

[REDACTED] **2021**

Ratings Review Decision Notice

Panel members

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Panel date

[REDACTED] 2021

Applicant

[REDACTED] on behalf of
[REDACTED]

Regulatory Authority NSW Department of Education

Decision

The Ratings Review Panel (the panel) by consensus, decided to confirm the ratings for the standards under review as follows:

- Standard 2.1 remains as Meeting NQS
- Standard 2.2 remains as Meeting NQS
- Standard 4.1 remains as Meeting NQS
- Standard 6.1 remains as Meeting NQS
- Standard 6.2 remains as Meeting NQS.

The service's overall rating remains as Exceeding NQS.

Issues

1. The approved provider (the provider) sought a review of the ratings for the above standards on the grounds that the regulatory authority did not appropriately apply the prescribed process for determining a rating level.

Overview

2. After initial assessment, the draft ratings outcome summary recorded the service's overall rating as Meeting NQS. Six standards were rated as Exceeding NQS, and nine standards were rated as Meeting NQS.
3. After considering the service's feedback on the draft rating outcome summary, the final ratings outcome summary recorded the service's overall rating as Exceeding NQS. Ten standards were rated as Exceeding NQS and five were rated as Meeting NQS. Ratings for each standard were:

Quality Area 1: Exceeding NQS

Standard 1.1: Exceeding NQS

Standard 1.2: Exceeding NQS

Standard 1.3: Exceeding NQS

Quality Area 2: Meeting NQS

Standard 2.1: Meeting NQS

(Demonstrating Exceeding themes 1 and 3 at final report)

Standard 2.2: Meeting NQS

(Demonstrating Exceeding themes 1 and 3 at final report)

Quality Area 3: Exceeding NQS

Standard 3.1: Exceeding NQS

Standard 3.2: Exceeding NQS

Quality Area 4: Meeting NQS

Standard 4.1: Meeting NQS

(Demonstrating Exceeding theme 1 at final report)

Standard 4.2: Exceeding NQS

Quality Area 5: Exceeding NQS

Standard 5.1: Exceeding NQS

Standard 5.2: Exceeding NQS

Quality Area 6: Meeting NQS

Standard 6.1: Meeting NQS

(Demonstrating Exceeding themes 1 and 3 at final report)

Standard 6.2: Meeting NQS

(Demonstrating Exceeding themes 1 and 3 at final report)

Quality Area 7: Exceeding NQS

Standard 7.1: Exceeding NQS

Standard 7.2: Exceeding NQS

4. The provider sought a first review for Quality Areas 2, 4 and 6 and, specifically, Standards 2.1, 2.2, 4.1, 6.1 and 6.2, which were rated as Meeting NQS.
5. After first tier review, the service's overall rating remained at Exceeding NQS, with no further changes to the ratings under review.
6. The service's quality ratings, as documented in the first tier review decision notice, are as follows:
 - Quality Area 1 was not under review and remains at Exceeding NQS.
 - Quality Area 2 remains at Meeting NQS.
 - Quality Area 3 was not under review and remains at Exceeding NQS.
 - Quality Area 4 remains at Meeting NQS.
 - Quality Area 5 was not under review and remains at Exceeding NQS.
 - Quality Area 6 remains at Meeting NQS.
 - Quality Area 7 was not under review and remains at Exceeding NQS.
7. At second tier review, the provider sought a review of the ratings for Standards 2.1, 2.2, 4.1, 6.1 and 7.2, aiming to have these standards amended to Exceeding NQS.

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
 - 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

9. 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

10. [REDACTED] is a long day care service located on [REDACTED] in [REDACTED] Sydney.
11. The service's previous assessment and rating took place on [REDACTED] 2016. All quality areas were rated as Exceeding NQS. The service's overall rating was Exceeding NQS.
12. The current assessment and rating [REDACTED] took place on [REDACTED] 2021 by one authorised officer.
13. The draft report was sent to the provider on [REDACTED] 2021, with feedback submitted to the regulatory authority on [REDACTED] 2021.
14. The final report was approved and sent to the provider on [REDACTED] 2021.
15. The provider applied for first tier review by the regulatory authority on [REDACTED] 2021.
16. The regulatory authority decided on the provider's first tier review application on [REDACTED] [REDACTED] 2021. The decision notice was sent to the provider on [REDACTED] 2021.
17. The provider applied for second tier review on [REDACTED] 2021.

Background information

General submissions by the Provider at second tier review

18. The provider submitted a statement in support of their second tier review application, as follows:

We believe that during the A&R Visit, the Authorised Officer lacked experience in the role of an AO. We felt that the critically reflective practices that we shared in respect to all Quality Areas were in many cases dismissed as basic evidence points.

We feel that, whilst she observed exceeding practices in Quality Area 1, across the spectrum of the rich evidence shown, she did not identify exceeding evidence that was occurring across all Quality Areas.

On the second day, the AO indicated that she would like to have further discussions with the [REDACTED]. While waiting, the [REDACTED] highlighted on the Self-Assessment document those points that he believed indicated Exceeding practices. After spending considerable time with the ECT, the AO advised that she did not need to see the [REDACTED] as all her questions had been answered. Not knowing what had been discussed with the ECT, the [REDACTED] assumed that his evidence was no longer required. Obviously, that was not the case. We actually asked whether she had collected all the evidence she needed for us to obtain an Exceeding Rating. She said that she

thought so but she would contact us if she found that anything was missing. There were no such requests.

Our attempts to have this rectified in the First Tier Review were not successful and we acknowledge that the evidence could have been submitted in a more succinct and relevant format. We are hopeful that this Review will better reflect the high standard upon which we operate our service.

Please note that all examples & evidence submitted in this document were available to and/or presented to the AO on the day and the majority of it was included in the First Tier Review Request.

19. The provider submitted a further statement and additional evidence after reviewing submissions provided by the regulatory authority as part of the second tier review process.
20. As part of this submission, the provider offered the following comment specific to Exceeding theme 2, noting that they are seeking a review of Exceeding theme 2 for Standards 2.1, 2.2, 4.1, 6.1 and 6.2. They said:

In [REDACTED] 2021 we were advised that we should be expecting an A&R visit and we were encouraged to use the regulatory authority's Self-Assessment Tool. With a short amount of time to complete this and a limited word count, we were relying heavily on showcasing our exceeding practices during the visit, in particular in relation to our reflective practices that have led to these outcomes.

Our educators have an excellent comprehension and appreciation for all 7 Quality Areas and it's because of this that our critically reflective practices can embrace a holistic approach. We believe that a lot of examples we shared on the days of the A&R visit of QA 2.1, 2.2, 4.1 6.1 and 6.2 were only considered within the context of Quality Area 1.

21. The provider's comments specific to the standards under review are noted elsewhere in this decision notice.

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

Standard 2.1

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

Standard 2.1: Assessment and rating

24. At assessment and rating, the regulatory authority assessed the service as Meeting NQS for Standard 2.1, with Exceeding themes 1 and 3 confirmed as being demonstrated, but not Exceeding theme 2.

25. In the assessment evidence summary, the authorised officer set out the following evidence, which was sighted, observed, or discussed in relation to the service's self-assessment summary:
- *Our edible garden promotes children's awareness of where healthy food comes from. Our children make choices about what we grow, and they plant, water, weed and harvest the seasonal fruit and vegetables, including mint, herbs, strawberries, tomatoes, and mandarins. During Spring, we share our front vegetable garden with families and encourage them to share with us their home gardening experiences and/or extend discussion at home about healthy eating.*
 - *Educators show compassion and patience towards children who may have a toileting accident and facilitate their changing into clean clothes. Upon enrolment, educators liaise with families' toilet-training progress and develop an agreed strategy that is consistent with the home approach. Also, educators are respectful of families who may ring during the day to check on their child's comfort and may request their child clothing to be changed due to the weather.*
 - *Families are advised at Orientation and on an ongoing basis to keep their child at home if sick. Educators are aware of the procedures to be followed when a child becomes sick in our care and where a child requires medication. We observe the Recommended Exclusion Periods in the case of infectious diseases (a copy of which is included in our Policy Manual in the front foyer for easy reference). Notifiable diseases are notified to the PHU as appropriate.*
 - *Our extensive literature relating to healthy eating and lifestyle often sparks many rich experiences which promote an awareness of healthy eating e.g. - the Very Hungry Caterpillar generates, among other things, discussion about healthy/sometimes foods, - A book on indigenous bush tucker has led us to replicating 'bush tucker' with healthy food including some harvested from our garden and - A You Tube clip of Aboriginal women harvesting and cooking yams led to us peeling and cooking sweet potatoes.*
 - *Our Sleep & Rest Policy has been developed in consultation with educators and families and is consistent with the recommendations of recognised authorities. Families are advised of the policy at Orientation and educators liaise closely with families to develop agreed S&R strategies for individual children. Educators encourage children to rest their bodies, monitor their comfort and respond to families' sleep requests. Educators communicate to families each day those children who sleep.*
 - *2020 Family Survey - 100% respondents felt that their healthy/medical needs were supported, and the effective hygiene practices are in place. Quote: "Any time he feels average we are made aware, and he tells me how cared for he was", "The staff are always caring for the children even when they have an accident, staff quickly address the matter and have them back playing without any shame or embarrassment".*
 - *Where necessary, Risk Management Plans are developed in consultation with the families based on their GP's advice. All medical conditions/food restrictions are shared with educators and are displayed with the child's photo throughout the Centre. Where appropriate information is shared with families e.g., where certain foods cannot be*

brought into the Centre. Our Centre promotes on its front door that it is 'Allergy Aware'. The Centre also maintains a register of children's immunisation status.

- *Whilst educators monitor children's comfort levels, educators facilitate children to 'take responsibility for their health/physical wellbeing' by self-regulating their own body temperature and making choices about what they wear and are encouraged to work towards dressing and undressing themselves. Example: (Child age 3) "I'm feeling cold so I'm going to change shorts to my tights in my bag".*
- *Through embedded systems and training, educators respond to illness/injuries expediently and empathetically. Incidents are recorded on the day and the parent's signature is obtained. Our incident form prompts educators to notify families immediately in the case of a head injury. The form lists notifiable "serious incidents" as per Reg 12. The team critically reflects on the incidents to review policies, practices, the environment, and behaviour guidance strategies to minimize further risk.*
- *Most staff have First Aid, CPR & A&A Training. First Aid kits are re-stocked quarterly. Emergency numbers are displayed beside the office phone. Educators monitor play to minimise risks and empower children to help set some safety rules. Families are informed of Medications Policy at Orientation and our embedded practice ensures that medications are received, stored, and administered in accordance with regulatory requirements. Dental care curriculum includes visits from community professionals.*
- *Children's dietary requirements and eating habits are identified at enrolment and shared with educators and displayed in key areas throughout the Centre. Close liaison with families at this time establishes trust and ensures a consistent approach, including future strategies as appropriate. Educators develop strategies to encourage children to try new foods. Mealtimes are used by educators to discuss why healthy foods are good for our bodies.*
- *Families are advised at Orientation and in Information Book to dress their child in comfortable clothing that is easy to manage (e.g., for toileting) and are SunSmart appropriate. Educators liaise with families who may need some guidance with this. The Centre has a plentiful supply of clothing for children who may need extra clothing e.g., jumper when it's cold, toileting accident. Children are supplied with their own personally labelled SunSmart-approved hat for outdoor play during peak UV periods.*
- *Embedded hygiene practices along with videos, charts, role modelling and guidance ensure effective and timely supervision of and assistance with children's toileting and handwashing and empower children to exercise their independence. An embedded regime of checklists and procedures ensures the Centre is systematically hygienically clean. Storage, handling, preparation and serving of food is carried out hygienically and educators support children in the safe handling and consumption of food.*
- *Educators use intentional teaching strategies and children's suggestions to develop obstacle courses suiting the children's physical skills. Children help set up the courses (often a combination of fixed and mobile equipment) which is adapted to cater for or challenge children's abilities as appropriate. During the airing of [REDACTED] which*

the children showed a great interest in, we set up a themed course with the assistance of [REDACTED] one of which was a personal trainer.

- *Our embedded Munch & Move Curriculum incorporates music and dance derived from children's interests and cultural perspective. Fundamental Movement Skills are employed through the year to challenge and develop children's gross motor skills. We share Munch & Move literature with families and encourage them to implement the 'Key Messages' at home. Families are actively encouraged to share their skills with the children e.g., age-appropriate physical activity e.g., kicking, throwing, jumping.*

26. In the assessment evidence summary, the authorised officer set out the following evidence of practice, which was sighted, observed, or discussed:

- *An educator encourages a child to go to bathroom to blow their nose, wipe their face and wash their hands.*
- *There are [REDACTED] water bubblers, [REDACTED] outside and [REDACTED] in each of the children's bathrooms for children to access water to drink at any time.*
- *There is a 'Lets taste it not waste it' poster with pictures of food items.*
- *An educator talks to the children about healthy food naming foods and the children call out where they grow. A child sits next to educator holding a large book about healthy bodies.*
- *The children wait on a mat for group time activity. There is a large TV screen in front of the group time mat. There is a recording of the movement song, children copy the actions along with the educators.*

27. In the draft rating outcome summary, the authorised officer included the following analysis note in relation to Standard 2.1:

The educational leader and educators regularly plan opportunities to enhance children's health outcomes and promote physical activity and are able to explain how this influences the design and delivery of the educational program. Educators engage with families and the community to discuss individual children's changing health and physical activity needs. Physical experiences incorporated are inclusive to ensure each child can participate in the program. Management and educators are developing an understanding of how to reflect on their practices to inform changes within the service.

Standard 2.1: Provider's feedback on the draft report

28. The provider submitted a response to the draft report in relation to Standard 2.1, noting that, *'The Analysis Notes in the A&R Report confirm our Centre meets these criteria. Our focus therefore is in relation to Exceeding Theme 2 that has not been confirmed in the report in respect to either standard of QA2.'*
29. The provider submitted feedback specific to each Element for Standard 2.1, with supporting evidence.
30. Specific to Element 2.1.1: Wellbeing and comfort and Exceeding theme 2, the provider offered the following remarks:

Context. Meeting minutes: 'Children are eager to get out to play. Educators are rushing through routines as we transition outdoors. Educators are taking children's jumpers off for them. We need to go back to scaffolding, empowering children to take off their own jumpers.'

Critical reflection of our practices against philosophy/EYLF: Are we promoting children's agency and self-help skills? Are we even asking children if they want to their jumpers off? [REDACTED] room meeting minutes [REDACTED] 21

How this changed our practices: Educators intentionally promoting self-help skills. Also slowing down routines, reflective listening and promoting children to self-regulate their own body temperature.

Outcome: Child (age 5) observed saying, 'I'm a bit hot. Can I take my jersey off then my long sleeve off then my jersey back on again?' [REDACTED] 21

31. Specific to Element 2.1.2: Health practices and procedures and Exceeding theme 2, the provider offered the following remarks:

Critical reflection: Promoting health & safety practices during COVID, including fostering wellbeing and mental health.

Reflecting on our practices, we used phrases with children such as 'Because of COVID we can't do that' and 'When COVID is over.'

We critically reflected: We are now more conscious of our wording. This isn't about sheltering children, it's about being mindful and intentional. There is truth that we're not having our [REDACTED] Concert in the local hall because of COVID, but we're not to reference COVID when we remind children to wash their hands. (Reflective journal: [REDACTED] 20).

32. Specific to Element 2.1.3: Healthy lifestyle and Exceeding theme 2, the provider offered the following remarks:

Context: Families sought our partnership from home to guide children's learning and development while not attending service due to COVID.

Educational leadership team meeting: Robust discussions led to an agreed and passionate critical reflection on social justice and equity implications of children not being active at [REDACTED]

'Formal sports postponed, parks closed and families self-isolating. As skilled educators the most important thing we can promote to parents at this time is for children to engage in movement and exercise.' (Leadership meeting: [REDACTED] 20)

Outcome: [REDACTED] video created by educators with information about its value. Also links to Munch & Move's FMS embraced by families who shared positive feedback including photos and videos.

Context: Educators and EL critically reflect on opportunities to promote healthy eating, reflecting on children's ideas, changing needs and interests, and enriching the design and delivery of our program.

Critical reflection on what is missing from the planning cycle: We found that none of the children knew that hot chips come from a potato. We needed to be more intentional and consider what is missing in the learning cycle.

Outcome: Intentional cooking food prep experience included children learning about where food came from including planting and harvesting potatoes. Led to rich meaningful curriculum outcomes and shaped ongoing cycle. Planning meeting [REDACTED] 21

Standard 2.1: Final report

33. In the assessment and rating feedback form with officer comments, the authorised officer remarked that the provider's evidence was already included in the initial assessment, noting that it was not new evidence.
34. The final rating outcome summary included the same analysis note in relation to Standard 2.1 as documented in the draft report.
35. In the final rating outcome summary, Exceeding themes 1 and 3 were confirmed as demonstrated, but not Exceeding theme 2. The rating for Standard 2.1 remained as Meeting NQS.

Standard 2.1: First tier review

36. The provider applied for first tier review, seeking to have Standard 2.1 amended to Exceeding NQS. In their first tier review application form, the provider made the following remarks:

Following receipt of the Final Report of the Assessment and Rating of our service, [REDACTED] requests a First Tier Review of Quality Area 2, 4 & 6 for which an 'Exceeding' rating was not granted.

We strongly believe that our service meets the Exceeding Criteria for all Quality Areas. Whilst the ratings were upgraded for Quality Area 3 & 7 in the Final Report, this wasn't the case for Quality Areas 2, 4 & 6.

Many of the examples of critically reflective practices that we presented during the Assessment have been documented by the Assessor as evidence in very basic form and, in our view, have missed the essence of their true value and how these practices have shaped our perspective and have led to growth and change in all quality areas.

As you would be aware, no reasons are given in the report as to why, after considering the evidence submitted, a rating was or wasn't changed. Accordingly, we've supplied additional evidence to support our application for an Exceeding rating.

37. Specific to Quality Area 2, the provider noted that, *'The A&R Report confirmed that our service met the Exceeding Criteria for Themes 1 & 3 for Standards 2.1 & 2.2 but not Theme 2 (Practice is informed by critical reflection). Accordingly, it is this Theme that is hereby addressed.'*
38. In support of their application, the provider submitted examples of practice specific to Standard 2.1, with supporting evidence, as follows:



Example 1

Educators, coordinators, and the educational leader engage in critical reflection to promote children's physical and activity needs. By embracing family input within theories including "Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory," educators consider how children's lives and cultural competencies outside the service affect their behaviour at the service.

For example, we know that a group of five-year-old children engage in rough play together at the park on the weekend. What we had mistaken for misbehaviour, e.g., chasing and hands-on games, was actually a sign that they need more stimulating physical play and that activities that were once a physical challenge were no longer within their "Zone of Proximal Development" (Vygotsky.)

