

## Ratings Review Decision Notice

**Panel members:** [REDACTED] [REDACTED] (Chair)  
[REDACTED] [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

**Panel date:** [REDACTED] [REDACTED] 2021

**Applicant:** [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

**Regulatory Authority:** Queensland Department of Education

**Decision:** The Ratings Review Panel (the panel), by consensus, decided to confirm the rating for Element 1.3.2 as Not Met. The service's overall rating remains as Working Towards NQS.

## Issues

1. The approved provider (the provider) sought a review of the ratings for Element 1.3.2 on the grounds that the regulatory authority failed to take into account or give sufficient weight to special circumstances or facts existing at the time of the assessment and rating.

## Overview

2. After assessment and rating, as documented in the final assessment and rating report, the overall rating for the service was Working Towards NQS. Ratings for each standard were:

### **Quality Area 1: Working Towards NQS**

Standard 1.1: Meeting NQS

Standard 1.2: Meeting NQS

**Standard 1.3: Working Towards NQS**

- **Element 1.3.2 was rated Not Met**

### **Quality Area 2: Meeting NQS**

Standard 2.1: Meeting NQS

Standard 2.2: Meeting NQS

### **Quality Area 3: Meeting NQS**

Standard 3.1: Meeting NQS

Standard 3.2: Meeting NQS

### **Quality Area 4: Meeting NQS**

Standard 4.1: Meeting NQS

Standard 4.2: Meeting NQS

### **Quality Area 5: Meeting NQS**

Standard 5.1: Meeting NQS

Standard 5.2: Meeting NQS

### **Quality Area 6: Meeting NQS**

Standard 6.1: Meeting NQS

Standard 6.2: Meeting NQS

### **Quality Area 7: Meeting NQS**

Standard 7.1: Meeting NQS

Standard 7.2: Meeting NQS

3. The provider applied for first tier review in relation to Quality Area 1, Standard 1.3 and, specifically, Element 1.3.2.

4. The regulatory authority determined, as documented in the first tier review report, that Element 1.3.2 had not been demonstrated and remained as Not Met, and that Standard 1.3 remained as Working Towards NQS.
5. As a result of the first tier review, the overall service rating remained as Working Towards NQS.

## Evidence before the panel

6. 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
  - the assessment and rating instruments and the final assessment and rating report
  - the service's feedback to the draft report
  - the application for first tier review and its attachments
  - the regulatory authority's findings at first tier review
  - the regulatory authority's submission to second tier review.

## The law

7. Section 151(1) of the *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2020* (the National Law) states:

'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

8. [REDACTED] is a long day care service located in [REDACTED] Queensland.
9. The current assessment and rating [REDACTED] [REDACTED].
10. The service's assessment and rating visit took place on [REDACTED] 2021.
11. The draft report was sent to the provider on [REDACTED] 2021, with feedback submitted to the regulatory authority on [REDACTED] 2021.
12. The final report was approved and sent to the provider on [REDACTED] 2021.
13. The provider applied for first tier review by the regulatory authority on [REDACTED] 2021.
14. The regulatory authority made a decision on the provider's first tier review application on [REDACTED] 2021. The decision notice was sent to the provider on the same day.
15. The provider applied for second tier review on [REDACTED] 2021.

## Items for review by Ratings Review Panel at second tier review

### Standard 1.3

16. Standard 1.3 is:

*Educators and co-ordinators take a planned and reflective approach to implementing the program for each child.*

17. Element 1.3.2 is:

*Critical reflection on children's learning and development, both as individuals and in groups, drives program planning and implementation.*

### Standard 1.3: Assessment and rating

18. The regulatory authority assessed the Standard 1.3 as Working Towards NQS, with Elements 1.3.1 and 1.3.2 rated as Not Met.

19. Evidence that was observed, sighted and/or discussed specific to Element 1.3.2 is documented in the assessment and rating draft report. This includes the following:

- *Educator programming room contained a poster of the ECA commitments to action, [REDACTED] code of conduct and [REDACTED] support structure for educator reference. A poster about reflective practice and the importance of this with prompting questions for educators to reflect on different areas including, the self, learning environment, practice, program plan, and children.*
- *Documentation provided titled 'critical reflection' contained posts from educators from each room. One critical reflection from the [REDACTED] room contained one sentence stating, 'settling in new children. becoming more familiar with room and routines. Becoming competent with policy and procedure.' Another from [REDACTED] stated 'Welcoming new families this week, speaking to all and sending out multiple request for our room, which I have had amazing responses to and have began implementing projects throughout our room.'*
- *Documentation provided titled 'critical reflection' contained posts from educators from each room. One critical reflection from the [REDACTED] room contained a statement, 'meal times and how we can try and stop the children that aren't eating at the table from others food and off the ground! - communicate to children about not eating food off the ground – sitting and doing/key educator is tricky as when they babies see food, that's all they want, thoughts?' The two other educators in the room responses included, 'I agree with this, maybe we can try having one educator on the other side of the room being with the children who are not eating whilst the other educator is with the children who are eating.' Another Educator added 'I was thinking about the food falling on the ground issue...we could use an extra plate or bucket...placing food in it as soon as it's dropped on the floor. I think also...getting extra chairs to sit them all down at the same time to have a biscuit while other children eat their lunch or meal.'*
- *Documentation provided titled 'critical reflection' contained posts from educators from each room. Various posts contained statements including, 'I have put onto this weeks*

