

Through the Looking Glass: Seeing Difference, Growing Together - Keynote Presentation

In *Through the Looking Glass: Seeing Difference, Growing Together*, participants are invited to explore how diversity, culture and identity shape every therapeutic relationship. Drawing on the metaphor of stepping through the looking glass, this keynote examines how clinicians can move beyond assumptions and develop greater curiosity, cultural humility and responsiveness when working with children, young people and families whose experiences may be similar to, or different from, their own.

The presentation will explore the importance of creating inclusive therapeutic spaces that honour diverse cultural backgrounds, family structures, neurotypes, gender identities, abilities, spiritual beliefs and lived experiences. Participants will consider how personal values, biases and worldviews influence clinical decision-making, engagement and therapeutic outcomes.

Grounded in contemporary research and evidence-based practice, the keynote will highlight practical strategies for strengthening culturally responsive and neurodiversity-affirming approaches across play, art, drama and counselling settings. Attention will be given to the role of safety, belonging, collaboration and curiosity in building meaningful therapeutic relationships.

Through reflection, storytelling and practical examples, attendees will be encouraged to view difference not as a barrier, but as an opportunity for learning, connection and growth. This inspiring keynote will challenge participants to broaden their perspective, deepen their practice and strengthen their capacity to work effectively and respectfully with the rich diversity of children, families and communities they serve.

Presenter: Jacki Short



Jacki Short is a counselling psychologist, play therapist, trainer and clinical supervisor with over 25 years of experience working therapeutically with children, young people, and the professionals who support them. Her work has spanned a diverse range of settings, including schools, hospitals, welfare organisations, drug and alcohol services and private practice, giving her a deeply grounded and nuanced understanding of complex clinical presentations.

Across her career, Jacki has developed a strong reputation for translating therapeutic theory into meaningful, practical application. Her approach is informed by a clear

understanding of the core elements that facilitate connection, regulation, and lasting change. She brings a particular focus to the role of imagination, play, and creative expression as powerful pathways for engagement, healing, and growth—especially for children navigating challenge and adversity.

As the Founder and Director of Sydney Centre for Creative Change, Jacki leads training and professional development for mental health clinicians and therapists across Australia and internationally. She is passionate about equipping practitioners with creative, evidence-informed approaches that deepen therapeutic impact while sustaining practitioner wellbeing.

Jacki's work is underpinned by a belief that when individuals are supported to explore their inner world safely and creatively, they can access new possibilities, strengthen resilience and move toward meaningful and lasting change.

Presenter's Professional Affiliations

Director, Sydney Centre for Creative Change

President, Australian Play Therapists Association (APTA)

Registered Play Therapy Supervisor,

Registered Counselling Psychologist and Supervisor, Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA)

Registered Counselling Psychologist and Supervisor, Australian Psychological Society (APS)

Registered Counselling Psychologist and Supervisor, Australian Association of Psychologists Inc. (AAPi)

Registered Play Therapist and Supervisor, Australian Play Therapists Association (APTA)

Registered Play Therapist and Supervisor, Australasian and Pacific Play Therapy Association (APPTA)

