



"There is no power for change greater than a community discovering what it cares about."
- Margaret J. Wheatley



Visit from Councillors Adam Pulford and Ella Svensson

It was a pleasure to welcome Brunswick Councillors Adam Pulford and Ella Svensson to our Albert Street facilities. Both councillors expressed enthusiasm for ongoing involvement as The Salvation Army's presence in Brunswick continues to expand. This quarter, our 'brag board' has been proudly filled with photos of community members, schools, and local groups who have visited the Brunswick Citadel.

As we share our vision for a strengths-based, community-led approach, we're seeing exciting new partnerships develop. We remain committed to maintaining regular communication and collaboration with other churches and community groups across Merri-bek, working together to foster a stronger, more connected community.

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- Community Development Training
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Prayer Focus

- Continued connection with people living with dementia, their families and carers
- Building relationships with residents of Harvest Square in Brunswick West
- Volunteer April Cox who is travelling overseas
- Continued connection with 4pm Bible Study group
- Singing by Heart initiative.
- Family movie night

Community Development Training

The asset-based community development (ABCD) approach originally planned for Brunswick has now been adopted across Merri-bek City Salvos, ensuring a consistent mission delivery approach. Our leadership team, Corps representatives, and volunteers from the Coburg Community Connect Space recently participated in a two-day community development training facilitated by the Corps-based Social team, led by Marcus Hutchins and Monty Bhardwaj.

Day 1

The training began with foundational learning about key community development postures—such as active listening, meaningful conversation, building trust, and fostering collaboration within the community. We also explored the differences and complementary roles of community services versus community development. The team was introduced to a six-step approach for engaging with the community, beginning with understanding the local context and moving towards capturing the authentic voice of the community. This method focuses on leveraging community strengths and supporting grassroots aspirations to drive both small- and large-scale improvements in community health. Additionally, we discussed various levels of community participation and strategies for empowering communities to make decisions on issues that directly affect them.

Day 2

Monty and Marcus presented quantitative data outlining the City of Merri-bek's socioeconomic profile, highlighting areas of disadvantage. These indicators went beyond economics, encompassing factors such as social distress, health, community safety, environment, lifetime disadvantage, and education.

The weekend concluded with a worship gathering led by Marcus Hutchins. In his message, Marcus reflected on Acts 3, challenging traditional church boundaries and encouraging believers to be

"Believers are to be 'sent ones' who actively engage in community life"

'sent ones' who actively engage in community life outside of Sunday services—bringing God's love into everyday spaces.

Looking ahead, the group discussed next steps for community development at Merri-bek City Corps (church). The focus will be on capturing the community's voice and collaborating with state-based resources, including Monty Bhardwaj (Local and Integrated Mission Specialist) and Sandra McLead (Faith Communities Development Secretary).

We will undertake a review of existing programs through a public participation lens—inform, consult, involve, collaborate, and empower. This process will align with both the Corps local mission plan and the local council's strategic plan, using the principles learned to inform our next steps.

It was also agreed that it's important to identify and map the skills, passions, and assets within our local team, as well as to consider the broader Merri-bek community. Listening to informal conversations and gathering qualitative data will help us capture the true community voice. This approach will support the co-design of a community development plan for both the north and south of the City of Merri-bek.



The Corps leadership team is already exploring ways to integrate community development principles into their decision-making processes. This will help ensure that we are genuinely capturing the community's voice and using it to guide The Salvation Army's mission delivery throughout the City of Merri-bek.

Initial Community Focus Areas

After careful consideration of 11 potential community opportunities identified, we are excited to announce our focus on two key initiatives for the remainder of the year:

1. Singing by Heart: Dementia-Friendly Singing Groups

With the support of grant funding and our musical expertise, we are launching monthly "Singing by Heart" sessions designed for people living with dementia, their carers, and families. These sessions were promoted during Dementia Action Week (15-21 September) and may expand further based on community interest. We are also exploring collaborations with council-run events during Older Persons Month in October. Several team members are currently completing Dementia Australia training, and we hope to involve local community members in the program. As these relationships develop, we are also considering introducing a "Dementia-friendly Café" in the future which will be informed by participants.

2. Community Engagement at West Brunswick's Harvest Square

We are beginning a new partnership with the Women's Housing development in West Brunswick, starting with a family-friendly movie night during the upcoming school holidays. We look forward to building strong relationships with Harvest Square residents and exploring further community-led projects, particularly for young families.

One initiative in development is the "Kids in the Kitchen" program, which aims to equip young people with practical skills in nutrition, budgeting, and cooking for their families.

Our approach is intentionally steady and relationship-focused, with an emphasis on genuine connection and listening to the aspirations of our community. We believe that starting small and prioritising relationships is the foundation for sustainable impact.

"Our approach is intentionally steady and relationship-focused."

Ways of working

Led by Jason Simmonds, our community development working group (Brunswick) includes onsite volunteer



April Cox, the Corps Officer team, Corps representatives Alastair Coombridge, Lisa Bumpstead, Kris Halliday, Lachlan Caple, and area officer Rebecca Inglis. Together, we have established a collaborative approach grounded in The Salvation Army's values—emphasising open dialogue, empathy, continuous improvement, and inclusivity.

We recognise the experimental nature of this work and are committed to learning from both our successes and challenges.

We are especially encouraged by the growing connections with people living with dementia, their families, and carers—clear evidence that we have the right people and resources to move forward.

At the recent Mosaic Prayer event, Commissioner Doug prayed for Jason and the team, seeking God's blessing and guidance as we embark on these new opportunities.



Dementia Action Week

We were thrilled to have The Salvation Army Brunswick represented at the recent free community information session about dementia, hosted by Merri-bek Council and Holstep Health.

Jason had the opportunity to share the planned launch of Singing By Heart–dementia-friendly singing groups starting in Brunswick this November!

During the session we learnt:

- What dementia is and how it can affect behaviour
- Practical tips for communicating with people living with dementia
- What to do if you're concerned about someone
- Support services available in our community



Dementia is now the leading cause of death in Australia, making supportive initiatives like 'Singing By Heart' more vital than ever. Programs such as Dementia Friendly Singing Groups harness the unique power of music to unlock memories and foster genuine connection for people living with dementia.

'Singing By Heart' creates a relaxed, uplifting space where participants, carers, and families can share joyful moments, spark communication, and build community. These free, inclusive sessions at Brunswick Salvation Army offer not just music, but meaningful support and hope for those navigating the dementia journey together.

Learn more about 'Singing by Heart' Brunswick here:

<https://www.salvationarmy.org.au/brunswick/about-us/singing-by-heart/>

Register here:

https://tsa_au.chmeetings.com/forums/34D2E8BD80D71899

Contact Jason if you would like to assist with this new community-based initiative.

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This Quarters Events

Singing by Heart - Dementia Friendly Singing Groups

Family Movie Night - Harvest Square Residents

Second Wednesday of the month Wednesday 1st October 6pm
11am - 12.30pm (from Nov).



Recent visit from staff from Milparinka - a community-based organization providing supports and programs for people with disabilities (Pictured left to right: Adrian Hill - Program Manager, Claudia Veneris - Head of Lifestyle Services and Supports, Sarah Forbes - Chief Executive Officer).