



Date of Decision: 12 November 2018

File number: STR0031

PANEL MEMBERS:



APPLICANT:



REGULATORY AUTHORITY: Department of Local Government and Communities,
Education and Care Regulatory Unit (WA)

Decision

The Ratings Review Panel (the Panel) by consensus decided to confirm the rating levels for Quality Areas 2, 3, 5 and 7 as Meeting 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:
 - Quality Area 2, Standard 2.1 – Exceeding Theme 2



- Quality Area 3, Standard 3.1 – Exceeding Theme 2
- Quality Area 3, Standard 3.1 – Exceeding Theme 3
- Quality Area 3, Standard 3.2 – Exceeding Theme 3
- Quality Area 5, Standard 5.2 – Exceeding Theme 2
- Quality Area 7, Standard 7.1 – Exceeding Theme 2
- Quality Area 7, Standard 7.1 – Exceeding Theme 3
- Quality Area 7, Standard 7.2 – Exceeding Theme 3

3. After the initial assessment, the service was rated as:

- Quality Area 1: Exceeding
 - Exceeding in standards 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3.
- Quality Area 2: Meeting
 - Exceeding in themes 1, 2 and 3 in standard 2.2
 - Not exceeding in themes 1, 2 and 3 in standard 2.1
- Quality Area 3: Meeting
 - Exceeding in theme 1 in standard 3.1, and in themes 1 and 2 in standard 3.2
 - Not exceeding in theme 2 and 3 in standard 3.1 and theme 3 in standard 3.2
- Quality Area 4: Exceeding
 - Exceeding in standards 4.1 and 4.2
- Quality Area 5: Meeting
 - Exceeding in standard 5.1 and themes 1 and 3 in standard 5.2
 - Not exceeding in theme 2 in standard 5.2
- Quality Area 6: Exceeding
 - Exceeding in standards 6.1 and 6.2
- Quality Area 7: Meeting
 - Not exceeding in standards 7.1 and 7.2.

4. The provider applied for first tier review on the basis that they believe they should have received a rating of exceeding in standards 2.1, 3.1, 3.2, 5.2, 7.1 and 7.2.

Regulatory authority's view

5. At first tier review, the regulatory authority:

- Standard 2.1: Meeting
 - Amended the rating to exceeding in themes 1 and 3;
 - Confirmed the rating of not exceeding in theme 2;



- Standard 3.1: Meeting
 - Confirmed the rating of exceeding in theme 1;
 - Confirmed the rating of not exceeding in themes 2 and 3;
- Standard 3.2: Meeting
 - Confirmed the rating of exceeding in themes 1 and 2;
 - Confirmed the rating of not exceeding in theme 3;
- Standard 5.2: Meeting
 - Confirmed the rating of exceeding in themes 1 and 3;
 - Confirmed the rating of not exceeding in theme 2;
- Standard 7.1: Meeting
 - Amended the rating to exceeding in theme 1;
 - Confirmed the rating of not exceeding in themes 2 and 3;
- Standard 7.2: Meeting
 - Amended the rating to exceeding in themes 1 and 2;
 - Confirmed the rating of not exceeding in theme 3.

Applicant's view

6. The provider's overarching point at second tier review is that the complexity of their organisation, the size of their centre and the uniqueness of their educational approach made it impossible for a single assessor to make an accurate assessment of the service in the allotted time frame.
7. The provider also prepared separate evidence and submissions for each of the standards they sought review of.

Evidence before the panel

8. 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
 - Assessment and Rating Instrument and the final Assessment and Rating Report
 - service's feedback to the draft report
 - application for first tier review and its attachments
 - regulatory authority's findings at first tier review
 - regulatory authority's submission to second tier review
 - provider's response to the regulatory authority's submissions.
9. The Panel was also provided with advice from ACECQA on the standards under review.



The law

10. 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.

The facts

11. [REDACTED] is a long day care service with 111 approved places. The service is based in [REDACTED] WA.
12. The assessment and rating visit took place between [REDACTED] 2018 and [REDACTED] 2018.
13. The provider received the draft assessment and rating report on [REDACTED] 2018 and provided feedback to the draft report on [REDACTED] 2018. The final report was sent to the provider on [REDACTED] 2018.
14. The provider applied for first tier review on [REDACTED] 2018. The regulatory authority made a decision on the review on [REDACTED] 2018. The provider received the decision on [REDACTED] 2018. The provider applied for second tier review on [REDACTED] 2018.

Review of rating levels

15. The Panel considered each standard under review.

Standard 2.1

16. Standard 2.1 is that:
Each child's health and physical activity is supported and promoted.
17. Exceeding theme 2 is that:
Practice is informed by critical reflection.

Regulatory Authority's view

Assessment and rating report



18. In the assessment and rating report the regulatory authority states:

All educators provide a range of opportunities to effectively address and respond to children's need for sleep, rest and relaxation throughout the day, individually and in groups. Educators provide a range of active and restful experiences and support every child to make appropriate decisions regarding rest and relaxation that meets their individual needs.

Rest and sleep times for babies depends on their routines. Kindy children, who do not require sleep, are involved in a 'rejuvenation program', which incorporates restful breathing techniques and meditation. The children then continue with quiet activities or go outdoors. Rest and sleep is staggered and reflective of the 'small group' policy and the children's individual need for sleep. Children who appeared tired prior to their sleep time were observed being offered a quiet place to rest/sleep. The rest areas were inviting with lights turned off or dimmed lighting and relaxing music. SIDS Safe Sleeping practices are followed, 'sleep safety checks' are completed and recorded every 15 minutes. Several educators were observed sitting with, or close by, sleeping children. Children are encouraged to have their comforters when rest/sleeping and this practice was observed. Parents are requested to complete a sleeping form to inform educators how children sleep at home, to provide continuity of care. Information about children's individual rest, sleep and nappy change patterns, particularly for younger children and babies, was shared both verbally and in written form with families at the end of the day. Most children had spare changes of clothing in their bags and the service has spare clean clothes available for children if required. Educators were attuned to the weather conditions and were observed asking children if they needed to remove any extra clothing for their comfort. During a team meeting, educators were heard reflecting on finalising sleep times and an educator suggested moving some of the children's beds to accommodate those who do not sleep for long periods and are transitioning to activities so they don't disturb the sleeping children. The educators also reflected on lighting and how they could introduce soft lighting for children who are reading whilst others are sleeping.

The service and educators provide effective illness and injury management and thorough hygiene practices are implemented and promoted. Children were observed routinely going to the bathroom to wash their hands in readiness for meals and snacks and after using the toilets. Younger children were encouraged to wash their hands after their nappy change procedure. A 'mouthed toy' container was available for toys being used by younger children and are washed in hot soapy water at the end of each day. Children displaying signs of a temperature and/or being unwell are placed in a quiet comfortable area until parents come to collect them. The service's policy on communicable diseases requires the child to be isolated from other



children to minimise the spread of infection. For example, an educator was observed responding promptly to a child showing signs of illness. The child's temperature was taken immediately, a manager was advised that the child showed signs of a temperature and then she contacted the parent. The educator also obtained permission from the parent to give the child Panadol and comforted the child whilst waiting for the parent to arrive. The parent was overheard thanking the educators for the telephone call. There are several educators with current first aid, asthma and anaphylaxis qualifications on the premises at all times and the service has all the appropriate policies and procedures referenced to 'Staying Healthy in Child Care'. Cleaning is undertaken by the educators throughout the day and, where possible, children are included in the cleaning activities to learn appropriate hygiene and cleaning practices. Children were observed sanitising tables, sweeping floors and helping educators to fold small items from the washing line.

Healthy nutritious meals, snacks, milk and drinking water were provided and continuously promoted. Educators were observed sitting with the children discussing and describing the food and actively promoting 'healthy foods and role-modelling good manners and social skills. Children were observed sharing fresh fruit and vegetables, drinking water from their individual water bottles for morning and afternoon tea, lunchtime and throughout the day. Educators were heard reminding children to stay hydrated throughout the day. The food coordinator provides assorted lunches and snacks from a rotating seasonal menu and families are encouraged to share their child's dietary requirements. The weekly menu was on display and the children were offered an assortment of healthy dishes. They enthusiastically self-served and ate the food that was on the menu and were actively praised for finishing their food and some had second servings. The food coordinator commented that she prepares separate meals for children with additional dietary requirements.