All educators began robustly discussing this as a team and critically reflecting that we are intentional and skilled at identifying where children lack certain skills, and now that we know better, we can think more about extending the activity needs of children with advanced gross motor skills and confidence in their own abilities. Educators embraced activities that we once considered to be inappropriate and against the rules as a gateway to foster rich interest and challenging play. This professional growth as a team has shaped the way we guide children's behaviour as well as play and our own pedagogy. A current example is children [REDACTED] Educators support children to assess risks. As a result, [REDACTED] became part of the children's obstacle course (with educators' supervision) [REDACTED]

Example 2

Through critical reflection as a team, educators, co-ordinators and the educational leader foster children's wellbeing and physical development together in partnership with families. An educator commented on the social justice implications for the children not having the opportunity to be at [REDACTED] in [REDACTED] 2020 during Covid-19. "Formal sports postponed, parks closed and families self-isolating at home. As skilled educators, the most important thing we can promote to parents at this time is for children to engage in movement and exercise." [REDACTED] 20)

There was ongoing reflection on what we could share with families to guide children's "home learning". The critical reflection was that the most important thing right now is for children and families to be active every day, and also that this was a really valuable time to redistribute rich information to families including promoting Munch and Move's fundamental movement skills (FMS). Educators created a dance video to promote "Crossing the midline" and shared with families simple information on the benefits of crossing the midline and how these skills help with reading, writing and co-ordination. Due to the great feedback and responses, including families doing crossing the midline with grandparents over Zoom, we used the opportunity to continue correspondence with families. In response, they inspired the curriculum of the children who were attending the service at the time with examples of children making their own obstacle courses at home. (Also relates to 6.2, theme 2.)

Example 3

Educators, the educational leader, and coordinators critically reflect to consider alternative ways of supporting healthy eating. A child brought in “carrots [REDACTED] from her home garden, and these carrots were celebrated with the whole [REDACTED] community in relation to promoting sustainability by being open to eating vegetables that look different. In response, many children from both classrooms started to bring in fruits, vegetables, and plant spices from their home gardens. These were all met with great enthusiasm and explored, discussed, and tasted during afternoon group times. A staff member heard about the carrots [REDACTED] and brought in his [REDACTED] tomatoes from his garden. A child smiled and said, “We would definitely eat those.”

Educators reflected on the rich outcomes that had come from this interest so far. Staff began asking critically reflective questions in relation to how we can keep these practices happening. A decision was made across the service to embrace vegetables as part of afternoon group time and this is now embedded in practice including within the context of pedagogy e.g., fractions, exploring felt planter box and how things grow and embracing numeracy, literacy, S.T.E.A.M including clay work. Through critically reflecting on outcomes as a team, we also began to clearly identify “what was missing within the cycle.” The children made their own hot chips in the Acti Fry and engaged with the whole lifecycle of the potato. This interest of the children became a rich link to exploring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives. When a child suggested that we plant our own [REDACTED], we embraced our links with our ATSI community and sourced the yam daisy seeds, which the child planted himself. Due to a child’s interest in growing his own carrots [REDACTED], action research project included working out how to do this and using root-viewing planter to observe the progress.

Part of these critically reflective practices included acknowledging our growth as a team. Back in [REDACTED] 2019 at a Parent Meeting, a reflection on menu included “hiding grated zucchini and grated carrot within meals.” In [REDACTED] 2021 we critically reflected that while there is definitely value within this nutritionally, there was no sense of belonging, being and becoming within it. We’re not setting children up to be life-long lovers of veggies if children don’t even know they are eating them.

39. At first tier review, the panel considered evidence gathered at assessment and rating and first tier review and provided the following conclusion in the first tier review decision notice:

The panel considered the information in the report, including the officer’s notes that management and educators are developing an understanding of how to reflect on their practices to inform changes within the service. The panel acknowledged that the officer confirmed the self-assessment practice that the team critically reflects on incidents to review policies, practices, the environment, and behaviour guidance strategies to minimize further risk. The panel agreed however, that this was not sufficient to demonstrate regular and ongoing critical reflection across this standard.

The panel reviewed the submission from the approved provider and acknowledged that the evidence showed some reflection on ensuring physical activity was promoted while children were at home during COVID-19 lockdown and on children’s changing physical

needs as they get older. The panel discussed that further claims of critical reflection by the provider were not supported by the evidence provided. The panel determined that the available evidence was not adequate to show systematic and regular reflection on opportunities to enhance health outcomes for children.

40. The panel concluded that there was insufficient evidence to support attainment of Exceeding theme 2 for Standard 2.1 and decided to confirm the assessment of this theme as No.
41. Following first tier review, the rating for Standard 2.1 remained as Meeting NQS.

Standard 2.1: Second tier review

42. At second tier review, the provider sought a review of the ratings for Standard 2.1 and, specifically, Exceeding theme 2.
43. The provider presented three submissions specific to Standard 2.1 and Exceeding theme 2, with supporting evidence.
44. Specific to critical reflection on child's hyperactive behaviour, the provider offered the following submission:

2.1.1 Wellbeing and comfort

Without a strong sense of wellbeing, it is difficult for a child to develop a sense of belonging, to trust others and feel confident in being themselves and to participate in experiences that support their personal growth (Early Years Learning Framework, p.30).

***Context:** (age 5y,1m) is observed to be very hyperactive and reactive. He's often racing from A to B and knocking over other children. The child often unintentionally hurts others in while in this mode. When a child says, "He hurt me", the boy reacts because it was unintentional. The child's Occupational Therapist had advised educators to encourage the child to 'slow down', recommending measured obstacle courses/hopscotch etc. The child was not interested in these experiences.*

*The educational leader and educators **critically reflected** from the perspective of [REDACTED] "stress behaviour" agreeing that we could not effectively meet the child's physical needs until we reduced his stress.*

***Outcome:** To foster the child's wellbeing and to reduce stress, we considered group dynamics. Educators met child's cues for [REDACTED] within the Centre's indoor [REDACTED] Grouped with primary educator and friends, the child feels he can trust who will not react if he accidentally bumps them. Trying out different strategies to lift the tyre, the child demonstrated spatial awareness and negotiated the play space, being conscious not to touch others. He then had a rest, lying under the car (while still playing). By reducing the child's stress, promoting wellbeing through interest-based play, we could meet his physical needs. Indirectly as a result of that, we also met his rest needs.*

45. Specific to critical reflection on the centre's approach to encouraging children to appreciate healthy food, the provider offered the following submission (building on evidence submitted at first tier review, set out above):



2.1.3 Healthy Lifestyle

The services 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. (Exceeding Theme 2 p.164).

Context: (██████████ 2021.) A child brought in "carrots ██████████ from her home garden to share with her friends. The children had a conversation about who was willing to taste them. We have a new zoo near us and a few of the children have fed carrots ██████████ to the animals at the zoo. Was there any reason why we couldn't eat them too? ██████████ said, "It would be so ridiculous if we wasted them." Some children said the home-grown carrots ██████████ taste "as good as" normal carrots. Others argued that they tasted even better. These carrots were celebrated within play, pedagogy, science, technology, art, and sculpture. Due to an overwhelming interest, we sourced more carrots ██████████ and bent carrot from the local farmer's market. Many children from both classrooms started to bring in fruits, vegetables, and plant spices from their home gardens (many from grandparents' gardens as many live nearby on large properties and farms). The significance of this was understood and underpinned by all educators and staff and every time a child brought something in it was met with great enthusiasm. Children began to lead small group time, promoting agency, reflexivity, and dispositions for learning by washing, cutting, choosing what they wanted to plant. Children and educators explored, discussed, and tasted vegetables during afternoon group times and led to progressive afternoon tea. ██████████ heard about our interest in carrots ██████████ from his office and brought in his heart shaped tomatoes from his garden. ██████████ smiled and said, "We would definitely eat those."

Odd fruit and veggies market stall, opportunities for intentional teaching including a felt planter box, paper bags for mushrooms, punnets for berries. Our children were promoting themselves as ██████████ (Centre Philosophy element) as they whole-heartedly embraced ██████████ (Centre Philosophy element) for fruits and veg of all shapes and sizes. Children's voices were celebrated e.g., "Not sour for me" said ██████████ as his face told a very different story.

Critical reflections from April 2021: - In ██████████ 2018, a QIP goal was "to meet children's nutritional needs in partnership with families." We now know that if we want best outcomes for children, they need to be included. That way we can aim to not just meet their needs but exceed them.

In ██████████ 2021, we also critically reflected that in 2019, we felt we had met this outcome in partnership with families." We had referred to "hiding grated zucchini and grated carrot within meals" as successful. We believe that while there may have been value within that outcome nutritionally, where was the belonging, being and becoming within it? Where were the ethics? Didn't we have higher expectations of children than that? We weren't setting children up to be life-long lovers of veggies if children didn't even know what they are eating veggies.

Outcome: Now children are making genuine choices about what veggies we are planting (yam daisies, planting carrots too close together hoping they ██████████), watering,

harvesting, washing, preparing, eating, and celebrating vegetables of all shapes and sizes. These child-led initiatives have offered us a strategic re-think of the way we offer vegetables to children. Practices include afternoon small group time (vegetable play and pedagogy) merged into progressive afternoon tea - [REDACTED] 2021.

46. Specific to critical reflection on [REDACTED] gross motor development, the provider offered the following submission (building on evidence submitted at first tier review, set out above):

2.1. Health

Educators support children in risky play. 2.1.2 p.153.

The program incorporates physical activity that meets each child's capabilities and extends their development. 2.1.3 p.162.

Embedded critical reflection on potential barriers and biases to meeting children's physical needs. The mother of a 3y, 11m old girl sent us a video of her daughter at [REDACTED] impressively manipulating an advanced obstacle course on her own. The educators reflected on this video of the child's physical abilities against recent observations of the child. The child's planning cycle suggested "the child would benefit from staying two more years at the service." The observations mentioned the child's delayed fine motor skills and delayed comprehension of basic shapes. The document also stated that the child ran [REDACTED] during a transition. This was within the context of copying another child's misbehaviour and didn't mention anything about it being an example of "well-developed gross motor skills."

Critical reflection: *We frequently critically reflect on environments through the lens of "meeting the advanced physical needs of an almost 6 year old child." This underpins a very important message to continue to challenge our biases. We have a thirst for learning and a high expectation of ourselves to support rich outcomes for every single child at every level.*

Outcome: *From the perspective of the children's "Zone of Proximal Development" (Vygotsky), physical play and activities that were once within the children's ZPD were no longer a physical challenge.*

Incorporating risky play: *Educators critically reflected on environments with a new perspective that certain activities once considered "against the rules" were a gateway to foster play. Example: [REDACTED] became part of the children's obstacle course (with educators' supervision). Educators also critically reflected on their indicators for children's gross motor skills development, acknowledging that children often have un-observed skills that need to be sought out and identified.*

47. The provider submitted a further statement, with supporting evidence, after reviewing submissions provided by the regulatory authority as part of the second tier review process.
48. Specific to Standard 2.1 and Exceeding theme 2, the provider stated:

The analysis notes for 2.1 includes that at our service our team "regularly plan to meet children's health outcomes and are able to explain how this influences the design and delivery of the educational program." However, at the bottom of the analysis notes it states that management and educators are developing an understanding of how to

reflect on their practices to inform change within the service. P10. We feel that this was an inappropriate conclusion to that observation.

The AO's Quality Improvement suggestion for 2.1 included "Further ways for all educators to create opportunities to have conversations with children about healthy eating, good nutrition, healthy lifestyles and how our bodies work on an everyday basis, ensuring consistent practice across all rooms."

Response: The EL explained to the AO that recent reflective practices of the children's interest in vegetables across the service had led to a strategic rethink of the way we offer vegetables to children, including a merge between afternoon small group time and afternoon teatime. (More detail within the examples shared for 2.1.3).

These practices were shared with the AO, however her basic comments leads us to assume that the AO did not identify the significance of these outcomes. [Evidence] "There is a 'Lets taste in not waste it' poster with pictures of food items. 2.1 Evidence of Practice." Response: The "food items" was a photo of our carrots [REDACTED] and the "taste it not waste it" was the comment of a child who tasted the carrot [REDACTED]. This was not just a photo of food items, it illustrated the result of the reflective practices as stated above and is part of the evidence submitted in both Tier Reviews.

Panel considerations

49. In deliberating on whether the service demonstrated Exceeding theme 2 for Standard 2.1, the panel noted evidence of the service reflecting on practice specific to supporting children's health and physical activity. From their assessment of all the available evidence, however, these reflections were, in their view, more descriptive in nature, highlighting what worked and what didn't, rather than evidence of critical reflection, or evidence of how this critical reflection had informed practice.
50. The panel noted that critical reflection, as required for this exceeding theme, requires a deeper level of thinking, examination, and analysis, involving robust discussion and debate, links to theorists or current research, and/or social justice considerations. They added that the theme also requires that critical reflection validates and builds on current practice and/or shapes changes or improvements to ongoing practice.
51. The panel highlighted examples of sound practice specific to supporting children's health and physical activity. For example, they noted the service team's reflections on and reframing of children's rough play, referencing the thinking of [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] in their analysis, and resulting in educators offering children more stimulating and challenging physical play experiences.
52. Other examples included the service team adapting their educational program specific to the provision of physical activity due to COVID-19 by creating a dance video that was shared with families, and extended discussions with children about healthy eating, inspired by a child bringing a "carrot [REDACTED] to the service.
53. The panel remarked that there were examples of individuals reflecting on practice and in some instances of small groups of educators reflecting together. However, from their assessment of the evidence provided, the panel were unable to find clear, relevant, and

substantive evidence of all educators systematically and regularly reflecting together on practice, or evidence of how this led to ongoing changes in supporting each child's health and physical activity.

54. The panel concluded that there was insufficient evidence to determine that Exceeding theme 2 should be amended to Yes to support an overall higher rating for Standard 2.1.

Panel decision

55. The panel decided, by consensus, to confirm the rating for Standard 2.1 as Meeting NQS.

Standard 2.2

56. Standard 2.2 is:
Each child is protected.
57. Exceeding theme 2 is:
Practice is informed by critical reflection.

Standard 2.2: Assessment and rating

58. At assessment and rating, the regulatory authority assessed the service as Meeting NQS for Standard 2.2, with Exceeding themes 1 and 3 confirmed as being demonstrated, but not Exceeding theme 2.
59. In the assessment evidence summary, the authorised officer set out the following evidence, which was sighted, observed, or discussed in relation to the service's self-assessment summary:
- *Our embedded Sun Protection Policy has been developed in consultation with and endorsed by the Cancer Council and includes: - A shaded outdoor environment that provides 95% UV protection, - Daily monitoring of UV levels to identify when sun protection is required, - Protecting children with sunscreen and personally-labelled Cancer Council-approved bucket hats during peak UV levels, - Encouraging families to dress their children in SunSmart clothing and - Staff role modelling sun protection strategies.*
 - *Educators are encouraged to be alert to possible cases of child abuse or neglect. We have had cases where families have not so much fallen into that category but have needed parental assistance. We maintain a variety of community resource links and access these to lend assistance to these families. As stated in 2.2.1, this sometimes relates to road safety and we have, in the past, shown surveillance footage of close calls to emphasise the importance of close supervision in the carpark.*
 - *We have an embedded regime in respect to the cleaning and maintenance of building and equipment. A series of daily/weekly/monthly/termly/annual checklists ensure that designated staff undertake tasks systematically. This includes checking for hazards, breakages, worn equipment and poisonous plants that may require immediate action to ensure the safety of children. These are dealt with expediently. Educators are encouraged to immediately notify their supervisor of any hazard that they discover. This key practice was considered for quality area 3.1.*

- *Our succinct Emergency Evacuation Procedures (covering both evacuations and lockdowns) are on display at each Exit Point and include the role of each staff member. Drills are used to train new recruits to gain an understanding of and confidence in their role during a drill. Drills are evaluated by educators to refine the process. A copy of our Emergency Drill Report is placed on the front door that day to inform families. The most current report remains on display on the Notice Board.*
- *We arrange each year for the local Fire Brigade to visit and talk the children about fire safety. Children learn key fire safety messages e.g., Triple 0, Stop Drop Roll, what an activated smoke detector means etc. These key messages are emphasised to the children after the visit and the days following for the benefit of the children not in attendance that day. These visits are conveyed to families who are encouraged to reaffirm the key messages through discussion and role playing at home.*
- *Staff are informed upon recruitment of their responsibilities as a Mandatory Reporter and the process of reporting via the Childstory website. They are issued with a copy of our Child Protection Policy as well as the ECA Code of Ethics. Our Child Protection Policy is regularly reviewed with families and educators. Educators are reissued a copy of the policy annually and reminded of their responsibilities. Educators undertake refresher training biennially.*
- *A Working With Children Check is carried out on prospective employees before engaging their services and a record is maintained of the expiry date of their WWCC to ensure it is renewed prior to that date. As an act of goodwill, our Centre covers the cost of staff's WWCCs prior to the recruitment and upon renewal.*
- *We promote to families and the broader community our commitment to child protection through our Information Book (issued to families at Orientation) as well as our display in the foyer of our Philosophy, Code of Ethics, and the UN Rights of the Child.*
- *Road Safety is embedded in our curriculum. Families are advised at orientation and reminded with signage/newsletters of their road safety responsibilities upon collection and delivery of children. We periodically emphasise this with photos of parents holding their child's hand at drop off. Video monitoring occasionally leads us to remind families of their responsibilities. Our educators attend Kids & Traffic workshops and distribute key messages and fact sheets to families throughout the year. The officer observed photos of the children participating in road safety activities and information was sent home to the families.*
- *Educators have received training in the use of fire-fighting equipment by a licensed provider. Educators closely supervise children during drills to ensure they are not anxious, that they respond to the whistle and remain within the group during the drill. Educators work as a team during drills ensure all children are present - firstly with a head count then a roll call. They feedback the experience the Nominated Supervisor to identify any fine tuning required with the procedure.*
- *Our embedded emergency and evacuation procedures have been developed in consultation with stakeholders and external agencies and are regularly fine-tuned after*

critical reflection. Drills are conducted every 2-3 months and include a range of potential emergency scenarios for which Risk Assessments have been conducted to develop appropriate emergency procedures. Drills alternate between evacuations and lockdowns and are conducted on different days to ensure all children experience the drills.

