



'Approved provider' and Qld Early Childhood Education and Care, Department of Education and Training [2015] ACECQARRPstr0018 (11 November 2015)

Applicant:	'Approved provider'
Regulatory Authority:	Qld Early Childhood Education and Care, Department of Education and Training
Decision date:	11 November 2015
Application reference:	STR0018

Decision

The Ratings Review Panel (the Panel) by consensus decided to confirm the rating levels for standards 2.3 and 3.1 are 'Meeting NQS', and to amend the rating level for standards 3.2, 5.2, 6.1 and 6.2 to 'Exceeding NQS'. As a result, the Panel by consensus confirmed the rating level for Quality Area 2 is 'Meeting NQS'. The Panel amended the rating level for Quality Areas 3, 5 and 6 to 'Exceeding NQS', and the service's overall rating to 'Exceeding NQS'.

Issues under review

1. The approved provider (the provider) sought a review on the grounds that the regulatory authority in making its determination, failed to take into account or give sufficient weight to facts existing at the time of the rating assessment (section 144(3)(b) *Education and Care Services National Law* (National Law)).
2. The provider sought a review of the following:
 - Quality Area 2, standard 2.3
 - Quality Area 3, standards 3.1 and 3.2
 - Quality Area 5, standard 5.2
 - Quality Area 6, standards 6.1 and 6.2
3. After the initial assessment, the service was rated 'Meeting NQS' for Quality Areas 2, 3, 5 and 6, and 'Exceeding NQS' for Quality Areas 1, 4 and 7 in the Final Report.
4. The provider applied for first tier review of standard 2.3, 3.1, 3.2, 5.1, 5.2, 6.1 and 6.2.

Regulatory authority's view



5. At first tier review, the regulatory authority amended its original rating of standard 5.1 to 'Exceeding NQS'. The service's rating for Quality Area 5 did not change. The regulatory authority confirmed its original rating of 'Meeting NQS' for standards 2.3, 3.1, 3.2, 5.2, 6.1 and 6.2. The service's overall rating remained unchanged at 'Meeting NQS'.

Applicant's view

6. The provider states in its application for second tier review that it believes the authorised officer did not consider or give sufficient weight to evidence available on the day of the assessment and rating visit. The provider further believes that the regulatory authority did not take into account the evidence submitted at first tier review.

Evidence before the panel

7. The Panel considered all the evidence submitted by the provider and the regulatory authority. This included:
 - the application for second tier review and its attachments, including statements for each standard and evidence provided by educators
 - the Assessment and Rating Instrument and the final Assessment and Rating Report
 - the application for first tier review and its attachments
 - the regulatory authority's findings at first tier review.
8. The Panel was also provided with advice from ACECQA on the standards under review.

The law

9. Section 151 of the National Law states that following a review, the Ratings Review Panel may:
 - (a) confirm the rating levels determined by the Regulatory Authority; or
 - (b) amend the rating levels.

Review of rating levels

10. The Panel considered each standard under review in turn.

Standard 2.3

11. Standard 2.3:
Each child is protected.
12. The Panel noted that to achieve a rating of 'Exceeding NQS' for this standard, it may expect to see evidence of the following:



- Children are effectively supervised at all times and educators are attuned to the needs of all children to ensure each child's safety and wellbeing.
- Effective steps are taken to identify and manage risks and the precautions taken to protect children from hazards and harm reflect best practice.
- Plans to effectively manage incidents and emergencies are developed and reviewed in consultation with relevant authorities. Strategies are regularly practised and implemented effectively.
- Educators, co-ordinators and staff members understand their roles and responsibilities in accordance with relevant child protection legislation and they actively raise family and community awareness of child protection issues.

Regulatory authority's view

13. The Final Report provides a number of examples of the service's practice against standard 2.3 including:

- Educators supervised children in all areas of the service, at all times. At all times educators maintain close physical proximity to children, especially when children are eating and drinking, during nappy changing and toileting. Educators frequently position themselves within environments to ensure that they have maximum visibility of children and educators respond to children's verbal and nonverbal cues. They regularly check all areas of environments by scanning an area or listening for cues. Levels of supervision offered by educators varied throughout the day dependent on the level of risk in an activity and the agency of individual children. For example, when children were climbing the rock wall the level of support offered varied according to the age of the children and their level of skill development.
- Procedures were in place for managing incidents and providing a child-safe environment. Educators complete daily safety checks of all environments and were observed ensuring that equipment was placed in a manner that did not pose a risk to children in the outdoor play environment.
- Sun safe practices were implemented and discussed with children. At all times, children and educators were observed wearing hats in the outdoor environment and parents applied sunscreen to their child when dropping their child at the service.
- Hazards that presented a risk to children's safety, health and wellbeing, including excursions, were identified and managed. As evidenced by the risk assessment developed for the regular visits to the mobile library van, a copy of the risk assessment plan was displayed for viewing by parents and is reviewed regularly to ensure that it is addressing all the potential hazards that may be encountered during the excursion.



- Emergency and evacuation procedures were practised, documented and developed in consultation with relevant authorities. Emergency evacuation procedures are rehearsed monthly and have included lock downs. Educators complete on line training in relating to emergency procedures, including how to use a fire extinguisher.
 - Educators and staff were aware of their roles and responsibilities to respond to every child at risk of abuse or neglect. All new educators receive information about child protection during the orientation process. Recently, educators have reviewed the child protection policy and all educators have completed an online course about child protection issues. Educators are required to complete this course annually. Last year, the service participated in the 'Day for Daniel' activities.
 - Some books and other resources relating to child protection matters have been bought and that these can be borrowed by families from the parent library.
 - Children are involved in the development of some risk assessment processes.
 - The service has a supervision policy and educators have completed risk assessments prior to excursions occurring.
14. The Final Report noted that the service was rated Meeting NQS for this standard because:
- Evidence of how educators are attuned to the needs of all children ensuring their safety and wellbeing, and
 - Information about how the service actively raises families and the community's awareness of child protection issues was not included.
15. At first tier review, the regulatory authority noted that the following evidence in the Final Report supports exceeding practice:
- Levels of supervision offered by educators varied throughout the day dependent on the level of risk in an activity and the agency of individual children. For example, when children were climbing the rock wall the level of support offered varied according to the age of the children and their level of skill development.
 - The evidence included examples of how educators ensure that the environment is safe including children are involved in the development of some risk assessment processes.
16. The regulatory authority determined that the service demonstrated aspects of both meeting and exceeding practice, but that overall the evidence supported a rating of Meeting NQS for standard 2.3.

Applicant's view

17. In the cover letter for its application for second tier review the provider notes the regulatory authority mentioned only some of the points of evidence it



submitted, and feels that this means the other points of evidence were not taken into account at first tier review.

18. In its statement for standard 2.3, the provider notes that the regulatory authority identified examples of exceeding practice, and suggests that overall the evidence of practice reflects 'Exceeding NQS'.
19. The provider contends that 'there were many examples in the evidence provided from both the assessor and evidence provided in our first tier response that demonstrates how children are effectively supervised at all times and educators are attuned to the needs of all children to ensure each child's safety and wellbeing'.
20. The provider notes that information in the Final Report supports Exceeding NQS, including:
 - children are supervised 'in all areas of the service, at all times'
 - hazards presenting a risk to children's safety are identified and managed
 - risk assessments are developed and emergency evacuations and procedures are rehearsed monthly
 - educator to child ratios are maintained at a level that exceeds the legislative requirements for the majority of the day, which contributes to high quality environments for children and supports the service's capacity to ensure a high level of attunement occurs.
21. The provider notes that the authorised officer stated 'educators and staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities to respond to every child at risk of abuse or neglect'.
22. The provider notes that evidence it has provided at draft and first tier review supports 'Exceeding NQS'.
23. The provider notes the effective steps taken to identify and manage risks, and precautions taken to protect children from hazards and harm, reflect best practice. The provider also notes that strategies for how it effectively manages incidents and emergencies are regularly practised and implemented effectively.
24. The provider identifies that educators know the children in its service well, and this allows educators to be purposeful, thoughtful and deliberate in responses to children, and that educators are attuned to the needs of all children. The service's routines are very flexible and meet the individual needs of each individual child. The service's educators are placed to supervise specific areas during the day, allowing children to access inside and outside areas, as well as allowing children to sleep, rest and eat at flexible times.