All educators including relief educators are aware of children's dietary requirements and were observed paying particular attention to the food allergy chart and children's religious beliefs prior to serving food to the children. An educator and child were overheard having a discussion about why her peers meal looked different to hers, the educator explained how people can be allergic to certain foods and eating them can make them very ill and could be taken to hospital. She explained to the child we don't wish for our friends to get sick so we have to be careful not to feed them certain foods. The managers and educators have reflected upon how they could make meal times much more relaxed and enjoyable by introducing small groups into the dining room. This has proven to be successful as reflective comments in the quality assurance file noted that 'the experience has been less stressful and the dining room is now relaxed and calm'. Children were encouraged and supported to participate in physical activities according to the children's abilities. Outdoor areas are set up for



physical activities and children were observed riding bikes, climbing, jumping and playing chasey games. Babies were supported to walk and encouraged to use push-along toys, as well as safe areas being set up for babies to sit, crawl and roll around. Yoga is also offered in the morning during 'mindful mat sessions in the kindy room. Both indoor and outdoor environments were organised in ways to allow children to have safe physical play and activities.

The senior manager explained physical activities are programmed for using a fundamental movement program focusing on specific gross motor movements that involve the whole body. Educators record and monitor children's physical progress as part of their routine observations, which included time spent in active play, sedentary activities and fundamental movement skills.

19. The service was rated as not exceeding in all three exceeding themes.

First tier review

20. The provider sought exceeding ratings in all three exceeding themes. The regulatory authority awarded the service exceeding ratings in exceeding themes 1 and 3.
21. The regulatory authority response to provider evidence on exceeding theme 2 was:

The service claims that 'critical reflection is built into every level of the practice from forums conducted between educators and children and the production of daily photo journals and weekly reflections, to fortnightly team meetings between educators, educational leaders and managers, reviewing observations of children and their learning and the learning programs, to peer meetings of managers, educational leaders, studio coordinators, senior managers and directors, in which systematic reflection on operation is undertaken.' While it is acknowledged that forums for educators to provide input are available, evidence to substantiate robust debate, discussion and input by all educators has not been provided. Additionally, critical reflection on past incidents has not been provided.

The evidence provided states that 'changes may then be a focus of a training night, during which other team's perspectives will add to the quality of the final modifications.' Evidence that any change is understood by all and implemented appropriately has not been provided.



It is acknowledged that a variety of mechanisms to support up to date information is available, and that current recognised guidelines are used in relation to sleep and nutrition. However, evidence has not been provided to show how current recognised guidelines are used to support and promote children's health and physical activity.

Approved Provider's view

Draft assessment and rating report feedback

22. The regulatory authority described the provider feedback as follows:

The provider feedback referred to the Assessment and Rating Draft Report as well as providing some extra information. In response to Exceeding theme 2, the feedback states 'We have an internal audit process that provides independent feedback on the critical control points for every quality area. These are reviewed by the managers and issues addressed through team meetings and in practice' and 'Systematic reflection on children's health, well-being and comfort is embedded in our Team Meeting structure.' Provider feedback also consisted of documentation such as program evaluations, program plans, photo journals, information about the approach to meal times and parent feedback.

Provider feedback received included documents such as examples of curriculum documents highlighting children trying new foods, preparing picnic baskets, team meeting notes, parent feedback regarding a child's food interests discussing children nutrition and other records that supported the services previous rating of meeting national quality standards.

First tier review

23. The provider sought exceeding ratings in all three exceeding themes. They submitted their first tier review application form and a list of evidence as material considered as part of the first tier review process.

Second tier review

24. The provider contended that they are exceeding in exceeding theme 2. They submitted evidence in support such as:



The parallel pressures of several 'past incidents' combined to require educators to think differently about meal times:

- Ensuring children ate before they were exhausted (reported by some of the Toddler educators)
- Supporting children who needed to sleep to be asleep by 12:30pm (as advised by our sleep specialist as a result of her research)
- Enabling small groups of children to continue investigations without interruption if they were engaged
- The [REDACTED] philosophy that children should self-manage their meals
- Concern from a family about what their child was actually eating (2H Parent communication)
- A desire to make meal times more relaxed (see [REDACTED] Photos 183).

These issues (or 'past incidents') were discussed in Team Meetings and documented by the Pedagogical Coordinator (see 2F Collaborative Meals). Educators had to think about how the day could flow if small groups from different rooms were sharing the dining room. A staff training night was dedicated to the flow of small groups through the dining room and how that might be managed in the context of the cook preparing bowls of food from which children could serve themselves, educators going to lunch, children coming from different areas of the centre and washing their hands on the way, groups arriving for a meal before tables are wiped down, the use of placemats and children moving on to other activities.

A year later, another training night supported educators to unpack routines to identify all the tasks required in each (see 2S Unpacking Routines). Meal times were one of the focuses. With most children only attending [REDACTED] two days a week, the children needed more practise with the various tasks than they could get at meal times. Embedding collaborative meal times in the programme enabled educators to create opportunities for the children to build skills in using tongs and spoons, transferring, mixing, pouring and filling. Children needed to know the names of the utensils, the foods they were eating and the meal time routine. These activities were then built into experiences in the morning programme, gardens, studios and mat times (see 2A Mealtime Investigation).

Panel's consideration

25. The Panel noted that to be exceeding standard 2.1 the following three exceeding themes need to be present:

- Exceeding theme 1: Practice is embedded in service operations



- Exceeding theme 2: Practice is informed by critical reflection
 - Exceeding theme 3: Practice is shaped by meaningful engagement with families and/or the community.
26. As the service is already exceeding standard 2.1 in themes 1 and 3, a decision by the Panel that the service is exceeding in theme 2 would bring the service's rating for standard 2.1 from meeting to exceeding.
27. The Panel considered the following indicators of exceeding theme 2 when assessing whether service quality for standard 2.1 exceeds the NQS:
- Educators, the educational leader and co-ordinators:
 - systematically and regularly reflect on opportunities to enhance each child's health outcomes and promote physical activity with children and families
 - seek out and consider alternate ways of supporting each child's health and activity needs, and make changes where opportunities to further enhance children's outcomes are identified
 - are able to explain how reflection on children's changing health and activity needs influences the design and delivery of the educational program
 - reflect together on health and illness-related incidents, and support the service to make changes to practices, policies and procedures where opportunities are identified to strengthen the approach
 - are aware of and able to discuss the influences on their approach to supporting and promoting children's health and activity requirements and outcomes, the recognised guidelines that underpin their practice approach, and how these build on the approved learning framework/s and the service's health policies and procedures
 - consider and discuss social justice and equity implications of their practice decisions to ensure that practice takes into account the needs and rights of every child at the service.
 - The service's approach to supporting and promoting children's health and activity needs and outcomes reflects robust debate, discussion, and opportunities for input by all educators, and is informed by critical reflection on past incidents.
 - The service's approach to supporting and promoting children's health and physical activity, including safe sleep and nutrition, is informed by current recognised guidelines and up-to-date information.



- Any change to the service's approach to supporting and promoting children's health and activity needs are understood by all and implemented appropriately.
28. The Panel noted that in its view critical reflection is a regular ongoing commitment, putting theory to practice, adopting processes to inform practice and make change. It is a deep process that goes beyond reflection on events that have occurred. The Panel noted they were looking for greater evidence of ongoing translation of theory into practice and building on current practice.
 29. The Panel noted there was some evidence of reflective practice regarding sleep times and meal times. However, purposeful change to practice being informed by reflection was not evidenced.
 30. The Panel noted the tendency in the provider's evidence toward recapping rather than reviewing practice with a critical eye to improvement. It also noted the focus on meals and sleep, and lack of evidence in relation to other areas of the standard such as illness, injury and hygiene. The Panel considered the service demonstrated reflection but not critical reflection at the level of exceeding practice, and not across the whole of standard 2.1.
 31. The Panel considered that description of reflective practice undertaken did not appear to be consistent and ongoing and that this is required for theme 2.

