Susan: We often talk about holistic and integrated approaches in early childhood education and care, and Rhonda I've heard you talk about the fact that we need to think about the National Quality Standard in that light too, that everything is connected.

I'm wondering, what are the implications of that for sleep and rest for this 3 to 5 age group?

Rhonda: So when I reflect on some of the discussions that we had when we were developing the National Quality framework, we really did see it as a really integrated and holistic approach. And as much as possible, we try to focus on outcomes for children.

And so, when you think about children's sleep and rest, yes, it does sit with the quality area two children's health and safety—but there's linkages across all of the quality areas when you think about setting up environments that are restful and relaxing, relationships with children, working in partnership with families and communities, having policies and procedures.

The sleep and rest time gives such positive opportunities for, to maximise children's learning.

Alexis: I do see educators and who think about sleep and rest time and all routines as another part of the day where there is opportunity for children to learn, I think during an assessment and rating that as assessors, we look for educators' perspective of the child, and looking at the child as the whole child, and that the rest time is part of the whole child and is part of the whole program, so what can-- what do we see educators thinking about and doing in their practice that determines that rest time is considered an important part of the day for fostering relationship with families, and you know, thinking about rest time holistically for the child and also in terms of the whole National Quality Standard.

Kelly: I guess encouraging the child themselves to identify if they are feeling tired and needing some quieter time or needing a sleep.

And, I guess, we'd expect that there'd be some provision in the program for that to happen if that child needed to have a rest or some quiet time before, you know, the time that they'd normally have a rest.

That is able to happen, and, for that child.

For the children who don't need it, they can still have their rest and their quiet time when it normally happens during the day.

Kelly: In terms of autonomy in decision-making for that child.

Allowing the child the opportunity to make some decisions about whether they'd

like to have a sleep whether they'd like to do something quiet and restful, quiet activity on their bed or reading a story, or providing a table activity perhaps, some services might actually take their children outside for a short period if, you know, being outside, sitting reading a book under a tree, or something like that could be quite a restful time, but, still, allowing that child the opportunity to do that.

Looking at an integrated approach on a rating and assessment, for example, we'll be looking at, for example, Quality Area 6, Collaborative Partnerships with Families.

We would expect that there would be some conversations with families around children's sleep and rest requirements.

We'd expect that families, educators would have discussions with families about what's happening at home and then how that can then be catered for in the day-to-day events at the service.

So for example if a parent came in and said oh my child had a big weekend and been very busy and my child may need a rest today, just see how they go.

Sometimes rest time can be stressful for families as well so you know it's a great opportunity to have conversations with families about how they can support each other and how the service or educator support the families in their rest time at home and also to share information about the child's rest needs with the educators and work collaboratively together.

Are staff sitting down engaging with children, reading stories one on one or engaging with a small group of children and you know a quiet activity rather than doing their cleaning or attending to paper work it would be nice for staff to think about how they are engaging with children and encouraging those restful times and opportunities for interactions and things during that time.

And the national quality framework including the underpinning regulatory requirements allow that flexibility so that educators can support each other in terms of you know, making sure that the sleep and rest time is a relaxing and restful period that does give you opportunities to look at the outcomes for children.

I know what can be a really busy part of the day that can be, I know sometimes educators move quickly through the lunchtime break and sleep because they may need to organise their own lunch breaks and there might be some cleaning task to do around the service but it's just such a missed opportunity.

The attuned educators they implement a program that caters for all children's needs, so and they watch their cues so they can still operate a group program but providing for each child's needs and wants at that time.

So if it means they need to set up their physical environment in a different way so that all children can be outcomes and learning and well-being can be met, then that's what happens, they give children a voice and children also get to have input in how their room is set up so if they are feeling tired well before everyone else they know how to access areas of their room that they can.

There's some myths emerging I heard one the other day that there's a requirement in

the National Quality Standard that you have to have a sleep period of 20 minutes and

that's not reflected in the National Quality Standards or the underpinning regulatory standards.

In fact, it's quite the opposite it's more about being flexible and being able to maximise opportunities for learning through those routines but recognising that individual children have different patterns it might vary, as you say, from day-to-day and then being responsive to that.

And I've heard of educators requiring children to stay on, the whole group of children,

to stay on the bed for the two hours so they can have their lunch breaks and do other tasks.

That to me goes against what the national quality framework and the underpinning regulatory requirements are trying to foster in terms of that individualised responses to children.

If you were going to give educators a tip or something to think about in terms of quality practices for sleep and rest, what would you say?

To think about sleep and rest and relaxation from the child’s perspective and really thinking critically about, what does the child need, what does the child get from rest and relaxation?

Thinking about us as educators how we are we working together to support children during that time.

If you have a room where children are doing quiet activities and not resting can we draw staff from another room during that time to, I guess, work with those children, have those one on one times and support those relationships during the restful time, and just be there to interact with the children.

I think it's really important to reflect on practice.

Because, you know, I've been talking to some educators who have been engaging in action research projects and unpacking their sleep and rest routines and you know thinking about how that links with the philosophy of the service and if you have a view or if your philosophy reflects that you see children as capable and competent, well how's that playing out in the sleep routines if you're asking children to lie on the beds for long periods of time?

How does that link with children having opportunities to make choices?

So reflecting on practice and seeing this as a really important part of the overall program I think is really important as well.