25. Charts outlining all children's individual requirements are displayed extensively throughout the service and are updated regularly. Educators are made aware of children's medical needs. Children's individual plans are displayed throughout the service as program flexibility means that children can visit all classrooms and the outdoor area at any time. The service's cook knows and caters to individual health needs of children.
26. Educators assist individual children to make their own risk assessments and know some children are more confident than others. Educators will determine proximity to an activity depending on level of risk, while identifying that children need spaces to play where they 'feel they are not being watched', even though they are. The service has appointed an outdoor educator to supervise the outdoor environment and engage children in outdoor projects. The service encourages children to take risks they are comfortable with and encourages self-initiated, child-directed play. The service's play spaces have been designed to provide elements of challenge for children. Educators are attuned to children and know when to step in and out of play, and while 'stepped out', educators are still observing and are close at hand to provide support, assistance or play extension.
27. The service has supervision and excursion policies which guide practice. The service uses 'benefit-risk' assessments that are developed for excursions, regular outings and the outdoor program. The assessments are best practice for identifying and managing risks and children are involved in the process.
28. The provider gave an example of when a parent let the service know about concerns with wood blocks outside, the service talked to the family about their concerns and how the service could remedy the situation. The provider referred to its policy on supervision, undertook a benefit-risk assessment and talked to the family about the benefits of loose parts and how risks were minimised. The family was involved in the benefit-risk assessment and were happy with the outcome, with larger loose parts being located in the playground, out of traffic ways and in designated spaces.
29. Educators complete online training for emergency procedures. Educators rehearse evacuations and lockdowns monthly and evaluate the effectiveness. The provider notes that children embed these in their play and conversations, and that educators have conversations with families about the rehearsal and children's discussions as a result.
30. Educators receive information about child protection during orientation, including information about legislation, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and service policies and procedures about reporting. Educators reviewed the child protection policy recently. All educators complete an online child protection course annually. Educators and all staff understand their roles and responsibilities in accordance with relevant child protection legislation and actively raise family and community awareness of child



protection issues. Further, the provider noted it is proactive in working with Child Safety when children attending its service had specific child protection needs.

31. The provider notes that newsletters contain articles about supporting children's resilience and wellbeing at home. The service works with support agencies and professionals. The service seeks out resources and information to help support families' personal situations and circumstances.
32. The service participated in 'Day for Daniel' activities last year. In addition to these activities, educators talked to families about why they were participating and the strategies they shared with children to educate them about their own rights, as well as sharing resources. The service also promoted a child safety resource kit in the library for families to borrow.
33. The provider shares examples of children being supported to manage their emotions, supporting children in working with others and giving them strategies they can use to help themselves. The provider notes that educators are responsive to children's needs and ensure they feel comfortable, and always respond to children, respecting their needs.

Panel's considerations

34. In its discussion, the Panel referenced evidence submitted by the provider and outlined above at paragraphs 35 – 39 where the provider gave examples of educators taking steps to identify and manage risks, complete online emergency procedure training, rehearse evacuations and lockdowns and evaluate their effectiveness.
35. The Panel discussed what was required by the term 'effective' which is a focus of the Exceeding NQS descriptors for this standard. The Panel noted that the service was taking a number of steps to meet the standard, but it could not find evidence of the *effectiveness* of the service's practice. The Panel noted that while there was evidence that children were supervised at all times, there was no evidence of the effectiveness of the supervision.
36. The Panel further noted that there was a lack of evidence for how educators were attuned to the needs of children and noted that the authorised officer observed that educators were not attuned to the needs of all children.
37. The Panel noted that to improve on quality the provider could consider how educators might consult with children about child protection issues, and how the service might teach children protective behaviours.
38. The Panel noted that while there were plans to effectively manage incidents and emergencies and that the service had reviewed them, there was no evidence that the plans were reviewed in consultation with relevant authorities.



39. The Panel noted that educators had attended child protection training and that they were aware of their roles and responsibilities in accordance with relevant child protection legislation.
40. The Panel discussed that to achieve a rating of Exceeding NQS, the service would be required to actively raise awareness of child protection issues. The Panel noted that while the service participated in Day for Daniel and explained to families why they were participating, it was once a year and this was not sufficient to actively raise community awareness.
41. The Panel noted that there should be active encouragements for families to borrow books from their resource centre. The Panel noted the provider provides information about children's resilience in its newsletter and said this could be relevant to this standard when taking a broad interpretation of child protection issues. The Panel agreed that the service would need to take a more proactive approach to actively raising issues with families to meet the requirements for an Exceeding rating for this standard.
42. The Panel agreed with the regulatory authority that, while some practice is Exceeding NQS, overall when looking at evidence there was not enough practice to be Exceeding NQS for the standard.
43. The Panel noted the provider's contention that all points of evidence submitted had not been considered at first tier review, as the regulatory authority did not mention each piece of evidence in its decision notice. The Panel agreed that this was not a conclusion the provider should draw. The Panel noted that the regulatory authority would not necessarily be expected to identify and respond to each piece of evidence, but that it would have made its decision based on the available evidence. The Panel noted that while its own deliberations may not mention all pieces of evidence, the Panel has considered all of the available evidence at each standard.
44. The Panel agreed that standard 2.3 remains Meeting NQS.

Standard 3.1

45. Standard 3.1:
The design and location of the premises is appropriate for the operation of a service.
46. The Panel noted that to achieve a rating of Exceeding NQS for this standard, it may expect to see evidence of the following:
 - All outdoor and indoor spaces, buildings, furniture, equipment, facilities and resources provide a stimulating learning and care environment for children.
 - All premises, furniture and equipment are safe, clean and well maintained and enhance the learning environment for children.



- Facilities are designed or adapted to ensure active participation by every child in the service and promote flexible use and interaction between indoor and outdoor space at all times.

Regulatory authority's view

47. The Final Report provides a number of examples of the service's practice against standard 3.1 including:

- The physical environment was designed to foster children's learning and development. The design of the buildings allows for convenient access to all areas of the buildings and between the indoor and outdoor environments from all play rooms.
- The building has covered verandas facing onto the large playground areas. The indoor and outdoor spaces provided opportunities for children to explore a number of environments that included a mud digging patch, children being able to stomp through water in a large container on the ground; moving pebbles and larger stones to create dams; and children using a variety of resources to engage in block dramatic play which gradually spread across one half of a room.
- The indoor and outdoor environments were designed or adapted to ensure access and participation by each child. Some of the children's bathrooms and nappy change areas are located in rooms that can only be accessed from the outdoor environment via the indoor play spaces. Educators have adapted their practices to ensure that children are able to access bathrooms at all times whilst in the playground. For example all of the rooms operate an indoor/outdoor program and educators frequently prompt children about going to the bathroom.
- The physical environment and premises were clean, well maintained, and included adequate space for children of all ages to work and play. The service undertakes daily safety checks and any repairs that might need attention are reported to the Director and recorded on a maintenance schedule. Any broken equipment is removed and placed in an area that is inaccessible to children. Trades persons are employed to address maintenance that the provider cannot repair or involve major repairs or renovations at the service. Educators were observed undertaking light cleaning duties throughout the day, including sweeping floors and wiping tables.
- Copies of some of the service's maintenance logs were provided demonstrating that the premises, furniture and equipment are maintained in a safe and clean manner. The documentation provided included examples of children engaging with natural materials within a number of different environments and of children engaging in a variety of activities in the playground.
- Documentation provided outlined evidence of educator training and photographs of environments used as part of this training.
- Further evidence provided was of photos of the indoor and outdoor environment. However, these photos are not reflective of the current



environment. Photos of the Facebook pages capture some examples of experiences in the playground. However, these are mostly evidence of events that occurred in 2014.

48. The Final Report noted that the service was rated Meeting NQS for this standard because:
 - While the facilities are designed to ensure access and participation by every child, children were not observed engaging with the environment in a way that enhanced their learning. Educators did not facilitate and support the children's interactions with the environment to extend children's learning.
49. At first tier review the regulatory authority considered evidence submitted by the provider in response to the draft report and at first tier review, and information in the Final Report and determined that the evidence reflected practice at the 'Meeting NQS' level.