*program to make bag tags and create an 'About Me' page that they can illustrate and we can hang up in room.'; 'we need to make a display showing key children.'; 'I would like to set the hygiene area up next week with children's photos, fix the hat rack and frames.'; we also need to add a more defined book area with soft furnishings and a colour focus area, we also need to put up a shelf for the hygiene station.'*

- *Individual children's [REDACTED], feedback, summative assessment, milestones...' document provided a column titled [REDACTED] reflection/evaluations and date achieved. In this column Educators responses include, '3.2.21 child has demonstrated trust and confidence in his educators. He feels comfortable in his new environment. He becomes upset when he needs assistance such as a bottle, tired, comfort etc. Child demonstrates a feeling of being safe, secure and supported. GOAL ACHIEVED.'* Another two individual children's plan contain no information in this column.
- *The Nominated Supervisor advised that every staff member is responsible for critical reflections. These are done individually either on [REDACTED] or in educators own personal diaries, room reflections are completed using a review tool process in the form of a checklist with questions at the end for Educators to answer including the successes in the room for the month as well as challenges to overcome. Educators then use the previous month review tool in the current month to compare and discuss changes or improvements required. Video reflections are also used where Educators are filmed in practice and then asked to reflect on it.*
- *The Educational Leader discussed an example of a critical reflection in practice in one of the younger age group rooms around meal times. EL stated that "Educators had noticed that children were washing their hands and then walking to meal time tables and touching numerous things along the way, walls, sandpit, doors or stopping to play, as the table was quite a distance away from the bathroom. When discussing this, Educators came to the agreement that during the transition period from children moving into the room they would eat meals inside to cater for this transition. Educators pushed the tables together to create a group experience and Educators sit at children's level and engage in conversations during meal times. The group have started to trial having picnics outside on a rug closer to the bathroom to assist in effective hand washing hygiene. This is an ongoing practice they will keep working on together.*

20. In the assessment and rating draft report, the regulatory authority set out the following analysis in relation to Standard 1.3:

*Individual children's plans demonstrate, at times, the elements of a cycle of planning, including observe, question, plan, act and reflect. Information gathered about each individual child is typically gathered by using the educator/family goal. Families are informed about the program via [REDACTED] which enables them to access the weekly curriculum as well as their individual child's progress and learning documentation.*

*However,*

*Some observations contained limited context to support statements made at the 'observe' stage of the cycle to demonstrate individual children's learning and development. Information about each child's knowledge, strengths, ideas, culture,*

*abilities and interests was not always the foundation of the program. Critical reflection documentation did not provide evidence that Educators critically reflect on children's learning and development, both as individuals and in groups in order to drive the program planning and implementation. Critical reflection practices do not identify how educators regularly examine all aspects of events and experiences from different perspectives with a focus on equity, inclusion and diversity.*

### **Standard 1.3: Provider's feedback on the draft report**

21. The provider submitted a response to the draft report in relation to Standard 1.3 in their feedback template. Specific to Element 1.3.2, they stated:

*The centre opened in [REDACTED] 2019. As the centre has grown in children and educators, critical reflection from different viewpoints and lens is a natural occurrence as families, children and educators have come together to belong, be and become in a newly established environment. At the time of assessment, the centre had a newly appointed [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] new team members settling into new roles alongside welcoming new families and transitioning children into new rooms. As evident in the draft report, QA 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7, all met NQS as a result of continuous collaborative critical reflection. However, additional evidence is provided on further events and experiences to support different perspectives with a focus on equity, inclusion and diversity.*

22. In their response to the draft report, the provider highlighted specific considerations, with supporting evidence provided, as follows:

#### ***Critical reflection on children's learning and development***

*At the time of visit, documentation was provided on only one example of a cycle of planning for each room. However, educators do critically reflect on children's learning and development both as individual and in groups to drive the program and planning implementation.*

#### ***Collaborative critical reflection***

*At the time of visit, documentation was provided on educators' collaborative critical reflection on the following areas:*

- *Staff meeting reflection*
- *Code of Ethics reflection*
- [REDACTED]
- *Routines and rituals, in particular meal time transition*
- *Centre compliance checklist reflection*
- [REDACTED]
- *Use of two programs.*

#### ***Meal Time Critical Reflection progress***

*We provide addition evidence to show the critical reflection cycle on the meal time transition topic.*

### **Floor book critical reflection**

*A teaching and learning goal was collaboratively set as a follow-up from recent discussions and research on floor books. Additional evidence is provided as evidence of educators introducing floor books into their environments.*