Decision

32. The Panel by consensus decided that the service's practice did not demonstrate exceeding theme 2 in relation to standard 2.1. Therefore, it confirmed the service's rating of meeting for that standard.

Standard 3.1

33. Standard 3.1 is that:
The design of the facilities is appropriate for the operation of a service.
34. Exceeding theme 2 is that:
Practice is informed by critical reflection.
35. Exceeding theme 3 is that:
Practice is shaped by meaningful engagement with families and/or the community.



Regulatory Authority's view

Assessment and rating report

36. In the assessment and rating report the regulatory authority states:

The service is in a business complex and has been suitably adapted to meet the needs and requirements of children in an education and care setting. Careful research was conducted by the approved provider's management team to ensure all areas were designed and built in line with the centre's philosophy that children need a safe, secure environment that challenges and stimulates, such as the studios which is a space where children can visit to take part in learning new skills by continuous investigations and exploratory experiences. Appropriately sized furniture and equipment suitable for the ages and developmental needs of children were available; these were arranged to maximise opportunities for children to access resources and engage in the program.

Various processes are in place to ensure the premises, furniture and equipment have daily and monthly checks for safety, cleanliness and maintenance issues. Educators appeared very comfortable with cleaning and hygiene practices, which appeared embedded across the service. Several documents, including a daily opening and closing checklist, daily and weekly staff checklists, a children's bathroom and hygiene checklist and a schedule of weekly laundry and cleaning of toys and resources were sighted and evidenced as being consistently completed. In addition, a professional cleaning contractor attends the service daily.

Critical reflection on the environment is part of the educator's and children's daily reflections to ensure the environment meets the needs of the children at all times. An internal audit involving managers and educational leaders is undertaken daily to ensure the environment meets theoretical perspectives such as being 'Child Centred' (Montessori) and 'Engaging' (Reggio Emilia). The Quality Assurance Officer whose sole purpose is to ensure all quality areas are compliant and provide a high-quality standard for children's learning. During a previous quality assurance assessment, it was identified that one of the rooms had insufficient resources for the dolls area and a few sofas needed to be reupholstered. These issues were addressed and rectified in a timely manner. In addition to the evidence sighted and practice observed that demonstrated the service's approaches to meeting the requirements of the National



Quality standards in relation to this standard, evidence of the following exceeding theme was also demonstrated.

37. The service was rated as exceeding in exceeding theme 1 only.

First tier review

38. The provider sought exceeding ratings in exceeding themes 2 and 3. The regulatory authority did not amend the ratings at first tier review.
39. The regulatory authority response to provider evidence on exceeding theme 2 was:

The [REDACTED] handbook includes information about the philosophy of the 'environment as the third teacher'. The information contained in the handbook does not provide guidance regarding a safe physical environment. No evidence was provided to demonstrate how the current recognised guidance used is by the service to create a safe physical environment that strengthens children's learning and enhances participation in the program.

Information provided included various blank templates such as the 'Preparation for Team Meetings', the [REDACTED] Handbook' and the 'Team Meeting' handbook. The 'Plan for: Play (environment)' is a plan for different areas of the service to guide educators on what they might reflect on. It does not appear to be about the environment but rather what you can do in the environment. While it may provide guidance to the educators, it does not demonstrate that critical reflection has occurred. While it is acknowledged that forums for educators to provide input are available, evidence to substantiate robust debate, discussion and input by all educators has not been provided. Additionally, critical reflection on past incidents has not been provided.

It is acknowledged that the environment is regularly audited. Information provided states that 'environments are regularly audited, through training nights'. However, the 'Environment Audit' provided was a blank template and the 'Training Outline' was a plan for a presentation to staff. The information provided does not show that practice is informed by critical reflection. There was limited reflection demonstrated on the design of the physical environment. There was no reference to theoretical influences or social justice and equity implications of design choices of the physical environment. There was also no evidence of how design choices align with the approved learning framework/s, policies and procedures.



The information provided in the application in relation to this indicator is comprised of statements with no supporting evidence. The statements primarily refer to the way the spaces are used rather than focusing on the design and maintenance of the physical environment.

40. The regulatory authority response to provider evidence on exceeding theme 3 was:

The 'Connection documentation' refers to an excursion to a community garden and a sister service. This does not demonstrate sufficient evidence that the design of the physical environment reflects the unique geographical, cultural and community context of the service. The 'Plan for: Relationships and Connections' and the 'Plan for: Relationships and Connections – Strengthening the link between home and day care' shows a plan for different areas of the service. It does not demonstrate that practice is shaped by meaningful engagement with families and/or the community. There is also no evidence provided to show that the priorities and strengths of the children and families is welcomed or that the service draws on the voices of the children. The evidence mentioned the 'Small Group Policy' to 'support children's wellbeing, agency and resilience in voicing "their priorities and strengths" and contributing to the design of the environment'. This does not demonstrate evidence in practice of how the design of the physical environment welcomes, reflects and draws on the voices, priorities and strengths of the children and families at the service.

The provider's newsletter, from November 2017, includes information of parent contributions of recycled materials to the 'loose parts' collection, incursions and excursions. It is also acknowledged that children can escort their families through the service which can invite conversations with educators. However, the information provided is based on statements and does not clearly demonstrate evidence that 'opportunities for collaboration with family and community partners are built into the services approach to designing and making changes to the physical environment.' The evidence provided relates more closely to standard 3.2.

Approved Provider's view

Draft assessment and rating report feedback

41. The regulatory authority described the provider feedback as follows:



The provider feedback referred to the Assessment and Rating Draft Report as well as providing some extra information. In response to Exceeding theme 2, the provider feedback consisted of statements such as 'Team meetings are a core component of our critical reflection. Issues related to the children's access and use of the environment are discussed and actions identified to enable all children to fully participate. Where additional needs are identified, educators undertake a 'process for determining a behaviour of concern' in which issues related to the development of the children and the suitability of the experiences, environment and equipment are identified and solutions devised' and 'It is expected that all environments which are used by the children will be planned for and set by educators.' Provider feedback also consisted of documentation such as programme evaluations, garden meeting notes and the 'process for determining a behaviour of concern.' In response to Exceeding theme 3, the provider feedback consisted of statements such as 'Children are actively involved in setting and re-setting environments'. Provider feedback also consisted of documentation such as the 'Kanimbla Helpers' which shows photographs of children engaged in 'helping' activities.

Provider feedback received included statements and documents such as program records, team meeting minutes and other records that supported the services previous rating of meeting national quality standards.

First tier review

42. The provider sought exceeding ratings in exceeding themes 2 and 3. They submitted their first tier review application form and a list of evidence as material considered as part of the first tier review process.

Second tier review

43. The provider contended that they are exceeding in exceeding themes 2 and 3. They submitted evidence in support such as:

The Programming Handbook (pp. 51-53) (Programming Doc Part 3) asks educators to audit their learning environment to ensure they have designed the spaces to enable children's learning. There is also a reflection form 'Considering our Environment' (listed on TT3 QA3 Centre based evidence, TT5 Considerour Environ) which supports educators in designing the spaces in which the learning experiences



will take place.

The QA Internal Auditor provides an objective eye against specific critical control points in relation to the design of spaces (see Photos 4-9), Reports are given to the Managers who address concerns with specific educators or rooms. Since, there are always two or more sides to a story, Managers elicit reflections from educators about the 'non compliances' observed and seek solutions to rectify them. As already explained, ongoing concerns about the design or use of environments will be brought to a Team Meeting for critical reflection. A systematic environment audit may be used as evidence (see Programming Doc Part 1, Part 2 and Part 3). If the concern is that a particular child is not engaging in the environment, changes will be made to the Programme to better meet their needs. If those concerns continue, a 'process for determining a behaviour of concern' will be implemented in which the environment will be analysed to ensure it is designed for purpose. Where spaces are shared, educators will meet together to discuss ways in which they can be set in order to meet the needs of all children (see 3C Garden Meeting Notes).

One of the training nights focusing on the Environment used the Exceeding Themes as a basis for the educator's reflections on their environments and the environments of another room (see 5E Training Outline). This was not a 'presentation to staff' but an interactive workshop where educators reflected on another room's environment and gave feedback to the educators in that room while also receiving feedback on their own room and reflecting on these perspectives.