Applicant's view

50. In its submission for standard 3.1 the provider notes that while the regulatory authority at first tier review found the evidence provided supported a 'Meeting NQS' rather than 'Exceeding NQS' rating, there were many examples in the authorised officer's comments, strengths identified in the service's Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) and feedback provided by the provider that demonstrated how the service exceeds Standard 3.1.
51. The provider notes that the Final Report identifies many of the service's strengths but notes that there was an incorrect reference to bathrooms being inaccessible from the outdoor area. The provider advises that both bathrooms have direct access to the outdoor playground.
52. The provider advises that its QIP outlines the service's five unique learning environments. It also emphasises how the service provides purposeful and intentional spaces that promote children's sustained learning. Set ups in each classroom provide children with opportunities for building self-confidence and independence, curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, interest in exploring early literacy and numeracy skills, a sense of connection to other people, the environment and the world, physical social and emotional wellbeing, and communication skills. The service uses the Early Years Learning Framework and the Queensland Kindergarten Learning Guideline to guide decision-making about its learning environments.
53. The service's QIP states that the service uses a holistic approach to curriculum including meal times and routines, as well as sustained periods of time for children's learning experiences. Children are empowered to make decisions, have ownership over learning, and have flexibility to move between the indoor and outdoor environments. The outdoor environment is inviting,



challenging and natural, allowing children to experience a strong connection to the natural world.

54. The provider refers to the regulatory authority's statement in the Final Report that photos on the service's Facebook page mostly occurred in 2014 and were not reflective of the current environment and that 'children were not observed engaging with the environment in a way that enhanced their learning'. The provider states that 'all outdoor and indoor spaces, buildings, furniture, equipment, facilities and resources provide a stimulating learning and care environment for children, how our premises, furniture and equipment enhances the learning environment for children and how the facilities are designed and adapted to ensure active participation by every child in the service and promote flexible use and interaction between indoor and outdoor space at all times'.
55. The provider notes that the service is furnished with natural materials and natural and artificial lighting is used in classrooms to create inviting spaces, with fluorescent lights being replaced with warm LED bulbs. The service has added home items to capture some aspects of a home-like environment. Adequate shade in the yard is provided by a covered veranda, shade sails and mature trees on the playground perimeter, all allowing children the opportunity to decide where they will play. The service has child sized equipment, and furnishings and resources encourage open-ended exploration and learning.
56. Educators think about the presentation and possibilities of materials, and acknowledge that children may use materials in a different way to what was planned. The service's spaces are designed to promote opportunities for shared thinking and collaborative learning, and spaces are designed so children can work, play and talk together in small or large groups or on their own. The service's natural resources provide a challenging landscape for children to engage in with logs, stumps, large sandstone blocks, a secret garden, large sandpit, digging patch and stage area.
57. The service uses Loose Parts Theory as it believes this enhances children's creative, imaginative, explorative and problem solving capacities in indoor and outdoor learning environments. Loose parts are used to promote thoughtful and creative play and are available on a small and large scale.
58. The service planned the environment spaces and studio environments as a group, identifying what experiences would be available and using materials and resources to promote learning, including identifying the purpose of those experiences. The service provides experiences in response to how children are using equipment, materials and space, and educators are constantly monitoring, adapting or tweaking spaces to ensure greatest participation for children in the program. Each room completed an environment audit from the 'Designs in Life and Learning' book, prompting educators to consider the sorts of things reflected in their classroom spaces.



59. The service shares that a deep level of reflection and thought has gone into what is available in the outdoor environment. Further information was shared including examples of activities and experiences available to children in indoor and outdoor areas. Children and educators have conversations about respecting and understanding the natural environment, and the role of plants, animals, people and the land.
60. The provider notes how a session with an early childhood expert led to the service creating studio spaces. An educator then visited a service with studio spaces to learn more and brought ideas back to the service. After accessing further professional development and another service visit, the educators planned for studio environments, undertaking reflection about how the spaces could facilitate and support children's interactions with the spaces to extend children's learning. The provider notes that this process demonstrates the reflection, thinking and planning that contribute to the design of its environments and spaces.
61. The provider referred to a statement in the Final Report where the authorised officer stated 'children were not observed engaging with the environment in a way that enhanced their learning. Educators did not facilitate and support the children's interactions with the environment to extend children's learning'. The provider contends that this statement is up to the 'interpretation of the individual and again the way children are observed, and how educators facilitated and supported children's interactions with the environment could differ in interpretation between authorised officers and other early childhood practitioners'.
62. The provider notes that children spend the majority of the day in a family group setting with many opportunities to work with, learn from and help each other. These opportunities happen during indoor and outdoor play periods, during meal times and throughout the day during shared play experiences. The service provides planned spaces in the indoor and outdoor space for collaborative learning. The provider lists experiences such as block play, reading areas, art areas and dramatic play areas. While children play collaboratively, they engage in conversations, and if educators are present they provide further prompts to facilitate play. The provider further notes that there are ongoing collaborative projects involving research, planning, problem solving and shared decision making.
63. The provider states that educators continually encourage and support children to participate in learning experiences and additionally support children to create and construct their own learning environments, spaces and experiences. The provider notes that educators promote flexible use between indoor and outdoor spaces, reminding children of choices they have, noticing and responding to interests and setting up engaging environments to enhance interest and stimulate further learning, supporting children to be part of the



process. Educators use floorbook documentation with children to plan their own learning, suggest areas for enquiry and think of available spaces and resources they can use.

64. The service layout and classroom provision allows children to independently access resources and initiate their own experiences. Children can move resources and equipment between different environments. Environments are often created in collaboration with children, or from observing children's ideas and interests during the program, and children are encouraged to join in small or large group experiences. Educators set up environments with invitations to play and welcoming play spaces, with regular collaborative cooking experiences where children help each other.
65. The service shares its philosophy on the importance and benefit of natural environments and connecting children to nature during orientation, and includes a handbook called '10 reasons you should let children play in the mud' to help parents understand the benefits and challenges of a natural environment.
66. As stated earlier, the service runs an indoor-outdoor program and children have access to indoors and outdoors through the whole day. The program allows children to form attachments and relationships with many educators leading to smooth arrival and departure times, as children know all educators. The provider notes that the service sees itself as a big community.
67. The provider notes that it has an apprenticeship-style system where older children support younger children. Children are relaxed, comfortable, confident and secure in all play environments and they make the choice about which learning environment they will engage in at any given point in time. Educators use their knowledge of individual children to involve them in the program, and they are encouraged to join in small and/or large group activities based on their interests or social group.
68. Room vision statements are displayed in each classroom, and reflected upon and updated quarterly. The visions are holistic and identify the design of the indoor environment, what is happening outside, and include big picture ideas. Statements reflect on what has been happening in the space over the previous months.
69. Educators have both planned and spontaneous intentional teaching in many varied situations and environments, where they intentionally scaffold children's understanding and learning.

Panel's consideration

70. The Panel noted that while the design of the building allows access between all areas, active participation by every child was not observed by the



authorised officer and active participation by every child is a key requirement for a rating of Exceeding against this standard.

71. The Panel noted that the Facebook photos submitted by the provider were from 2014 while the assessment and rating visit was in 2015, and that these photos lacked currency.
72. The Panel noted that there was clearly evidence of maintenance being undertaken. However, the Panel could not find evidence of how the learning environment for children was enhanced by the premises, furniture and equipment.
73. The Panel noted that the authorised officer did not observe children engaging in the environment in a way that enhanced their learning.
74. The Panel noted that the provider's evidence about curriculum may be better considered under Quality Area 1.
75. The Panel noted that the provider's submissions show that the service has a connection with its world and the classroom builds children's confidence and independence and empowers them to make decisions.
76. The Panel questioned whether the evidence showed that the environment promoted flexible use at all times. The Panel noted that the service runs an indoor-outdoor program which children could access throughout the day but there was no evidence of how the service ensured active participation by every child, which is required for a rating of Exceeding NQS.
77. The Panel noted that the evidence and observations were in line with Meeting NQS.
78. The Panel noted that bathrooms were accessible indoors and outdoors but that this was not the determining factor in making a decision on Meeting or Exceeding NQS.
79. The Panel agreed that standard 3.1 would remain Meeting NQS.

Standard 3.2

80. Standard 3.2:
The environment is inclusive, promotes competence, independent exploration and learning through play.
81. The Panel noted that to achieve a rating of Exceeding NQS for this standard, it may expect to see evidence of the following:
 - Outdoor and indoor spaces are designed and effectively organised to engage every child in quality experiences involving the built and natural



environments. The spaces provide the flexibility to respond to children's individual needs, development, self-initiated play and exploration.

- Resources, materials and equipment are sufficient in number, organised in ways that extend every child's participation in the program and are consistently used in numerous ways.

