

For over a decade, Chantelle has dedicated herself to the field of social work. With a focus that's as broad as it is deep, Chantelle extends her reach and ability to help others across multiple roles. One of her roles is as a social work therapist, specialising in Play Therapy, within a private practice where she works with children, young people and adults across various mental health presentations.

Chantelle also runs her own business, providing clinical supervision to other helping professions – such as social workers, teachers, sociologists, and counsellors – and developing training for organisations around clinical and creative therapy interventions. The final piece is maintaining a social media presence, where she works to ensure equal access to resources and information for social workers and offers mentorship to social work students or new graduates.

Challenge: Rediscovering her creative drive

Before the diverse and rewarding career she now enjoys, Chantelle held a demanding position as the clinical lead of an investigative team addressing child sexual assault. "Everything felt so heavy," Chantelle recalls, "**I didn't feel connected to the creativity I used in previous roles when working with children.** I wanted to find a way of working differently with children in that space."

The challenge was the limited opportunity for professional development in an environment that required Chantelle's full attention and constant presence. She had limited help to balance the workload, so any time away left her playing catch up and impacted the rest of the team.

Chantelle's pivot to a career path more aligned with her creative spirit came courtesy of her best friend, a fellow professional in the field. Seeing Chantelle's desire for something more, her friend pointed her to an information night about the Sydney Centre for Creative Change's Graduate Certificate in Play and Art Therapy. Chantelle hadn't been actively seeking a career change, yet as she absorbed facilitator Jacki Short's presentation, the decision to pursue this new path was swift; she was convinced this was the next step in her career.

"I needed to get back to something more creative. The Graduate Certificate in Play and Art Therapy was like the first step towards reminding myself how much I cared about that type of work."

Solution: Embracing the art of Play Therapy

The Sydney Centre for Creative Change's Graduate Certificate in Play and Art Therapy was a financial and time commitment, but for Chantelle, investing in her growth was a "no-brainer". Her application to join the program was a definitive step towards a more fulfilling trajectory that promised to reignite the creative spark within her therapeutic practice. A step that proved fruitful for Chantelle, with the program far exceeding her expectations:

Comprehensive and diverse curriculum

"I loved that the program covered so much more than I anticipated, from symbolism and sand trays to drama and movement therapy."

Chantelle appreciated the breadth of creative interventions the course offered, providing her with a **rich and varied learning experience** that exceeded her expectations.

"It was a Graduate Certificate in Play and Art Therapy, but Jacki included so many more creative interventions. I got a great taster of many other modalities, plus an accelerated experience of the play and the art therapies. I felt like I've got so much more than anticipated; I loved the structure."

Flexibility of learning

Chantelle found the program's structure very accommodating, enabling her to **maintain her professional commitments while engaging deeply with the course material**.

"The program offered a flexible mix of core modules and elective training. Having both daytime and evening webinars allowed me to align my schedule with the sessions that interested me most."

Space for development

Clearly communicated schedules and program requirements allowed Chantelle to negotiate the necessary time allowances with her employer, ensuring she could commit to the program without conflict or sacrificing her personal time.

"Clear expectations made it easier to integrate into my work life."

Learning flow

The thoughtful pace of the program allowed Chantelle to absorb and apply what she learned effectively.

"The course's pacing was perfect, maintaining momentum without feeling rushed."

Interactive Experience

Chantelle valued the interactive nature of the course, which fostered a more engaging and dynamic learning environment.

"Despite being online, the program was highly interactive, which was done really well."

Small group dynamics

"It was a small group, which I believe was very purposeful. I've made really good friends in that group."

The intimate group setting of the program enhanced the learning experience and helped build lasting personal and professional relationships.

"It was great, the people were fantastic."

Building confidence

The quality of facilitation, the accessibility and the experience of the program's lead, Jacki Short, gave Chantelle the confidence that her investment was well-placed. "I've spent lots of money on professional development and have walked away feeling like that was a bit of a waste," she says, "I never felt like that with any of the training that Jacki delivered."

"Jacki's facilitation boosted my confidence, which is crucial when investing in professional development."

Result: Chantelle's professional reinvention

Chantelle's completion of the play therapy certification marked a significant shift in her career trajectory, empowering her to confidently embrace a new direction. The program rekindled Chantelle's passion for creative therapeutic work and guided her towards a role that fully utilises her newfound skills.

Chantelle reflects on her transformative journey:

"Before, I wasn't doing any of what I'm doing now. The play therapy certification was part of the catalyst for me recognising what I really wanted to be doing.

After doing the certificate, I wanted to use the skills but was met by lots of brick walls in the system I was working in. That was what pushed me out the door and into something else. I'd always been too scared to jump out of a high-paying, secure workplace. But connecting to so many people that cared so deeply about this work connected me back to what my values were.

It motivated me to start looking for other opportunities, and Play Therapy has become an integral part of the work I'm providing now. It's the lightness of doing that type of work."

"It's completely reconnected me back to the direction I always wanted to move in."

Looking ahead, Chantelle aims to broaden her private practice, creating a diverse clinic rooted in nurturing and creative therapy methods.

"I'm very passionate about providing a supportive space when working with people who have experienced trauma that doesn't rely on talking as the primary way of processing trauma.

I feel confident in how I do the work now, and I'm seeing the positive benefit of it. It's not just a theory; it's evidenced now for me. I'm experiencing it every day when these beautiful children run into the clinic excited to be there. I really believe that's because I'm harnessing these approaches and being creative with the children."

"I have such a different perspective now on how we connect with people and a whole other lens of how to support people through their experiences. The program was such an amazing decision."