At [REDACTED], as previously explained, meetings and training events are not lectures delivered by a Director, Manager or Educational Leader. Nor are they simply times for educators to have input. [REDACTED] practice depends of the voices of children, educators and families being heard, considered and respected, for critical reflection that enables educators to understand what, how and why they are doing what they are doing, so that philosophy is embedded and so that any changes are understood by all and implemented appropriately.

Families also provide input to the design of the environments. Unlike many community based services, families do not participate in working bees or renovation projects. Families provide input in a way that is appropriate to the time frames of extremely busy professional families: through the donation of photographs, resources, books and links to online information (see [REDACTED] Photos 16, 17, 87, 105, 108, 109) that support and extend children's investigations.

Panel's consideration



44. The Panel noted that to be exceeding standard 3.1 the following three themes need to be present:
- Exceeding theme 1: Practice is embedded in service operations
 - Exceeding theme 2: Practice is informed by critical reflection
 - Exceeding theme 3: Practice is shaped by meaningful engagement with families and/or the community.
45. As the service is already exceeding standard 3.1 in exceeding theme 1, a decision by the Panel that the service is exceeding in themes 2 and 3 would bring the service's rating for standard 3.1 from meeting to exceeding.
46. The Panel considered the following indicators of exceeding theme 2 when assessing whether service quality for standard 3.1 exceeds the NQS:
- The service's approach to design and maintenance of the physical environment:
 - reflects robust debate, discussion, and opportunities for input by all educators, and is informed by critical reflection and past incidents
 - is informed by current recognised guidance on creating an inclusive, safe physical environment that strengthens children's learning and development outcomes and enhances participation in the program.
 - Any change to the service's approach to design and maintenance of the physical environment is understood by all and implemented appropriately.
 - Educators, the educational leader and co-ordinators:
 - are attuned to changes to the physical environment throughout the day and confidently adjust practice and the environment as needed to ensure the continued safety, participation and inclusion of all children
 - reflect, individually and together, on the design of the physical environment, and consider opportunities to make changes to strengthen inclusion and participation, and to enhance children's safety, learning and development outcomes
 - are aware of and able to discuss the theoretical influences on the service's design choices and how these align with the approved learning framework/s and the service's philosophy, policies and procedures



- consider and discuss social justice and equity implications of design choices to ensure that the physical environment supports the needs and rights of every child at the service.
47. The Panel noted that the regulatory authority wrote that critical reflection on the environment is part of the service's daily reflections, but in their view the evidence of changes in practice arising out of the reflection (for example, reupholstering a sofa) did not constitute critical reflection.
48. The Panel noted that the service provided documents intended to act as guidance to educators but that they did not illustrate that critical reflection has occurred. Limited reflection on the design was demonstrated and the focus was on the practices within the environment rather than reflecting on the environment itself.
49. The Panel noted some reflection and discussion of designing and building the service in line with its philosophy, but that purposeful higher level critical reflection that informs practice was not present.
50. The Panel noted the similar theme throughout the provider's evidence of giving numerous statements of critical reflection, but with limited evidence that the reflection has informed the service's practice.
51. The Panel considered the following indicators of exceeding theme 3 when assessing whether service quality for standard 3.1 exceeds the NQS:
- The design of the physical environment:
 - reflects the unique geographical, cultural and community context of the service
 - welcomes, reflects and draws on the voices, priorities and strengths of the children and families at the service
 - shows that the service works creatively within the limitations of the physical setting
 - Opportunities for collaboration with family and community partners are built into the service's approach to designing and making changes to the physical environment.
52. The Panel noted that the evidence given by the provider (plans and policy documents, team meetings and newsletters to parents) does not show strong



evidence that the service's practice is shaped by families and/or the community.

53. The Panel noted that the evidence provided is often statements that the theme is present without clear evidence of that. For example, descriptions of events but no discussion or evidence of how these shape practice.
54. The Panel noted that many of the examples given are what they would expect as evidence of practice for a meeting rating rather than exceeding.
55. The Panel noted the service did not show sufficient evidence of looking beyond the service to constitute meaningful engagement, nor did it appear to use observations to find ways to shape practice, in addition to fixing problems as they arise. This is what is expected of this standard at the exceeding level.
56. The Panel acknowledged the service's efforts at collaboration with families and the community, but considered there was not sufficient evidence of connections with the community outside the service, including the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

Decision

57. The Panel by consensus decided that the service's practice did not demonstrate exceeding themes 2 and 3 in relation to standard 3.1. Therefore, it confirmed the service's rating of meeting for that standard.

Standard 3.2

58. Standard 3.2 is that:
The service environment is inclusive, promotes competence and supports exploration and play-based learning.
59. Exceeding theme 3 is that:
Practice is shaped by meaningful engagement with families and/or the community.

Regulatory Authority's view



Assessment and rating report

60. In the assessment and rating report the regulatory authority states:

Experiences included water play, playdough, clay, painting, wooden blocks, drawing, cooking, art and craft and trains and train tracks in keeping with the children's ongoing interest in community. Imaginative play experiences were also actively promoted using dress-ups, a real-life canoe, small world jungle play, the mud kitchen with real life equipment such as biscuit trays, pots and pans and utensils and a home corner with the dolls and beds. Children were observed baking pancakes in the mud kitchen and four-wheel driving making tracks in the wet sand. An educator explained that water play experiences is an ongoing due to children's interest in pretend kitchen and cafes. The educators and children had created a water play experience designed out of loose parts, recycled materials, bowls, funnels and pipes to provide children with the opportunity to explore and investigate water in a different context. An educator was observed supporting children's play at the water activity asking open questions such as 'What do you think will happen?' and 'Why do you think that is?' Resources support play based learning and equipment and materials are part of the teachings which sees the environment as a third teacher. Children were observed exploring and investigating with their materials and the studio supports the children to develop their skills in experiences such as mixing paints together to change colours and how to join and mould clay together, which raises children's awareness and build that connection about their environment. Children at the service are encouraged to become environmentally responsible and are supported in developing environmentally respectful practices. Children are encouraged to take ownership of their environment by developing rules using their own words and drawings representing the rules.

Children of all ages are included on all levels of development of projects on sustainability. The service is a member of Remida (reduce, recycle and reuse) and excursions are conducted so children can extend on their learning by choosing their own recyclable materials for their projects. Sustainability posters are visible to all educators, children and families reminding them about sustainable practices such as purchasing products with minimal packaging, visiting community gardens, using 'green' cleaning products, installing energy efficient light globes, reusing glass jars to store various items, using fans and natural light and many various other suggestions for sustainably and conserving energy, with a section at the bottom of the poster for children and families to add their ideas regarding sustainable practices. Photos of children placing items such as plastics in a recycling bin have been created into jigsaw puzzles as a way to embed children's awareness of sustainability.



Children are engaged in excursions that utilises community environments and support child directed exploration and discovery. Excursions into the community, such as to parks to gather natural materials and the library to borrow books rather than buying them, are a forum to extend on children's awareness and responsibility about the environment. An educator explained whilst children were having an excursion to their local park they noticed the rubbish trucks emptying the council bins. Discussions were held with the children regarding the local council's requirement for rubbish, open ended questions such as 'What are we doing with the rubbish, where does it go, what do we put in the rubbish bins, and what is the global effect?'.

61. The service was rated as exceeding in exceeding themes 1 and 2 and not exceeding in theme 3.

First tier review

62. The provider sought an exceeding rating in exceeding theme 3. The regulatory authority did not amend the ratings at first tier review.
63. The regulatory authority response to provider evidence on exceeding theme 3 was:

The statement provided in relation to these indicators states, 'Images of the children and families, resources that reflect the diversity of cultures and an openness of attitude and mind ensure that...(the information then quotes the indicators as above).' The statement provided is not sufficient to demonstrate the above indicators.

It is acknowledged, as in the final report, that children are involved in caring for the environment, recycling and reusing a variety of materials. Sustainability posters are visible to all educators, children and families. It is also acknowledged that children are involved in activities such as planting, growing and watering coriander seeds. The evidence provided states 'Through the children, [REDACTED] can "support families to develop understating and engage in environmentally responsible and sustainable practices" '. This does not indicate how the educators support families to develop understanding and engage in environmentally responsible and sustainable practices.