Regulatory authority's view

82. The Final Report provides a number of examples of the service's practice against standard 3.2 including:

- Indoor and outdoor environments were designed and organised to cater for all levels of abilities. All rooms have a variety of different types of age appropriate shelving which allows children to independently access resources stored in baskets and clear plastic containers. Equipment is also placed on mats on the floor and in some rooms and in the playground educators have placed mirrors on the wall at child height.
- The environment was planned with appropriate levels of challenge to encourage children to explore, experiment and take appropriate risks in their learning.
- Built and natural environments supported children's exploration and learning through play. Documented evidence and observations identified that children are provided with many opportunities to engage and explore natural and man materials that are open ended. This includes the use of cardboard boxes during collage activities, wooden building blocks and puzzles. Opportunities to engage in sensory experiences with sand, water and stones were observed.
- Children had access to sufficient resources, materials and equipment. All rooms and playgrounds had a variety of equipment accessible to children for use in their play. At times throughout each day, educators provided the children with opportunities to participate in activities in both the indoor and outdoor environments simultaneously. All of the rooms have access to shaded areas of the playground and children were observed participating in dramatic play, and painting at an easel.
- Resources, materials and equipment were organised in ways to enable multiple uses within the program. In all environments educators have placed developmentally appropriate equipment on shelves, in containers and on trolleys enabling children to have multiple options when selecting materials and equipment. In all rooms there was a wide range of art materials available for use and these are accessible by children at all times. There is a wide range of materials that are open-ended and children are encouraged and able to initiate play using materials in a number of different ways. Educators plan their indoor and outdoor environments, as evidenced by the placement of equipment in areas of the verandas that are secluded and away from high traffic areas. These included areas defined by timber decking and cane chairs



- where children sit to read books and engage in discussions with their peers.
- Children were provided with appropriate resources, technologies and media which were used to support their learning. Children were observed using iPads on which they accessed educational games and educators were observed supporting children to take photos.
 - Documentation provided by the service included examples of children engaging in activities simultaneously in both the indoor and outdoor environments and shows children are provided with opportunities to self-select equipment when required.
 - Educators have participated in and reflected upon professional development opportunities relating to the establishment of environments with nature as its focus has been provided.
83. The Final Report noted that the service was rated Meeting NQS for this standard because:
- While spaces and resources are beginning to reflect the educator's training and vision have been created, the design and organisation of the spaces does not encourage every child to consistently engage in quality experiences which respond to children's individual needs, self-initiated play and exploration.
84. The regulatory authority noted that the following evidence submitted by the provider in response to the draft report and at first tier review supported exceeding practice:
- We re-arrange and re-design our environments in response to children's play, and to provide variety and challenge, and allow children to take items and experiences from indoors to the outdoors to support their play experiences, and to use the materials in a variety of ways.
 - Sometimes environments are re-designed or re-arranged because of our reflections about what children seeking, and ensuring there is an easy flow from indoors to outdoors as well as inside and in-between spaces.
85. However, the regulatory authority considered other information submitted and in the Final Report supported a rating of 'Meeting NQS'.
86. The regulatory authority noted that while documentation was provided to show reflection on room environments occurred 17 and 23 February 2015, evidence has not been provided to demonstrate how these areas changed as a result of the reflection, in support of outcomes for children.

Applicant's view

87. In the cover letter for its application for second tier review the provider noted the regulatory authority mentioned only seven of 24 points of evidence it submitted, and feels that this means 17 points were not taken into account.



88. The provider states that the service does change areas as a result of reflection, in support of outcomes for children and that these changes are evident in the authorised officer's comments, strengths the service had identified in its QIP and feedback it provided to the draft report and at first tier review.
89. The provider notes that the Final Report reads 'educators plan the environments including the placement and selection of resources to support and facilitate children's exploration'. The provider notes further that educators reflect about individual children and groups and use reflections to develop and implement a program based on the needs and interests of children.
90. The provider also notes that its QIP shares the five unique learning environments it has designed 'using a studio approach to provide purposeful and intentional spaces that promote children's sustained learning'. The spaces are set up in each room and 'provide children with opportunities for building self-confidence and independence, curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, interest in exploring early literacy and numeracy skills, a sense of connection to other people, the environment and the world, physical, social and emotional wellbeing, communication skills'.
91. Team meetings are used for professional critical reflection on practice and learning, guiding educators to improve practice and foster best possible outcomes for all children in the service. The service has an 'inviting, challenging and natural outdoor environment that allows our children to experience a strong connection to the natural world. We provide equal opportunities for children to explore both indoor and outdoor environments'.
92. Educators engage in individual critical reflection or with classroom team groups, as well as whole staff groups, and each room has a reflective diary used for brainstorming and recording notes, such as reminders to conduct further research about particular topics, add parent voices and make reflective notes when changes are implemented. The provider notes that 'there has been a lot of deep thought and consideration given by educators on the design of the physical environment. Most things done in the classrooms are in response to how the children are using the materials, equipment and space, and they are constantly monitoring, adapting or tweaking spaces within their classrooms to ensure the greatest participation for children'.
93. Further evidence of educator's deliberative practice and experiences available for children include dramatic play provisions, items children can transport, places for children to hide away and loose parts available for children to use in creative ways.
94. Children have freedom to choose where they will play and are empowered to make decisions. There is purposeful thought and planning to create flexible



and open ended spaces with invitations to play. Educators want children to feel belonging and ownership and choose materials and resources that encourage relationship building, creativity and learning. Children's contributions to the program and learning are a service focus and equipment or resources are sourced to show children their voices and interests are valued. Educators ensure multiple resources are available and get more out if necessary.

95. Quarterly summaries are used to plan opportunities to support children for the coming quarter and have a section for parent feedback. Educators also have verbal conversations with families and add feedback in, while others leave it for parents to fill in, and 'information gathered from every child's summative assessment is used in the reflection process and vision for the room'. These visions include information about design of indoor and outdoor environments, as well as focus topics, such as sustainability, indigenous perspectives, independence, decision making skills, routines, transitions and relationships.
96. Team journals are used to reflect on the environments, how they are functioning, sharing readings and articles about a range of topics, reflections on family communications, sharing professional development and planning for the future.
97. The provider included photos to show the change of its environment as a result of reflection to support outcomes for children.

Panel's consideration

98. The Panel noted that the final report showed the environment was designed to cater to all levels of abilities, that shelving allowed for independent access and that equipment was planned with appropriate levels of challenge to let children participate.
99. The Panel noted that the final report stated that 'children were provided with appropriate resources'.
100. The Panel noted that educators reviewed and sought feedback on the service environment and reflect and make changes to the environment as a result. The Panel noted that children have the freedom to play and make decisions, and that the service is purposeful and thoughtful in its planning.
101. The Panel noted that children have the freedom to choose and make decisions and that there are a wide range of open ended materials with multiple uses which children can engage with.
102. The Panel discussed that the final report did not provide evidence that children were engaging in the environment. The Panel noted that the Exceeding NQS descriptor asks for children to be engaged. However, the Panel agreed that children cannot be forced to engage and the service had actively encouraged



engagement, self-initiated play and exploration through the design and organisation of the environment.

103. The Panel noted that there were some examples of practice that demonstrated practice at the Exceeding NQS level, including examples which the regulatory authority also identified as Exceeding NQS.
104. The Panel noted that there was evidence to support a rating of Exceeding NQS because on balance, the evidence provided was closer to Exceeding NQS than Meeting NQS.
105. The Panel agreed to amend the rating level for 3.2 to Exceeding NQS.

Standard 5.2

106. Standard 5.2:
Each child is supported to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships with other children and adults.
107. The Panel noted that to achieve a rating of Exceeding NQS for this standard, it may expect to see evidence of the following:
 - Collaborative learning opportunities are effectively facilitated and every child is consistently supported to work with, learn from and help others.*
 - Each child is consistently encouraged and supported to manage their own behaviour, respond appropriately to the behaviour of others and communicate effectively to resolve conflicts.
 - The dignity and rights of every child are consistently supported and promoted at all times.

* Examples of an effective grouping could be one that does not exceed 3 times the ratio pertaining to the relevant age group or a grouping that achieves the outcomes sought through limiting the group size.

Regulatory authority's view

108. The Final Report provides a number of examples of the service's practice against standard 5.2 including:
 - Educators encouraged children to listen to other children's ideas and solve problems together. An educator ensured that all children are heard as they are speaking in quieter voices during group time. The educator lowers her voice, almost whispering and the children stop talking to listen to other children.
 - A range of strategies were utilised to ensure that the dignity of each child was maintained regardless of culture, ability or background. Children and educators have developed a list of room expectations, which have photographic examples to assist children to understand the



rules. These expectations include walking inside, using gentle hands, use quiet voices, take turns and have fun.

