46

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

Name: Name suppressed

Date received: 31/07/2012

Partially Confidential

The Premier
Barry O'Farrell
Parliament House
Macquarie St
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Premier,

I undertook three years of postgraduate study through the University of Newcastle on '*the effectiveness of management strategies in the relocation of NSW Government departments*'. The methodology of this study was to evaluate how successfully the management objectives for the relocation of the agencies concerned were met.

The outcome was that the effectiveness of these relocations could not be determined as there were no management or business objectives defined for the eight agencies canvassed. They were simply directed by the NSW Labor Government to move and the sole measure of success was that the relocation occurred, regardless of agency business and staffing impacts and costs.

In the case of the Department of Local Government moving from Bankstown to Nowra, the only staff member employed at the time the relocation was announced that actually commenced duty at Nowra was the CEO. Other than for him, there was a 100% turnover of staff with a consequent enormous loss of corporate knowledge and talent.

My readings identified the different approaches in moving staff and functions to different locations, with ad hoc piecemeal relocations of government agencies not considered to be Decentralisation and generally viewed overseas as service delivery failures in the longer term.

In contrast, initiatives such as Bathurst-Orange, Albury-Wodonga and the earlier move of Federal Government Departments from Melbourne to Canberra in the 1950's and 60's were decentralisation in practice. They were part of a larger plan in which government agencies relocated as part of an overall strategy to encourage much greater growth in private sector investment and population in those areas. I note that at that time NSW had a Minister for Decentralisation.

The level of planning and commitment demonstrated in those approaches was absent in the politically motivated ad hoc relocations made by the former NSW Government and this deficiency is in danger of being replicated by the O'Farrell Government.

I expect better of a Party and Government who have historically claimed the financial and business acumen highground – I certainly hope the lack of any such basic due diligence demonstrated in the decision to 'relocate' (not decentralise) the Cronulla Fisheries Centre is not repeated.

Actions under your 'Decade of Decentralisation' should be well thought out and implemented with costs and benefits clearly defined, rather than knee-jerk populist announcements made without even a basic economic or business assessment.

At the Six Months in Review Dinner in the Shire held on 28 September you acknowledged that 'we are not perfect' and mistakes may be made, giving the example of the Electricity rebate reduction as an instance where 'we simply got it wrong' but acted to fix it once it became apparent it was a mistake.

Hopefully such instances will be rare if good decisions supporting good policy which is well thought out and based upon sound and defensible financial, business and social considerations are to be the touchstone of the O'Farrell Government.

I urge you to at least review the material upon which the decision was made to close the Cronulla Fisheries Centre to satisfy yourself that that is the level of detail and assessment you are happy to publicly acknowledge as meeting the standards of the O'Farrell Government in making such decisions.

Yours sincerely

22 DEC 2011

Dear

Thank you for your correspondence of 21 October 2011 in relation to the recent announcement by the NSW Government to decentralise services and facilities currently located at the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre.

Over the next 12 to 18 months the NSW Government will decentralise the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre to a number of locations along the NSW coastline - such as Port Stephens, Coffs Harbour and Nowra.

One of the many reasons why the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre will be relocated is because the Cronulla site has limited access and constrained modernisation and expansion capacity.

Decentralisation of the Centre will also ensure there is greater interaction between fishers, scientists and fisheries managers. Excellent facilities are already in place at NSW Fisheries locations along the coast, including world-class research facilities and high-quality water at the Port Stephens centre.

As part of the NSW Government's 'Decade of Decentralisation' policy announced prior to the March election, we are determined to ensure regional NSW plays a bigger part than ever before in the future of this State. This initiative will be undertaken in a manner which meets the needs of all fishing stakeholders while also providing the socio-economic benefits to these regional centres.

The NSW Government intends to maintain the current level of services and research currently provided by the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre. Indeed, the functions and services undertaken at the Cronulla site will be replicated at the regional locations.

Consistent with our commitment to ensure the current level of services enjoyed by fishers and the industry provided in the future, I am pleased to inform you that a number of options are available for employees who wish to relocate and entitlements are available under the *Crown Employees Transferred Employees Compensation Award 2009*. As management of the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre work through the relocation project, regular communication will take place to keep employees informed.

The NSW Government has no plans to develop or sell the site and we encourage the local community to establish a working group to consider all options for the future use of the site, taking into account its historical and cultural significance.

Thank you again for taking the time to share your concerns with me. The NSW Government is determined to ensure that the relocation of the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre is undertaken with the highest regard to the needs of its employees, their families and all fishing stakeholders.

Yours sincerely

Barry O'Farrell MP
Premier