- *Our Risk Assessment form includes a Hazard Matrix to identify the overall hazard risk. If safe to proceed, risk management strategies are developed in consultation with educators and, if appropriate, children and families. Before beginning, educators talk to children about their responsibilities in respect to the activity. Where necessary, additional supervision and/or equipment is arranged prior to the event. Educators critically reflect on the experience to identify any areas for improvement. This key practice was considered for quality area 3.1.*
- *We view effective supervision as a high priority which is achieved through: -issuing 'supervision tips' to new recruits upon induction, -displaying those tips through the Centre as a reminder to all staff, -ongoing mentoring, -ongoing critical reflection to achieve best practice, -a shared understanding of a team approach, including reminding each other of our supervision responsibilities and -assisting children with limited physical mobility, particularly with challenging equipment.*
- *Our Centre prominently displays in the foyer its Annual Fire Statement. Our professionally designed Evacuation Plans, which depict exit routes, assembly points and the location of firefighting equipment, is on display at all Exit Points. The firefighting equipment is tested bi-annually and serviced where appropriate. New families are informed through our Information Book of our Emergency Management Plan.*
- *As per the 1989 UN Rights of the Child, we encourage children to be empowered, passionate and willing advocates for their safety and to share their knowledge of staying safe including water, boat, beach, and sun safety, in relation to their experiences with their families. Using the Royal Lifesaving Society Australia message 'please watch your child not your mobile' educators used role play to empower children be able to ask parents to watch them (Children have a right to be protected from harm).*

60. In the assessment evidence summary, the authorised officer set out the following evidence of practice, which was sighted, observed, or discussed:

- *The educational leader explains they see children as advocates for their own safety.*
- *The children put sunscreen on in front of a mirror at entrance to bathroom before going to group time activity.*
- *An educator supervises the bathroom while children are in there.*
- *The educators are located around the yard. Some are interacting with children at activities and other are supervising the children and talking to them.*
- *The service practice emergency evacuations at least every 2 months and include a variety of different emergencies relevant to the service. However, they have not practiced drills between [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. The approved provider explained the service was closed for a month during these times and they did*

not practice evacuations. The nominated supervisor states they will make sure they practice evacuations as soon as the service reopens in future. A minor adjustment was offered.

61. In the draft rating outcome summary, the authorised officer included the following analysis note in relation to Standard 2.2:

All educators work together to ensure all areas used by children are effectively supervised and systems are in place to identify, assess and manage hazards. Effective plans are in place to manage incidents, and emergencies are practiced regularly. Educators demonstrate awareness of their roles and responsibilities in child protection, and actively raise awareness of issues impacting on children's safety, including child protection. Management and educators are developing an understanding of how to reflect on their practices to inform changes within the service.

Standard 2.2: Provider's feedback on the draft report

62. The provider submitted a response to the draft report in relation to Standard 2.2, noting that, *'The Analysis Notes in the A&R Report confirm our Centre meets these criteria. Our focus therefore is in relation to Exceeding Theme 2 that has not been confirmed in the report in respect to either standard of QA2.'*

63. The provider submitted feedback specific to each Element for Standard 2.2, with supporting evidence.

64. Specific to Element 2.2.1: Supervision and Exceeding theme 2, the provider offered the following remarks:

Context: Educators reflect and critically reflect on keeping children safe within play environments. There was a conversation about a constant need for supervision because children were throwing wooden blocks.

Critical reflection: 'We can't have an area that needs constant supervision. We're going to have to reassess if we might need to take the blocks out of our room for now.'
(Meeting minutes █████ 21)

Outcome: Swapped wooden blocks to good quality foam blocks that resemble wooden blocks. Benefits of this play could still be achieved with foam blocks without the risk of injury.

65. Specific to Element 2.2.2: Incident and emergency management and Exceeding theme 2, the provider offered the following remarks:

Our service has an embedded practice on critically reflecting after each emergency drill to ensure that:

- *the drills run efficiently and smoothly*
- *each staff member has a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities*
- *children are responding calmly and quickly to directions given*

Staff feedback and observations of the children during the drills contribute to the evaluations which has often led to fine-tuning of the process.

Critical reflection of our Emergency Evacuation signage identified that it did not meet signage. In ██████ 2019, the service engaged the service of a relevant authority to assist in the development and implementation of industry-approved Emergency Evacuation signage throughout the premises.

66. Specific to Element 2.2.3: Child protection and Exceeding theme 2, the provider offered the following remarks:

Context: Robust discussion at management level about child protection training for trainee educators.

Critical reflection: Although Child Protection will be covered in their Cert III studies, it is important that the trainees, as Mandatory Reporters, know now how to use the Childstory platform. We need to provide them with hands-on training using the Childstory website.

Outcome: Added to QIP and now embedded in practice.

Standard 2.2: Final report

67. In the assessment and rating feedback form with officer comments, the authorised officer remarked that parts of the provider's feedback had already been considered in the original assessment. They also noted that other parts were regulatory practice, not evidence of the Exceeding theme.
68. The final rating outcome summary included the same analysis note in relation to Standard 2.2 as documented in the draft report.
69. In the final rating outcome summary, Exceeding themes 1 and 3 were confirmed as demonstrated, but not Exceeding theme 2. The rating for Standard 2.2 remained as Meeting NQS.

Standard 2.2: First tier review

70. The provider applied for first tier review, seeking to have Standard 2.2 amended to Exceeding NQS.
71. In support of their application, the provider submitted examples of practice specific to Standard 2.2, with supporting evidence, as follows:

Example 1

The service's approach to developing and implementing Playground Improvement Plans reflects robust debate, discussion, and opportunities for input by all educators, and is informed by critical reflection and past incidents. As part of our Playground Improvement Update, the service proposed the idea of a new physically challenging play structure to families. We asked families to "share ideas, including things their children liked doing at the park." They responded enthusiastically, however their suggestions were on a much larger scale than we could fit in the space or weren't suitable from a safety perspective. We critically reflected that we had gotten ahead of ourselves and that if we genuinely want to do this in partnership, we need to be more intentional about what we're asking them to contribute.

Educators, coordinators, and the educational leader engaged in robust debate and discussion, reflecting on past incidents of a structure that needed constant supervision as something we don't want. Through the lens of our Philosophy, it needed to promote equity, agency and be accessible to all children. We also embraced the NQS and the Education and Care Service National Regulations as we discussed the idea of "Risk/Hazard v Benefit" and the importance for children to be able to take measured risks. Creating a more concise intentional vision of what we were asking families to think about and consider, allowed us to then ask for their ideas. Making decisions in partnership was especially important for a family whose son has [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] The educator leading the project invited the child and his mother to come outside and discuss the space. The child's input was that he only cared about going down the proposed [REDACTED] that he saw a photo of. The child's mother said that he would not be able to use a [REDACTED]. The project leader asked him if he would like her to build him [REDACTED] and he said yes. The child is now in kindergarten and, during the [REDACTED], visited the service, and reminded the educator that she built the [REDACTED] "just for him." (Also relates to 6.1, 6.2 Theme 2.)

Example 2

Ongoing commitment to children's safety influences the design and delivery of the educational program. In [REDACTED] 2020, Children returned from the summer break with many stories to tell that promoted skills and cultural competence developed by things they had experienced related to beach, water, and sun safety. Through their stories shared at mealtimes and expressed through narrated artworks, the children discussed things they had learnt about safety within things they had done as a family. "You need to wear life jackets on my [REDACTED] boat in case you fall in or the boat crashes, then you get rescued." "If you step on bluebottles, they sting you."

Family input guides our curriculum and practices. The mother of one of the children said, "you should get the children to teach each other what they know." Educators embraced this idea and made posters together with the children. Instead of writing the answers, we wrote the prompting questions for children to answer why. And this became the curriculum. As more and more children gave input, the document got richer to include "Why can't you leave your rubbish on the beach?" and "Why do you still have to wear sunscreen when it's not sunny. Educators and families critically reflected together that by not simply being taught by adults about safety but to have the opportunity to learn from each other, children could truly be advocates for their own safety and to take increasing responsibility for their health and physical wellbeing and that of their friends. It also allowed children to gain a rich comprehension of "why" and "what might happen if you don't" through hearing examples from their peers. (Also relates to 2.1 Theme 2)

Example 3

The service promotes opportunities for all members of the service team, including trainee educators, to reflect on supervision and safety.

An educator expressed her concerns at a staff meeting that children were throwing wooden blocks and that she felt like she couldn't leave the area. Another educator said, "We can't have an area that needs constant supervision." As a team, the educators

critically reflected to consider and discuss social justice and equity implications of taking the blocks away, considering the needs and rights of every child at the service - the right to be safe from harm, as well as the right to block play. Outcome was to invest in high quality foam replica 'wooden' blocks. This led to an opportunity for ongoing critical reflection of the block centre, also to embrace the now safe environment as the third teacher, as it no longer needed constant supervision for safety and block play was thriving and more successful than ever. (Also relates to 4.1, Theme 2).

Example 4

Our service has an embedded practice on critically reflecting after each emergency drill to ensure that:

- *the drills run efficiently and smoothly, and no procedural changes are required*
- *each staff member has a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities*
- *children are responding calmly and quickly to directions given.*

Staff feedback and observations of the children during the drills contribute to the evaluations which has often led to fine-tuning of the process e.g., during COVID-19 in 2020, our service was using only one iPad to sign children in/out as this was being done by staff on behalf of families who could not enter the premises. An Evacuation Drill identified the need to have two iPads operational as the two children's rooms have separate Assembly Points and an iPad was needed at each one.

Example 5

Risk Assessments are carried out for incursions and experiences where children's safety may be a factor e.g., cooking experience, fire brigade visit, etc. Feedback from educators involved in the experience help to shape our overall assessment of the experience and identify any unforeseen risks that may require procedural changes.

72. At first tier review, the panel considered evidence gathered at assessment and rating and first tier review and provided the following conclusion in the first tier review decision notice:

The panel considered the evidence within the report and discussed the officer's notes that management and educators are developing an understanding of how to reflect on their practices to inform changes within the service. The panel noted that the officer confirmed some reflection in relation to emergency and evacuation procedures, risk assessments and supervision. The panel agreed however, that it was not clear how practice for this standard had been informed or changed as a result of this reflection.

The panel reviewed the approved provider's submission, noting that many of the claims made in relation to critical reflection were not supported by evidence and some were better aligned to other quality areas. The panel discussed that claims regarding reflection on emergency drills were confirmed by the officer in the report. The panel commented that the record of a QIP goal about child protection training for trainee educators did not show that this decision was based on critical reflection. The panel acknowledged claims regarding consideration given to ensuring the updated playground was both safe and challenging for children, as well claims regarding children learning

about safety issues from each other. The panel agreed however, that the evidence did not show the robust discussions and critical reflection regarding these issues as claimed.

73. The panel concluded that there was insufficient evidence to support attainment of Exceeding theme 2 for Standard 2.2 and decided to confirm the assessment of this theme as No.
74. Following first tier review, the rating for Standard 2.2 remained as Meeting NQS.

Standard 2.2: Second tier review

75. At second tier review, the provider sought a review of the ratings for Standard 2.2 and, specifically, Exceeding theme 2.
76. The provider presented three submissions specific to Standard 2.2, with supporting evidence.
77. Specific to critical reflection on playground design, the provider offered the following submission (building on evidence submitted at first tier review, set out above):

2.2.1. Supervision

The services approach to supporting and promoting children's safety reflects robust debate, discussion, and genuine opportunities for input by all educators and is informed by critical reflection on past incidents. (Exceeding Theme 2 p.179).

*As part of our Playground Improvement Update, the service proposed the idea of a new physically challenging play. We **critically reflected** on a past cubby ladder that needed constant supervision because there was only one way up and down. **Underpinned message:** It was vital that this structure had more than one way up or down and that it didn't need constant supervision. It needed to promote equity, agency and be accessible to all children **Outcome:** We shared concise intentional vision of what we were asking families to think about and consider e.g., an example of "Risk/Hazard." **Promoting inclusion:** Making decisions in partnership was especially important for a family whose son has [REDACTED]. The educator leading the project invited the child and his mother to come outside and discuss the space. The child's input was that he only cared about going down the proposed [REDACTED] that he saw a photo of. The child's mother said that he would not be able to use a [REDACTED]. The project leader asked the child if he would like her to build him [REDACTED] and he said 'Yes'. Critically reflecting through the eyes of this child and others in future who may lack the gross motor development to scale a [REDACTED] it was agreed amongst educators that in the interest of equity, there needed to be a safer and less-challenging option for those children who needed it. Accordingly, [REDACTED] were erected.*

The child is now in kindergarten and, during the [REDACTED], visited the service and it was heart-warming to hear him say that we built the [REDACTED] "just for him."

This underpinned message "we can't have an area that needs constant supervision" shapes ongoing critically reflective practices: *The service promotes opportunities for all members of the service team, including trainee educators, to reflect on supervision and safety.*

Context: An educator expressed her concern that children were throwing wooden blocks and that she felt like she couldn't leave the area. As a team, the educators critically reflected to consider and discuss social justice and equity implications of taking the blocks away, considering the needs and rights of every child at the service (the right to be safe from harm, as well as the right to block play.)

Outcome: High quality foam replica 'wooden' blocks to support play, and to slowly negotiate returning wooden blocks to play. **Critical reflection through the lens of Reggio Emilia:** "Now that the environment is safe it can become the third teacher."

78. Specific to critical reflection of children as advocate, the provider offered the following submission:

2.2.2 Incident and emergency management

Educators, the educational leader, and coordinators consider the social justice implications of their practice decisions to support and promote each child's safety to ensure that practice takes into account the needs and rights of every child at the service. (Exceeding Theme 2 p.179).

The Quality Improvement Process drives quality outcomes as we reflect on goals, deliverables, and outcomes as a team. This includes critical reflection on what beliefs have shifted, evolved, or changed completely.

Critically reflective practices with children: Risk assessments of the physical environment are also done as part of children's play and learning, promoting their advocacy for their own safety and the safety of others.

Outcome example: After the rain, child █████ made a risk assessment of where she believed it was safe to play "I think it's not safe to walk on the logs or the rocks, but we can easily step around them." █████ and other child █████ fitted themselves inside a nook between logs and soaked up sponges full of water from the riverbed, carefully moved them to a different location to squeeze out the water as they made mud for their 'pig' to live in.

In 2018, the QIP was "children as advocates for their own safety" but also "we actively do everything we can to keep children safe." There was an obvious undertone of concern that was holding us back from measured risk taking. Evolving practices have shaped the evolution of our QIP: In █████ 2020, the QIP goal evolved to "Educators mentor children to take measured risks with their play."

79. Specific to critical reflection of strengthening the road safety message to children via connection with families, the provider offered the following submission:

2.2.3 Child protection

Educators, the educational leader, and coordinators systematically and regularly reflect, individually and as a team, on practices to support child safety. (Exceeding Theme 2 p.178).

Context: We are committed in supporting families to keep their children safe in the car park and on the road. Critical reflection of how we can support families to hold their

child's hand as they arrive and depart from the service includes intentional and ever-evolving practices.

Current example: *In addition to embedded learning experiences within the curriculum for children, a large bunting with the words [REDACTED] with large visuals was on display in the car park. This was met with great response and enthusiasm from children and families. Educators discussed the importance of keeping this positive message going.*

We critically reflected through the lens of what children and families are seeing "Have you noticed us doing the right thing? We needed to identify that families and children had heard our message and need to be acknowledged accordingly."

Outcome: *We put up a new sign that said, [REDACTED] and had stickers, awards, and safety packs to further promote these practices, acknowledging the efforts of children and families and continually promoting the message that "We see you keeping safe."*

80. The provider submitted a further statement, with supporting evidence, after reviewing submissions provided by the regulatory authority as part of the second tier review process.
81. Specific to Standard 2.2 and Exceeding theme 2, the provider stated:

The following evidence from our self-assessment was confirmed by the AO. Our risk assessment form includes a Hazard Matrix to identify the overall hazard risk. Educators critically reflect on the experience to identify any areas of improvement. Standard 2.2. p.19.

The AO's Analysis Notes for 2.2 says that "management and educators are developing an understanding of how to reflect on their practices to inform change within the service."

Response: This appears to be a contradictory statement based on the AO's own conclusion.

Panel considerations

82. In deliberating on whether the service demonstrated Exceeding theme 2 for Standard 2.2, the panel highlighted some examples of sound practice. For example, the panel noted the service incorporating [REDACTED] into the design of a [REDACTED] following a conversation with a child with additional needs who would otherwise have been unable to access this structure. The panel also noted the service's [REDACTED] signage in the car park, supporting families to keep children safe. The panel added that, in their view, these examples were more closely aligned with Meeting NQS practice and did not demonstrate critical reflection at the level required for this exceeding theme and standard.
83. The panel remarked that while the provider made statements that educators were critically reflecting, this was not, in their view, supported by the evidence provided. For example, the provider stated that the service has an embedded practice of critically reflecting after each emergency drill. The panel noted, however, that the supporting

evidence was more descriptive in nature and lacked the deeper level of questioning and analysis required for critical reflection.

84. Citing another submission, the panel commented on the example of children throwing wooden blocks, which was highlighted as a safety/supervision issue, with the educators' solution being to replace the wooden blocks with foam blocks. The panel added that, in their view, this was a missed opportunity to engage children in discussions about their responsibilities in treating people and equipment respectfully and involving children in decision-making about how to respond to this issue.
85. The panel noted and agreed with the authorised officer's analysis note in the final rating outcome summary, that the service team was 'developing an understanding of how to reflect on their practices to inform changes within the service.' The panel commented that, from their assessment of the available evidence, they were unable to determine how all educators and management systematically and regularly reflect, individually and as a team, at the level required for this standard and exceeding theme. The panel added that they were also unable to find clear and relevant evidence of how changes in practice linked back to critical reflection.
86. The panel concluded that there was insufficient evidence to determine that Exceeding theme 2 should be amended to Yes to support an overall higher rating for Standard 2.2.

Panel decision

87. The panel decided, by consensus, to confirm the rating for Standard 2.2 as Meeting NQS.

Standard 4.1

88. Standard 4.1 is:
Staffing arrangements enhance children's learning and development.
89. Exceeding theme 2 is:
Practice is informed by critical reflection.
90. Exceeding theme 3 is:
Practice is shaped by meaningful engagement with families and/or the community.

Standard 4.1: Assessment and rating

91. The regulatory authority assessed the service as Meeting NQS for Standard 4.1, with Exceeding theme 1 confirmed as being demonstrated, but not Exceeding themes 2 and 3.
92. In the assessment evidence summary, the authorised officer set out the following evidence, which was sighted, observed, or discussed in relation to the service's self-assessment summary:
 - *We are very proud of our high retention of staff which facilitates continuity of care. ■■■ staff members have over ■■■ years' service at our Centre and ■■■ others have been with us through their traineeship - now an integral part of our team and furthering their tertiary studies. These staff have established a trusting relationship with families which*

facilitate a reciprocal exchange information. Children show a sense of delight when they are greeted by them upon arrival.