It is acknowledged, as per the final report, that children attended excursions into the community to places such as the community garden, library, local aged care facility and several local businesses. It is also evident in the final report that these excursions supported child directed exploration and discovery.



Approved Provider's view

Draft assessment and rating report feedback

64. The regulatory authority described the provider feedback as follows:

The provider feedback referred to the Assessment and Rating Draft Report as well as providing some extra information. In response to Exceeding theme 3, the provider feedback consisted of statements such as 'Jill McLachlan, in her book "Unearthing Why" explains that when children are visible in the community in these kinds of ways, not only do they learn from their experiences, but they influence the thinking of adults who see them, hear their discussions and engage with them in conversations', 'Families contribute to the environment through their feedback, gifts of resources and photographs' and 'Families have offered their skills and worked with the children to create environments.' Provider feedback also consisted of documentation such as 'connection documentation', weekly reflections and a newsletter.

Provider feedback received included statements and documents such as a connection in community learning story, program records and other records that supported the service's previous rating of meeting national quality standards.

First tier review

65. The provider sought an exceeding rating in exceeding theme 3. They submitted their first tier review application form and a list of evidence as material considered as part of the first tier review process.

Second tier review

66. The provider contends that they are exceeding in exceeding theme 3. They submitted evidence in support such as:

A strong part of [REDACTED] practice is the involvement of families through excursions and incursions. Families provide experiences that link with the children's investigations, such as arranging for members of their family to visit and share cultural experiences, cooking different foods, sharing favourite stories (see [REDACTED] Photos 108,109) or linking with their own workplaces. These contributions change the design of the environment in that they take children to different environments,



change the temporal environment (schedule) or require changes to spaces in order to accommodate the activities.

Some of the resources families provide do not only change the design of spaces, but also change the use. Parent contributions of resources such as loose parts, jars with family photographs (see 3H Newsletter, pp. 1, 6) and favourite books (see [REDACTED] Photos 87, 105) add depth and richness to the children's investigations and build the cultural diversity of experiences.

Panel's consideration

67. The Panel noted that to be exceeding standard 3.2 the following three themes need to be present:
- Exceeding theme 1: Practice is embedded in service operations
 - Exceeding theme 2: Practice is informed by critical reflection
 - Exceeding theme 3: Practice is shaped by meaningful engagement with families and/or the community.
68. As the service is already exceeding standard 3.2 in exceeding themes 1 and 2, a decision by the Panel that the service is exceeding in theme 3 would bring the service's rating for standard 3.2 from meeting to exceeding.
69. The Panel considered the following indicators of exceeding theme 3 when assessing whether service quality for standard 3.2 exceeds the NQS:
- The service's use and organisation of space and resources:
 - reflects the unique geographical, cultural and community context of the service
 - welcomes, respects and draws on the voices, priorities and strengths of the children and families at the service.
 - The service's approach to environmentally sustainable practice and support of environmental responsibility:
 - reflects the unique geographical, cultural and community context of the service
 - welcomes, respects and draws on the voices, priorities and strengths of the children and families at the service.
 - The service collaborates with family and/or community partners to:
 - foster an inclusive, welcoming and flexible play-based learning environment
 - design indoor and outdoor spaces that draw on and reflect the diverse cultures of the broader community, for example



- engaging with the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to design an environment that reflects their culture
 - engage in sustainable practices within the service and support environmental awareness and responsibility across the service community.
 - Children engaged in excursions that utilise community environments and support child-directed exploration and discovery.
 - Educators supporting families to develop understanding and engage in environmentally responsible and sustainable practices.
70. The Panel discussed the provider's evidence of the children being out and visible in the community (participating in sustainability initiatives, recycling, excursions), as well as some families sharing their skills with the service, but noted it was not clear how these activities are shaping practice within the service nor how children engage with these activities. They noted that the evidence focuses on involvement rather than how engagement is shaping practice. The connections between the children's activities and the community were not drawn out in the evidence.
71. The Panel noted that excursions and other activities described are expected for a service operating at a meeting level.
72. The Panel noted children engaged in sustainable practices, and took excursions, but reflection of the unique cultural and community context of the service was not strongly evidenced. In the Panel's view aspects of the exceeding theme were shown to be evident but the theme as a whole was not.

Decision

73. The Panel by consensus decided that the service's practice did not demonstrate exceeding theme 3 in relation to standard 3.2. Therefore, it confirmed the service's rating of meeting for that standard.

Standard 5.2

74. Standard 5.2 is that:
Each child is supported to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships.



75. Exceeding theme 2 is that:
Practice is informed by critical reflection.

Regulatory Authority's view

Assessment and rating report

76. In the assessment and rating report the regulatory authority states:

There were minimal disputes observed, although however on one occasion, a child started to show off in front of his peers and became a bit disruptive. While his peers were trying to build towers with the blocks the child was seen knocking them down harshly. The educator discreetly walked the child away from the activity quietly chatting to the child about working collaboratively with his peers and how his actions could possibly hurt someone. The child was seen joining his peers to help pack away the resources. Children with the support of educators reflect on their agreements regularly to see if they are still happy with the rules and do they need additional rules to be added. Photographic evidence demonstrated children collaborated together to make an agreement regarding safety instructions before working together to make a robot using loose parts and power tools, photos showed each child taking a turn putting parts of the robot together using a drill and screws. The children use their own language and/or drawings to develop the agreements in all the environments including the outdoors. Agreements are also reflected upon at mat sessions where children can revisit the rules and share their expectations with any new children who may have recently transitioned. Agreements developed for the environments include the child's name who had input into the agreement for tools and resources. One child's input was, 'Can't draw on the tables, just draw on the paper and can't break them (pastels)' and another child's input was 'Can't put all the pencils on the floor'. For Learning and Skills children have decided the rule is to listen to the teachers and our friends. Children's agreement for 'Behaviour' entailed no running around or you may hurt someone.

77. The service was rated as exceeding in exceeding themes 1 and 3 and not exceeding in theme 2.

First tier review



78. The provider sought an exceeding rating in exceeding theme 2 and did not receive it.

79. Regulatory authority response to provider evidence on exceeding theme 2:

It is acknowledged that during team meetings, educators have opportunities to 'critically reflect on the children's interests and needs, identify focuses and intentions and plan inquiry-led, play-based learning experiences.' However, this is simply a statement and evidence to substantiate that robust debate, discussion, input by all educators occurs and opportunities to strengthen practice has not been provided. Additionally, evidence of critical reflection on past incidents has not been provided. The information on 'Gender Play' does not adequately support the claim that children are supported to build and maintain sensitive relationships. Overall, no evidence to show practice is informed by critical reflection has been provided.

It is acknowledged that 'Staff at ██████████ purposefully slow down the daily routine when they have new children enter the cohort, allowing them time and space to settle, experience and explore at their own pace'. However, this is considered to be standard practice across the sector. There is no evidence of practice that shows that social justice and equity implications have been considered in the educators approaches to facilitating active and collaborative learning opportunities and behaviour guidance. While there is information provided about the professional and organisational values, there is no evidence of how these are used in robust debate and discussion to support children to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships.

Approved Provider's view

Draft assessment and rating report feedback

80. The regulatory authority described the provider feedback as follows:

The provider feedback referred to the Assessment and Rating Draft Report as well as providing some extra information. In response to Exceeding theme 2, the provider feedback consisted of statements such as 'Team meetings are a key forum for reflecting on children's abilities to self-regulate and to manage their interactions with other children', ██████████ uses and inquiry approach to all aspects of children's learning, including collaborating, learning from and helping others, regulating their own



behaviour, responding appropriately to the behaviour of others and communicating to resolve conflicts', and 'In 2018, [REDACTED] created a systematic investigation planning process with the intention to support children to develop their sense of agency and relationships with others. Investigations are planned at team meetings and in collaboration with members of the team, educational leaders and managers. They are then reviewed at the next Team Meeting, noting achievement of children's learning goals, achievement of learning intentions, what worked and didn't work and identifying focuses for the future.' Provider feedback also consisted of documentation such as team meeting notes, 'Relationships documentation', a training outline and information on 'Gender play'.

