Answers to written questions on notice

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1). What are the challenges in engaging the broader community on issues associated with nanotechnology? Are the current measures being taken by the Australian Office of Nanotechnology sufficient?

The Inquiry may wish to consider the different aims of public engagement that have been identified and the different means that can be used to achieve those various ends. See Head, B. W. (2007) Community Engagement: Participation on Whose Terms? *Australian Journal of Political Science* 42 (3) 441-454: 445.

2). Is it sensible to attempt to engage the community on nanotechnology? How do the risks and benefits of nanotechnology compare to other areas of science and industry?

The Inquiry might like to refer to some of the material on public engagement and deliberative democracy, eg.

- Lyn Carson's (Government, University of Sydney) work on democratic engagement http://www.activedemocracy.net/
- John Gastil and Peter Levine (eds) 2005. *The deliberative democracy handbook : strategies for effective civic engagement in the twenty-first century* San Francisco : Jossey-Bass.
- The UBC W Maurice Young Centre for Applied Ethics/ Mayo Clinic project on Biobanking and Deliberative Democracy http://gels.ethics.ubc.ca:8213/ge3ls-arch/face-to-face

3). Can you recommend any processes by which NSW would best be able to engage the public on nanotechnology issues?

One of the members of the Inquiry raised the question to the effect that there is a risk that regulation and public engagement could stifle the economic potential of nanotechnologies. It is important to balance that concern, in my view with concerns about the protection of well-founded public trust. If governments and industry appear to be resolving issues that may affect all citizens (and future generations) behind closed doors, then there is a real risk that the lack of open deliberation and transparency of process may undermine the conditions for public trust that are necessary both for governance and for commercial profitability, so quite independently of using public engagement as a means of informing the public about the potential benefits and risks of nanotechnology, or to find out what social

concerns there are about the technology; governments may do well to demonstrate that they are committed to open discussions about risks/ benefits and effects of the technological applications of nanoscience and to demonstrate responsible governance.