*The [REDACTED] [REDACTED] room also took on the idea of floor books, and after trialing this idea for several weeks, they critically reflected on the value it added to their program for this age group. Their critical reflection, including examples from the floor books, is attached as additional evidence.*

### **Worm farm critical reflection**

*A team discussion was initiated by an educator/student completing a sustainability assignment. Through this discussion, it was identified that the [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were investigating bugs and had been having discussions with the children about worms. From here, the [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] project work extended to include the worm farm. We have provided additional evidence on where the worm farm idea started, to this point in time. The additional evidence includes a planning and reflection cycle.*

### **New educators and critical reflection**

*As stated in the QIP, new Educators starting at the centre and will need to revisit critical reflection practices to support and guide Educator practice uplift whilst driving program planning and implementation. The learning and development plan is provided as additional evidence.*

## **Standard 1.3: Final report**

23. In the assessment and rating final report, the regulatory authority determined that Element 1.3.1 was Met, but not Element 1.3.2.
24. The regulatory authority set out a similar analysis in relation to Standard 1.3 in the final report compared with the draft report. This analysis stated:

*Individual children's plans demonstrate, at times, the elements of a cycle of planning, including observe, question, plan, act and reflect. Information gathered about each individual child is typically gathered by using the educator/family goal. Families are informed about the program via [REDACTED] which enables them to access the weekly curriculum as well as their individual child's progress and learning documentation.*

*However,*

*Some observations contained little to no context to support statements made at the 'observe' stage of the cycle to demonstrate individual children's learning and development. Information about each child's knowledge, strengths, ideas, culture, abilities and interests was not always the foundation of the program. Critical reflection documentation did not provide evidence that Educators critically reflect on children's learning and development, both as individuals and in groups in order to drive the program planning and implementation. Critical reflection practices do not identify how*

*educators regularly examine all aspects of events and experiences from different perspectives with a focus on equity, inclusion and diversity.*

25. Specific to Element 1.3.2, the regulatory authority noted consideration of feedback to the draft report received from the provider, as follows:

*On [REDACTED] 2021, the Approved Provider submitted feedback to the draft assessment and rating report for Element 1.3.2. The feedback submitted consisted of statements relating to this element and evidence as follows:*

- Critical reflection evidence from educators in each learning environment;*
- Collaborative critical reflections; and*
- A [REDACTED] for all educators to re-visit critical reflection.*

*In response to the feedback from the Approved Provider, **Element 1.3.2** has been reviewed and will remain as **not met**. In the documentation provided there was evidence that educators actively record reflections on a variety of aspects including the program, children's experiences and the learning environments. These reflections, while titled 'critical reflection' generally focus on evaluating the success or effectiveness of an activity, experience or professional development opportunity. For example, statements include; 'this weeks activities went well,' 'the change from the kitchen to the baby area is working very well and children are enjoying having more space to engage in this area of role play,' 'transitions have been successful, the children have moved into our room well, as they all moved up together, they still have their friends.'*

*A document was provided titled [REDACTED]' which outlined a goal for all Educators to 'revisit critical reflection practices to support and guide educator practice uplift whilst driving program planning and implementation.' The main objective of this plan was for 'all Educators to ensure that they are consistently critically reflecting on the educational program, children's learning, pedagogical practice and learning environments.' This plan also identified actions and responsibilities to be undertaken in order to achieve the objective, with a target date of [REDACTED] 2021. This document had no further information regarding any progress or review of critical reflection for all/any educators across the service.*

*There was some documentation provided that evidence critical reflection occurring at various times and based on various aspects of the service's program, children's experiences and the learning environments, however this documentation was not consistent across all rooms and educators at the service.*

26. After consideration of all evidence, the regulatory authority determined that Standard 1.3 would remain as Working Towards NQS.

### **Standard 1.3: First tier review**

27. The provider applied for first tier review, seeking for the rating for Element 1.3.2 to be amended to Met.
28. In their first tier review application, the provider specified the grounds of their review application as follows:

*We believe that at [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] we are achieving Meeting in QA1 and are asking you to review element 1.3.2. In addition to the feedback that was provided during the draft report feedback process, we have attached some more evidence to support a meeting rating. Please note that this evidence has been entered in to the attached template with feedback added against the element. Appendices have also been added.*

29. In the feedback template submitted as part of their first tier review application, the provider responded to content from the final assessment and rating report, describing how, in their view, the service met Element 1.3.2. They stated:

*Critical reflection on children's learning and development, both as individuals and in groups, drives our program planning and implementation. Critical Reflection allows us to question what has happened and to consider changes and improvements on our practice and Knowledge. This reflection and questioning assists Educators to achieve the best outcomes for children.*

*We critically reflect on the children, planning, the environment, our self and our practice. We have provided a selection of examples of each rooms Critical Reflection in:*

