Andrew Cappie-Wood  
Director-General  
NSW Dept of Education and Training  
L2, 35 Bridge Street  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Andrew

It is with great pleasure we present to you the Report on The Futures Project initiated by you in May 2004.

The community consultation generated by the document *Excellence and Innovation* has been extraordinarily widespread. By close of consultation some 28,000 people had been involved in meetings and some 2,700 submissions had been received. The analysis has identified common themes and these have been validated by independent analysis through the University of New South Wales.

This Report details the wide and sometimes confronting opinion held by various individuals and groups. It draws out specific directions and sets an agenda for the future. The academic companion pieces add a dimension that provides independent and wider perspectives on particular issues.

We would like to put on record our deep appreciation to the senior project officer, Ms Hetty Cislowski as well as the project officers Annie Hollander, Kathy Ryan, Catherine Burrows and Neville Warner. We also had a group of officers who have provided wonderful contributions through part time or short term employment during the course of the project. In particular: Eric Jamieson, Jim Harkin, Andrew Dowling, Bronwyn McLean, John Bentley, Jack Baseley, Lorraine Franklin, Mary O’Sullivan, Sandra Jones, Diane Wasson, Anne Topple, Sue Herron, Pam Peelgrane and Alan Pratt. Our clerical support has also provided invaluable service; Michael Manno, Jeanne Poisson, Michelle Ho, Joanna Manno and Helen Ling.

The experience of being able to analyse and reflect in developing this report has been a most unusual and exciting process. Thank you for the opportunity to work on this important task.

Yours sincerely

Alan Laughlin  
Deputy Director-General  
April 2005

Lindsay Wasson  
Regional Director Western Sydney (Futures)  
June 2005
The purpose of the consultation process was to engage the community of New South Wales in discussion about the priorities and principles that should guide planning by the Department of Education and Training (DET) for the next 5 to 10 years.

There was a remarkable response, a clear indication of the value that people in the education and training community, as well as in the broader community, place on public education and training. Altogether, more than 28,500 people participated in the consultation process. More than 1300 meetings were held around the state of NSW in schools, TAFE colleges and community venues involving students, staff, parents, industry and community members. The information from those meetings was recorded by the group facilitators and forwarded to the Futures team. In addition, 1342 written submissions were received from individuals and 66 submissions were received from representative organisations, via post, fax or email.

As described in Appendix 1 (Consultation Process), all the responses received were entered into an electronic database, collated by questions. All the responses to each question were read by at least two people with experience and expertise in the relevant area of education and training, initially working independently from one another, then comparing notes and aggregating ideas to form the major themes.

In preparing the report, the Futures team was aware that it would be difficult to do justice to the great volume of material that had been received. It was not possible to report on every issue raised nor to include every suggestion made: to do so would have generated a report too long to be read. Accordingly a series of decisions was taken that would influence the structure and presentation of the final report:

- The findings would be reported in a small number of fairly substantial chapters that represented the main areas of interest in education and training –
  - students’ learning across the K-12 continuum
  - the provision of leadership for quality education
- the nature of the system which should be supporting schools
- future directions and strategies for TAFE NSW.

- The material in each chapter would include brief summaries of the major themes related to that area and a set of Key findings arising from analysis of how those themes might impact positively on the future of NSW public education and training.

- Themes highlighted in each chapter would reflect the main issues that were most frequently reported by respondents, as well as less frequently mentioned issues that were clearly controversial. Each section would include a brief summary and direct quotes from the different viewpoints where this was appropriate.

- As many quotes as possible would be incorporated into the report to convey to readers a sense of the feelings and genuine concerns of respondents. The inclusion of quotes would also highlight the themes that were identified and, as far as possible, would reflect a range of stakeholders’ views.

Readers will find some of the quoted statements confronting. Many quoted statements will be arguable. They are not intended to offend or denigrate any staff or supporters of public schools and TAFE, nor do they represent absolute truths. They are a mix of perceptions, criticisms, observations, ideas and proposals. They are intended to convey the depth of feeling of the respondents, as well as the perspectives of a broad range of people interested in the future of public education and training.

Some respondents offered solutions to the problems they perceived. These were evaluated in the light of other responses and the knowledge and research available to the writing team. Many of the ideas and solutions have been incorporated in the Key findings in Chapter 6.

The Key findings reflect the views of respondents and the researchers who contributed.
At the end of each chapter there are one or more short *Companion Papers* by well-known academics who have an interest in public education and training in NSW. Their papers provide a brief overview of research which is relevant to the issues under discussion and their perspective on the issues outlined in the consultation document. The papers were commissioned as part of the *Futures Project* to provide an independent expert view on the issues raised for consultation. The views presented are those of the authors, not necessarily the views of the Department of Education and Training.

In addition, an independent text analysis was conducted on the data by an external organisation attached to the University of NSW, Educational Assessment Australia. This process was commissioned to supply an independent analysis which would provide verification of issues found by the experts and to identify any differences in the views of stakeholders. Sixteen sub-reports were produced, one for each of the discussion papers contained in the consultation document, *Excellence and Innovation*. The methodology for the text analysis is included in the report. There is a high degree of correlation between the themes identified by education experts within DET and the themes identified by the electronic analysis. The text analysis report contains quantitative information that would not be possible to generate from a qualitative analysis alone.