- *In addition to guiding children with their learning and development with hands-on experiences, our educators have the knowledge and skills to empower children by identifying their strengths and stepping back to promote their agency and emerging autonomy. This is a particular focus for those pre-schoolers who are going to school the following year and need to develop their independence e.g., children designing and setting up their own obstacle course.*
- *We empower our experienced educators to lead each room and mentor those under their supervision including trainees. This ensures that children's learning and development opportunities are identified, implemented, observed, and documented to a high standard. Conversely, the less experienced staff share their experiences (cultural activity, holiday/work experience) which develops their growth and confidence e.g., (Educator) talked to us about how her family celebrates Eid and shared food from her culture.*
- *Our high retention is also due to the respect we have for our staff. We show an interest in their lives, a keenness to learn of their culture and encourage them to share it with us, the families, and children e.g., when (Educator) turned [REDACTED], we invited her family to the Centre and employed their custom of the children [REDACTED] [REDACTED] in partnership with families [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. This made (Educator's) Mum cry saying, "You are also her family".*
- *Children benefit from continuity of care at our Centre. Children and families are welcomed by the same educators each morning who engage in conversation with the parent and child, building a relationship of trust, connection, and open and honest dialogue. In the afternoon, an educator from the child's room is either present or has exchanged relevant information with a colleague. This close connection is key to families and children feeling a sense of belonging and achieving learning outcomes.*
- *Except for trainees, all staff are remunerated with wages in excess of the award rate, acknowledging their professionalism, trustworthiness, and loyalty. We also cover the cost of their tertiary studies and any workshops/webinars that may assist in their professional development. We also support staff's personal needs - allowing them to carry a debit in leave entitlements until it has been accrued.*
- *In line with our Philosophy principle of Equality/Equity, Planning Cycles and Behaviour Management Plans include the role of educators (in partnership with families) to support all children to participate fully as both individual and in group situations e.g., to promote the safety of a child who may not follow group instructions to move from outdoor to indoor play.*
- *Staff rosters and breaks are scheduled to ensure that we meet staff/child ratio at all times to maintain a consistent approach to children's learning and development. We also have an experienced pool of relief staff who are familiar with Centre's routine and have established a close rapport with families, children, and fellow staff.*

- *We are proud of the equitable and respectful way in which we dealt with COVID-19 in respect to our staff. As families began to withdraw their child, we held open and honest meetings with staff about how this may affect us all.* [REDACTED]

93. In the assessment evidence summary, the authorised officer set out the following evidence of practice, which was sighted, observed, or discussed:

- *There is an educator sitting at an adult size table with five children. They have textas, matching cards and tiles, clay, and pinecones/seed pods.*
- *The nominated supervisor explains the team get together every morning to discuss the children attending that day and share any information among each other.*

94. In the draft rating outcome summary, the authorised officer included the following analysis note in relation to Standard 4.1:

The educator to child ratio is maintained at all times. The organisation of educators enhances children's learning and wellbeing, and ensures children have familiar educators at all times, and consideration is given to help support the inclusion of all children. The team of educators are qualified, experienced with some having worked at the service for a number of years, providing continuity in the service team itself, and for children and families.

Standard 4.1: Provider's feedback on the draft report

95. The provider submitted a response to the draft report in relation to Standard 4.1, noting that, *'The Analysis Notes in the A&R Report confirm our Centre meets these criteria. Our focus therefore is in relation to Exceeding Themes 2 and 3 that have not been confirmed in the report in respect to either standard of QA4.'*

96. The provider submitted feedback specific to both Elements for Standard 4.1, with supporting evidence.

97. Specific to 4.1.1. Organisation of educators & 4.1.2 Continuity of staff and Exceeding theme 2, the provider offered the following remarks:

Context: Staffing arrangements intentionally foster strengths and professional developmental goals of educators.

EL personal reflection: 'I can't be a calming influence on staff or children in the classroom when I need to be in the office to work on the QIP.'

PD Outcomes for educators: EL worked out of the classroom on professional development. Staffing arrangements empowered diploma-trained educator to take on role of room leader and mentor for staff (fostering both EL and diploma trained educators professional development goals.)

High quality outcomes for children: Children were supported and guided by a team of skilled educators who were present, enthusiastic, and motivated.

EL Critical reflected on changing beliefs: EL changed perspective that positive outcomes for children could still be achieved when she wasn't in the room. Also, positive reflection about her role as mentor to other educators.

Context: Educator [REDACTED] was home for a period due to COVID-19 and took on role of guiding many families also at home during that time. Her role included recording virtual Mat Times for children with intent for learning including numeracy, literacy, STEM, letter formation etc.

Critically reflecting from the perspective of educator at home during this period: Educator [REDACTED] 'Even though I may never return to work, I'm working from home, I'm still part of the staff team, I have a purpose. I am connected. My role is important.'

Critically reflecting from the perspective of children and families at home during this period: Children who are temporarily not attending the service are still a part of the curriculum, we are still connected and are being serviced by a compassionate and dedicated educator.

Result: Embedded partnerships between the service, educators, families, and children during unprecedented times.

98. Specific to 4.1.1. Organisation of educators & 4.1.2 Continuity of staff and Exceeding theme 3, the provider offered the following remarks:

Continuity of staff is shaped by meaningful engagement with families on multiple levels. At Orientation, there is close liaison with families to identify the children's interests and needs and family expectations. This has included developing a mutual understanding of the level and type of care that a child may need such as additional needs, toileting, food preferences, allergies etc.

This in-depth and consultative process between families, relevant educators and, in some cases, the development of specific strategic plans with specialist services, allows the service to organise educators (according to their skill level) to support children's learning and development on an individual level.

There is ongoing two-way consultation with families throughout the year in respect to the child's development and formulation of strategies (for both home and the centre) for a consistent approach e.g., working on pencil grip, speech, toilet training etc. Children who 'connect' with particular educators is also identified.

This continuity of care of educators in respect to children's specific needs (identified by close connection with families) helps children to best achieve learning outcomes and for children and families to feel a sense of belonging.

At a broader level, families are surveyed at the completion of the Orientation process and again at the end of the year. Within those surveys, families are asked to comment on the quality of or staff and the continuity of care such as:

- *Support during the settling-in period.*
- *Quality of staff*
- *Child being welcomed on arrival*

with the message [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] The article was well received.

This line of thinking as a result of thoughtful and professional critical reflection continues to guide practices today as we embrace our continuity of educators and our flexibility within staffing arrangements to prioritise what is most important in the perspective of an early childhood setting.

Example 2

Educator, [REDACTED] and a valuable staff member for [REDACTED] years, was at home for a period due to COVID-19. Her isolation was compounded by her sense of worthlessness in not contributing to the service on a daily basis. Critical reflection by management and senior staff identified an opportunity to turn lemons into lemonade and capitalise on:

- *her expertise with running Mat Time with a small group*
- *her advanced skills with digital technology*
- *her having time on her hands to interact online with children and families.*

The service created a valuable role for the educator with the children who were not attending the service during COVID-19. This included:

- *recording and delivering online virtual Mat Times for children with intent for learning including numeracy, literacy, STEM, and letter formation*
- *communicating directly with families and children via Facebook message and sharing of stories and images.*

Critical reflection from the perspective of educator at home during this period:

Educator [REDACTED] "Even though I may never return to work, I'm working from home, I'm still part of the staff team, I have a purpose. I am connected. My role is important."

Critical reflection from the perspective of children and families at home during this period: *Children who are temporarily not attending the service are still a part of the curriculum, we are still connected and are being serviced by a compassionate and dedicated educator.*

Critical reflection from the perspective of the service: *[REDACTED] is providing an invaluable service for us by continuing to maintain a connection with the families we are not seeing and helping the absent children to achieve Learning Outcomes.*

Result: *Embedded partnerships between the service, educators, families, and children during unprecedented times.*

Example 3

The service's approach to organisation and continuity of educators promotes professional development goals of educators and is informed by current recognised guidance. Director fostered professional development aspirations of diploma trained educator to take on more leadership roles within the service. This has included critically reflecting together on the need for another skilled educator in the room to guide children's behaviour. Diploma trained educator was empowered to reflect on why funding is needed and how it will benefit the service as part of the application for the

funding. The Diploma educator also collaborated with the Director to recruit a new staff member. By critically reflecting on needs of the children and the dynamics of the educators already in the room, they chose a regular relief staff member for the role who is known to children and staff and shares our commitment to high quality outcomes for children.

Example 4

The service team reflected together on opportunities to make changes to the organisation of educators or ensure continuity of care for a child with additional needs. This included establishing staffing arrangements after a meeting between his educator, the child's parents, and educators in new room, talking about strategies, focusing on the child's strengths and the rich progress that the child had made, as well as how the child plays within the context of other children.

With a familiar educator transitioning with the child during the group orientation sessions, a continuity of trust was built with new educators. An unplanned outcome of this staffing arrangement also included the child's educator critically reflecting during the play session to consider continuity of the role of the environments. Both rooms have a [REDACTED] and adjustments were made to arrange furniture in the [REDACTED] to mirror his classroom, allowing space for the child to lie down and to foster the child's rest needs within play. At a whole group staff meeting the educators shared this critical reflection on the success of staffing arrangements to consider the role of the environment. This practice of the staffing arrangements for educators to critically reflect on continuity of environments beyond "children's interests" but for deep thought and provocation is now an embedded practice.

Example 5

Continuity of educators drives our critically reflective practices promoting an embedded culture of inclusion, equity and social justice for all children and families. Having continuity of skilled educators allows us to develop and maintain trusting, professional learning relationships with all families e.g., whose voice is missing within the child's individual planning cycle.

Example: Child's parents separated. Child's mother attended Centre as a child and has a close bond with educators. We don't see the child's father.

Educators critically reflected from child's father's perspective: My child's mother and her family belong at the service, not me.

Outcome: Prior to our [REDACTED], we contacted child's father asking for a photo of the child that he had spoken about. This began a relationship with father before [REDACTED] as he began sharing other photos unprompted.

Emerging belonging: After [REDACTED] experience, child's father began to collect child up from the service for the first time.

106. Specific to Exceeding theme 3, the provider offered the following examples:



Example 1

The organisation and continuity of educators welcomes, reflects, and draws on the voices, priorities and strengths of the children and families at the service. Embedded partnerships with families and communities enrich the recruitment of staff. Parent of a child who attends the service is a [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] visit the service, including during [REDACTED]. She approached management and said, "If you're looking for a trainee, I know someone who I think would really suit the team." The [REDACTED] was hired.

The parent, knowing the trainee educator within the context of her culture, also helped us to adjust staffing arrangements for other staff to take on her more physical roles as the trainee educator, [REDACTED]. The trainee educator shared aspects of how she celebrates this religious festival, the focus was on celebrating similarities between children and families and we had a feast with food representing the educator's culture. This led to growth as professionals and as a service, educators learning, and us learning more about cultural backgrounds of our staff and families. (Also relates to 6.2, Theme 2.)

Example 2

Opportunities for collaboration with family and community partners are built into the services approach to organisation and continuity of educators. Family input, strengths of educators and professional development opportunities are all considered to meet specific needs of children and families. Intentional staffing arrangements promote all educators to take on leadership roles, shaped by partnerships with families. Upon critical reflection, it's not necessarily "most qualified" who are "most suited" for a role.

Current example: Educator has "knowledge of Australian Sign Language (Auslan) and identified a strength for picking up new languages." She enthusiastically volunteered to collaborate with [REDACTED] of additional needs child to learn the unique signs that the family uses at home with the child. Trainee educator now guiding educators and team to use these signs through modelling - [REDACTED] 2021. (Also relates to 4.1 Theme 2 and 6.2 Theme 2)

Example 3

Opportunities for collaboration with family and community partners are built into the services approach to organisation and continuity of educators. Educators sought expertise of a [REDACTED] librarian from a local school to support staff upskilling their use of digital technology to enable to use and delivery of digital technology and to guide our QIP goal to embrace the outcomes of ECA's Statement on Young Children and Digital Technology. On the school holidays, staffing arrangements were made so the [REDACTED] could teach educators new skills including how to use a green screen with children, which promoted relationships, health and wellbeing, citizenship, play and pedagogy. (Also relates to 6.2 Theme 2.)

Example 4

Staffing arrangements are shaped by meaningful engagement with families on multiple levels. At Orientation, there is close liaison with families to identify the children's interests and needs and family expectations. This has included developing a mutual

understanding of the level and type of care that a child may need such as additional needs, toileting, food preferences, allergies etc.

This in-depth and consultative process between families, relevant educators and, in some cases, the development of specific strategic plans with specialist services, allows the service to organise educators (according to their skill level) to support children's learning and development on an individual level.

There is ongoing two-way consultation with families throughout the year in respect to the child's development and formulation of strategies (for both home and the Centre) for a consistent approach e.g., working on pencil grip, speech, toilet training etc. Children who 'connect' with particular educators is also identified.

These staffing arrangements in respect to children's specific needs (identified by close connection with families) helps children to best achieve learning outcomes and for children and families to feel a sense of belonging.

At a broader level, families are surveyed at the completion of the Orientation process and again at the end of the year. Within those surveys, families are asked to comment on the quality of or staff and the continuity of care such as:

- *Support during the settling-in period*
- *Quality of staff*
- *Child being welcomed on arrival*
- *Relationship with staff.*

Feedback from this survey helps us to formulate an analysis in respect to, among other things, the organisation of our educators and continuity of staff.

Example 5

The organisation and continuity of educators reflects the unique geographical, cultural and community context of the service. Continuity of educators is not just felt by children but also by many parents who attended the service as children and their educators are now teaching their children, promoting an ever-evolving cycle of belonging, being, becoming over generations. Example (Transition on first morning of Assessment and Rating, observed by Assessor) Child arrived and announced, "I have a new baby brother." Child shared photo with educator. Educator looked at the photo and said, "He looks just like you." Educator enthusiastically announces to Assessor that [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Educator congratulated father, they have quick conversation about how mother and baby is doing. Educator asked child "Would you like to add your brother's photo onto your family poster in the [REDACTED]?"

107. At first tier review, the panel considered evidence gathered at assessment and rating and first tier review and provided the following conclusion in the first tier review decision notice specific to Exceeding theme 2

The panel reviewed the information in the report and determined that there was no evidence to support critical reflection in relation to staffing arrangements.

The panel considered the submission from the approved provider. The panel noted that many of the claims made of critical reflection, including claims of the educational leader reflecting on her practices and an educator reflecting on her contributions to the program during the COVID lockdown, were not supported with evidence of these records. The panel discussed the evidence of reflection about developing a relationship with a child's ██████ however considered this evidence to have limited relevance to how critical reflection informs practice in relation to the organisation and continuity of educators. The panel determined there was no evidence to demonstrate how educators reflect together on opportunities to further enhance children's wellbeing and learning through possible changes to the organisation of educators.

108. The panel concluded that there was insufficient evidence to support attainment of Exceeding theme 2 for Standard 4.1 and decided to confirm the assessment of this theme as No.

109. Specific to Exceeding theme 3, the panel provided the following conclusion:

The panel considered the evidence in the report. The panel noted that the officer confirmed the self-assessment practice about inviting an educator's family to the service to participate in their cultural custom for the educator turning ████, however considered this to hold limited relevance to this theme for this standard. The panel did not identify any other evidence in the report to support meaningful engagement with families and/or the community in relation to staffing arrangements.

The panel reviewed the approved provider's submission. The panel discussed the claim that information from families at orientation influences the organisation of educators, however agreed that this was not supported by the evidence provided. The panel also commented that, while the evidence of family surveys showed positive feedback about staff, there was no evidence of how this feedback has shaped practice for this standard. Further, the panel noted that claims that a parent suggestion led to the employment of a trainee, did not clearly show meaningful engagement shaping the organisation and continuity of educators. Additional claims regarding collaboration with a parent of a child with additional needs and support from a parent in upskilling staff in the use of digital technology were considered to be limited in relevance to theme 3 for this standard.

110. The panel concluded that there was insufficient evidence to support attainment of Exceeding theme 3 for Standard 4.1 and decided to confirm the assessment of this theme as No.

111. Following first tier review, the rating for Standard 4.1 remained as Meeting NQS.

Standard 4.1: Second tier review

112. At second tier review, the provider sought a review of the ratings for Standard 4.1 and, specifically, Exceeding themes 2 and 3.

113. The provider presented two submissions specific to Standard 4.1 and Exceeding theme 2, with supporting evidence.

114. Specific to the critical reflection of an emerging ECT, the provider offered the following submission:

4.1.1 Organisation of educators

The service's approach to organization and continuity of educators is informed by the qualifications, strengths, priorities, and professional development goals of educators. (Exceeding Theme 2 p.218).

Educational leader critical reflection: *I'm coming in and out of the classroom too often and not giving [REDACTED] (emerging ECT) effective opportunities to lead.*

Strategy: [REDACTED] *to take on role of room leader for larger blocks of time.*

Staffing arrangement: *Larger blocks of uninterrupted time for [REDACTED] to lead room. [REDACTED] supported child-led initiatives. [REDACTED] discussed a holiday to Uluru they had a year earlier in the year as they used sticks to reproduce symbols they remembered. [REDACTED] used the iPad to find a photo [REDACTED] playing alongside local [REDACTED] children in the sand while the adults did an art workshop. The only difference [REDACTED] discussed between herself and the local children was that "their sand was red."*

Teaching decision: [REDACTED] *made a decision not to "prompt [REDACTED] to think deeper about differences." (e.g., about skin colour or language.)*

Educational leadership: [REDACTED] *revisited a prompt together in the ECA Ethics in Action Document prompting educators to "encourage children to notice difference in people" p61. [REDACTED] stance that "This was [REDACTED] story to tell and their own perspectives to share" challenged what we had read, and we agreed that there isn't always a need for further prompt children.*

High quality outcomes for the sector: *In [REDACTED] 2020, [REDACTED] empowered [REDACTED] to share this interpretation with The Ethics Team at Early Childhood Australia (ECA) and it was very well received, and we were prompted to share more of the story.*

Outcome: *By taking a step back and allowing [REDACTED] to work independently, it not only gave the ECT the reassurance that [REDACTED] is more than capable of running the room, it gave [REDACTED] a rich opportunity to utilize and enhance her pedagogical skills and develop her confidence and see herself as a highly skilled emerging ECT.*

Critical Reflection through the eyes of ECT - *"I can confidently leave the room with [REDACTED] in charge."*

Critical Reflection through the eyes of [REDACTED] – *"My ECT has shown faith in me and values my pedagogical skills. I am confident enough to lead the room."*

Critical Reflection through the eyes of [REDACTED] – *"[REDACTED] showed interest in our trip to [REDACTED] and allowed us the freedom to share our experience with our friends using our own voice."*

115. Specific to critical reflection of children transitioning into the [REDACTED], the provider offered the following submission:

4.1.2 Continuity of staff

The service team reflects together on opportunities to further enhance children's wellbeing, learning and development through possible changes to the organisation of educators. (Exceeding Theme 2.1 p.218).

Context: Children's advocacy shapes continuity of educators and drives continuity of their learning cycle. A large group of children had orientated into [REDACTED] classroom. Within the first week in their new classroom, children had asked:

"Can we plant the seeds from our mandarins" [REDACTED] age 4)

"We didn't put our scraps in the worm farm" [REDACTED], age 4)

"Can I give them to [REDACTED] she needs to help me plant them then I'll take them home."
([REDACTED] with Woollies planters.)

Reflective practice: As a team of highly skilled educators (ECT, emerging ECT, educator with 40 years' experience) we were struggling to develop rich goals for the group.

Continuity of educators during the orientation process: We had drawn on the strength of the continuity of their educator [REDACTED] to scaffold the transition. We hadn't asked the right questions. When we asked for children's interests it was in relation to "How we could best prepare environments to ensure they were inclusive?" When we asked about routines it was about self-help skills, nutritional needs, and safety perspectives.

Critical reflection: All children had been disadvantaged by our practices because as a team, we had not considered continuity of what mattered most to the children.

Staffing arrangement: We sat with [REDACTED] and looked through outcomes in the 2020 daybooks together, with the clear intention for us to gain an insight into their pedagogical practices and learning outcomes that had been achieved. Through this we gained an appreciation of their interests, strengths, their knowledge and what shaped their strong advocacy for gardening.