- *Children's learning plans with regards to their observations, goals, spontaneous learning (individual and group), their interests and development.*
- *The EYLF regarding children's learning through Summative assessments and Room goals.*
- *Educator's Individual critical reflection (self)*
- *Each learning Space/room - collaborates as a small group to create opportunity for conversation and debate though room goals, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and practice and environment reviews*
- *As a Team/Centre to ensure all voices are heard and respected through the reflective practice room on [REDACTED] and in PD at Team meetings.*

*Some of this evidence has been provided in our last feedback BUT we have clearly highlighted each step in how we take a reflection to a critical reflection stage. We have also included evidence from the period between draft and final reports to show how our practice is consistent, including the growth of our less experienced Certificate III educators. All these reflections drive the program, planning and implementation.*

*The selection of examples we provide are over three months from educators in each of the six learning spaces. Evidence is highlighted in each attachment, for example:*

- *why educators may have responded in the way they did*
- *how educators felt*
- *why educators made certain decisions*
- *what may have influenced educators' actions*
- *which theoretical perspectives educators draw on in their decision-making (whether deliberately or subconsciously).*

*We draw your attention to the attachment provided. The examples provided in this attachment are evidence of reflective questions that guide our team in the initial*

*conversations around a topic. These topics for discussion are elaborated on to inform individual and team critical reflections on the children, planning, the environment, our self and our practice.*

A [REDACTED] plan for critical reflection was created in [REDACTED] 2021 to support the newly employed [REDACTED] educators in developing a deeper understanding on critical reflection. The plan is reviewed regularly as the plan progresses. As this plan is a living document, the most recently updated review has been attached.

30. The provider also supplied a number of documents in support of their first tier review submission.
31. At first tier review, the regulatory authority panel considered evidence provided at assessment and rating and first tier review in making their decision, as detailed in the first tier review report - referred to as First Tier Review: Findings and Reasons.
32. In highlighting the relevant facts and findings, the regulatory authority noted that the evidence showed:
  - *The Approved Provider provides educators with a number of reflection templates for completion. Examples included:*
    - [REDACTED]
    - [REDACTED] Reflection
    - [REDACTED] Reflection Tool
    - [REDACTED] Goal
    - Educator Weekly Reflection
    - Educator Monthly Reflection
    - Educator Room Reflection
    - Self-Reflection template
    - Reflection template
    - Critical Reflection – [REDACTED]
    - [REDACTED]
    - [REDACTED]
    - [REDACTED]
    - [REDACTED] Critical Reflection [REDACTED]
    - [REDACTED]
    - Reflection [REDACTED]
    - Reflection [REDACTED]
    - Reflection [REDACTED]
    - [REDACTED] – [REDACTED] observation template
    - Code of Ethics Reflection
    - Staff Meeting Reflection
  - *Educators complete 'Term Room Goals' that align with the Learning Outcomes of the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) and centre philosophy.*

- *Educators complete Developmental [REDACTED] for individual children and reflect on how the children have progressed within that developmental area.*
- *Educators complete Individual Reflections on a variety of topics, for example, the program, meal times, environment, routines, specific learning areas and children's behaviour.*
- *Each term, educators' complete individual children's goals on [REDACTED] that includes spontaneous learning, teaching strategies, planned experiences, progress of learning and [REDACTED] reflections/evaluations where educators document whether the goal was achieved and where to next.*
- *Summative Assessments are completed for individual children with educators reflecting on the children's learning in line with the Learning Outcomes of the Early Years Learning Framework.*
- *Spontaneous group observations are completed with educators reflecting on the experience that had occurred.*
- *The Educational Leader poses reflective questions on [REDACTED] with responses from educators on a variety of topics.*

33. The regulatory authority determined that the facts and findings support a decision that there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate that Element 1.3.2 is met. In making this decision, the regulatory authority outlined the following rationale:

*From this evidence it is clear that there are many tools and templates available to educators to assist in their reflective practice.*

*The reflective questions and answers on [REDACTED] demonstrated that educators often reflect on aspects of the environment and practices as well as on specific topics. However, these reflections were not specifically related to children's learning and development as required under Element 1.3.2.*

*Several individual reflections that were submitted as evidence related more to operational aspects of the service, rather than children's learning and development. For example, replacing the Early Childhood Teacher, not enough chairs for all the children, educators being on their own during meal times, creating and displaying an outdoor cleaning checklist, replacing the lost posters and placing them higher in order for children not to peel them off the wall.*

*Educators recorded daily reflections on the curriculum, programs and experiences, and interactions with children. These reflections, while often written under the title of 'Critical Reflection', generally focused on evaluating the success or effectiveness of an activity or the development of an individual child rather than critically reflecting on children's learning and development.*

*A [REDACTED] document was submitted with the objective for 'educators to ensure that they are consistently critically reflecting on the educational program, children's learning, pedagogical practice and learning environments'. The plan documented actions, responsibilities, target date and indicators in order to achieve the*

