The recent release of the first iPad in Australia immediately interested educators in its potential to engage students in learning. Consequently, schools and educators nationally and internationally started investigating the usefulness of iPads for learning.

iPad pilot trial
In July 2010, the Catholic Education Diocese of Parramatta, covering 78 schools and over 41,000 students, decided to trial the use of iPads in a number of schools. The aim was to gather feedback and information on how iPads might be used to enhance learning. Managed by our Centre for Excellence - Learning Exchange, 20 schools were selected to be part of a pilot to trial the use of iPads for one term.

Feedback
Participants commented that the iPad allows learning to be personalised, meeting a range of different learning styles and learning levels of students. Other comments note the usability of the iPad.

One of the biggest assets is that the kids engage with it so easily. Also the advantages are that it is portable, light and colourful. For those lower ability classes – it’s absolutely instant; you can flick from one thing to the other.

The children found the iPad very easy to navigate, as it is quite visual. Those that have difficulties with reading were able to find the app they wanted to use by clicking on the corresponding app’s picture. Children learn by experiencing, and even those with no knowledge of how an iPod or iPad works were able to use them independently very quickly.

Participants also felt that the easy to use swipe design, portability and accessibility features, such as voiceover, zoom and predictive text, made it a particularly useful tool for students with disabilities or learning difficulties or from non English speaking backgrounds (Figure 1).