- Regular opportunities were provided for all children to learn through social play and collaborative experiences with the support of educators to maintain positive relationships. An educator was observed sitting with a group of children talking about the play dough the children are using. An educator encouraged all the children to explain what they have created with the dough and a child told a story about a dog and garden that she has created. The child then explained to a peer how she rolled the dough into balls and placed them together to create the dog. Some of the children in the group then tried to make their own round balls of dough.
- Educators modelled strategies and facilitated opportunities for children to maintain positive relationships with each other and with adults. As evidenced when a child started to throw equipment through the room and an educator stated that she was 'concerned with what was happening with the Lego men' and asked the child 'what do we normally do with the Lego men'. The child stopped throwing the blocks and started to build with the blocks. The educator thanks the child for considering his friends and praises the construction that the child has made.
- Educators supported children to manage their own behaviour, communicate effectively to resolve conflict and consider alternative behaviours. All educators modelled appropriate interactions for children and at times provide children with alternatives to their behaviour. Some educators asked children to consider the consequences of their behaviour which often initiated further discussions about appropriate behaviours. Such as when a number of children were sharing a play space, an educator posed a number of questions about the possible outcomes if they did not consider their peers need for space when building with the large wooden blocks.
- Documentation provided included evidence about how the indoor/outdoor program provides opportunities for all children to interact, support and co-operate with peers and educators from different age groupings.
- Evidence of discussions with some older children about respect was provided.
- At times educators reminded children to use their words to tell their peers that they do not like other children's actions. Evidence provided and observations made at the time of the visits identified that educators support each child to feel secure, confident and included.

109. The Final Report noted that one reason the service was rated 'Meeting NQS for this standard because:

- Educators were observed to react to the behaviours of children and were not role modelling and supporting children to manage their own behaviours and resolve conflict through effective communication.



110. The evidence gathered by the authorised officer at the visit provides a number of observations of educators interacting with children.
111. The regulatory authority identified that the evidence in the Final Report which supports exceeding practice is:
- All educators modelled appropriate interactions for children and at times provide children with alternatives to their behaviour. Some educators asked children to consider the consequences of their behaviour which often initiated further discussions about appropriate behaviours. Such as when a number of children were sharing a play space, an educator posed a number of questions about the possible outcomes if they did not consider their peers need for space when building with the large wooden blocks.
 - An educator was observed sitting with a group of children talking about the play dough the children are using. An educator encouraged all the children to explain what they have created with the dough and a child told a story about a dog and garden that she has created. The child then explained to a peer how she rolled the dough into balls and placed them together to create the dog. Some of the children in the group then tried to make their own round balls of dough.
 - Evidence (provider feedback) of discussions with some older children about respect was provided. It is acknowledged that at time educators reminded children to use their words to tell their peers that they do not like other children's actions.
112. However, the regulatory authority noted that other evidence included in the Final Report and submitted by the provider in response to the draft report and at first tier review demonstrates meeting practice.
113. The regulatory authority noted that evidence in the authorised officer's notes collectively demonstrates that educators consistently encouraged and supported children to manage their own behaviour and respond appropriately to resolve conflict including:
- Kindy group - educator intervenes as two children want the same piece of equipment. Together with the children they discuss how they could share the equipment. Together the children agree to use the equipment together.
 - Kindy - disagreement about where a child wants to build. Educator explains that the other children need the space to build their road. Educator explains that if the child sits in a corner of the mat then there will not be a dispute over the equipment. Child becomes aggressive, pulling at the educator's hair and tries to bite the educator. The educator moves the child to a corner of the mat, calms the child and then praises the child when he calms down.



- Kindy running inside, Educator says that she believes someone may get hurt. Educator – I think sadly someone is already hurt. Educator calls the three children together, discusses that the child is hurt how they feel. Collaboratively the children and educator decide that they need to walk inside and be careful with their friends.
- Children playing in Kindy room. Educator says that she can hear words that might hurt each other feelings. How do you feel when someone calls you by a name? We need to be aware of our friends' feelings.

114. The regulatory authority noted that 'A copy of the service's positive behaviour guidance policy was included in the documentation submitted by the provider and practice observed at the time of the visit follows the service's policy. Educators discussed strategies and talked with children about impact on others and positively guided and supported children in the management and resolution of conflict. However, the regulatory authority stated that while educators were able to respond appropriately to children in conflict situations, there was insufficient evidence to demonstrate educators proactively facilitated collaborative learning opportunities where every child was supported to work with, learn from and help each other'.

115. The regulatory authority states that while the evidence before it reflects both meeting and exceeding practice, overall, the evidence of practice supports a rating of 'Meeting NQS' for standard 5.2.

Applicant's view

116. In the cover letter for its application for second tier review the provider noted the regulatory authority mentioned only two of 11 points of evidence it submitted, and feels that this means nine points were not taken into account.

117. The provider claims educators responded appropriately to children in conflict situations, and that there was evidence to demonstrate educators proactively facilitated collaborative learning opportunities where every child was supported to work with, learn from and help each other. The provider identifies that there are many examples of this in the authorised officer's comments and the feedback the provider has given. The provider states that 'every day, our centre is full of collaborative learning opportunities, it's within our philosophy and the reason we are structured the way we are as a family grouped centre with learning and working together as one of our core beliefs'.

118. The provider states 'we believe there is significant evidence provided above to support how we exceed the National Quality Standard in standard 5.2 in relation to how we proactively facilitate collaborative learning opportunities where every child was supported to work with, learn from and help each other. There is abundant further evidence available in our response to draft and first tier review about how we exceed the rest of the elements in standard 5.2'.



119. The provider notes that within the Final Report there were examples of a range of collaboration that educators and children were involved in and that educators sought feedback and input from children.
120. The authorised officer observed children talking together and educators modelling strategies and facilitating opportunities for children to maintain positive relationships with each other and with adults during playdough play.
121. Children spend the majority of the day in a family group setting with opportunities for children to work with, help and learn from each other in a variety of settings, and that small group experiences allow children to play collaboratively while engaging in conversations, with educators providing further prompts to facilitate play.
122. The provider states 'at our centre, we have a strong view of children being capable and competent. When children feel that they are capable, and they know that they are supported in doing things for themselves, that in turn affects their positive self-esteem. We use an apprentice-ship style model at the centre where children support each other. If we know there is a child who is having particular trouble with something, rather than doing it with the child and helping the child ourselves, we encourage children to ask for someone else to show them or help them. We will often say '(so and so) is really good at that, maybe if you ask (so and so) to show you how they did that', that child feels really empowered and thinks 'I can actually teach my friend this'. In viewing children as capable and competent, we allow our toddlers to access scissors if they are visiting the older classrooms, but the educators know they are going to need a bit more support, so educators make themselves more available for them. Children aren't told 'No you can't have that'.
123. Social play is high on the service's agenda and it has observed the scaffolding that older children provide younger children, and the peer learning children of the same age receive. Older children scaffold physical, social and intelligence skills, while receiving the benefit of learning how to nurture and take care of others. Educators also observe that children demonstrate their knowledge when they teach younger children skills.
124. Educators support children to engage in group activities or collaborative projects. For example, during regular cooking experiences children help one another prepare recipes.
125. Group learning and planning is documented in a floor book, and 'in planning with floor books, children's voices are recorded verbatim. There is a combination of functional talk (factual), anecdotal talk (general conversations) and creative talk (storying). In consulting with children, it creates a closer match between the child fascination and the experiences and outcomes that children encounter. It builds self-esteem and positive attitude when children are involved in the decision-making, and their voices are empowered'.



126. Children access their own and each other's portfolios, share them together with educators and sometimes revisit past learning experiences.
127. Educators sit with less social children and identify what other children are doing, so quieter children feel part of things, and help to initiate relationships. Educators are aware of children who require additional attention and work hard to ensure children are included in the program by building their skills and promoting engagement in successful play situations. The provider also notes that not all children want to socialise, but rather want to do things on their own or have an adult with them.
128. The provider notes that educators support children having difficulty managing emotions or behaviours and have a conversation about how children are feeling, helping children to respond to others and encourage children to have a voice or to listen to what others are saying.
129. As previously mentioned, the service has a flexible routine and children can choose activities, when to rest, when to eat, where to play and access the resources they need. Children create environments in collaboration with educators. Educators explain, engage in shared thinking and problem solving and follow through on spontaneous teaching moments to extend children's learning, thinking and understanding.
130. Educators purposefully plan spaces for children to work, play and talk together in small or large groups, or on their own. Educators provide opportunities for group play and projects.
131. Educators use many methods to collect, document, organise and interpret information including iPads, computers, feedback from children, discussion with families and working collaboratively on projects. Educators listen to children and actively seek their input, and incorporate these into the development of the program.