Provider feedback received included statements and documents such as team meeting minutes, planning documents, learning stories and other records that supported the services previous rating of meeting national quality standards.

First tier review

81. The provider sought an exceeding rating in exceeding theme 2. They submitted their first tier review application form and a list of evidence as material considered as part of the first tier review process.

Second tier review

82. The provider contends that they are exceeding in exceeding theme 2. They submitted evidence in support such as:

The [REDACTED] (4H) requires respect for the dignity and rights of the child. To embed this thinking, all new educators are required to undertake an Orientation. While this process is supported by a Training Officer, Managers, Educational Leaders and room educators, the structure of the Workbook is to require critical reflection. Rather than simply asking educators to read documents, the Workbook requires responses such as;

- Give two (2) examples of ways you involve children in making decisions about their behaviour.
- Give an example of when you have used positive guidance with a child in your group.
- The [REDACTED] have a small group policy. (Public\QA5_Rel_Chn\QA5_Policies) What are the advantages of this policy?



- Where can small groups of children be taken as part of your routines (e.g. meals, sleeping), mat or forums times or programme?
- What is your role in helping a child and family to enter and/or leave the centre? (Choose one child).
- Read the Interactions with Children Policy and Procedure (see QA5_Rel_Chn). From your understanding of this policy what are some things you would expect to see educators doing as they interact with children? What are some things you would not expect to see?
- What do you do to show the children you are listening?

These responses are then discussed (and sometimes debated) with the Training Officer who reviews progress in the Orientation Workbook weekly.

Panel's consideration

83. The Panel noted that to be exceeding in standard 5.2 the following three themes need to be present:
- Exceeding theme 1: Practice is embedded in service operations
 - Exceeding theme 2: Practice is informed by critical reflection
 - Exceeding theme 3: Practice is shaped by meaningful engagement with families and/or the community.
84. As the service is already exceeding standard 5.2 in exceeding themes 1 and 3, a decision by the Panel that the service is exceeding in theme 2 would bring the service's rating for standard 5.2 from meeting to exceeding.
85. The Panel considered the following indicators of exceeding theme 2 when assessing whether service quality for standard 5.2 exceeds the NQS:
- The service's approach to supporting children to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships:
 - reflects robust debate, discussion, and opportunities for input by all educators, and is informed by critical reflection and past incidents
 - enables the identification and implementation of opportunities to strengthen practice
 - is informed by current recognised guidance.
 - Any change to the service's approach to supporting children to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships is understood by all and implemented appropriately.



- Educators demonstrate self-awareness of the theoretical perspectives that influence their pedagogy, and the practice across the service, and show that they are committed to continuous improvement.
 - The service team reflect together to:
 - consider the social justice and equity implications of educators' approaches to facilitating active and collaborative learning opportunities and behaviour guidance
 - engage in robust debate and discussion in which personal, professional and organisational values that support children to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships are identified and discussed.
86. The Panel discussed the provider's evidence of a workbook completed by educators, and their view that answering questions in a workbook does not constitute critical reflection. In the Panel's view critical reflecting requires exploring multiple perspectives, drawing links, and making changes. It needs to be ongoing and purposeful, not individualised and one-off. There was also no evidence of the discussion or debate following completion of the workbook, or evidence of plans for improvement.
87. The Panel noted a lot of description of the children's behaviour, but no critical reflection on practice itself. They could not see evidence to answer how the child is supported, what role the environment plays, and how these observations are being used to change practice.
88. The Panel considered that the service has a strong policy framework but its implementation, and how the children are supported in practice, is not strongly evidenced.

Decision

89. The Panel by consensus decided that the service's practice did not demonstrate exceeding theme 2 in relation to standard 5.2. Therefore, it confirmed the service's rating of meeting for that standard.

Standard 7.1

90. Standard 7.1 is that:
Governance supports the operation of a quality service.
91. Exceeding theme 2 is that:
Practice is informed by critical reflection.



92. Exceeding theme 3 is that:
Practice is shaped by meaningful engagement with families and/or the community.

Regulatory Authority's view

Assessment and rating report

93. In the assessment and rating report the regulatory authority states:

Staff meeting minutes and team leader meetings demonstrated that educators continuously critically reflected and discussed aspects of their philosophy, such as in relation to listening to the children's voices and perspectives. An educator was overheard discussing with her colleagues that some children have identified that they cannot recognise their water trolley in the dining room as they all look the same and the children have come up with a solution to draw pictures on their trolley as a sign of ownership. Families are actively supported to provide feedback through various mediums such as Facebook, email, surveys, verbally and the parent portal. The service's practices are based on effectively documented policies and procedures, which are both in hardcopy and electronic formats and are readily available to parents and educators. A review process has been completed for 2018 and all educators and families are advised of any policy changes verbally and through email.

Records and information are continually reviewed and stored appropriately to ensure confidentiality requirements are maintained. All educator, children and parent records, and other confidential documents, were stored in locked filing cabinets, and can only be accessed by the appropriate staff. The management team had a thorough understanding of how long records are to be retained, and these are also archived in a secure location. Prescribed information, required in accordance with the Regulations, and including the contact details of the Approved Provider and the Regulatory Authority, was displayed at the service entrance. All computer access is password protected and the service uses a specific program to manage enrolments, bookings, attendance, fees and emergency contact details. All computers are backed up to the iCloud. Electronic documentation can be accessed through the parent portal, with parents approval for images and names documented. Discussions with the manager confirmed that concerns, complaints and grievances are actioned promptly and reported to the Directors. Directors and managers meet with families to discuss and work together to resolve any issues. These issues are then followed up



with educators for any action required and reports are made to families to complete the communication cycle. Staff grievance are also actioned promptly and addressed through the grievance procedure. For example, educators resolve their issues with each other, however if they are unable to do so they are supported by the managers and Human Resource department to negotiate solutions.

Well established governance arrangements and administrative systems consistently support the operations of a high quality service and drive for continuous improvement. Management processes allow for the service to identify and manage organisational risks. Risk associated with each programme are developed and included in the 'High Alert Files'. Any issues related to risks are identified at each team meeting and reported to the Directors. A Quality Assurance process audits the practice weekly and any issues that arise are reported to the management team to take action accordingly. Any recurring issues are entered into the QIP and action planned and taken. Administrative functions such as; accounts and fees, are completed with administrative support to ensure the managers and educators can engage with the children and families and focus on their needs. The annual (or when required) review and updating process is undertaken in partnership and consultation with families, educators and management. A comprehensive quality assurance process ensures practices are audited weekly. Any identified issues are reported to managers, reflected upon and action taken accordingly. For example, the Quality Assurance Officer identified that transitions to meal-times in the dining room were not engaging and hectic. This was discussed with the managers and educators, who critically reflected upon best practice and implemented progressive meal-times, where children came in smaller groups. Educators indicated this had a much calmer approach and was more engaging.

The organisation's Human Resource Managers are responsible for the recruitment of staff, whilst the Training Manager is responsible for inductions and orientations for new educators. Upon commencement, educators complete a comprehensive orientation process over a six week period, covering six focus areas, such as, 'Introduction to the Schools of Early Learning', 'Your room', and 'Safety'. The Training Manager visits new educators each week to assist, guide, mentor, monitor their progress and assess their achievements before the educator is signed off for each focus area. New educators are given one hour per week for study and at the end of each focus area. Educators are asked to reflect upon their learning and provide feedback on each focus area. Orientations consist of centre room, kitchen, for food safety awareness, and Studio orientation. An orientation feedback is completed and signed by the employees. Feedback submitted is used by the Approved Provider, Directors and Managers to reflect upon the orientation process for continuous improvement. All new employees are supplied with a comprehensive Staff



Handbook, Code of Conduct/Ethics, Confidentiality Policy, which is to be signed and abide by, Programming manual, Team handbook and Room books that provide information about roles and responsibilities. These books are introduced during the orientation process and continue to provide continuous guidance for educators. Each room has a team leader who is provided with the tools and resources to ensure that all educators have a deep understanding of their roles and responsibilities with each other, children and families.