*objective. However, the document did not demonstrate how educators are thinking about all aspects of the program, the principles that guide them, the practices they use and the learning outcomes for the children.*

*The Approved Provider submitted completed [REDACTED] [REDACTED] that demonstrated that educators were completing:*

- *Documentation expectations*
- *Effective planning and programming expectations*
- *Planning cycle expectations.*

*In addition, with the document, educators were documenting the [REDACTED] [REDACTED].*

*The documentation did not provide an example of how educators critically reflect on children's learning and development.*

*The Approved Provider submitted a completed, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] regarding the worm farm. The Approved Provider highlighted that this form may influence educators' actions. However, this related more closely to Element 2.2.1 Supervision as it concerned children's safety rather than focusing on the program and practice.*

*Educators complete a [REDACTED] Reflection' template that demonstrated some elements of critical reflection. For example, educators were encouraged to respond to questions with the intention being to gather information and gain insights that support, inform and enrich decision-making about children's learning. Whilst this shows some indication of reflective practice that is 'critical', it is not occurring meaningfully and consistently across the service and program.*

*The evidence demonstrates that some documentation submitted demonstrated that individual educators at times showed aspects of critical reflection on individual children and program changes, analysed their own work including their interactions with children and families, and reflected on their teaching strategies and how these could be improved; however, on balance there wasn't sufficient evidence to demonstrate that across the service critical reflection on children's learning and development drives the program planning and implementation.*

*Critical reflection takes reflections and evaluations to a deeper level, focusing more on the 'why?' Critical Reflection:*

- *May be an internal process done by an individual educator or team discussion*
- *Considers multiple perspectives*
- *Makes clear links between theory and practice*
- *Makes changes to practice to improve outcomes for children.*

*Critical reflection involves educators discussing their own values and biases with other colleagues to explore different viewpoints, knowledge, and experiences to that of their own; examining all aspects of events and experiences from different perspectives to search for ways to make a positive change and trying out different strategies based on*

*research and theorists to support each child's further learning and development and to drive program planning and implementation. The purpose of critical reflection is to help educators become increasingly thoughtful about their work and to motivate them to explore new ideas and approaches.*

*It was clear that the Approved Provider has processes in place to encourage critical reflection such as numerous templates. It was evident that educators complete many different forms of reflections across the service, however, there was limited evidence to demonstrate that critical reflection in regards to children's learning and development, both as individuals and in groups, drives program planning and implementation at the service.*

*The Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) has a document that outlines the difference between critical reflection and reflection/evaluation. The document can be found on the ACECQA website under 'Resources and Research – Meeting NQS'. This document may be helpful for discussion at team meetings and professional development days at the service.*

*Therefore, Element 1.3.2 has not being demonstrated and remains as Not Met and Standard 1.3 remains Working Towards National Quality Standard.*

34. Following first tier review, the rating for Standard 1.3 remained as Working Towards NQS, as did the service's overall rating.

### **Standard 1.3: Second tier review**

35. At second tier review, the provider sought a review of the ratings level for Element 1.3.2. In support of their second tier review application, the provider submitted an additional document. This document detailed their response to feedback from the regulatory authority contained in the first tier review report.
36. The provider highlighted the following text from the first tier review report specific to Element 1.3.2:

*The reflective questions and answers on [REDACTED] demonstrated that educators often reflect on aspects of the environment and practices as well as on specific topics. However, these reflections were not specifically related to children's learning and development as required under Element 1.3.2.*

*The Approved Provider submitted a completed, [REDACTED] regarding the worm farm. The Approved Provider highlighted that this form may influence educators' actions. However, this related more closely to Element 2.2.1 Supervision as it concerned children's safety rather than focusing on the program and practice.*

37. In response, the provider stated:

*The reflective questions and answers on [REDACTED] encourage our educators to engage in analytical and diagnostic thinking to honestly and critically reflect in detail on all aspects of the program, their professional practice, and look holistically at the children's learning and development. While these topics cover a range of quality areas across the*



*NQS, (refer to attachment provided A&R feedback first tier) when combined, these reflective practice topics are a form of ongoing learning that supports our team in thinking about all aspects of the program, the principles that guide them, the practices they use and the learning outcomes for children. These [REDACTED] reflective questions are one of a variety of tools we use to start the conversations and seek everyone's opinion as part of stage one of the reflection process. **As stated in the EYLF (p. 10), "Educators' practices and the relationships they form with children and families have a significant effect on children's involvement and success in learning."** This comment supports that the reflective questions and answers on [REDACTED] is supporting children's learning and development.*