Panel's consideration

132. The Panel noted that it was looking for consistency of children being supported to work with and learn from one another in evidence provided at this standard. The Panel noted that there were a range of examples provided in the final report and in materials submitted by the provider that demonstrated the service supported children consistently.
133. The Panel discussed the regulatory authority's comment in the final report that educators were observed to react to children's behaviours and were not role modelling and supporting children to manage their own behaviours. The Panel agreed that there is no mention of role modelling being a requirement for an Exceeding rating, but that there was evidence in the final report that educators



were observed modelling strategies and facilitating opportunities for children to maintain positive relationships with each other and adults.

134. The Panel also noted examples in paragraphs 118 and 120 of educators interacting with children and agreed that educators supported children's dignity and rights.
135. The Panel noted that children are encouraged to listen to one another's ideas.
136. The Panel noted that the service uses a model where children are encouraged to support one another, identified at paragraph 129. This model was not adult directed and empowered children and the Panel agreed this was a good strategy. The Panel noted evidence of children learning collaboratively.
137. The Panel was of the view that examples in the final report showed educators responding appropriately and supporting children to manage their own behaviour.
138. The Panel noted that the service has a policy on positive guiding of children's behaviour which educators follow. The Panel noted that positively guiding and supporting children is the crux of what is expected for Exceeding NQS.
139. The Panel hypothesised about whether the authorised officer had observed that not all children were being supported, but noted that there was nothing documented to show that every child was not being supported.
140. The Panel agreed to amend standard 5.2 to Exceeding NQS.

Standard 6.1

141. Standard 6.1:
Respectful supportive relationships with families are developed and maintained.
142. The Panel noted that to achieve a rating of Exceeding NQS for this standard, it may expect to see evidence of the following:
 - There is an effective enrolment and orientation process based on active communication, consultation and collaboration with families that supports all families.
 - Families are offered a range of opportunities to be actively involved and are encouraged to significantly contribute to service decisions.
 - Comprehensive and current information about the service is provided to families in an accessible format.

Regulatory authority's view



143. The Final Report provides a number of examples of the service's practice against standard 6.1 including:

- Families had opportunities to be involved in the service, make suggestions and contribute to service decisions. Families are encouraged to record special events in their lives in their child's individual portfolio and information about each child's day is emailed daily to all parents and their feedback about the activities is sought. There was evidence of this in the documented program, when information about significant events at a child's home was used as the foundation for future planning. The service has an open door policy and parents are encouraged to visit the service whenever they would like to do so. At the time of the visits, a number of parents were observed interacting with their own child and their peers. The service recently held information evenings providing parents with an opportunity to meet with educators and discuss and ask questions in relation to the curriculum and service processes. The service celebrates special days and extended family members are encouraged to attend the service. Documented evidence of grandparents' and mothers' day celebrations were sighted.
- Information was gathered from families to support the continuity of care between home and the service. Families are asked to complete an 'About Me' form during the orientation process and educators regularly discuss children's development and changes in interests with families during the arrival and departure times.
- The service had a culture of open and friendly communication between families and educators. Throughout the year, families are invited to attend Grandparents Day, Parent Information Nights and end of year Christmas celebrations.
- Families were supported throughout the enrolment and orientation process. The service has a documented orientation process for families, which educators advised is flexible and is dependent on the needs of individual families. After making an initial enquiry with the service families are provided with an information package. This information is also available on the service website. Families are encouraged to visit the service a number of times prior to commencement and participate in the program offered in the age group to which the child is assigned. During the visits information may be collected to ensure the program will meet the needs of the child and the family. At the time of the visits a parent and her child who is yet to commence at the service were visiting. The family has been visiting for the past couple of months, in preparation for the child commencing at the service and the parent returning to work. Educators and the parent were heard discussing strategies for the child's first day and re-assuring the parent that educator will call if the child becomes too distressed. As part of the enrolment package parents are provided with a feedback form and management also verbally discuss the process with families.



- Families had access to current information relating to the service and service operations. Current information about the service is provided to families in a number of different ways. Information about the management structure of the service is displayed at the service and on the service website. The enrolment pack includes current information about the service. Educators have identified that the majority of their parents prefer the use of electronic media rather than hard copy documents. Therefore, information is available to families through the service website, via emails from educators in each room as well as management. Communication books are also located in each room. Service policies and procedures are located in a folder in the front foyer and are accessible to all parents. Electronic media is also used to notify parents of changes to policies and when participating in the review process.
- Additional documentation provided evidence that current information about the service is available for families in hard copy through the Parent Handbook and in electronic versions which are included on the service website. Evidence that families provide additional individualised information about their child through the 'About Me' form and that the enrolment process is flexible to meet the needs of individual families.

144. The regulatory authority noted the following evidence submitted by the provider in response to the draft report and in support of the first tier review that supports exceeding practice:

- We actively seek feedback from our families, but also from families who choose not to enrol, and families who are leaving us. We also have a feedback box for families who may wish to remain anonymous.
- Our comprehensive Parent Handbook is provided to families during the enrolment process, and can be emailed in PDF format to families who request an electronic copy. It contains current information about our centre including our philosophy and programs offered at our service. Our website and Facebook page are maintained, and are proactively used as a tool to communicate news and events with families. All prescribed information is displayed in the entrance foyer to the centre, including staffing details and service philosophy.
- Although we don't have a 'parent committee', family feedback, contributions and expertise are sought in many different ways. There is information on the enrolment form, information on the all about me form, policy reviews, philosophy reviews, parent evenings, parent events, daily emails, centre newsletters, centre-wide emails, excursions, fixing items, photographer, outdoor design, ESL families, feedback box, communication books to name some.
- When seeking input from parents, we have used survey monkey, emails, displays with little envelopes for feedback, notes in sign in sheets, but by far the most successful way we gain input from families is by talking to them. Families have had input into the running of our



program, the design of our playground, the excursion to the library to name a few.

- Families have been (and will continue to be) invited to contribute to the development of our philosophy, policies and procedures via email, newsletters and physical displays at the centre. Families are invited to become involved in community gardening days, and sometimes will become involved in some minor repairs or maintenance.

145. The regulatory authority also noted that the following information included in the Final Report demonstrates practice that is 'Exceeding NQS':

- Families are encouraged to visit the service a number of times prior to commencement and participate in the program offered in the age group to which the child is assigned. During the visits information may be collected to ensure the program will meet the needs of the child and the family. At the time of the visits a parent and her child who is yet to commence at the service were visiting. The family has been visiting for the past couple of months, in preparation for the child commencing at the service and the parent returning to work. Educators and the parent were heard discussing strategies for the child's first day and re-assuring the parent that an educator will call if the child becomes too distressed. As part of the enrolment package parents are provided with a feedback form and management also verbally discuss the process with families.
- Current information about the service is provided to families in a number of different ways. Information about the management structure of the service is displayed in the foyer and on the service website. The enrolment pack includes current information about the service including philosophy and a description of the programs offered at the service. Educators have identified that the majority of their parents prefer the use of electronic media rather than hard copy documents. Therefore, information is available to families through the service website, via emails from educators in each room as well as management. Communication books are also located in each room. Service policies and procedures are located in a folder in the front foyer and are accessible to all parents. Electronic media is also used to notify parents of changes to policies and when participating in the review process.

146. The regulatory authority further considered observations recorded in the authorised officer's notes including:

- Parent night - night to share information about the service and were also reviewing our philosophy. Discussed at this meeting what was important to them. Suggestion box in the foyer. Emails to families asking what they would like to see happen. Emails about dirt outside, a kindy information night, and the outdoor environment. Have tried survey monkey to get information. Newsletter - policy review, family wanted to know about volunteers and visitors to the service, wanted to



know blue cards screening. Notification for families e.g. at the entrance of the service is a sign notifying of a student and the AO visiting.

- Parent handbook, enrolment pack. Each room send out daily emails. Information about events. Facebook page, emails and verbal communications.