94. The service was rated as not exceeding in all three exceeding themes.

First tier review

95. The provider sought exceeding ratings in all three exceeding themes. The regulatory authority awarded the service an exceeding rating in exceeding theme 1 only.

96. The regulatory authority response to provider evidence on exceeding theme 2 was:

It is acknowledged that the service has a staff handbook and an outline of roles and responsibilities for each staff role. The service has a variety of administrative teams such as finances, enrolments and quality assurance. It is acknowledged that there are opportunities throughout the year for staff to discuss their daily practice in relation to the philosophy. The final report states 'Well established governance arrangements and administrative systems consistently support the operations of a high quality service and drive for continuous improvement'. It was evident from the information provided that there are mechanisms in place that demonstrate that practice is embedded in service operations.

It is acknowledged that reviews of the philosophy, policies and procedures are undertaken in various ways. It is also acknowledged that the service has processes in place such as an orientation process, training nights and regular meetings. However, it is not evident that critical reflection is evident in these processes or how critical reflection is used to support consistent, high quality practice across the service.

It is acknowledged that there are feedback opportunities for all members of the service team. However, it is not evident how feedback is considered or that it has strengthened governance and administrative systems.



It is acknowledged that the service uses an adaptation of a 'Managing Change model'. However, there is no evidence of a rationale for change or how it is clearly communicated.

97. The regulatory authority response to provider evidence on exceeding theme 3 was:

The information provided in the application for 1st Tier review states that [REDACTED] has been rated as Exceeding in Exceeding Theme 3: Practice is shaped by meaningful engagement with families and/or the community.' However, neither the Assessment and Rating Draft Report or the Assessment and Rating Final Report indicates this rating. No additional evidence in relation to this theme accompanied the 1st Tier Review application.

Approved Provider's view

Draft assessment and rating report feedback

98. The regulatory authority described the provider feedback as follows:

The provider feedback referred to the Assessment and Rating Draft Report as well as providing some extra information. In response to Exceeding theme 2, the provider feedback consisted of statements such as 'Reviews of policies and procedures are undertaken in many ways as part of the orientation process, as a result of EYE training ([REDACTED]'s registered training organisation), students analysis of policies and procedures, through the regular review cycle, as issues arise and for clarification when practice that needs to be improved is identified.' In response to Exceeding theme 3, the provider feedback consisted of statements such as 'Since 2015, [REDACTED] has actively sought ways of engaging families in all aspects of the service, from the development and implementation of programmes through policy reviews and to service management. After a family survey, [REDACTED] created a Facebook page, Instagram and blog, renewed the Parent Portal, made Weekly Reflections from the rooms available through the website and developed a [REDACTED] Families App through 'Slack'. Centre newsletters and Directors newsletters are also now sent electronically.'

Provider feedback also consisted of documentation such as survey results, newsletters, parent input forms and team meeting notes. Provider feedback received included statements and documents such as emails, evaluation forms, policy review



documents and other records that supported the services previous rating of meeting national quality standards.

First tier review

99. The provider sought an exceeding rating in all three exceeding themes. They submitted their first tier review application form and a list of evidence as material considered as part of the first tier review process.

Second tier review

100. The provider contends that they are exceeding in exceeding themes 2 and 3. They submitted evidence in support such as:

Through a series of meetings at every level of the organisation, Senior Managers, Managers, Educational Leaders, Studio Coordinators, Lead Educators and Assistant Educators support the Directors to provide high quality care and education for children (see 7C Educational Leadership in [REDACTED]). In a culture of supporting children to 'break new ground', the goal of each meeting is to systematically reflect on the responsibilities of the group in leading, managing and delivering programmes and to make decisions which are relevant for their level of operations. Groups will escalate issues if they feel unable to resolve them or that additional support is required (see TT6 Directors Memo 1, TT10 Directors Memo 2, TT7 Managers Meeting, TT8 Educational Leaders Meeting, TT9 Studio Coordinators Meeting).

Discussion points for these meetings include:

- Incidents
- Children's behaviour or responses
- Families' concerns
- Internal audits that indicate that something isn't working or isn't working well
- Observations by Directors, Managers, Educational Leaders, Studio educators or educators
- Misunderstandings between educators
- Reflections on educators' performance
- Reflections on children's achievement
- Feedback from families, educators or students on work placement
- Exit interviews with families or educators
- Plans for family or community engagement
- Research into current practice



- Research into education and care philosophy and practice
- External training, including visits to Reggio Emilia
- External networks
- Political pressures
- Changes in legislation
- Changes in the Assessment and Rating process
- New initiatives

As evidenced in 7C Educational Leadership at [REDACTED] sees leadership as a shared responsibility, rather than the sole province of the Directors or the Managers. Shared leadership ensures that the voices and choices of children, families and educators are heard and respected in the directions of programmes and the service. Families contribute to service directions through their various communications with the room educators, Managers and the Directors (see [https://www.\[REDACTED\].com.au/faq/](https://www.[REDACTED].com.au/faq/)). Children contribute to the operation of the centre through their Agreements in the room, their excitement and interest in their environment and their use of spaces, equipment and resources. Families are vocal about times when they feel they or their children are not receiving the high quality of care and education they expect. Fortunately, there are also many verbal and written compliments (see Photos 36 and TT6 and TT10 Directors' Memos).

Panel's consideration

101. The Panel noted that to be exceeding in standard 7.1 the following three themes need to be present:

- Exceeding theme 1: Practice is embedded in service operations
- Exceeding theme 2: Practice is informed by critical reflection
- Exceeding theme 3: Practice is shaped by meaningful engagement with families and/or the community.

102. As the service is already exceeding standard 7.1 in exceeding theme 1, a decision by the Panel that the service is exceeding in themes 2 and 3 would bring the service's rating for standard 7.1 from meeting to exceeding.

103. The Panel considered the following indicators of exceeding theme 2 when assessing whether service quality for standard 7.1 exceeds the NQS:

- Any change to the service's approach to governance is understood by all and implemented appropriately.
- Educators, co-ordinators and those with management responsibilities:



- critically reflect on the statement of philosophy, individually and together, to ensure it aligns with the service's current purpose, priorities, and approach to practice, and make changes where required to strengthen alignment and drive continuous improvement
 - engage in regular reviews of systems, policies and procedures to ensure they are effective, align with quality practice, are responsive to feedback identified through the service's risk management and quality improvement systems, and support consistent, high quality practice across the service
 - are aware of and able to discuss the service's governance and decision making processes and how these align with professional standards and contribute to continuous quality improvement.
 - The service supports and enables all members of the service team to provide feedback on opportunities to strengthen governance and administrative systems, including decision-making processes, and this feedback is respectfully considered.
 - Change processes are managed sensibly and collaboratively with key stakeholders and the rationale for change is clearly communicated.
104. The Panel noted the evidence contained a lot of description of initiatives providing opportunities for feedback, and families being supported to provide feedback on governance. For example, since 2015 the service has been seeking feedback from families, and uses Facebook, Instagram, blogs and the Parent Portal to do this.
105. However, the Panel considered there was little evidence or discussion of the effectiveness of these feedback channels. The Panel noted the exceeding theme requires the feedback to be used to shape practice and this was not evident.
106. The Panel observed that good structure and systems are in place, but that it was not evident how these are improved through critical reflection.
107. The Panel considered the following indicators of exceeding theme 3 when assessing whether service quality for standard 7.1 exceeds the NQS:
- Governance of the service:
 - reflects the unique geographical, cultural and community context of the service



- welcomes, reflects and draws on the voices, priorities and strengths of the children and families at the service.
- Educators, co-ordinators and those with management responsibilities:
 - actively support families and the community to meaningfully engage with the service philosophy, policies and procedures, and to provide feedback and contribute to regular reviews
 - actively support families and the community to understand the roles and responsibilities of members of the service team and how to engage with the service's feedback processes.
- The service supports and enables families and the community to provide feedback on governance arrangements and administrative systems, including decision-making and feedback processes.
- Governance and administrative arrangements contribute to a culture of inclusiveness and a sense of belonging at the service and suit the unique context of the service.

108. The Panel noted that the service gave evidence of a strong governance structure, but no evidence on how this structure is shaped by engagement with families and/or community.