*The reflective process of completing a [REDACTED] form for a worm farm supports educators, children and families debate and collaborative inquiry as a team to improve opportunities for children learning and development. This process of inquiry was to further children's learning by reflecting around safety to examine all aspects of establishing the experience to inform the planning and respond to the spontaneous experiences. Completing a [REDACTED] form allows for different perspectives to support equity, inclusion and diversity which drives our program and practice for children's learning and development. For example: to extend children's interest and learning in the Science Area around insects and bugs, the worm farm was introduced. The [REDACTED] was a form of reflection to enable this learning to continue. The completed [REDACTED] form provides evidence of stage two of our reflection cycle. We refer you to the beginning of the reflection cycle which was a [REDACTED] post (see A&R draft feedback attachment). We began the worm farm project by gathering everyone's input. We elaborated on these first reflections through gathering further information to develop a management plan and [REDACTED] (see A&R draft feedback attachment). These processes deepened our understanding of managing and planning our program for the inclusion of a worm farm to support children's learning and development. A&R draft feedback attachment provides evidence of the implementation of the worm farm in the program and further reflection (as seen on p.4).*

*When each of our stages of reflection are combined, as seen in the worm farm example, our critical reflection across all quality areas does that drive children's learning and development.*

38. The provider highlighted the following text from the first tier review report specific to Element 1.3.2:

*Several individual reflections that were submitted as evidence related more to operational aspects of the service, rather than children's learning and development. For example, replacing the Early Childhood Teacher, not enough chairs for all the children, educators being on their own during meal times, creating and displaying an outdoor cleaning checklist, replacing the lost posters and placing them higher in order for children not to peel them off the wall.*

39. In response, the provider stated:

*We challenge the above statement on reflection on operational aspects of the service, rather than children's learning and development. As per the Guide to the National Quality Framework Element 1.3.2 – Critical reflection involves closely examining all aspects of events and experiences from different perspectives with a focus on implications for equity, inclusion and diversity (p.134), our reflections on resources and furniture for children, meals times, health and hygiene, and displays have a direct impact on the program and practice we provide for children's learning and development. Our reflections on the operational issues of the service support our educators in thinking deeper, analysing, building on their knowledge and skills, and identifying programs and practices that can be continued as well as what might need to be improved or changed. Reflection across the NQS elements supports our educators to identify ways to improve opportunities for children's participation, learning and development as individuals and in groups.*

*For example, we identified an issue with our mealtime routines and rituals across the service. As can be seen in attachment provided in A&R draft feedback, we worked through our process of reflection to ensure our children's learning and development were supported and improved during this key time in our programs.*

*Attachment provided in A&R draft feedback (p. 2 - 4) provides further evidence of how this centre-wide issue was further elaborated on within an individual room program.*

40. The provider highlighted the following text from the first tier review report specific to Element 1.3.2:

*Educators recorded daily reflections on the curriculum, programs and experiences, and interactions with children. These reflections, while often written under the title of 'Critical Reflection', generally focused on evaluating the success or effectiveness of an activity or the development of an individual child rather than critically reflecting on children's learning and development.*

41. In response, the provider stated:

*The NQS states "educators: - plan the program including: - 'reflect' on individual children's learning and participation and the program as a whole, to support further planning for learning (p. 131). Our lead educators reflect at every step of the planning cycle as they think about their practice and decisions, and children's engagement with the program. Our educators reflect in the moment throughout the day (as noted in final report notes p. 40), room conversations and during their programming and planning time. They reflect and evaluate how effective, meaningful and relevant their observations and analyses are. They reflect on how children respond to the program, as well as the intentional teaching strategies they used to support children learning and development. The reflection found on the individual plans is part of the reflective cycle our educators take to deepen their knowledge about children's learning and development. While some of this documentation is reflective (stage one of our reflective cycle), there are critical questions identifying and assessing about our knowledge, the way we perceive events and issues, our beliefs, feelings, and actions (stage two of our reflective cycle). Our educators look back on the planning cycle reflections to inform*

*ongoing learning and development for our children and placed into the program document. Our daily and weekly reflections are used to make changes to their program and practice which are seen in their further planning and evaluation of that planning. Attachment provided in A&R draft feedback is an example of the stages we take to support the critical reflection process. We provided examples of this process for each room in A&R draft feedback (refer QA 1.3.1 evidence).*

42. The provider highlighted the following text from the first tier review report specific to Element 1.3.2:

*A Learning and Development Plan document was submitted with the objective for 'educators to ensure that they are consistently critically reflecting on the educational program, children's learning, pedagogical practice and learning environments. The plan documented actions, responsibilities, target date and indicators in order to achieve the objective. However, the document did not demonstrate how educators are thinking about all aspects of the program, the principles that guide them, the practices they use and the learning outcomes for the children.*

43. In response, the provider stated:

*As part of our on boarding process of new educators to the [REDACTED] team, we like to set our new team member up for success. We know that critical reflection is key to driving practice improvement across the centre, and across all quality areas, including children's learning and development. The objective of the plan was to ensure our team felt supported as they settled into their new roles at our centre. This [REDACTED] [REDACTED] plan forms part of our commitment to our ongoing improvement process. The [REDACTED] plan is a living document as seen in A&R draft feedback attachment and A&R first tier feedback attachment.*