Sustainable initiatives, children's agency to make decisions with what they planted were not simply outcomes or practices, they were the core of the curriculum.

Outcomes: The children's right to continue to have those experiences with [REDACTED]. Rosters allowed for [REDACTED] to be available to the group often. (This arrangement was understood by the children and all staff and educators.): An underpinned commitment to "What's missing in the cycle?" and "Where to next?"

How this has shaped our thinking: In future we will have these meetings before the end of the year with a specific time dedicated to continuity of the whole curriculum and staffing arrangements.

116. The provider presented four submissions specific to Standard 4.1 and Exceeding theme 3, with supporting evidence.
117. Specific to the centre's long-standing connection with families and community, the provider offered the following submission:

4.1 Staffing

The organisation of educators reflects the unique geographical, cultural and community context of the service. (Exceeding Theme 3 p.218).

The organisation and continuity of educators welcomes, reflects, and draws on the voices, priorities and strengths of the children and families at the service. Our staffing team has been led by ██████████ for over █ years, together with ██████ for the past █. As three generations of passionate advocates for children, meaningful engagement and collaborative partnerships with families is embedded.

Our roles continue to be flexible, and responsibilities are shared. We know that children thrive when families and educators work together in partnership.

Continuity of educators shapes relationship and supports collaborative cycles of planning, implementing and evaluation. Flexible staffing arrangements, attuned practices allow educators to prioritise the importance of “seizing best opportunities” to talk with families.

118. Specific to connections with families during COVID through the wise allocation of staffing resources (building on evidence submitted at first tier review, set out above), the provider offered the following submission:

4.1 Staffing

The services approach to organisation and continuity of educators supports all children to participate fully in the service program at all times. (Exceeding Theme 3 p.218).

Context: ██████ led an online learning program for children at home during COVID, shaped by meaningful engagement with families. “The organisation of educators is a key factor in supporting all children to have opportunities to engage in meaningful learning and interactions with educators with whom they are familiar and comfortable.” (4.1.1 p209.).

Staffing arrangements were transformed and re-shaped by meaningful engagement with our families was during the COVID outbreak in 2020 where many children were not attending the Centre. This coincided with ██████████ also staying home due to health concerns over the unknown nature of COVID. Over the years, ██████ has developed a close relationship with families past and present – a relationship that goes far beyond being a child’s educator. Families have continued to stay in touch with her through electronic media and visits and she has continued to show a keen interest in ex-students’ developing lives through to adulthood. This compassion is never-ending and continues with today’s families.

Many families of children at home and at the service contacted us wanting their child to stay connected with the ██████████ during these unprecedented times. ██████ also had a strong drive to remain connected with the children during her absence. Families showed an eagerness to stay connected through an online learning platform for the children. ██████ passionately volunteered to facilitate the platform. Underpinned by a necessity to deliver this new strategy with professionalism, ██████ (Early Childhood Teacher), ██████ (Director) and ██████ taking into consideration the identified needs of families at home,

developed online learning packages that were consistent with the Centre's weekly curriculum. [REDACTED] delivered weekly videos with a personal touch which children [REDACTED] also often had one-on-one online discussions with individual children as well as their families to discuss any issues that a child may be having at home, thereby enhancing the child's learning and development.

119. Specific to the continuation of staffing arrangements after COVID, the provider offered the following submission:

Staffing 4.1

The organisation and continuity of educators welcomes, reflects, and draws on the voices, priorities and strengths of the children and families at the service and, in particular, family input on ways to support familiarity and continuity of their child's learning and development at the service. (Exceeding Theme 3, p.218).

When children and [REDACTED] returned to the service after a period of time away, staffing arrangements supported [REDACTED] to direct her full attention to her work with children supporting the "re-orientation" process. Acknowledging that some of these children may have difficulties transitioning back to the early childhood setting upon their return, staffing arrangements continued to be adapted cater to their needs. This didn't just include children who had been away but also children who had been at [REDACTED] and have been missing [REDACTED]. "Carefully planned rosters support educators to be available and responsive to children, and support quality experiences". 4.1.1 p.213.

*The children were offered large blocks of uninterrupted time to spend with [REDACTED] individually and in small groups. These staffing arrangements were not just understood but wholeheartedly embraced by the staffing team and by families – acknowledging their value for the children as well as [REDACTED] as she gradually transitioned into full duties after considerable time off. The outcome for children of this time together is celebrated within the artworks they made for Father's Day during their time with [REDACTED]. Every single child's artwork told a different story about their family interests and culture. [REDACTED] learnt so much about what children had been doing during lengthy periods at home. These staffing arrangements celebrate our dedication to best outcomes for **all children and families**, and our ability to unite together as a community with a shared goal of supporting children's learning and development.*

120. Specific to family input in recruitment of staff, the provider offered the following submission (building on evidence submitted at first tier review, as set out above):

4.1.1: Organisation of educators

Practice is shaped by meaningful engagement with families and/or the community (Exceeding Theme 3 – p.218).

[REDACTED] a parent who is [REDACTED] and with whom, after three years, our Centre has developed a strong and trusted bond, recommended [REDACTED] as a potential trainee. [REDACTED], having a deep understanding of our Centre's values, experience, and sound reputation in the community, felt that there would be reciprocal gains for both the student, [REDACTED] and our Centre. [REDACTED] knew that it would be a wonderful

opportunity for the student to begin her child career in our Centre which she rates highly but also we would benefit from the student's strong work ethic, her passion for childcare, her engaging personality as well as her cultural background which is underrepresented at our Centre. Our Centre was indeed looking for a Trainee at the time and, on [REDACTED] recommendation, [REDACTED] was interviewed and eventually hired.

The recruitment of [REDACTED] and the resultant cultural enrichment of the Centre would not have occurred if it were not for [REDACTED] involvement. [REDACTED] enthusiastically supported [REDACTED] to share aspects of her home life including her [REDACTED]. We celebrated [REDACTED] at school. This was an important experience for children, families and educators as the [REDACTED] is currently not represented within our service. However, it is very much celebrated within our wider community. The shared feast was a way for [REDACTED] and children to discuss similarities with the way their own families celebrate food with family.

121. The provider submitted a further statement, with supporting evidence, after reviewing submissions provided by the regulatory authority as part of the second tier review process.

122. Specific to Standard 4.1 and Exceeding theme 2, the provider stated:

The benefit of having a strong staffing team built on professionalism, collegiality, and a shared goal of best outcomes for children is that it inspires us to critically reflect on continuity of care 'beyond staffing arrangements.' In addition to the evidence previously provided in relation to Theme 2 of Standard 4.1, we would like to share this example.

The educational leader and the AO discussed our recent philosophy update from "learning through play" to "intentional learning environments."

The EL explained that "recently educator [REDACTED] from the [REDACTED] Room was in the [REDACTED] Room and when a child asked to play with the felt planter box, she wasn't sure if they were allowed to, as it was up on a high shelf out of their reach."

[REDACTED] comment led the team to further explore Reggio Emilia's "environment as the third teacher" and to consider the "environment's role" to advocate for children's rights, play choices and to support continuity of care including when their primary educators are not present, and as a result also supporting visiting educators to guide children's play.

The EL explained to the AO that the educators spoke with the children about "removing things from the high shelves." [REDACTED] was keen to have the felt planter in her dramatic play area and [REDACTED] advocated to still keep the high shelves for his mobilo creations so he can return to them later. (There is a sign with his voice to promote this agency. This was sighted by the AO.)

Documentation near the window advocates for why children choose to have the shutters open in the mornings to let the rainbows in, for the solar bugs to work, to observe the changes that autumn is bringing to the trees."

*(These were happening on the days of the A&R visit – **See attached photos of documentation on wall and child responding to the rainbow on her shirt**)*

These practices have been extended to the outdoor environment. (Current practices discussed during A&R visit.) Tubs at the children's level to access materials to create their own obstacle courses. The outdoor curriculum is on display and includes photos of current practices and prompts.

Whilst this example may not be directly in relation to staffing arrangements and may not be considered within the outcome for 4.1 by the panel, we believe it is relevant to share as it does relate to continuity of care, and it again demonstrates the holistic approach that our service team embraces to critically reflective practices and the rich outcomes these practices lead to.

123. Specific to Standard 4.1 and Exceeding theme 3, the provider stated:

The First Tier Review Panel reported that they did not identify any evidence in the report to support meaningful engagement with families and/or community in relation to staffing arrangements. Due to the limited evidence in the report, we would first like the opportunity to share more insight into our staffing team in addition to what we have included in our Second Tier Review application.

At [REDACTED] continuity of educators is shaped by meaningful engagement with families. The AO noted in her analysis that some staff and educators have worked at the service for a number of years. [REDACTED] is the dedicated owner and director at [REDACTED], guiding transitions of children daily from 7am open until 5pm closing for over [REDACTED] years.

Working with children has been [REDACTED] chosen profession since she was a teenager. [REDACTED] worked full time for [REDACTED] years in childcare as well as a second job on weekends at a [REDACTED] to save enough money to buy a block of land to then build her own childcare centre. The [REDACTED] was built with the help of her family including [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] opened [REDACTED] in [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] has also been a full-time educator at the service since the day it opened. Together in partnership, [REDACTED] have provided exceptional continuity of care and education for every single child and their family who has attended the service. [REDACTED] has also been an educator at the service full time for over 20 years. [REDACTED] started her traineeship in [REDACTED] and went on to complete her teaching degree at [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] is now the Educational Leader of our service.

Every effort has always been made to ensure that our children and families experience continuity of educators. Having [REDACTED] also committed to best practices, in the role of Administrator at the service also for over [REDACTED] years, allows [REDACTED] to be on the floor with the team, maintaining trusting partnerships with families and high-quality outcomes for all children.

Our team of educators includes [REDACTED] who both joined us as trainee educators. [REDACTED] has completed her diploma and [REDACTED] is an emerging ECT. Together we are a collaborative team of dedicated and committed leaders.

Our trusting partnerships are built on a continuity of care, not just for children at the service but also for their families. ██████ offered to ██████ for the older ██████ of one of ██████ children after the mother mentioned it needed to be done. The mother expressed how grateful she was to have ██████ do this for her. The mother told ██████ that ██████ and that ██████ not only ██████, she sat with the child's mother and showed the mother how it was done. During this time, the mother opened up about her concern about her youngest son (age 2, who does not yet attend the service) being non-verbal and asked ██████ for guidance to access support. This has led to a collaborative approach to early intervention services and re-allocation of staffing resources. This is just one small instance of countless occasions over the decades where our relationship with families is so embedded that families see us as an extension of their family and that connection sees us constantly evolving and catering to the needs of those families – with anything from ██████ or allocating staffing arrangement to provide optimum continuity of care.

Educators are responsive, enthusiastic and guide family participation in the program. Families regularly come in to share an interest, talents, stories, home cultures and more. Sometimes these experiences are planned, often they are spontaneous. These lead to rich learning outcomes that often occur over a number of experiences e.g., a child's father is a ██████, and the child often arrives and announces that his dad has a ██████ in the car, and can they bring it in to show, which leads to children having the opportunity to hear, learn more about and to play ██████. Staff "reflect in action" to scaffold these experiences, helping to make them as engaging, interactive and hands-on as possible. Staffing arrangements ensure all children are given the flexibility to continue to play elsewhere if they do not wish to participate; many children choose to come and go from experiences and are supported to do so.

124. The provider also offered the following submission in relation to Standard 4.1 and Exceeding theme 3:

AO. 1.1 REF# [Evidence] - "An educator explains a child generally comes to the service late every morning. They have left painting set up for her as she expressed interest in it the previous day and know she would be in later in the morning."

This evidence is more than just leaving the paints out. This child's mother frequently works night shift as a nurse and the child often arrives after ██████. Initially, arriving at this time made the transition difficult as educators tried to assist, which made the child more upset, as well as the mother who has been worried her child is missing out and also is tired from being at work all night.

The decision was made in partnership with the child and her mother that educators are available and ready if they are needed but also happy to give the child and parent the opportunity to transition on their own and not to be rushed. The child also knows she will not miss out on her interest in painting no matter what time she arrives, and this also puts the child's mother at ease. Sometimes the painting station is taken outdoors. This message has been understood by all educators and staff and is underpinned in

practice. Upon reflection, it's the staffing arrangements of attuned educators to step back and be led by children and families that may not always be visible but are often the most successful.

The following evidence was in our Self-Assessment and confirmed to be observed by the AO for 4.1. We believe that this relates to staffing arrangements shaped to ensure continuity of educators during transitions. "Children and families are welcomed by the same educators each morning who engage in conversations with the parent and child, building a relationship of trust, connection and open and honest dialogue. In the afternoon, an educator from the child's room is either present or has exchanged relevant information with a colleague. This close connection is key to families and children feeling a sense of belonging and achieving learning outcomes." Assessment evidence summary. P27.

Panel considerations

125. In deliberating on whether the service demonstrated Exceeding theme 2 for Standard 4.1, the panel highlighted the service's high staff retention rates, noting the positive impact of this on continuity of care.
126. The panel noted that the service was [REDACTED], with [REDACTED] [REDACTED] represented in the service team, and that it was evident that the service team had established positive relationships with families. The panel also commented on the provider's claims in the self-assessment summary that the service uses an experienced pool of relief staff.
127. The panel added, however, that they were unable to locate evidence of how this practice was informed by critical reflection, for example, how the service team was engaging in regular and continuous thinking, analysis, and questioning, and how their critical reflection informed decision-making specific to staffing arrangements.
128. The panel remarked on the service leveraging an individual educator's strengths, skills and interests when considering staffing arrangements to enhance children's learning and development. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the service created a role for a long-standing educator working from home, to provide virtual mat sessions and maintain connections with families using social media. The panel also noted the service drawing on this educator's relationships with children to support a positive transition from home when they returned to the service.
129. The panel commented on the provider's claims that this decision was informed by critical reflection between management and senior staff. They were unable to locate clear and relevant evidence of this to substantiate their claims. For example, the panel were unable to find evidence of all educators and management systematically engaging in robust discussion and debate and critically reflecting, individually and together, and how this critical reflection informed practice. The panel also noted that this practice was a response to a specific situation, i.e., the COVID-19 pandemic, and did not, in their view, demonstrate continuous and systematic reflection impacting changes in practice over time.

130. The panel also commented on the example of the educational leader providing leadership opportunities for an educator by supporting them to take on the role of room leader for increasing blocks of time. The panel noted that while the provider referred to critical reflection in this example, it was not substantiated by the evidence provided. They added that, in their view, distributed leadership was an example of sound practice that aligned more closely with Meeting NQS practice.
131. The panel concluded that there was insufficient evidence to determine that Exceeding theme 2 should be amended to Yes to support an overall higher rating for Standard 4.1.
132. In deliberating on whether the service demonstrated Exceeding theme 3 for Standard 4.1, the panel noted the provider's claims about the service's meaningful engagement with families and/or the community. They were, however, unable to find clear and relevant evidence to demonstrate how the service actively engaged with families and communities in a meaningful way to seek their input, guidance, and feedback, and to include them in problem solving and decision-making specific to staffing arrangements.
133. The panel noted that not all evidence provided supported the provider's submission that the service's practice specific to staffing arrangements was shaped by meaningful engagement with families and/or the community. For example, the panel noted the example of an educator offering to [REDACTED] for a child's older sibling. While noting the educator's positive intention, this example, in their view, did not demonstrate meaningful engagement with families and or show how that engagement shaped practice.
134. The panel also commented on the educator's engagement with the child's parent about a younger child's learning and development, which led to the family accessing early intervention support for the child. While this was noted as a positive example, the panel were unable to ascertain, from the information provided, the extent to which the service's engagement with families was consistent and ongoing, and involved families being key to the decision-making process.
135. The panel commented on the service's use of surveys, after orientation and at the end of the year, to gain feedback from families. They noted the largely positive feedback reflected in the survey responses. They were, however, unable to ascertain, from the evidence provided, how the service team analysed this feedback or how it informed practice specific to this standard.
136. The panel concluded that there was insufficient evidence to determine that Exceeding theme 3 should be amended to Yes to support an overall higher rating for Standard 4.1.

Panel decision

137. The panel decided, by consensus, to confirm the rating for Standard 4.1 as Meeting NQS.

Standard 6.1

138. Standard 6.1 is:

Respectful relationships with families are developed and maintained and families are supported in their parenting role.

139. Exceeding theme 2 is:
Practice is informed by critical reflection.

Standard 6.1: Assessment and rating

140. The regulatory authority assessed the service as Meeting NQS for Standard 6.1, with Exceeding themes 1 and 3 confirmed as being demonstrated, but not Exceeding theme 2.

141. In the assessment evidence summary, the authorised officer set out the following evidence, which was sighted, observed, or discussed in relation to the service's self-assessment summary:

- *We show great respect for the culture, values, and beliefs of our families. Showing that respect has allowed us to develop honest and effective relationships which facilitate the development of agreed strategies. Parents complete a 'Getting To Know Your Child' form, which is an excellent tool for not just learning about the child but learning about families' expectations or concerns and how we can work as a team e.g., toilet training, needs comforter at rest time, separation issues, won't share.*
- *We hold a series of family events throughout the year to help build relationships with children and families such as: [REDACTED], [REDACTED], -Family Disco, - Graduation Ceremony and -Christmas Concert. These events are always well attended [REDACTED] All events are free (not fundraisers) with a prime focus on connection and fun. We also have a Parent Committee and Parent Meetings where families have the opportunity to contribute to our curriculum and service delivery.*
- *Information about our service is available in many ways -our website, [REDACTED] Parent Information Book, brochure, monthly newsletters, regular group emails to families, policy manual in foyer, prescribed information on notice board. Our Philosophy and select policies are reviewed annually and draft amendments are emailed to families for feedback before being voted on at our AGM. We hold a Parent Meeting termly and families are informed of and given an opportunity to contribute to our QIP.*
- *We are always respectful of families who wish for their child to retain their first language. We greet (Child) with a [REDACTED] as he arrives with his father or say goodbye to another child with [REDACTED] when he leaves. These small but magic moments show that element of respect for families' culture which families appreciate. We have also had (Child's) [REDACTED] coming and making/cooking pasta with the children - experiences that have led to rich learning outcomes for the children.*
- *Through observations on Orientation Day, close liaison with families at this early stage and our 'Getting to Know Your Child' form, we gain a deep understanding of a child's likes, dislikes, behavioural/social patterns, food preferences etc. This helps us to develop a close and trusting rapport with children and families and to develop in partnership with families, a meaningful and effective curriculum with appropriate resources. This may also include input from specialist agencies.*



- One child [REDACTED] denied him the opportunity to attend his Graduation Ceremony. We held a private Graduation Ceremony with his family where he was able to wear his gown, sing the songs that he had been rehearsing and be presented with his [REDACTED] which, like the other children, included a personal message about his time with us. The family showed its gratitude by bringing a meal of their culture.
- We're very proud of our comprehensive Orientation Program which gives families and children a sense of belonging and comfort. 2021 Survey saw 96% of families rate it as exceeding their expectations. Typical quote "Such a fantastic [REDACTED] We couldn't be happier!" Our team puts in a big effort to establish a close rapport with families and get to know the child on a deep level. Families and children are greeted warmly and respectfully, and 'goodbye' routines are established to comfort the child.
- We are also mindful and respectful of families who may not be 'traditional' families e.g., we sensitively enquire if it is ok for a child to make two Father's Day cards and presents. We ensure that invitations to family events are sent to all those connected. We invite grandparents to a [REDACTED] when children do not see their fathers. We are also mindful of the very busy lives that families lead and offer them alternative father/child activities at another time.
- Educators share their extensive experience and have sensitive conversations with families in the best interest of the child e.g., getting hearing checked, speech, early intervention, holding child back from school. We are often complimented years later for our perception and being prepared to have that sensitive conversation.
- Feedback from the introduction in late 2020 of [REDACTED] (online portfolio platform) is that it has made families feel more connected with us, particularly during restricted access. Sharing photos and learning outcomes achieved, coupled with families sharing pics of outings and the child's favourite activities, the family/child/educator bond has strengthened and given families the comfort to suggest curriculum enhancements or discuss issues specifically relating to their child.
- Families are encouraged to visit and share their culture/practices with us. This occurs in many forms e.g., through song and literature in home language, talking about their job. These learnings and shared experiences help to break down barriers and generate conversation, often leading to extended learning activities for individual children and in groups. These moments also give the child a sense of belonging e.g., (Child's) Dad came in many times to play his guitar leading to (Child) playing his guitar.
- Our Centre maintains details of local community services that can assist families with issue such as parenting, counselling, domestic violence etc. The information is easily accessible in a folder in the foyer. However, when requested, we assist in finding the required information in a non-judgmental way and offer to make initial phone calls to begin the communication process. Such matters are dealt with sensitively and confidentially (unless it is a reportable matter).

