The NSW Department of Education and Training has conducted the largest public consultation process ever undertaken in Australian education history.

The key messages
After more than 28,500 submissions from people around NSW the key messages showed:

- strong community pride for the achievements of public education in New South Wales
- a desire to build on our strengths by using existing resources to make the system work better

People responded to the consultation document Excellence and Innovation. More than 1,300 meetings were held around the State, involving students, staff, parents, industry and community members.

In addition, more than 2,700 submissions and responses were received from teachers, parents, groups and organisations. The consultation process was designed to ensure that anyone who wished to have a say was able to do so.

Some example responses included:
- Students should have greater input into the direction of education
- Primary teachers need support and flexibility to assist them to develop manageable teaching and learning programs that meet the needs of their students
- There needs to be a greater emphasis on the key transition points in schooling, such as when students progress from Year 6 to Year 7
- There needs to be greater flexibility in High Schools to allow teachers to personalise learning
- The curriculum for 15 to 19 year old students should be more relevant, with greater vocational options
- Schools and TAFE should work together to improve student outcomes and engagement in work and study
- Schools need to have more flexibility and a greater capacity to make local decisions to meet the needs of their students
Support for sound frameworks within which schools should operate. Within these frameworks schools should be given the capacity to grow, develop and be more innovative.

Quality teachers should be recognised and rewarded and better strategies are needed to deal with unsatisfactory teachers.

Better strategies are needed to attract and retain quality teachers in hard to staff schools.

Parents and the community want clear, accessible and better information to help them keep informed about school structures, curriculum and systems.

The process
Following the consultation, there was a thorough internal and independent analysis of the submissions.

A team of researchers from Educational Assessment Australia, attached to the University of New South Wales, undertook a qualitative text analysis of the process.

The report is available online. It can be accessed on the Department’s Internet site at www.det.nsw.edu.au.