*In regard to the statement that the document did not demonstrate how educators are thinking about all aspects of the program, the principles that guide them, the practices they use and the learning outcomes for the children, we draw your attention to the action in the [REDACTED] Plan - For the educator to utilise the [REDACTED] [REDACTED] as a tool for reflecting on their practice. The [REDACTED] states the EYLF underpins the [REDACTED] [REDACTED] ([REDACTED]) and refers to the EYLF principles, practices and learning outcomes (see picture below). The [REDACTED] plan was created to support our QIP actions to further enhance quality improvement across the service.*

44. The provider highlighted the following text from the first tier review report specific to Element 1.3.2:

*The Approved Provider submitted completed [REDACTED] [REDACTED] that demonstrated that educators were completing:*

- *Documentation expectations*
- *Effective planning and programming expectations*
- *Planning cycle expectations*

*In addition, with the document, educators were documenting the [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. The documentation did not provide an example of how educators critically reflect on children's learning and development.*

45. In response, the provider stated:

*[REDACTED] Tool is used as a 'checklist' to support our educators meeting documentation expectations of children's learning and development. This tool supports educators in gathering evidence to guide their self-reflection on how their planning and documentation is used to support children's learning and development. By reflecting on [REDACTED], educators are able to take the time to reflect on their practice at a deeper level to ensure that they are documenting children's learning and development. This tool is part of our reflection cycle (refer to all attachments for "room" critical reflections provided in A&R feedback tier 1).*

46. The provider highlighted the following text from the first tier review report specific to Element 1.3.2:

*Educators complete a [REDACTED] 'Reflection' template that demonstrated some elements of critical reflection. For example, educators were encouraged to respond to questions with the intention being to gather information and gain insights that support, inform and enrich decision-making about children's learning. Whilst this shows some indication of reflective practice that is 'critical', it is not occurring meaningfully and consistently across the service and program, and*

*The evidence demonstrates that some documentation submitted demonstrated that individual educators at times showed aspects of critical reflection on individual children and program changes, analysed their own work including their interactions with children and families, and reflected on their teaching strategies and how these could be improved; however, on balance there wasn't sufficient evidence to demonstrate that across the service critical reflection on children's learning and development drives the program planning and implementation.*

47. In response, the provider stated:

*The [REDACTED] 'Reflection' template is used to support the educator reflections on their room goals and forms part of the critical reflection process. The questions on this template guide our educators in the process of thinking deeper on children's group learning and development. The questions on the "[REDACTED] Reflection" are taken for the Guide for the NQS in 1.3.2 (p. 135 – 136) as follows:*

*Critical reflection takes reflective practice to a deeper level and includes educators analysing or diagnosing what happened and why. For example:*

- *why educators may have responded in the way they did*
- *how educators felt*
- *why educators made certain decisions*
- *what may have influenced educators' actions*

- *which theoretical perspectives educators draw on in their decision-making (whether deliberately or subconsciously).*

*Critical reflection helps educators to build on their knowledge and skills, identifying practice that can be continued as well as what might need to be improved or changed. It also helps educators to identify ways to improve opportunities for children's participation, learning and development. Educational leaders support educators to consider questions such as:*

- *How do we currently examine our practices and decision-making, and identify improvements as well as successes?*
- *Have we considered which children may be advantaged and whether any child is disadvantaged?*
- *How do we use the approved learning framework/s to help us reflect?*
- *How are we creating opportunities for conversations, debates, and collaborative inquiries as a team, ensuring that all voices are heard and responded to with respect?*
- *What questions do I have about my work? What am I challenged by? What am I curious about? What am I confronted by?*
- *What strategies do I use to demonstrate that I value diversity and work to ensure all children have opportunities to fully participate in the program? (adapted from the Early Years Learning Framework, p. 13; and the Framework for School Age Care, pp. 11–12)*

*These reflective questions are used across all [redacted] rooms consistently throughout the service. The [redacted] Reflection' template is used as a [redacted] reflection tool ensuring that we allow ourselves time to stop and think at a point in time to consider if our room goals are contributing to children's learning and development. The [redacted] reflection contributes to the children's individual learning plans. This evidence was provided in tier 1 (refer to attachments relating to room critical reflections).*

*Each child within the service has an Individual learning plan, and therefore our critical reflection process is consistent across the service in each of our [redacted] rooms.*

*Each observation is evaluated/reflected on as part of the cycle of planning which in turn drive the program planning and implementation. Each educator brings to our centre a variety of experiences and qualifications, and their critical reflection is appropriate to their level of experience and qualification.*

*Evidence was provided from each room, (refer to attachments from all A&R draft feedback provided for QA 1.3.1) and as stated, demonstrated our process of critical reflection on children's learning and development. Driving the program, planning and implementation for children we use a combination of:*

- *Children/groups – Children's floor books, children's Individual learning plans and observations - evaluated/reflected on as part of the cycle of planning and critically reflected on, driving the program planning and implementation.*

