

Submission
No 35

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

Name: Name suppressed

Date received: 29/07/2012

Partially Confidential

As a former research scientist employed at the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre of Excellence, I am appalled at the NSW state government's decision to close the center. This decision is short-sighted for numerous reasons, including:

1. It will destroy an integrated, cohesive research and management unit. The Cronulla site has scientists, managers and administrators all within easy reach, allowing rapid dissemination of information and ideas. Breaking the site up will markedly decrease the efficiency, and increase the costs of meetings and information exchange.

2. The Cronulla site is ideally located to deal with NSW fisheries issues as it is close to the biggest fish market in the state (Sydney market). While decentralisation is a fine concept, the bulk of the personal should be where the bulk of the product it manages passes through. Commercial and recreational fishers are distributed throughout the state, making Sydney an ideal central location for the management body. Being a state government organisation, having Fisheries at the same location as the government body is also a sensible idea.

3. The Cronulla site has world-class facilities, with easy access from rail, road and sea. Also, the international airport is only 25 minutes distant, making Cronulla Fisheries one of the most accessible laboratories in Australia overall. Infrastructural improvements over the last five years also mean that the facilities are state of the art, and better than many contemporary laboratories.

4. The government has consistently failed to undertake the process of deliberation, review and decision-making in an open and accountable way. Mis-information (such as the Minister's repeated inaccurate comments about the site's accessibility), a lack of any credible costings analysis, and the lack of a business plan in place prior to the beginning of the process are all reasons why the proposed move should be immediately halted, and a public, open review of the business case and cost-benefit be undertaken.

5. The moving process has been so badly handled, that staff are being told their position will soon move to locations which are not yet properly equipped. Further staff are being told their positions will move without being able to be told who their new supervisors or position descriptions will be. How can employees be expected to work efficiently in this conditions?

6. There has been scant regard for the employees and families affected. While the decentralisation plans may suit a minority of employees, the majority do not wish to move, and are finding the poor way the process has been handled extremely stressful.

7. The financial outlay this process will cost, and the hidden costs (such as increased travel and allowances for scientists and managers to meet) have not been projected and made public. I suspect this will cost a huge amount of money which the taxpayers may only find out about after it is too late.

For these reasons, I strongly urge the Committee to call for an immediate halt to the relocation of staff and facilities from Cronulla.