147. The regulatory authority noted that the provider's evidence was provided to demonstrate that an effective enrolment and orientation process is in place that supports families, and current information about the service is provided to families in an accessible format. However, the regulatory authority noted insufficient evidence was provided in support of statements that indicated families are offered a range of opportunities to be actively involved in the service and significantly contribute to service decisions.
148. The regulatory authority states in its first tier review considerations that while the evidence considered as part of the first tier review reflects aspects of both meeting and exceeding practice, overall, the evidence of practice for Standard 6.1 reflects 'Meeting NQS'.
149. ACECQA advises the panel that the decision outcome letter lists standard 6.1 under both 'Meeting NQS' and 'Exceeding NQS' but the deliberation document has standard 6.1 listed as 'Meeting NQS'.

Applicant's view

150. In the cover letter for its application for second tier review the provider noted the regulatory authority mentioned only six of 33 points of evidence it submitted, and feels that this means 27 points were not taken into account.
151. The provider states that evidence was available to show families are offered a range of opportunities to be actively involved in the service and significantly contribute to service decisions. The provider identifies that there are many examples of this in the authorised officer's comments and the feedback the provider has given. The provider further states that, 'our relationships with families and input from families are definite strengths of ours, and our families are constantly involved, consulted and listened to'.
152. The provider states 'we believe there is significant evidence provided above to support how we exceed the National Quality Standard in standard 6.1 in relation to how we offer families a range of opportunities to be actively involved in the service, and significantly contribute to service decisions. There is abundant further evidence available in our response to draft and first tier review about how we exceed the rest of the elements in standard 6.1'.
153. The provider states the service does not just enrol a child, it enrolls a family and the director and educators show understanding and interest in each child and their family. Educators encourage children to share things with friends that



are special and meaningful to them, sometimes in an individual capacity and sometimes in small or large group situations.

154. The provider notes that the service encourages feedback, through conversations and via email. The service tries to provide a variety of opportunities for families to share what they would like to see in the service. When the service was developing its philosophy, it had a foyer display for family input.
155. Parent information nights are seen as an opportunity for families to give input and it actively seeks feedback from families about what is important for them. For example, during the parent information night the service shared information about its outdoor classroom and a sustainability project. Daily emails are sent to families with a summary of their child's day. The service sometimes receives feedback from these and ensures that it is followed up.
156. Parents' feedback, questions and input are discussed with educators and either answered or passed on to the director. Communication books in each classroom provide families the opportunity for written communication.
157. The service acts on feedback from families, for example a mother sent feedback that mornings were busy and educators stretched. While the service was meeting ratios, in response to the feedback, the team decided to have an educator start earlier to help relieve the pressure and spend time with families who arrive earlier.
158. As mentioned under standard 2.3, feedback about the wooden blocks from a family was acted on and the issue resolved with a consultative process and using the service's benefit-risk process. The family was happy with the response and decisions made.
159. The provider noted that the service's 'policy and procedure folder is located in the foyer alongside our QIP, Staying Healthy in Childcare, EYLF, NQS, Queensland Kindergarten Learning Guide, Policy Reviews and feedback box. Some policies that are appropriate are emailed to families for their input and feedback, and all current policy reviews are available in the foyer for parent perusal and/or feedback'. The director also informs educators and families of policies that are being reviewed and asks for input.

Panel's consideration

160. The Panel noted that, for an Exceeding NSQ rating, it was looking for how the service measured the effectiveness of its enrolment and orientation process and noted that the service met this quality level by actively encouraging feedback from families on its enrolment and orientation process.



161. The Panel agreed with paragraph 154 that evidence provided 'demonstrated that an effective enrolment process is in place that supports families, and current information about the service is provided to families in an accessible format' which supported an Exceeding NQS rating.
162. The Panel disagreed with the regulatory authority's view at paragraph 154 about there being insufficient evidence of families being offered a range of opportunities to be actively involved in the service and significantly contribute to service decisions. The Panel found this view conflicted with evidence which shows information is provided in a range of ways and evidence that families have sufficient opportunities to be actively involved in and significantly contribute to and influence service decisions.
163. The Panel noted families were offered service information in a range of formats including electronic, hardcopy and through the website.
164. The Panel noted that Exceeding NQS examples highlighted in the final report showed that at the time of the visit a family was visiting the service in preparation for commencement and that parents and educators were discussing strategies for the child's first day.
165. The Panel noted that evidence in paragraph 152 demonstrated the service provides information to families in ways that meet the requirements for Exceeding NQS.
166. The Panel noted that the outcome letter at first tier review showed standard 6.1 as both Meeting NQS and Exceeding NQS.
167. The Panel agreed to amend standard 6.1 to Exceeding NQS.

Standard 6.2

168. Standard 6.2:
Families are supported in their parenting role and their values and beliefs about child rearing are respected.
169. The Panel noted that to achieve a rating of Exceeding NQS for this standard, it may expect to see evidence of the following:
 - The expertise of families is actively sought and valued and they have the opportunity to share in decision-making about their child's learning and wellbeing and contribute to the service program. Families are offered a range of opportunities to be actively involved and are encouraged to significantly contribute to service decisions.
 - Current information about community services and resources is provided in a variety of accessible forms to all families to support parenting and family wellbeing.



Regulatory authority's view

170. The Final Report provides a number of examples of the service's practice against standard 6.2 including:

- Educators recognised the diversity of families' child rearing practices.
- Opportunities were available for families to communicate their expectations, values and beliefs. During arrival and collection times educators frequently shared verbal information with parents in relation to children's needs and answered queries for example educators assisted a parent to place their child's bag in an appropriate locker and informed parents about which activities their child was involved in during the previous day. Parents are informed via telephone or through face to face contact of any serious incident involving their child.
- Strategies were used to facilitate shared decision making with families regarding their child's education and care. Educators, from each room, email information each day to all parents and parents are encouraged to provide feedback or suggestions for future planning. This includes acknowledgement of children's achievements.
- Families were supported to access information about local community services and resources. There were a number of community notices on a large display board outside the front door of the service.
- The service supported families in their parenting role. There are current information pamphlets displayed in the hall way and available for parents. Topics include pregnancy, sleeping habits and routines, immunisation, pools, asthma and child restraints. Links are provided on the service website to further information on a vast range of child related topics and agencies which may offer assist to families.
- Documentation that shows the service has established links with the Community Centre located adjacent to the service and that families are provided with a broad range of brochures about a host of parenting topics was provided.

171. The regulatory authority noted that some information submitted by the provider was not relevant to this standard:

- 'You have provided evidence of the cultural links which have been developed and maintained with the EATSIPEC team and how this has influenced the development of the environments and program at the service. This information has been included in the report in Standard 6.3'.
- Highlighted community events in the local region that the service has been involved in and are not related to how the service recognises the expertise of families and how the families are supported in their parenting roles.

172. The regulatory authority noted that some evidence submitted by the provider in response to the draft report and in support of the first tier review is not



considered to be directly relevant to standard 6.2, and other evidence available reflected practice at the 'Meeting NQS' level.

Applicant's view

173. In the cover letter for its application for second tier review the provider noted the regulatory authority mentioned only three of 40 points of evidence it submitted, and feels that this means 37 points were not taken into account.
174. In its statement for standard 6.2, the provider notes that at first tier review the regulatory authority identified six items of exceeding practice under standard 6.1. The provider believes that the evidence it has provided in its response to the draft report and at first tier review was not fully considered by the regulatory authority. The provider states that 'we have included the evidence of exceeding practice described by the DET in relation to standard 6.1 as this evidence relates to the ways that we actively seek out family feedback and expertise and this is demonstrated practice of how we give families an opportunity to share in decision-making about their child's learning and wellbeing. It also begins the relationship with families showing that we deeply value what they have to say and that their feedback can not only directly contribute to our centre program but it can also contribute greatly to our journey of continuous improvement'.
175. The provider contends that there is significant evidence provided to support how the service exceeds standard 6.2 in all elements. The provider further notes that while the authorised officer said that it did not show how the service recognises the expertise of families or how families are supported in their parenting roles, it believes it has provided an abundance of information that describes how it does this.
176. The provider noted that its families are 'offered a range of opportunities to be actively involved in our service and significantly contribute to service decisions from emails, to educator reflective notes from conversations, family contributions to share additional information about religious or cultural practices and celebrations, opportunities where we have created displays for family contributions and actively sought out their feedback about what is most important to them about their child's experience in our centre'.
177. Families contributed to the development of the service's philosophy, which guides everything the service does.
178. The provider notes that it encourages families to share their knowledge of their child's strengths, interests and abilities and provide them with opportunities to significantly contribute to their child's individual plan and centre-wide plans. Families' contributions help educators to provide programs which support children and give families a regular opportunity to provide feedback about the service's program. Children's portfolios are available to families at all times and families can share information and special events from children's lives.