- *Children's summative assessments (for all children) – is critically reflecting on all of the EYLF/██████ outcomes driving the program planning and implementation.*
- *Children's developmental milestones (for all children) – an observation critically reflecting on what we know about the child's development driving the program, planning and implementation.*

### Panel considerations

48. In deliberating on whether Element 1.3.2 was met or not met, the panel commented on the timing of the assessment and rating, which was held early in the year. They added that while this may have impacted the service's capacity to submit current examples of critical reflection (for example, critical reflection on the goals set for each room at the time of the rating assessment), it did not preclude them from submitting evidence of critical reflection from the previous year to support their claims.
49. The panel also remarked that this was the service's first assessment and rating, noting that Element 1.3.2 was identified as an area for improvement in their Quality Improvement Plan as well as their ██████████ plan, which was positive. They added that while there was evidence the service had a structure and resources to guide their reflective practice, they queried if the number of templates being used was helping the service to attain its improvement goal for all educators to use critical reflection to drive program planning and implementation.
50. The panel commented on the abundance of evidence submitted by the provider, noting that some evidence was dated after the service's assessment and rating visit. They added that while this was evidence that the service team is continuing to reflect on their practice after assessment and rating, evidence of quality improvement after the assessment and rating visit cannot be considered or used to justify a higher rating in the second tier review process.
51. The panel noted that, on the evidence provided, there was a potential misunderstanding about what critical reflection means, noting that critical reflection is different to and requires a deeper level of questioning and analysis to reporting, summarising or describing an event or occurrence. The panel also added that Element 1.3.2 relates to critical reflection on children's learning and development to inform program planning and implementation, noting that not all evidence submitted related to this Element.
52. The panel also noted that critical reflection as it pertains to Element 1.3.2 is different to critical reflection as it relates to Exceeding theme 2. The panel noted that in their view, some of the evidence submitted was more relevant to critical reflection specific to other Standards. For example, the educator's reflection of a child who had a seizure was more relevant to Quality Area 2. Further, the panel noted that the reflection provided specific to this example did not, in their view, highlight what insights educators had gained from this experience or how it informed their decision making specific to this child's learning and development.
53. Drawing on another example, the panel highlighted an educator's observation that some children in the group were on pureed food and should be on solids, and that they would

“do some research and see.” The panel noted that they were unable to locate what this educator had discovered through this research and how this had informed program planning and implementation to enhance children’s learning and development. Further, this example was, in their view, more closely aligned to Quality Area 2.

54. The panel also noted that Element 1.3.2 requires that critical reflection should relate to both individual and groups of children. They remarked that the evidence provided was predominately of groups of children. They added that while there were some references to individual children, such as in the floor book examples, these examples were more descriptive in nature than evidence of critical reflection.
55. The panel noted that the evidence provided did not in some instances support the provider’s arguments made in their second tier review submission. For example, the panel noted the provider’s claim that “By reflecting on [REDACTED] [REDACTED] educators are able to take the time to reflect on their practice at a deeper level to ensure that they are documenting children’s learning and development”. The panel added that, in their view, the examples provided did not support their claim and lacked the analysis and deep thinking required for critical reflection. For example, comments that the children had settled in well with a new educator in the room were, in the panel’s view, more descriptive or evaluative than evidence of critical reflection.
56. The panel encouraged the service team to deepen their understanding of what critical reflection specific to Element 1.3.2 means and looks like, and to further develop and strengthen the quality of their critical reflection on children’s learning and development, both as individuals and in groups, to inform program planning and implementation. They also encouraged the service to consider streamlining processes for critically reflecting on practice, noting the number of templates currently in use aren’t necessarily assisting the service to realise their intentions specific to critical reflection. Further, in some instances the templates consisted of checklists and headings that did not support critical reflection, such as the [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
57. The panel highlighted one example of this tool, where educators in one room had identified engaging in regular critical reflection as something to improve on in the next month. The panel remarked that they were unable to determine, on the evidence provided, what had informed this improvement goal or how this informed decision making to drive program planning and implementation to enhance children’s learning and development. They added that there was also a lack of clear and relevant evidence of any subsequent analysis and critical reflection that may have followed. The panel also noted that this evidence was dated after the service’s assessment and rating visit.
58. The panel encouraged the service to strive for consistency in the quality of their critically reflective practice across the service noting that, on the evidence provided, critical reflection on children’s learning and development was not occurring consistently across all rooms or by all educators to drive program planning and implementation.

### Panel decision

59. The panel determined there was insufficient evidence that Element 1.3.2 was being demonstrated. They decided, by consensus, to confirm the rating for Element 1.3.2 as Not Met.

### General comments

60. The panel encouraged the service to view feedback received from the rating review processes – at both first and second tier review – as an opportunity to increase their understanding of critical reflection as it relates to Element 1.3.2. They highlighted a [critical reflection handout](#), which is available on the ACECQA website, as a resource that may assist the service in this regard.