- We annually engage the services of [REDACTED] for eyesight screening of those children going to school the following year. There have been a number of times where an eyesight deficiency was detected that had not been picked up by the parent and glasses needed to be prescribed - for which families have been very grateful.
 - We strive to make families feel supported before enrolment. Our initial contact with families (by phone, email, or a visit on site) is welcoming and respectful. Here we begin to establish a trusting relationship by responding to questions openly and honestly, offering a tour and providing them with an Information Brochure. Where we cannot offer a position, we assist by advising them of childcarefinder.gov.au where they may be able to find a spot in another local Centre that has a vacancy.
 - We have a website which promotes our Centre and a series of FAQs. The local media has covered stories at the Centre, including fundraising events and last year's milestone of [REDACTED]. We place on our Notice Board flyers from local council and other community organisations advertising family-targeted workshops and seminars e.g., parental guidance, sibling rivalry, coping with family stress etc.
142. In the assessment evidence summary, the authorised officer set out the following evidence of practice, which was sighted, observed, or discussed:
- The educational leader advises, "The service's app [REDACTED] provides a great platform for conversations with families".
 - New enrolments families are provided with a brochure that includes a 'Welcome to [REDACTED]', 'Our Team', 'Enrolment Process', 'Early Years Learning Framework' information, 'Relationships with Families', 'Our Curriculum [REDACTED]', 'Healthy Nutritious Meals' and 'Family Events and Participation'.
 - A parent who is expecting a child brought a picture of an apple to demonstrate the baby is currently the size of an apple. There is a description written on the picture and the word apple in [REDACTED] with how to pronounce the word.
 - Families can comment about the program or provide information through [REDACTED] app or with educators face to face.
 - Newsletters are provided to the families through [REDACTED] app and there are hardcopies kept in the service foyer.
 - The service provides planned orientation mornings for new children and families at the end of each year on a Saturday morning. They used to have all families come at the same time, now they have changed to time slots and feel this is working better as it is smaller and the parents can talk to the educators while the children play.
 - The service provides families with an end of year survey that is linked to National Quality Framework. Requesting feedback on the service's educational program.
 - The service provides an orientation information evening in [REDACTED] every year for new families.

- *After a family has enrolled in the service, they receive survey/evaluation request to gain feedback about the enrolment process.*

143. In the draft rating outcome summary, the authorised officer included the following analysis note in relation to Standard 6.1:

A comprehensive enrolment process has been established for yearly intake of new families. Families are well informed about service operation through [REDACTED] application and displays in the foyer. The service actively collaborates with families from enrolment and orientation, with strategies in place to learn more about the child and family, and ongoing communication with the child's family occurs. Opportunities are provided to families to contribute to their child's learning and development. Opportunities are also provided for families to contribute to service processes, through surveys and comment areas on [REDACTED]. Families are consistently provided with opportunities to participate at the service by attending calendar events, and day to day activities. Management and educators are developing an understanding of how to reflect on their practices to inform changes within the service.

Standard 6.1: Provider's feedback on the draft report

144. The provider submitted a response to the draft report in relation to Standard 6.1, noting that, *'The Analysis Notes in the A&R Report confirm our Centre meets these criteria. Our focus therefore is in relation to Exceeding Theme 2 that has not been confirmed in the report for either standard of QA6.'*
145. The provider submitted feedback specific to all three Elements for Standard 6.1, with supporting evidence.
146. Specific to Element 6.1.1: Engagement with the service and Exceeding theme 2, the provider offered the following remarks:

Context: Critical reflection from the point of view of families who may not have a sense of belonging.

Example: Child's parents separated. Child's mother attended Centre as a child and has a close bond with educators. We don't see the child's father.

Educators critically reflected from child's father's perspective: My child's mother and her family belong at the service, not me.

Outcome: Prior to our [REDACTED], we contacted child's father asking for a photo of the child that he had spoken about. This began a relationship with father before [REDACTED] as he began sharing other photos unprompted.

Emerging belonging: After [REDACTED] experience, child's father began to collect child up from the service for the first time.

Context: Child arrived after cooking experience. Child's mum said they love to cook, and she shared photos.

Reflection in action: Educator read cues from child and family that this was an interest. Staffing arrangements adjusted to allow child to participate.

Parent's perspective: (at arrival) I don't want her to miss out on this, she loves cooking. (Once child was included.) My child matters. We belong here.

Child's perspective: (at arrival) I want to cook. (Once child was included.) I belong, I am heard.

147. Specific to Element 6.1.2: Parent views are respected and Exceeding theme 2, the provider offered the following remarks:

Context: Educator liaised with family about her own concerns of child going to school the following year. Family decided child would go to school anyway.

The cycle of educator's reflection (high emotions): 'Why would they do this? She's going to struggle at school. Don't they respect us as professionals?'

Through critical reflection: We developed self-awareness of our own biases and reflected more constructively, intellectually, and compassionately - recognising families as children's first and most influential teachers.

Outcome: The cycle of reflective conversations and critical reflection from parents' perspective guides us to maintain trusting relationships. This led us to support the family and child in preparing for school rather than have negative approach.

Embedded outcome: This critical reflection experience has guided ongoing partnerships with families.

148. Specific to Element 6.1.3: Families are supported and Exceeding theme 2, the provider offered the following remarks:

Context: Supporting families to keep children safe in the car park. A bunting sign was displayed in carpark [REDACTED] This was met with great enthusiasm from children and families.

Critical reflection from the perspective of children and their families: 'Have you noticed us doing the right thing, keeping my child safe.'

Educator's reflection: 'This is so important that we keep this positive message going.'

Outcome: New poster that said [REDACTED] acknowledging the efforts of children and families. Engaging families in our road and car park safety program leads to positive outcomes and guides our ever-evolving commitment to keep children safe. Meeting minutes [REDACTED]/20.

Standard 6.1: Final report

149. In the assessment and rating feedback form with officer comments, the authorised officer remarked that the evidence submitted by the provider was considered during the visit, and that they did not believe it met the threshold for critical reflection. They also noted that practice was developing but they only had single evidence of critical reflections not demonstrating ongoing practice.

150. The final rating outcome summary included the same analysis note in relation to Standard 6.1 as documented in the draft report.

151. In the final rating outcome summary, Exceeding themes 1 and 3 were confirmed as demonstrated, but not Exceeding theme 2. The rating for Standard 6.1 remained as Meeting NQS.

Standard 6.1: First tier review

152. The provider applied for first tier review, seeking to have Standard 6.1 amended to Exceeding NQS.
153. Specific to Quality Area 6, the provider noted that, *'The A&R Report confirmed that our service met the Exceeding Criteria for Themes 1 & 3 for Standard 6.1 and 6.2 but not Theme 2 (Practice is informed by critical reflection). Accordingly, it is these areas that are hereby addressed.'*
154. In support of their application, the provider submitted examples of practice specific to Standard 6.1, with supporting evidence.

Example 1

Educators, coordinators, and the educational leader use the ECA Box of Provocations and the NQS Exceeding questions to think about how we promote engagement with the service. We identified that we embrace critically reflective practices to promote inclusion right from the time we meet families.

Example: A mother came to inquire about the service, saying that she had met people at the park, at her son's primary school [REDACTED] and they all said she needed to come to our [REDACTED]. She [REDACTED] wanted a place for her child straight away. She said all of her family are in [REDACTED] and this feels like family, and she needs to come here. English was the mother's second language, so we embraced the guidance of a staff member who spoke the same language to help share information about the enrolment process. As we interacted with the mother over two more occasions, the [REDACTED] and ECT identified a concern that this barrier of comprehension was beyond a language barrier, that she still appeared to still be confused about our enrolment process. We critically reflected and identified our belief that it would be in the best interest of the child as well as her mother that the child got a place at the service and secondly, to do so, there was a need for us to do more to ensure she came on the right day to enrol. When asked if we could help her, the mother replied, "Please, please." Together we drew on the support of her husband and her friend, and she successfully got a place for this year. Management also provided assistance to the family to facilitate with documentation and online registering process. Both parents are very grateful that their child now attends the service. We observe the sense of "belonging" the mother now has at the service and how at ease she has become.

By critically reflecting on the NQS exceeding themes and sharing our leadership practices (with consideration of privacy and confidentiality) together as a whole team, we gain a broader perspective of cultural competence and often it's different to what we first observe, for children and for families. This is vital, especially as our suburb has an ever-evolving demographic of families.



Example 2

At the service, many grandparents do the drop-offs and pick-ups. The Director observed a staff member in the foyer showing a grandparent how to sign in, the grandparent said, "Thank you for that [REDACTED] now I know how to do it myself." The educator critically reflected that she had always done the signing in for the grandparent, because she thought that was helpful, but if we really want family members to feel a sense of belonging to the service then guiding them to sign in themselves is actually a much better way.

Example 3

In [REDACTED] 2020, a passionate group of parents robustly voiced their wishes for us to hold Graduation Ceremonies with families, as many Covid-19 restrictions had been lifted. Through critically reflective conversations over time between families, coordinators, and educators about how it could successfully happen and guided by current regulations and information on social distancing, we created a Covid Safe Action Plan. The Ceremony had to be spread across two time slots over two nights and scaled back significantly with socially distanced [REDACTED] which were re-arranged between sessions.

Although very different from prior ceremonies, families understood and were very appreciative of the effort we went to. The critical reflection to go ahead rather than take the easy way out was well worth it and allowed all stakeholders to celebrate the children's time with us. In some cases, it was the end of any era for families who had brought the older siblings to [REDACTED] over many years and this event was a special moment in the families' lives. (Also relates to 2.2 Theme 2.)

Example 4

Embedded critical reflection as a team ensures that we are genuinely respecting parents views and choices, even if they differ from our own, allowing us to maintain trusting partnerships with families. The ECT liaised with a family of her concerns for their child going to school the following year. The family made the decision that the child would go to school. As passionate advocates for children, the first reflections of our ECT and diploma educator were highly emotional, including "Why would they do this? She's going to struggle at school." However, through critical reflection as a team of skilled professional educators, we quickly drew on that self-awareness of our own biases and reflected more constructively, intellectually, and compassionately, recognising families as children's first and most influential teachers. This new place of non-judgment allowed us to quickly shift in attitude to guided ongoing partnership and led us to wholeheartedly support the child and the family's transition to school.

Example 5

We're dedicated to ongoing critical reflection to do everything we can do to support families to keep children safe. Our critical reflection over time has been that when something is embedded within our curriculum and children understand it and are excited about it, there is a much more successful outcome. Recently the service ordered [REDACTED] [REDACTED] for families, including stickers for the car window to show which side of the car to exit from. Educators incorporated these stickers into dramatic play scenarios. On

the morning of the Assessment and Rating visit, a child's mother expressed that her child passionately advocated for the mother to put the safety door sticker on their car window, she could tell her mother which window the sticker was to go on and she could also explain why it had to be there. (Also relates to 2.2 Theme 2.)

155. At first tier review, the panel considered evidence gathered at assessment and rating and first tier review and provided the following conclusion in the first tier review decision notice:

The panel considered the information in the report, including the officer's notes that management and educators are developing an understanding of how to reflect on their practices to inform changes within the service. The panel discussed that there was limited evidence in the report to support critical reflection for this standard.

The panel reviewed the claims and evidence submitted by the approved provider. The panel acknowledged that the evidence demonstrated some reflection on developing a partnership with a child's father who the service did not normally see and reflection on a parent's comment regarding a child's interest in cooking. The panel agreed however, that clear links to how critical reflection informed practice for this standard were not evident. Additional claims, including reflection on a parent's decision to send their child to school and reflection on how engagement is promoted using the ECA box of provocations and NQS exceeding questions, were not supported by the evidence provided.

156. The panel concluded that there was insufficient evidence to support attainment of Exceeding theme 2 for Standard 6.1 and decided to confirm the assessment of this theme as No.
157. Following first tier review, the rating for Standard 6.1 remained as Meeting NQS.

Standard 6.1: Second tier review

158. At second tier review, the provider sought a review of the ratings for Standard 6.1 and, specifically, Exceeding theme 2.
159. The provider presented four submissions specific to Standard 6.1 and Exceeding theme 2, with supporting evidence.
160. Specific to critical reflection of a grandfather's sense of belonging, the provider offered the following submission (building on evidence submitted at first tier review, set out above):

6.1.1: Engagement with the service

Families are supported from enrolment to be involved in the service and contribute to service decisions. Educators, co-ordinators, and the educational leader consider and discuss social justice and equity implications of their approach to engaging with and supporting each families' participation in the service. (Exceeding Theme 2. p.267).

Context: *The Director ██████ observed ██████ in the foyer showing a grandparent how to sign in, the grandparent thanked ██████. The educator reflected that she had always done the signing in for the grandparent, because she thought that was helpful, but that if we*

really want family members to feel a sense of belonging to the service then guiding them to sign in themselves is actually a much better way.

Critical Reflective practices: *Leadership team referred to this example at a meeting with all educators. We looked at the ECA Box of Provocations card "It's the little things that count." The prompting question was - How do you communicate a sense of welcome and the message – 'You belong here, this is your place too' [redacted]/20*

We discussed the demographic of families. In many families, parents work, and grandparents drop off children. Which grandparents do we engage, and which do we rush through a quick transition because we think we're helping them? We're developing a relationship with [redacted] grandfather built on the connection of the sunflowers, but do we know his name?

-The importance of not "assuming" grandparents (in particular when English is their second language) would rather be rushed through transitions. Maybe they only feel like that because that's the vibe they are getting from us.

How this has shaped our perspective: *We've slowed down our practices, we've put in the effort to teach family members how to sign in where possible, we've gotten to know each family member including grandparents, aunts, and uncles individually, we've got know their names so we can greet them by name. An outcome has also been to often greet grandparents in their home language (when known) and these greetings have become embedded within our practices with children.*

161. Specific to critical reflection of educators' approach to child starting school, the provider offered the following submission (building on evidence submitted at first tier review, set out above):

6.1.2 Parents views are respected

The expertise, culture, values, and beliefs of families are respected, and families share in decision-making about their child's learning and wellbeing. Educators, coordinators, and the educational leader demonstrate self-awareness of their own biases and how these may impact on building respectful relationships with families. (Exceeding Theme 2, p.267).

Context: *After liaising for months with a family and sharing our concerns about their daughter going to school the following year, we were in shock when the family made the decision that she would be going to school.*

Reflective conversations and processes: *In practice, as a team of professionals, we discussed the outcome, and we knew we needed to 'recognise families as children's first and most influential teachers' and to accept their decision and to move forward. The problem was - as passionate advocates for children, our true reaction was still highly emotional and two of us absolutely struggled to let it go.*

We were saying things like "I just don't understand why they would send her" and "She's going to struggle at school" (even though a few days earlier we had agreed that we needed to accept the parent's decision and move forward.) We recognised and challenged our biases to ensure that when we say "We support families as children's

first and most important teacher and respect their rights and decision” we actually mean it. We knew that we needed to get all of these feelings and emotions out before we could truly move forward. Through honest, confidential critical reflection with the other educator, we were able to identify and accept that our feelings came from a place of really caring, as well as feeling like he hadn’t been heard by the family. Through these conversations we were able to draw on the self-awareness of our own biases and reflect more constructively, more intellectually and compassionately in relation to the parent’s decision to send her.

Critical reflection: *We don’t have to agree with the decision the family has made to send the child to school but we know from past experiences that we need to change our attitudes and get ourselves to a **genuine** place of non-judgment and, in turn, play our role as professionals and focus on school readiness development for the child.*

Outcome: *As soon as we verbalised this there was an instant shift, and it could truly be felt the next time we interacted with the child’s father. We told him that we love how every morning he asks, “What’s the most important thing to do today?” His daughter, and even some of her friends and educators often join in and reply “Have fun.” I told him that I share this belief with him. From that moment on, we could support the child and the family as we developed strategies to support the child’s successful transition to school.*

162. Specific to critical reflection on assisting families with enrolment process, the provider offered the following submission (building on evidence submitted at first tier review, set out above):

6.1.3 Families are supported

Educators, coordinators, and the educational leader intentionally consider alternative ways of engaging with families and supporting their participation at the service and make changes where opportunities to further enhance children’s and families’ outcomes are identified. (Exceeding Theme 2, p.267).

A mother came to inquire about the service. She said she had met people at the park, at her son’s primary school [REDACTED] and they all said she needed to come to our [REDACTED]. She [REDACTED] wanted a place for her child straight away. She said all of her family are in [REDACTED] and this feels like family, and she needs to come here. English was the mother’s second language, so we embraced the guidance of a staff member who spoke the same language to help share information about the enrolment process.

As we interacted with the mother over two more occasions, the [REDACTED] and ECT identified a concern that this barrier of comprehension was beyond a language barrier - that she appeared to still be confused about our enrolment process. With [REDACTED] experience in partnership, were able to draw on past experiences where families have not gained a place and then rapidly and thoughtfully, “critically reflect in action” through the lens of both outcomes e.g., the mother successfully gaining a place, or returning at a later date and missing out on a spot. We identified our belief that it would be in the best interest of the child as well as her mother that the child got a place at the

service and secondly, to do so, there was a need for us to do more to ensure she came on the right day to enrol. When asked if we could help her, the mother replied, "Please." Together we drew on the support of her husband and her friend, and she successfully got a place for this year. Management also provided assistance to the family to facilitate with documentation and online registering process. Both parents are very grateful that their child now attends the service. We then critically reflect together, with the broader team, through the lens of the outcome as we observe the sense of "belonging" the mother has at the service as she sits at the drawing table with her daughter. Taking these extra steps not only gave a sense of belonging to the child and parent but it reaffirmed to ourselves that we are a Centre that goes above and beyond and that doesn't go unnoticed in the local community e.g., the mother now knows why our Centre was recommended to her.

