



The National Play, Playing and Playwork Conference Australia 2026

location, timetable
and session choices

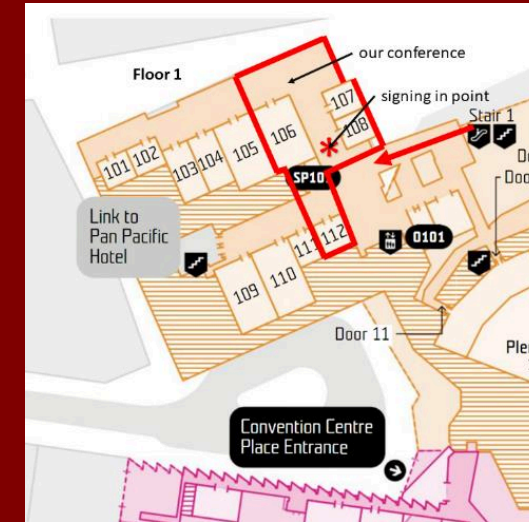
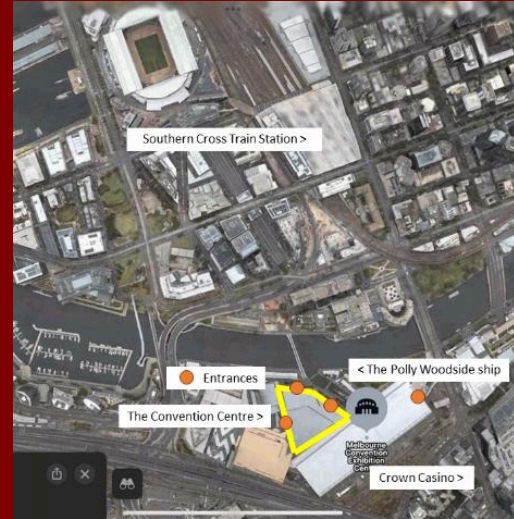
Melbourne, Victoria
5/6/7 March 2026



Welcome

Our venue is the **Melbourne Convention Centre** on the city's South Bank, in between the **Crown Casino** and the **Polly Woodside** (which is a sailing ship moored just off the River Yarra) – you can't miss it (see maps). We are on the 1st floor.

It is about 1km from Southern Cross Railway Station, an easy walk, and is served by tram routes 12, 96 and 109 which stop opposite the casino.



Each of the three days of conference begins at 9:30am sharp! Refreshments and registrations will be open from 8am.

The three days begin and end with a keynote presentation, followed by seven breakout sessions (three on Day 1 and Day 2, and one on Day 3) giving you a total of 28 breakout choices. You will be able to choose your breakout session each morning from 8:30am. Numbers in principal and breakout sessions is strictly limited.

Don't forget the Conference Dinner on Friday night and special 'pre-conference' activities on Wednesday 4th March. For more details about general activities along the South Bank in Melbourne check out <https://www.visitvictoria.com/regions/melbourne/destinations/southbank-and-south-wharf>.



venue, location and registrations

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Day 1: Thursday 5th March 2024

9:30am Welcome to Country, and official opening of conference

10:00am Opening keynote presentation by
Marc Armitage

11:00am **Breakout Session 1** and
Principal Speaker, **Doug Fargher**

12:15pm Lunch

1:15pm **Breakout Session 2** and Principal Speakers
Rachael Phillips & Sarah Louise Nelson

2:30pm Break

2:45pm **Breakout Session 3** and Principal Speakers
Hyahno Moser, Tyana Skimmings & Tahníe Togo

4:00pm Closing Keynote presentation by
Jodie Griffiths-Cook

5:00pm Closing remarks for Day 1

Day 2: Friday 6th March 2024

9:30am Conference Day 2 begins

10:00am Opening keynote presentation online by
Prof. Peter Gray (online)

11:00am **Breakout Session 4** and Principal Speaker
Chris Gregory (online)

12:15pm Lunch.

1:15pm **Breakout Session 5** and
Principal Speaker **Kylie Keane**

2:30pm Break

2:45pm **Breakout Session 6** and Principal Speaker
Adele Cleaver (online)

4:00pm Closing Keynote presentation by
Prof. Marketta Kyttä (online)

5:00pm Closing remarks for Day 2

7:00pm Conference Dinner and Birthday Party

Day 3: Saturday 7th March 2024

9:30am Conference Day 3 begins

10:00am **Breakout Session 7** and
Principal Speaker **Rhi Sugars**

11:15am Break

11:30am **Closing Keynote, Conference Summary and News**
Marc Armitage

12:30pm Conference Ends

Extended networking, chilling out

Also don't forget the special 'pre-conference' activities on the day before conference officially begins (Wednesday 4th March 2026)



timetable

please make every effort to stay right to the last minute or you won't know what you're missing!





OPENING KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Marc Armitage

Aging Playworker, Malarkey (UK/AUS)

What will play be like in 30 years time?