109. The Panel noted the provider's evidence that families unhappy with the service were able to provide input, and that discussion of this input followed, but that no impact on service provision going forward was shown.

110. The Panel noted that meaningful engagement requires the input of families and the community being incorporated into the way the service is run.

111. The Panel was of the view that the service was meeting its obligations under the standard but that there was no evidence of exceeding practice.

Decision

112. The Panel by consensus decided that the service's practice did not demonstrate exceeding themes 2 and 3 in relation to standard 7.1. Therefore, it confirmed the service's rating of meeting for that standard.

Standard 7.2



113. Standard 7.2 is that:

Effective leadership builds and promotes a positive organisational culture and professional learning community.

114. Exceeding theme 3 is that:

Practice is shaped by meaningful engagement with families and/or the community.

Regulatory Authority's view

Assessment and rating report

115. In the assessment and rating report the regulatory authority states:

The quality improvement process contributes to a culture of inclusiveness and a sense of belonging at for educators, families and children at the service. There is a high focus on quality and improvement. Feedback is actively sought from children and families, community, educators and other member of staff.

All feedback is reflected upon at team meeting to improve quality experiences for the children and families.

The educational leader is passionate about early education and care, pedagogy and the inclusion of theorist information in day-to-day practices and this was evident in the way she supported educators and assisted them to build their capacity, understand their practices, including how they assess, reflect and plan for children's learning. When new families are going through orientation the educational leader explained it is part of her role to explain the curriculum and what her role entails at the service. The educational leader also explained how she is supported by the Pedagogical Coordinator and Pedagogical Leadership team, managers, educators and children in her role to attend professional development opportunities in which is then share with all educators. She sees herself as a mentor for educators, children and families and commented, "she acts as a 'think tank" for educational issues, promote understanding of children's learning with families, assist with professional learning for educators at an appropriate level for them to understand, reflect on training and ensure consistent practices across the service.

The educational leader's role, and included in her job description, is to assist the provision of professional and workplace learning for all educators at an appropriate level and format . She also reflects upon training and supports planning for the next



professional learning event, which has been scheduled on the annual events calendar. A senior manager advised the practices of the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme are being integrated using an 'enquiry' method to strengthen educator's understandings of inquiry and for children's learning to be more visible to families and the community.

116. The service was rated as not exceeding in all three exceeding themes.

First tier review

117. The provider sought exceeding ratings in all three exceeding themes. The regulatory authority awarded the service exceeding ratings in exceeding themes 1 and 2.

118. Regulatory authority response to provider evidence on exceeding theme 3:

The information provided appears to give a rundown of the community in which the service is situated and the demographic of the families that attend the service. While the information included in the final report has been acknowledged, Quality Area Seven has a focus on governance and leadership as opposed to a primary focus on collaborative partnerships with families and communities. Evidence to show that leadership at the service reflects the unique geographical, cultural and community context of the service has not been provided. It is acknowledged that the service draws on the voices of the children and families through surveys, exit questionnaires and seeking feedback about the orientation and settling processes.

It is acknowledged that there is a range of mechanisms for families to provide feedback and input. The service states that 'All this information is included in our quality review processes and additions to the Quality Improvement Plan'. However, it is not clear how the information gathered on the 'Parent Input Forms', the photo journals, 'Settling and Orientation evaluations' and the 'Exit Questionnaires' are used to support families to participate meaningfully in the quality improvement process, including the development and review of the quality improvement plan.

It is acknowledged that there are mechanisms for families to discuss their own goals and expectations for their child's learning. However, there is no evidence to show how the families and the community are supported to understand the role of the educational leader in relation to their own child's participation in the service.



It is acknowledged that information from the 'Parent Input Forms', 'Photo Journal', 'Settling and Orientation Evaluation', 'Exit questionnaire', 'Open day Poster' and surveys is included in the quality review processes and additions to the quality improvement plan. However, there is no evidence provided to demonstrate that the quality improvement processes contribute to a culture of inclusiveness and a sense of belonging at the service.

It is acknowledged that the [REDACTED] educators attend conferences, seminars and tours. Educators also participate in a variety of network forums for research and support.

Approved Provider's view

Draft assessment and rating report feedback

119. The regulatory authority described the provider feedback as follows:

The provider feedback referred to the Assessment and Rating Draft Report as well as providing some extra information. In response to Exceeding theme 3, the provider feedback consisted of statements such as [REDACTED] has actively pursued community engagement through participation in the [REDACTED], engagement with the [REDACTED], connections with the [REDACTED] and visits to [REDACTED] Nursing Home and the library. Children's presence in the [REDACTED] community is marked by adults who engage with the children as they walk to their various excursion locations' and 'In 2017, the kindy teacher and babies Lead Educator participated in a research project through the [REDACTED] Network and showcased their learning at the Early Childhood Australia Play Summit. Another research project has been started in 2018, this time documenting children's engagement with the community.' Provider feedback also consisted of documentation such as surveys and feedback from families.

Provider feedback received included statements and documents such as educational leadership role document, feedback survey, emails and other records that supported the services previous rating of meeting national quality standards.

First tier review



120. The provider sought an exceeding rating in exceeding theme 3. They submitted their first tier review application form and a list of evidence as material considered as part of the first tier review process.

Second tier review

121. The provider contends that they are exceeding in exceeding theme 3. They submitted evidence in support such as:

Involvement in the local and wider educational community has been a strong focus for [REDACTED] over the last three years and this has benefitted our programmes, children, families and educators but has also supported understandings of other educators in relation to researching children's thinking and play (see 5F Gender Play). Our community sees our children and their capacities (as evidenced through our Exceeding rating for QA6). [REDACTED] is a work place of choice for the universities placing their early childhood education and care students.

Panel's consideration

122. The Panel noted that to be exceeding the standard the following three themes need to be present:

- Exceeding theme 1: Practice is embedded in service operations
- Exceeding theme 2: Practice is informed by critical reflection
- Exceeding theme 3: Practice is shaped by meaningful engagement with families and/or the community.

123. As the service is already exceeding standard 7.2 in exceeding themes 1 and 2, a decision by the Panel that the service is exceeding in theme 3 would bring the service's rating for standard 7.1 from meeting to exceeding.

124. The Panel considered the following indicators of exceeding theme 3 when assessing whether service quality for standard 7.2 exceeds the NQS:

- Leadership at the service:
 - reflects the unique geographical, cultural and community context of the service
 - welcomes, reflects and draws on the voices, priorities and strengths of the children and families at the service.
- Educators, co-ordinators and those with management responsibilities:



- support families and the community to participate meaningfully in the service's quality improvement processes, including the development and review of the Quality Improvement Plan
- support families and the community to understand the role of the educational leader in relation to their own child's participation in the service, and regularly invite them to discuss their own goals and expectations for their child's learning to inform the educational program.
- The service supports and enables families and the community to provide feedback on quality improvement processes, and this feedback is actively considered as part of the regular cycle of self-assessment that supports continuous quality improvement.
- The service builds and maintains community partnerships that strengthen the professional learning community and support continuous quality improvement, enhancing outcomes for children, families, and the service team.
- Quality improvement processes contribute to a culture of inclusiveness and a sense of belonging at the service, and suit the unique context of the service.

125. The Panel noted that in their view the service's evidence in relation to this standard related more to theme 2 than theme 3. They again noted the approach of the service describing practice rather than how that practice was shaped by meaningful engagement.
126. The Panel considered that the service did not demonstrate strong evidence of actively shaping its practice in response to engaging with families and/or communities.
127. The Panel considered that the provider's evidence seemed more focused on QA 6 than QA 7.
128. The Panel noted the provider's evidence of a list of community engagement projects, which indicated involvement with the community. However the Panel questioned whether or not this engagement was meaningful and shaped practice. The Panel considered there was not strong evidence on how the outcomes of these projects have been translated into practice and how the projects have been used. They noted that, to be exceeding, the service needs to evidence how the engagement has influenced what they do with the children and the leadership of the service.



129. The Panel also noted that there is no evidence that the relationships and engagement with families and the community have been maintained.

Decision

130. The Panel by consensus decided that the service's practice did not demonstrate exceeding theme 3 in relation to standard 7.7. Therefore, it confirmed the service's rating of meeting for that standard.