163. Specific to critical reflection on open relationships with families at orientation, the provider offered the following submission:

6.1 Transitions

As a team, coordinators and the educational leader intentionally consider alternate ways of engaging with families and supporting their participation at the service. (Exceeding Theme 2 p.267).

Context: A child who was born with [REDACTED] was having many orientation sessions. There was a tendency for both mother and educators to 'hover' around the child. We told the child's mum our concern was about getting to know the child's needs in respect to his [REDACTED]. The child's mother said she was mostly concerned about him hurting himself here at the Centre where he was not familiar with the environment and how we might react to that. After giving assurance to the Mum that we were happy for the child to have that freedom if that is what she wants, that saw the development of a more open relationship with us. After assessing any potential risks, a collaborative decision was made between the child's mother and the educators to take a step back and observe from afar. The child was observed socialising with other children for the first time and making friends

In consultation with the child's Mum and his [REDACTED], we developed a Strategic Inclusion Support Plan, which included strategies to ensure his safety as well as his cognitive development.

How this shaped practice: This identified a need to critically reflect on our 'Getting to Know Your Child' form to ask more specific questions in relation to a child's care needs. Previously this information was being documented by educators at orientation where vital information may be missed due to interruptions and time constraints. Having this information beforehand would allow educators to be more targeted in their interactions with families at orientation days and beyond.

164. The provider submitted a further statement, with supporting evidence, after reviewing submissions provided by the regulatory authority as part of the second tier review process.
165. Specific to Standard 6.1 and Exceeding theme 2, the provider stated:

The QA 6 Quality Improvement Plan 'prompts' by the AO on p.28 also states "engaging in regular critical reflection on alternate ways to engage meaningfully with families, supporting/strengthening their participation at the service and ways to gain their active inputs into the delivery of the program" implying that this is a practice that we are working towards.

In comparison to this, in Quality Area 1.2, for which we received exceeding, the AO's analysis notes confirmed that all educators engage in critical reflection to modify the curriculum every day to facilitate and extend children's learning. Educators welcome, respect and draw on priorities and strengths of children and families. 1.2 p.6.

Our response: - Example our Educational leader shared with the AO during the visit. The value of [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] in relation to supporting and strengthening family participation at the service. Example: A child has been at the service since [REDACTED] the child's parents are separated. When we met the child's father for the first time on [REDACTED] in [REDACTED] 2019, we found out so much about the child within the context of the time spent with his dad who [REDACTED] and that the child can speak and understand the [REDACTED] language from spending time with his dad's parents. We critically reflected on how valuable it would have been to have developed this connection and to know this earlier in the year. As a result, the [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] have been moved forward to earlier in the year. The outcomes of this have strengthened partnerships and as a result have enriched the delivery of the curriculum.

Panel considerations

166. In deliberating on whether the service demonstrated Exceeding theme 2 for Standard 6.1, the panel commented on the examples submitted as evidence. This included educators greeting families in their home language, an educator supporting a grandparent to sign in, family events held throughout the year, the [REDACTED] banner displayed in the car park, and the service working with a parent and occupational therapist to develop a strategic inclusion plan for a child with additional needs.
167. The panel noted that, in their view, these examples were statements about or descriptions of practice rather than evidence of how the service team was critically reflecting on their practice specific to building and sustaining supportive relationships with families. They added that they were unable to establish clear links between the statements made and the evidence provided specific to how staffing arrangements to enhance children's learning and development are informed by critical reflection.
168. The panel noted the example of educators' reactions to a family deciding to send their child to school the following year. Drawing on this example, the panel questioned the extent to which *all* educators respected the expertise, values and beliefs of all families and recognised families as their child's first and most influential teachers. Further, the panel noted that while the provider referenced reflective conversations and critical reflections specific to this example in their submission, it was not supported by the available evidence.

169. The panel also commented on the various mechanisms for connecting with and communicating with families, including the service's enrolment processes and orientation program and documentation, regular newsletters, group emails to families, and the service's communication app. The panel noted that while this was sound practice and is evidence of the service keeping families informed, it did not, in their view, demonstrate how this practice had been informed by critical reflection to develop and maintain respectful relationships with families.
170. The panel reiterated that critical reflection specific to Exceeding theme 2 requires regular and systematic analysis, examination and re-evaluation that involves robust debate, discussion, and opportunities for input by all educators. They also noted that this exceeding theme requires that critical reflection validates and builds on current practice and/or informs changes or improvements to ongoing practice. The panel determined that the evidence provided did not demonstrate practice being informed by critical reflection at the level required for this standard and exceeding theme.
171. The panel concluded that there was insufficient evidence to determine that Exceeding theme 2 should be amended to Yes to support an overall higher rating for Standard 6.1.

Panel decision

172. The panel decided, by consensus, to confirm the rating for Standard 6.1 as Meeting NQS.

Standard 6.2

173. Standard 6.2 is:
Collaborative relationships enhance children's inclusion, learning and wellbeing.
174. Exceeding theme 2 is:
Practice is informed by critical reflection.

Standard 6.2: Assessment and rating

175. The regulatory authority assessed the service as Meeting NQS for Standard 6.2, with Exceeding themes 1 and 3 confirmed as being demonstrated, but not Exceeding theme 2.
176. In the assessment evidence summary, the authorised officer set out the following evidence, which was sighted, observed, or discussed in relation to the service's self-assessment summary:
- *Educators' relationship with families facilitates children's transition into [REDACTED] from home - through child-focused greeting, guiding child into play experiences that interest them, positive and reassuring language with parent. Effective communication among educators ensures continuity of learning. Info from families is passed on to child's regular educator and relevant information that needs to be relayed back to a family is done expediently - either [REDACTED], email or face to face.*
 - *Our Centre is always open to accepting enrolment applications and observes children at orientation to identify barriers that may exist and establishes dialogue with families. The centre considers any modifications that may be needed to the environment, guided*

assistance that the child may need and the impact on staffing resources. Educators are open to any new strategies, training, workshops that may be beneficial in providing optimum care for the child.

- *Over [REDACTED], we have developed close working relationships with local schools that many of our families enrol their child into. We provide reports on request, detailing the children's EYLF outcomes, we have discussions with teaching staff, and we welcome visits from school reps who wish to observe prospective students in the child care setting. We receive many comments from schools about the quality of those students who attended our Centre. Many parents are teachers in the local community.*
- *We further support children's transition to school by offering families a [REDACTED] where the child's school orientation days clash with scheduled [REDACTED] days. We support children's transition back into our Centre after long absences through welcoming & friendly conversation, refamiliarizing them with the Centre and routines, facilitating the reestablishment of children's friendships and monitoring their sense of belonging.*
- *We have an embedded transition process for children progressing from the [REDACTED] Room (3-4 yrs) to the [REDACTED] Room (4-5 yrs) the next year. For [REDACTED], children spend time in the [REDACTED] Room, interacting and building relationships with the room's educators (who they already know through interactions with them during outdoor play and being a small centre). The children do craft, morning tea, story time & music thereby building their sense of belonging and agency with the new environment.*
- *We are committed to reconciliation and have built authentic links with our local ATSI Community. Aboriginal elder Aunty [REDACTED] came out to see our NAIDOC Week exhibition, including Indigenous Round jerseys made by (Children). Aboriginal Support Worker has guided us to use the Narragunnawali Platform to start articulating and developing our RAP. We are also using that connection to develop culturally appropriate signage in our dry riverbed that acknowledges the [REDACTED] Clan.*
- *We have a long-standing relationship with the local Fire Brigade who come and talk to the children about the importance of fire safety in the home. The children learn key messages about what to do in the case of a fire and their visit serves a wonderful purpose of reinforcing the message that, although they look scary, the Fire Fighters are our friends. Children often go home excited about the visit and ask parents to check the smoke alarm.*
- *We have a comprehensive school readiness program which acknowledges the significance of this event for families and the important role that we play. Our close liaison with families allows us to work towards focused and child specific Learning Outcomes to enhance children's school readiness e.g., self-help, literacy, pre-reading etc. Families are kept informed of children's progress and reports are written for schools that require them. We often instigate discussions with schools where needed.*
- *We engage with specialist services and work with them and families to ensure that all children experience a sense of inclusion and have equal and equitable access to resources and the curriculum. Current example - (Child's) [REDACTED] came to*

observe (Child) and is making arrangements to return with strategies to assist educators in the management of (Child). Children with additional needs are offered extended orientation to establish relationships and build child's sense of belonging.

- *Over time, we and our families and children have supported many charities or fundraisers - many of which are directly related to us. Examples: - [REDACTED]*

[REDACTED] One child offered to have his Dad drive out with his Ute and donate [REDACTED] [REDACTED] - Making contact with a family [REDACTED] and children exchanging information about their lifestyle and - Donating to south coast school effected by bushfires.

- *We have developed a close relationship with our local Council in multifaceted ways. They; - provide us with advice on planting native flora and donate generously with plants each year, - give talks on recycling, giving children a hands-on experience to understand the message and - give talks on worm farms and how they are good for our garden. These services enrich our Centre and provide, not only fun experiences for the children, but valuable EYLF Learning Outcomes.*

177. In the assessment evidence summary, the authorised officer set out the following evidence of practice, which was sighted, observed, or discussed:

- *The service develop behaviour plans and strategic inclusion plans in conjunction with [REDACTED] inclusion support and occupational therapists.*
- *An Aboriginal Elder visited the service to meet the children and educators and talk about her community.*
- *The service shared some of the concrete statue animals from the service's yard with an Aboriginal Elder to put in her classroom at a local public school.*
- *The service donated funds to the [REDACTED]. This was from funds that were allocated to having someone come and visit the service but couldn't due to COVID.*

178. In the draft rating outcome, the authorised officer included the following analysis note in relation to Standard 6.2:

The service provides continuity of learning for children throughout the daily transitions and with the collaboration of local schools. The service has strong relations with agencies and other organisations where resources and information are exchanged regularly. Families and the local school regularly contribute to the service with visits and participation in events. Management and the educators are developing an understanding of how to reflect on their practices, in relation to family and community involvement and how this will inform changes within the service.

Standard 6.2: Provider's feedback on the draft report

179. The provider submitted a response to the draft report in relation to Standard 6.2, noting that, *'The Analysis Notes in the A&R Report confirm our Centre meets these criteria.*

Our focus therefore is in relation to Exceeding Theme 2 that has not been confirmed in the report for either standard of QA6.'

180. The provider submitted feedback specific to all three Elements for Standard 6.2, with supporting evidence.

181. Specific to Element 6.2.1: Transitions and Element 6.2.2 Access and participation, and Exceeding theme 2, the provider offered the following remarks:

Some areas of reflection have potential to cause debate within the team and these are best used as opportunities to gain insights into various perspectives.

Context: Decision made in partnership with families to move to online platform [REDACTED] to share curriculum and learning outcomes, and for families to also contribute. Positive response from families.

Critically reflective journey to get there: EL previously had support of staff and families to not move to digital platform. Revisited due to COVID and families and educators gave it a trial. EL gained deeper insight into system and had a different perspective as she challenged her own biases.

EL journey of critical reflection: 'I need to keep challenging my biases and be open to moving forward with the times.'

Moving forward: 'It's so much better than I imagined. Families love it. Online portals have become easier to navigate and are much more effective than in the past.'

Ongoing critical reflection and commitment to high standards: We need to continually reflect to ensure it's used intentionally, professionally, ethically, and meaningfully.

Context: Mother and father prompted that if we wanted child's input and engagement, we should [REDACTED]

Critical reflection: This key piece of information changed child's whole experience at the service. Many EYLF learning outcomes that the child was 'working towards' all flooded through at once.

Continuity of educators: Shapes practices and relationship between child and educator and fosters belonging being becoming of children.

182. Specific to Element 6.2.3: Community engagement and Exceeding theme 2, the provider offered the following remarks:

Context: Reflection on Narragunnawali RAP deliverables. RAP 2020 budget included money for 'An ATSI incursion.' Due to COVID, we were not having any outside visitors but still wanted to contribute these funds to ATSI community in some way.

Critical reflection: We know that it is important that the ATSI Community is included in decisions made for and on behalf of them. Reflective journal [REDACTED] 20

Result: We reached out to Narragunnawali platform who guided us towards the [REDACTED] who were promoting [REDACTED] We donated the funds and shared our story with [REDACTED] of how we got to do so. We now receive their newsletters.

Context: Our service develops partnerships with the wider community. We draw on these within pedagogical decision making to provide authentic high-quality experiences and outcomes for children.

Ongoing partnership: █████ found an object on a property. His family didn't know what it was. Google didn't know! █████ thought it was a cow's foot. We reached out to farmer █████ from regional NSW. She replied with a developmentally appropriate response explaining to █████ that it was the equivalent of a horse's toenail. It would be a bit sore for a while but ok.

Critical reflection: 'Let's use less Google and more authentic connections with the community.'

Standard 6.2: Final report

183. In the assessment and rating feedback form with officer comments, the authorised officer remarked that the evidence provided had already been considered when developing the draft report, noting no change to the rating.
184. The final rating outcome summary included the same analysis note in relation to Standard 6.2 as documented in the draft report.
185. In the final rating outcome summary, Exceeding themes 1 and 3 were confirmed as demonstrated, but not Exceeding theme 2. The rating for Standard 6.2 remained as Meeting NQS.

Standard 6.2: First tier review

186. The provider applied for first tier review, seeking to have Standard 6.2 amended to Exceeding NQS.
187. In support of their application, the provider submitted examples of practice specific to Standard 6.2, with supporting evidence:

Example 1

Collaborative partnerships with families, and the unique context of the service where many families know each other outside of █████ help us to promote high quality outcomes. During a lengthy orientation program for a child starting who has █████ █████ the mother of another child observed the child's mother and two educators gently hovering around the child. The mother of the other child is good friends with the orientating family. She approached us at a different time and said, "We just treat him like he's normal when we see him." Upon critical reflection, this gave the team a completely different perspective. Embracing this information, we were able to have a very real conversation with the child's mother about how we were treating the child. She agreed that within the context of play, she was happy for us to take a step back and let him play. This was observed to instantly put her at ease. A collaborative decision was made between the child's mother and the educators to take a step back and observe from afar. The child was observed socialising with other children for the first time and making friends. A few months into the child starting, the mother told educators "If you guys didn't have this place, there's no way I would send him anywhere else. Bringing him

here is like leaving him with family, the learning is a bonus.” (Also relates to 4.1, theme 3.)

Example 2

We pride ourselves on building and maintaining collaborative partnerships with all families. In 2020 we began to face challenges we had never had to worry about due to Covid restrictions and safety. When families were not coming inside the service, we weren't having the same informal chats. As a team, we proposed to families that we consider embracing an online platform to communicate and to share children's outcomes. Many families embraced this suggestion immediately; there was a strong suggestion to look at the "██████████ platform." Most educators and staff members were enthusiastic to learn more about using the platform.

Educational leader reflected on her response- "I really struggled with the idea but acknowledged that I needed to ask the right questions from a place of wanting best outcomes. I also realised that unlike changes at the service that normally occur slowly over time, as soon as this ball got rolling it was going to be all on, and it was absolutely vital that I was on board to lead it. Once I began to articulate my feelings towards the online portal, I shared them as a team of educators and coordinators, and from their positive responses, I realised that what I initially thought was me being "behind the times" and "struggling to move forward" were genuine issues such as promoting professionalism and considering privacy and keeping every child's journey personal."

Once these messages were underpinned and understood and we started to find solutions to these issues, the floodgates to the possibility of a new way opened. Together, in dialogue with families, strategies have been developing and continue to critically reflect on to ensure we are promoting ourselves as skilled educators, that practices reflect our Policies, Philosophy, and ethical standards e.g., every child's learning stories are sent individually even within a group setting, promoting confidentiality for the individual child's journey and dialogue between families and educators remains private.

Example 3

(Written by ECT/ Educational leader) Inspired by ██████████ at the ██████████ conference I was motivated to embrace the Narragunnawali platform and get started on a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) for our service. Jottings and notes from the time show my struggle to get started and my concerns for getting it wrong, and a lack of vision of how we could make a RAP feel like our own.

I approached a friend of our service who is an Aboriginal ██████████ at a local public school and whose children used to attend the service

When I mentioned "RAP" she gave me a thumbs up. Her reply was "You're already doing it, don't over think it." I didn't realise it at the time, but this was the pivotal moment that our Reconciliation journey had officially begun, because I was no longer trying to create a RAP on my own. As soon as I embraced with other educators and said "██████████ said we're already doing it" we looked at ourselves through the lens of what our local ATSI

community has seen. That same year we had used children's passion for rugby league to embrace The NRL Indigenous Round. Children even designed their own jerseys. We had embraced an article of a child's favourite player [REDACTED] where he talks about how important his mum has been in his career and used it to celebrate NAIDOC Week's theme "Because of her we can". When we invited our local ATSI community to our NAIDOC art exhibition, children and another friend of our service who is also an Aboriginal elder bonded instantly over a love of the same NRL team and the magical moment was that the whole experience between them was about embracing similarities and not differences. We had "intentionally embraced Reconciliation within children's interests and curriculum driven by critical reflection as a team" and it was embedded in practice. And these are the practices on which our RAP is now based.

Our RAP is not a checklist of things that need to be done, it's something much more exciting than that. Our RAP is a journey and an ever-evolving consciousness that reflects our unique geographical, cultural and community context. Our RAP welcomes, reflects and draws on voices, promotes strengths of children, families and communities including our local ATSI community.

Example 4

Continuity of educators over [REDACTED] years has allowed us to maintain relationships with children and families into adulthood, and to use these partnerships to create rich outcomes for communities e.g., a child who attended the service [REDACTED] years ago reached out to our service in [REDACTED] 2020 with her personal idea to organise a [REDACTED] for children in bushfire effected areas. Community spirit was embraced, a parent at the service is a [REDACTED], and she volunteered to [REDACTED]. Children shared their own positive messages inside the books donated, focusing on positivity "It's growing back."

Example 5

Family Disco and Christmas Concert.