CLOSING KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Jodie Griffiths-Cook

ACT Public Advocate & Children & Young Peoples Commissioner (AUS)

Splashing in Muddy Puddles: understanding & upholding the right to play



Opening & Closing Keynotes
Thursday 5th March 2026

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PRINCIPAL SPEAKER
1:1 Doug Fargher
Educational Consultant,
Bush Kinder (AUS)

Weaving nature into the fabric of play and learning



BREAKOUT SPEAKER
1:2 Daniel Burton
Educated by Nature (AUS)

**The Transformative Potential of Junk:
Adventure Playgrounds in Schools**

BREAKOUT SPEAKERS
1:3 Belinda Rouhan &
Joel Appleyard, Gowrie NSW (AUS)

A multisite approach to Playwork

BREAKOUT SPEAKERS
1:4 Angie Casella, Jamilla Bowden
and Jordan Hill (AUS)

Exiled Playwork: How much is too much



Breakout Session 1
Thursday 5th March 2026 – choose one

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PRINCIPAL SPEAKER
2:1 Rachael Phillips &
Sarah Louise Nelson (AUS)

**Walking with play: Aboriginal worldviews and
play-based practice**



BREAKOUT SPEAKER
2:2 Ella de la Motte, Early
Childhood Consultant Longworth
Education (AUS)

**"Same Space, Different Pace: The Power of
Mixed-Age Play". Natural groupings create
natural learning — if we let them**

BREAKOUT SPEAKER
2:3 Isaih Tueta, The Outsiders Play
Advocates (AUS)

Compound Flexibility – a Playwork Theory



BREAKOUT SPEAKER
2:4 Renae Powell, Playtopia:
Runcorn State School (AUS)

**Playtopia: unlocking the magic
of schoolyard play**



Breakout Session 2
Thursday 5th March 2026 – choose one

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PRINCIPAL SPEAKERS
3:1 Hyahno Moser,
Tyana Skimmings & Tahníe Togo
Australian Institute of Play (AUS)

**Creating Place-Based Play Sanctuaries -
Joomunjie Land Story**



BREAKOUT SPEAKER
3:2 Kate Montiglio
Cambridge Hills Preschool (AUS)

**Custodians of Joy – Weaving Play into the
Fabric of our Newcastle Community**

BREAKOUT SESSION
3:3 Special Session:
Opportunities for Play Research in
Australia

**A chaired discussion on opportunities and the
direction of play research in Australia**



BREAKOUT SPEAKER
3:4 Cam Lee, Green Hat Workshop
and Reverse Art Truck Inc. (AUS)

**Adventures in playful learning (Blocks and
other Loose Parts)**



Breakout Session 3
Thursday 5th March 2026 – choose one

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OPENING KEYNOTE SPEAKER (online)

Prof. Peter Gray
Boston College (USA)

Children and Play in Human Evolution: What do we know and where to from here?



CLOSING KEYNOTE SPEAKER (online)

Prof. Marketta Kyttä
Aalto University (Finland)

Place-based approaches in the study of child-friendly environments



Opening & Closing Keynotes
Friday 6th March 2026

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PRINCIPAL SPEAKER

4:1 Chris Gregory
CEO Isle of Play (Isle of Man)

**Playwork in Action: Lessons from
a Small Island with a Big Impact**

BREAKOUT SPEAKER

4:3 Maria Taylor
Outside the Box Learning (AUS)

The Hidden World of Play



BREAKOUT SPEAKERS

4:2 Angie Casella and Kaycee
Larney, Curious Me (AUS)

**Meet Them Where They Play: Reimagining
Regulation and Connection Through Curiosity-
Led Play**

BREAKOUT SPEAKER

4:4 Julie Ritchey Freelance theatre
artist and playworker (AUS)

Decolonising Playwork



Breakout Session 4
Friday 6th March 2026 – choose one

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PRINCIPAL SPEAKERS

5:1 Kylie Keane
Playworker, Advocate,
Keen About (AUS)

**Let's Play Map our way out of the
documentation doom**



BREAKOUT SPEAKER

5:2 Clare Crew, Department for
Education South Australia (AUS)

Playing with Risk: A kindergarten case study

BREAKOUT SPEAKERS

5:3 Tyler Inglis
Bush and Beach Kindy (AUS)

**Nature Play - growth mindset, embodied
indigenous empathy and the magic of boredom**



BREAKOUT SPEAKERS

5:4 Clare Comedoy and Miranda
Smith, Think Again See Again Early
Education Consultancy and
Coaching (AUS)

**Rewiring Leaders: How Play Shaped a Journey
into Leadership Growth and Reflection**



Breakout Session 5
Friday 6th March 2024 – choose one

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PRINCIPAL SPEAKER

6:1 Adele Cleaver
Playworker & author of 'Children
don't dissolve in the rain' (UK)

More Play, Please:
Reflective practice, parenthood and playwork

BREAKOUT SPEAKER

6:3 Lucinda Jones,
BECIS Bathurst Early Childhood
Intervention Service (AUS)

BECIS- Empowering play to weave its magic



BREAKOUT SPEAKER

6:2 Hannah Powell, Norman Park
Community Kindergarten (AUS)

**The Brain Play Flow Connection And How It
Can Guide Quality Play Provision**

BREAKOUT SPEAKER

6:4 Tania Maloney
Nurture in Nature (AUS)

Storying Your Landscape .



Breakout Session 6
Friday 6th March 2026 – choose one

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PRINCIPAL SPEAKER
7:1 Rhi Sugars
The Atypical Educator (AUS)

From Jungles to Jungle Gyms: Ethology and its surprising role in the great autism debate

BREAKOUT SPEAKERS
7:3 Bec Burch
Bush Kindy (AUS)

**Why Nature is the Ultimate Provocation for Play:
The outdoors is the best playground**



BREAKOUT SPEAKER
7:2 Dr. Amie Fabry
The Learning Future (AUS)

Where Play Ignites Possibility: The Power of Pedagogical Leadership

BREAKOUT SESSION
Special Session:
A Recalcitrant of Playworkers

A chaired exploration for experienced playworkers



Breakout Session 7
Saturday 7th March 2026 – choose one

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CLOSING KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Marc Armitage

Aging Playworker, Malarkey
(UK/AUS)

*What will play be like in
two years time?*

*Conference Summary,
Evaluations, and News
Extended Networking*

That's it – see you there!

Oh! And don't forget to follow
along and share on social media using
the hashtag
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Closing Keynote
Saturday 7th March 2026

V2.1

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