179. Families contribute expertise to the program including sharing cooking experiences and facilitating French songs and games to share language and culture. Families contribute to events by printing flyers, setting up and assisting with delivery. The service's ANZAC day commemorative garden was developed after consultation with families who serve in the defence forces and educators actively sought the families' opinions, feedback, involvement and beliefs about how the service could hold its own commemorative ceremony.
180. The service has made links with community agencies that provide services in its local community and has had support workers visit the service to provide information and support for families and educators. Westside Community Care is a community organisation next door and educators have assisted families in need of support by providing the contact details and introductions to the services and people that can support them.
181. The service's QIP states that 'open communication with all families are practiced to create strong links with families. Families are invited to be involved in their child's learning and be involved in decision making around the centre. Each classroom/learning environment in our centre displays a visible program through means of a floor book to communicate with our families what learning we are promoting within the program. By having our program visible to families, we are able to better engage families in contributing to shared information about the learning and development of their child. We also make the program visible through our daily emails that are sent home to each family on a daily basis. Special events are planned to involve families in our centre programs and build relationships. We have created a strong community atmosphere for our families by inviting them to take part in the centre in a variety of ways from donating their time, resources and materials, participating in community gardening days and attending special morning teas and events in the centre'.
182. The provider notes that its process of encouraging feedback is documented in its QIP and 'families were invited to share their thoughts, ideas and feedback for what they would like to see in our centre environments during a community gardening day'. Further, 'families also gave feedback informing us that they wanted to see more individual learning recorded and documented in their child's portfolio. This feedback has influenced our QIP for what we would like to achieve in our service and what we would do to achieve this. It demonstrates that our families have the opportunity to share in decision-making not only about their child's learning and contribution to the program but also opportunity to share in centre-wide decisions, contributing to the whole centre program'.
183. The service has an open door policy. During orientation, families are invited to visit at different times in the day to experience different routines to support the child's ability to settle into the service. Families are also encouraged to begin



- with shorter days during the first week if necessary. Educators build knowledge of children and form relationships with families and children. Educators talk with families about strategies they use at home and try to develop similar strategies, while ensuring that they are respecting the rights of children. Educators are happy to share the service's strategies with families who ask. Educators collect relevant information during enrolment about children's routines.
184. Families are encouraged to talk with the director about their experiences with their child's learning and routines to ensure continuity of care between the home and the service. During orientation, communication channels are shared with families, including email, communication book, director, educators and telephoning. During enrolment, families provide the service with input about festivals, celebrations or traditions their family has. The service talks to families about how celebrations can be incorporated into the service's program. Families are also asked to provide information about what they want most for their child and what is important to them, their child's needs or other special considerations.
 185. Information gathered during enrolment and orientation is shared with educators and used to plan activities that may interest the child and assist them to settle into the service.
 186. The provider notes that 'parents often call throughout the day to check in on children, and we know will often call parents to ask for help with a particular instance. We might say 'We've noticed this today, we've tried a few different strategies and it's not working, what could we do here'. Families can share the best practice that they do to support children to settle etc.'
 187. Service decisions and the operation of the centre are reviewed as a part of an ongoing and collaborative process between educators, the Director, the Licensee and parents.
 188. The service seeks feedback from families who choose not to enrol their child in the service and those families who are leaving.
 189. The service uses many ways to collect, document, organise and interpret information including iPads, computers, feedback from children, discussion with families, and working collaboratively on projects. The provider notes that it has used survey monkey, emails, displays with envelopes and notes in the sign in sheet for feedback, but the most successful way of gaining feedback from families is by talking to them. There is a feedback box for families who wish to remain anonymous.
 190. During an action research project, families shared their home practices, and the service shared practices with children such as recycling paper, food scraps, conserving electricity and water. The service had a large display in the



- foyer titled 'What does sustainability mean?' and a scrapbook available for parents to contribute what they do at home for sustainability so that it could be shared at the service.
191. Families are invited to become involved in community gardening days, and sometimes will become involved in some minor repairs or maintenance.
 192. As families prefer to receive electronic communication, the service sends emails rather than paper communication. Families also value face-to-face communication and educators provide information through discussion with families at arrival and departure times.
 193. Families contribute feedback in children's learning and development summaries each quarter, where some educators talk to families and type feedback in, while others let families fill the feedback in, and the service finds that this feedback drives practice at the service. The service has a parent information night where it actively seeks feedback from families. Families requested to hold a State of Origin dress up support day as football was important in their home.
 194. The service has established many connections with local people and organisations in the community that provide support for families, and 'often have material displayed in our foyer, or placed in our family pockets about different services available to families including information about the local medical centre, 13 sick, community health services with free speech screening and health checks, Kambu services'.
 195. Information about local and community services or events is available for families and displayed in the classrooms and foyer, as well as shared through email newsletters and the service's Facebook page. The service shares information about children's resilience in its email newsletters.
 196. The service has parenting brochures available for families in relation to child safety, immunisation, medical and Counselling support, Cancer Council, Relaxation Techniques, Health, Child Protection nutrition healthy food choices, physical activity, local businesses and government information (Kindy information and CCB). There are links on the service's website to ACEC standard, Centrelink, DETE, AEDC, My Child Website, Playgroup QLD, Raising Children Network, Nature Play QLD, Kid safe QLD, Let the Children Play and Early Childhood Australia.
 197. Information in the service is periodically rotated to ensure that it is not overwhelming. Directors and educators discuss what should be available, as well as seasonal activities or services, annual days of celebration, and ensure the information is relevant to families.



198. The service has a parent library with community resources supporting children's wellbeing.
199. The provider states that its new website has comprehensive information about the service and extra support services available for families. The service's Facebook page is regularly updated with information about service events, and the foyer has current notices and families are also alerted to important events with notes displayed in the sign in and out holder.
200. Families are provided with policies and procedures and the parent handbook and policy handbook on enrolment. It contains information about the service's philosophy and programs.
201. The service researches and finds information or support services for families seeking specific advice.
202. The provider shares local events with families, parenting workshops and programs in the newsletter and on the Facebook page, and the service hosts parent information evenings. For example, the service connected with Nutrition Australia QLD and held an evening workshop for families about food and behaviours, and shared flyers from the session with families.
203. A community centre is nearby the service and the service has referred a family there for counselling services, and another family was referred to access their food boxes. The service shares flyers with families to let them know what is offered at the Community Centre.
204. The service refers families to a speech pathologist who offers screening for young children, and has the option of further follow up and support.
205. The service has enrolments from families with non-English speaking backgrounds who are bi-lingual or don't speak English. The service aims to support families in any way it can. One educator speaks another language with two children at the service who speak that language. One parent speaks French and has spent time at the service speaking French with children. The service had enrolments from two children from non-English speaking backgrounds and families shared key words with educators who could use these to help support children. The service also notes that it respects families' privacy if they don't want to share and educators may research and source words or greetings to help support children.
206. The provider notes that some families accessed the service via the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP), who established contact with the service and assisting families with enrolment.

Panel's consideration



207. The Panel noted that parents are kept informed about activities their child is involved in. The Panel discussed whether this meant parents were being told rather than educators seeking information. The Panel concluded that while parents are being told about what happens, educators are also seeking feedback.
208. The Panel identified examples of how families are offered opportunities to be actively involved in the service and significantly contribute to service decisions including contributing to the service's quality improvement plan and the development of its philosophy.
209. The Panel noted that families have a range of opportunities to give feedback and that the service actively seeks feedback. The Panel noted photographic evidence of the noticeboard where families can write feedback. The Panel noted that families contribute to service wide decisions and individual plans.
210. The Panel noted that families are provided with information and resources in a range of formats to support parenting and family wellbeing. The Panel noted that resources are also culturally diverse.
211. The Panel noted that examples in the final report show a range of opportunities for families to become involved. The Panel noted families were involved in an action research project and this shows a high level of engagement.
212. The Panel agreed to amend standard 6.2 to Exceeding NQS.

Decision

The Panel by consensus decided to confirm the rating level for standards 2.3 and 3.1 are 'Meeting NQS', and to amend the rating level for standards 3.2, 5.2, 6.1 and 6.2 to 'Exceeding NQS'. As a result, the Panel by consensus confirmed the rating level for Quality Area 2 is 'Meeting NQS'. The Panel amended the rating levels for Quality Areas 3, 5 and 6 to 'Exceeding NQS', and the service's overall rating to 'Exceeding NQS'.