The Centre holds two major family events annually - a Family Disco and a Christmas Concert. Through critical reflection over [REDACTED] years with staff, families, children, and the local high school from whom we hire out their hall, we have seen ongoing improvement of these significant events which are priceless opportunities to further develop relationships with and amongst families and the community. These improvements and enhancements include:

- Identifying in the early years the need to seek out a new venue as our Centre was too small to openly invite all family members and friends*
- Establishing a relationship with the local high school via a parent [REDACTED]*
- Establishing the most effective way to deliver the events and maintaining an ongoing relationship with the high school students who continued to provide that service way beyond their school years to deliver ever-evolving experiences for the families and children e.g., smoke machines, video screens, video recording, superior microphones etc*

- *Embedded critical reflection of the safety of the environment in partnership with staff and families e.g., a safety issue of children running in the hall was addressed the following year with the set-up of the seating.*
- *Critically reflecting on the level of popularity of the songs and dance routines and making changes for future events e.g., [REDACTED] was so popular, we did it twice.*

A rich example of the impact that the Disco can have on families is [REDACTED]. In [REDACTED] we were amazed when [REDACTED] who attended the disco [REDACTED] that she had attended with her sister attended and she was [REDACTED] years of age. After that, [REDACTED] who came through the [REDACTED] and they knew how much the events meant to her. To this day, [REDACTED] continues to amaze us with [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] On “at least a weekly basis” one of the educators who wholeheartedly embraced [REDACTED] interest and talent, remains in dialogue with [REDACTED] on social media about [REDACTED]. We continue to incorporate [REDACTED] expertise into critical reflection of [REDACTED] played today.

Incremental improvements each year of these facets of the productions came from ongoing critical reflection which has led us to the present time where families and the children are absolutely thrilled with these community events which are put on entirely free of charge and, aside from the COVID-19 restrictions of 2020, are open to all families (past and present) and friends.

In 2020, we introduced [REDACTED] which coincided with the time that we would normally have our Family Disco which wasn't possible due to COVID-19. Although we could have simply cancelled the event, we critically reflected on how successful the event had been in the past and staff and families didn't want the 2020 children to miss out. We also considered that that this was more than just a one-night event for the children and families. Children had been learning songs and dances throughout Term 2 and sharing that learning with their families. We were appreciative of how disappointed they would be if the culmination of that learning could not be demonstrated and enjoyed.

So, we ran a Disco at the Centre each day for a week and posted videos on [REDACTED] for families to enjoy – some shedding a tear of joy for seeing their child's enjoyment and that we had gone that extra mile (once again) for their child.

Due to the success of the event and the positive feedback we received from so many families, our critical reflection led us to do this again for our 2020 Christmas Concert.

You will see that comments from our Family Survey convey us as being ‘amazing’, ‘15 out of 10’ and ‘the best [REDACTED] in the universe’. These ‘extra-mile’ efforts that occur through strong relationships with families and deep and thoughtful critical reflection are examples of why they say that!

Another outcome of this critical reflection on the value of conducting family events (even in adversity) was the celebration of the service's [REDACTED] Year Anniversary in [REDACTED] 2020.

Again, COVID-19 denied us the opportunity of an exciting social event where families past and present were to be invited to help celebrate the milestone and reminisce. After consultation with the Parent Committee, we decided that this significant event should be shared in whatever format possible with families and children. The week of the anniversary coincided with our Dress Up Week. Each day children had the opportunity to dress up and participate in a Disco. The Centre made up generous showbags for every child and their siblings and we shared on [REDACTED] a slideshow of historical class photos where many parents identified themselves and friends as past students.

We also gained support from the local newspaper which posted a photo of one of our long-serving educators with those current children whose parents attended the centre as a child.

The attached sample of the feedback on Facebook that we received from that [REDACTED] posting and our celebration throughout the week, validated not only that we had critically reflected wisely to run the event, but it also validated the strong relationship we have developed with families and the wider community over many generations.

Example 6

As a service, we draw on our close partnerships with families, our rich index of community support and our links to the wider community to collectively guide high quality outcomes for children. Guided by the ECA Code of Ethics, The UN Rights of the Child, and our service Philosophy of [REDACTED] it is absolutely crucial that we critically reflect before reaching out for these partnerships to ensure the “Image of the child” we share with families and communities is one where children are viewed as capable, strong, and powerful protagonists in their own learning. Current examples include:

- We draw on our partnerships with staff and educators who have moved on into other leadership roles. There was a great interest in [REDACTED] after many children visited the Sydney Aquarium and children knew the [REDACTED] live in the [REDACTED] Islands. An educator who was with us for over [REDACTED] years and went from trainee to emerging ECT at the service moved to [REDACTED] with her family. We reached out to her, and she asked her class, which included many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, if they had seen any [REDACTED]. We found out that they had not only seen them, but their families catch, and each eat them. This led to discussion about how cultural practices vary. We now have a child’s artwork of the [REDACTED] next to the Torres Strait Islander flag. This is on display at children’s level. When we reflected on our RAP deliverable to display flags, we agreed that we had gone above and beyond simply displaying them. These partnerships remain reciprocal, the educator has a copy of children’s books illustrated by one of the mothers at the service and sent us a photo of a child in her class in the [REDACTED] reading the story.*
- When a child expressed a desire to feed the hungry cows, instead of simply raising money for a drought relief, we critically reflected how wonderful it would be if the child got to see exactly where the money went, and the exact cows that were fed due to her idea and initiative. We reached out via the EYLF Facebook Community*

where we met Farmer [REDACTED]. The process went on for a long time because everyone who got recommended to receive the funds thought of someone worse off than them who needed it more. These experiences taught all of us so much as a community about that great Aussie spirit of giving. Eventually, the money went towards moving hay from one farm to another to feed the cows, the magical moment came when the photos came in of the cows being fed and it was celebrated by all of us. Through this link we were also able to foster the children's right to learn more about the effects of the drought firsthand. This experience shaped our perspective still to this day. As a team, we now have a motto, which is "less google, more authentic links with the community."

188. At first tier review, the panel considered evidence gathered at assessment and rating and first tier review and provided the following conclusion in the first tier review decision notice:

The panel considered the officer's notes in the report that management and educators are developing an understanding of how to reflect on their practices, in relation to family and community involvement and how this will inform changes within the service. The panel agreed that there was limited evidence in the report to support critical reflection regarding collaborative partnerships.

The panel reviewed the submission by the approved provider. The panel acknowledged the evidence showing engagement with the community, including an ECT who is also a [REDACTED] in Regional NSW and an educator in [REDACTED]. The panel also recognised the evidence relating to developing the service's Reconciliation Action plan which showed some reflection on the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. The panel agreed however, that the evidence was not sufficient to demonstrate that critical reflection has informed ongoing practice in relation to collaborative partnerships.

189. The panel concluded that there was insufficient evidence to support attainment of Exceeding theme 2 for Standard 6.2 and decided to confirm the assessment of this theme as No.
190. Following first tier review, the rating for Standard 6.2 remained as Meeting NQS.

Standard 6.2: Second tier review

191. At second tier review, the provider sought review of the ratings for Standard 6.2 and, specifically, Exceeding theme 2.
192. The provider presented three submissions specific to Standard 6.2 and Exceeding theme 2, with supporting evidence.
193. Specific to critical reflection of developing the RAP, the provider offered the following submission (building on evidence submitted at first tier review, set out above):

6.2.3. Community engagement

The service demonstrates a commitment to developing its own cultural competence and raise awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. P278. Educators,

coordinators, and the educational leader ...raise awareness of and cultivate deep respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and culture (Exceeding Theme 2 p.280).

Critical reflection: Our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) could only begin once I, as ECT was no longer trying to “create a RAP on my own, from the office.” We were building a RAP as a community, starting by articulating our strengths. The Narragunnawali platform gave us the confidence that we were on the right track and helped us to develop meaningful and achievable goals and deliverables.

Outcome: In 2019 we developed our very own format to critically reflect on our reconciliation practices. This has been extremely successful in articulating the difference between simply “celebrating culture” and to intentionally “promote Reconciliation.”

Example: Child (age 4) took it upon himself to be “an advocate for always ensuring that the Aboriginal Flag pillow is always up the right way.” This is celebrated by his friends who call out to him, and he rushes over to fix it. This outcome emerged from embedded practices to not just display the flags but to continue to talk about them and to embed them within curriculum.

Whilst we had made progress with our RAP, we felt that we were failing in not completing it within the time frames we had set and not sharing it on the Narragunnawali platform. In ██████ 2021, we had discussions with local Elder Aunty ██████ who reassured us that we were ‘already doing it’ through our promotion of Indigenous culture at the Centre. The fact that the RAP wasn’t complete wasn’t the key objective.

Critical reflection: We needed to remove a time frame from our RAP. Our RAP’s success cannot be measured by its completion on the Narragunnawali platform. Our RAP instead needs to be measured by the way it welcomes, reflects, and draws on voices, promotes strengths of children, families and communities including our local ATSI community. Our RAP is a journey and an ever-evolving consciousness that reflects our unique geographical, cultural and community context.

194. Specific to critical reflection of children’s reaction to drought, the provider offered the following submission (building on evidence submitted at first tier review, set out above):

6.2.3 Community engagement

The service builds relationships and engages with its community. Community engagement influences the design and delivery of the educational program, supports children’s learning and wellbeing. (Exceeding Theme 2, p.280).

When ██████ saw a photo of the cows in drought affected NSW, she expressed a desire to feed them through the narrative of her artwork.

“There’s no grass because there’s no rain. The cows had no grass to eat. We have to leave some grass for the cows. Maybe I could get some grass near my home and put it in my car and drive to the cows. Maybe we can get a truck.”

We spent weeks looking into the best way to guide this initiative. We talked about simply raising money for a drought relief and agreed the opportunity for learning and genuine connection was very closed.

We critically reflected on past outcomes and how their success had come from intentionally reaching out for the expertise of our rich index of community partnerships developed over decades. There was a clear intent for the child to be a part of the experience. From the perspective of our drought-affected farmers doing it tough, we also wanted them to know of this child-initiated gesture. Within our spectrum of community links, we did not have anyone who could guide us, so we reached out on the EYLF Facebook Community where we met Farmer [REDACTED].

The process went on for a long time because everyone who got recommended to receive the funds thought of someone worse off than them who needed it more. These experiences taught us about that great Country Australia spirit of helping others.

The outcome: We received photos and videos as soon as the truck arrived and just as [REDACTED] mum was picking her up. The photos included a mother cow feeding her calf. [REDACTED] said that was her favourite part. [REDACTED] mother said that at her home they know how kind she is, and she was so happy that we could see this.

Critical reflection on this outcome through the lens of the “Image Of the child” we are sharing: It is absolutely crucial that before reaching out for partnerships with families’ community that we ensure the “Image of the child” we’re promoting is one where children’s voices are heard, and they are viewed as capable, strong, and powerful protagonists in their own learning.

Critical reflection: A child has the right, not just to reliable information from the media about the drought, but to make real connections and real outcomes.

How this has shaped future practices: At the time, we jotted down “less Google, more authentic links with the community.” This has become our motto and continues to guide rich authentic opportunities to connect and best outcomes.

195. Specific to critical reflection of the disco during COVID, the provider offered the following submission (building on evidence submitted at first tier review, set out above):

6.2.3: Community engagement

The service builds relationships and engages with its community. p.278.

In 2020, due to Covid 19, we were unable to have family and community at our disco for the first time in over [REDACTED] years, instead, children planned a [REDACTED] disco week at school. During the [REDACTED] disco week children controlled the music, the lighting, the dress up clothing they wore, the location, they made their own decorations and even took their own photos in a photo booth. We also sent a “disco at home kit” complete with a playlist of our videos and a disco light so a family disco could still happen.

Critically reflection: *Of the imagine of the child at the family and community disco. The children do make a lot of choices including the music and the dances, but we think a lot of them are not visible on the night.*

Rethinking community events, as we’ve always known them: *Covid 19 opens the possibilities of transformative changes. Image we have of capable competent children within the context of planning and implementing the disco shape future possibilities.*

■■■■ suggested something like the ■■■■ experience with images designed by children.

196. The provider submitted a further statement, with supporting evidence, after reviewing submissions provided by the regulatory authority as part of the second tier review process.

197. Specific to Standard 6.2 and Exceeding theme 2, the provider stated:

Reflective practices as we develop a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) has promoted a continuous evolution of growth and perspectives.

- From "Do we need a RAP if we don't have any Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Families at the service?" to thinking about what reconciliation means within the cultural and geographical context of our service.

- In partnership with our friends (ECT and Aboriginal Elder at ■■■■) we began to create a RAP from a perspective of "Welcoming Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) families and communities." Outcome: Today we have ATSI communities represented within our children, families, and staff.

- Through embracing the Narragunnawali platform we now know that our RAP is also significant for promoting reconciliation for non ATSI children and families at the service. To collectively recognise and respect the ATSI community as the first peoples of this land, to acknowledge the past injustices, and the ongoing inequalities, experienced by ATSI peoples since colonisation, and to commit to working towards a more equal and respectful future. Current example: Within the context of our curriculum, ■■■■ has always had conversations with children about the lyrics of our National Anthem and what they mean e.g., "girt by sea" means "water all around." In ■■■■ this year, ■■■■ began to talk with the children about how the ATSI peoples have been here in Australia for more than 50,000 years, which is why the lyrics needed to be changed to "we are one and free" not "young and free", because not acknowledging their long history wasn't fair. (Confirmed in self-assessment by AO.)

*We went into great detail sharing outcomes of our RAP with the AO during the visit. The reflective practices that have led to the collective growth in our perspectives and our intentionality behind our reconciliation practices were not documented. **The service shared some of the ■■■■ from the service's yard with an Aboriginal Elder to put in her classroom at a local public school. P40. 6.2 [Evidence].***

Response: This appears to be a very simplistic account of that observation. For many years ■■■■ and Aunty ■■■■ have bonded over having indoor and outdoor environments that represent the natural landscapes of ■■■■ Country" and continue to inspire each other with their ideas. Aunty ■■■■ loved some of the ■■■■ and ■■■■ happily gave them to her. It was a way of continuing to develop that bond and symbolic of the respect that they have for each other. That sharing was reciprocated when we visited Aunty ■■■■ at her school where she shared with us her resources and knowledge and stories.

The AO documented that the service donated money to the ■■■■ ■■■■ with allocated RAP funds we could not use for an incursion due to Covid19.

The intentionality behind this decision was not documented. That was the growth in cultural competence as educators knowing the significance of including our ATSI communities in decisions made on behalf of them as we engaged with Narragunnawali to inform this outcome.

Welcome to Country Sign

Another example of critical reflection in Standard 6.2 is the development of the Centre's Welcome to Country Sign. This was shown in detail to the AO by the Administrator on the day and emailed to her.

Our Centre staff critically reflected on the way in which we acknowledge the local ATSI community and agreed that the current practice of a small-framed sign high on the wall downplayed the significance of the local [REDACTED] land and its people. This began a protracted project in developing an appropriate Welcome to Country Sign and involved extensive communication with various local ATSI bodies, liaison with Aunty [REDACTED] and her colleague which, in itself, was a rich and fulfilling experience. It also led to unanticipated outcomes such as a re-think of Welcome to Country beyond just a sign but also the way our natural environments represent the local landscape of the [REDACTED] country e.g., [REDACTED] bush tucker in our veggie garden. The process also led to the identification within our family community of a local ATSI member who could assist us with a smoking ceremony.

Without going into details here, I refer you to the attached document.

It is surprising and rather disappointing that this wasn't considered by the AO as worthwhile evidence in respect to Theme 2 for Standard 6.2.

Panel considerations

198. In deliberating on whether the service demonstrated Exceeding theme 2 for Standard 6.2, the panel noted that while the provider described several examples of practice, they did not, in their view, demonstrate critical reflection at the level required for Exceeding theme 2 specific to collaborative partnerships.
199. The panel commented that statements made about critical reflection were not clearly substantiated in the evidence provided. The panel highlighted the example of the service introducing a communication app to better connect with families during the COVID-19 pandemic. They noted the provider's submission that this idea had previously been met with mixed views from educators, and that the decision to move to an online platform was decided in partnership with families. They added that they were unable to locate clear and relevant evidence demonstrating how critical reflection informed ongoing engagement with families or how the decision to introduce the communication app linked back to critical reflection.
200. The panel remarked on the example of the service engaging with families and specialist services to support the inclusion of children with additional needs. Drawing on one example, they noted a conversation between the parent of a child with additional needs and educators in how to support the child's participation in the service and enhance opportunities to socialise and build relationships with other children. While it was noted

that this conversation shifted educator's perspectives upon critical reflection, the panel was unable to locate relevant and substantive evidence to support this claim.

201. The panel noted the service's connections with the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. Examples noted included a visit from Aunty [REDACTED] during NAIDOC week, being supported by an Aboriginal support worker to use the Narragunnawali Platform to develop the service's Reconciliation Action Plan, and the development of the service's Welcome to Country sign.
202. The panel noted these examples as sound practice in raising awareness of and cultivating respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures. They added, however, that the examples did not, in their view, demonstrate evidence of collaborative partnerships with community, nor did they demonstrate critical reflection by management and educators, including engaging in robust discussion and debate, and opportunities for input by all educators. The panel also remarked that they were unable to determine, on the evidence submitted, how critical reflection had shifted thinking and shaped ongoing practice specific to building and sustaining collaborative partnerships with its community, including their local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.
203. The panel noted the provider's reference to the service's parent committee in deciding how to proceed with the service's [REDACTED] anniversary in a COVID safe way. They added that there was no detail provided specific to the roles and responsibilities of the parent committee, or how collaborative partnerships with the committee informed ongoing practice specific to this standard.
204. The panel also noted the provider's submission that decision-making about proceeding with the service's anniversary was made in consultation with the parent committee. They were, however, unable to determine what critical reflection had occurred specific to this decision, and how other educators at the service were involved in critically reflective discussions that may have occurred in relation to this decision.
205. The panel concluded that there was insufficient evidence to determine that Exceeding theme 2 should be amended to Yes to support an overall higher rating for Standard 6.2.

Panel decision

206. The panel decided, by consensus, to confirm the rating for Standard 6.2 as Meeting NQS.

General comments

207. The panel encouraged the service to broaden their understanding of Exceeding theme 2, which was pertinent to all standards under review. The panel noted that much of the evidence submitted was descriptive rather than evidence of critical reflection, which requires a deeper level of questioning, analysis, and examination by all educators, individually and together, regularly, and consistently. Further, while the provider made statements about the service team 'critically reflecting' on practice, the panel were unable to locate clear, relevant, and substantive evidence to demonstrate exceeding practice specific to the standards under review to support a higher rating.

208. Additionally, the panel noted that Exceeding theme 2 requires that practice is *informed* by critical reflection. This requires that decisions about practice are linked back to critical reflection, and that all educators understand and can articulate shifts in thinking and/or changes in practice that have occurred through critical reflection. The panel reiterated that, after assessing all available evidence, practice being informed by critical reflection was not clearly apparent at the level required for the standards under review.
209. The panel highlighted resources available to the sector that may assist the service to deepen their knowledge, understanding and application of critical reflection. This includes:
- the reflective questions for exceeding practice at the standard level in the Guide to the NQF, as well as the [indicators of Exceeding practice](#) and [questions used by authorised officers and ratings review panels](#) to consider against evidence gathered during the quality rating process, to determine if exceeding themes are demonstrated for each quality standard.
 - the [Exceeding the NQS webpage](#), which includes a series of case studies providing practical and illustrative examples of what high quality practice might look like for each standard.
 - a [critical reflection handout](#) describing what critical reflection is in broad terms and how it is different from evaluating, summarising or describing what educators are seeing or doing.