



Community Partner Update, May 2023.



PLAY9ROU
TASMANIA

What we have been doing.

Playgroup Tasmania has been funded as a community partner to deliver the smalltalk program across 4 sites during our contracted period. To date, we have completed delivery in New Norfolk and Herdsman's Cove. We are currently delivering a second program in Herdman's Cove in partnership with Gagebrook Community Centre, Kutalayna Collective and YourTown, we have plans to deliver our final program in Bothwell in Term 3.

What is the smalltalk program?

Smalltalk is a light touch – low intervention program for families with children from birth to school age that is delivered within a playgroup setting. Smalltalk aims to increase parents' confidence to do the things we know can have a positive impact on their children's learning.

Smalltalk is a set of evidence-based parenting strategies and resources that are shared with parents by a trained facilitator during 10 playgroup sessions. These ideas and strategies can then be used by the parents to enhance the home learning environments.

The smalltalk program:

- builds upon a parent's existing strengths
- notices and highlights the positive things a parent is already doing
- encourages parents to set their own goals and identify areas that they want to focus on
- focuses on using everyday opportunities and activities that many parents already do in the home to enhance their child's learning and development.

Smalltalk is a model for enhancing home learning, the content revolves around 5 themes:

- quality everyday interactions
- stimulating environments
- parental selfcare
- parenting confidence
- community and services connectedness

Smalltalk is delivered as a ten-week program, however we have expanded the delivery period to 14-weeks, this allows 2 weeks either side of the formal ten-week program for the smalltalk facilitator to run 2 informal playgroup sessions to grow trusting relationships with participating families. It also allows for 2 extra weeks at the end for families that have missed some sessions to catch up and also provide extra opportunities for families to go over what they have learnt during the program.

The two smalltalk programs we've delivered to date has seen positive participation with 13 parent/caregivers and 18 children under 5 years engaged during the program.

"Thank you for being so non-judgemental – so often people that run groups like this come across as being superior and knowing more than I do."

"Thank you for great sessions. Loved coming together to chat with other parents and great chance for my daughter to engage/connect with other children."

"This makes me realise that I am doing a better job of parenting than I thought'."

"It has been such a great program. Thanks!"

What has worked?

Family engagement

Through observations and participant feedback, we know parents have become more actively involved in their child's play and increased their connection with their children.

Families also report the program content has been relevant and relatable to their parenting experiences. Parents have identified that their confidence has increased in most aspects of parenting from their learnings within the program.

The smalltalk content supported parents to become more aware of their role as their children's first teacher. Parents took play ideas and activities home with them to continue with their children. Over the course of the program, it was noticeable that parents became more actively involved in their child's play.

Being able to deliver the program in a playgroup environment has provided a safe, secure and informal environment for families to come together and share their experiences of parenting – the wins and the challenges. Parents have bonded and children have made new friends through new social interactions.

Community Connections

Through our working relationships, we have been able to create connections and referrals to other programs and services relevant to families living in these communities.


We have worked with the following partners during the delivery of this program to connect families to information and resources that are relevant and can support their family wellbeing:

- Waterbridge Food Co-Op,
- Gagebrook Community Centre (JRS)
- Kutalayna Collective
- YourTown- Early Childhood Development Program
- 54 Reasons- The Hippy Program
- Sarah Davidson Counselling & Life Coaching
- Libraries Tas with their Rock and Rhyme sessions
- The Salvation Army Doorways and emergency relief
- New Brighton Food Hub initiative
- The Brave foundation and their SEPT (Supporting Expecting and Parenting Teens) program.

What hasn't worked?

- Delivery sites as per the AWP - We haven't been able to fulfil our goal to deliver in the Bothwell or Ouse communities. We have worked with potential partners to work towards this goal, however challenges with timing and capacity remain.

Emerging issues

- *Staffing:* smalltalk is a 2-worker program model. Due to workforce challenges, both internally and with external partners, this has been challenging to fulfil. However internally we have put new strategies in place to alleviate some of these challenges.
 - *Transport:* Some families are reliant on a family member or public transport to get to the venue; therefore, this can make attendance sporadic at times.
 - *Delivery locations:* Some footprint areas experience multiple services attempting to engage at the same time, especially in the early years space. For smaller communities this can be a challenge for families as well as other potential service delivery partners in terms of their capacity.
 - *Sustainability:* With the smalltalk program it is hoped that once the program delivery period ends that the group would transition to a volunteer led playgroup with the support from Playgroup Tasmania. At times, due to venue availability and accessibility and participants capacity and availability the sustainability of the group has not always been achieved. However Playgroup Tasmania has strengthened the volunteer recruitment and retention
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strategies across the organisation as a priority which will ensure we have a stronger approach to this in the future.

Things we've learnt.

Delivering programs as a Community Partner needs to be resourced across 52 weeks of the year. When we built our program budget, we allowed for service delivery resourcing across the 4 program delivery periods. However, we did not allocate enough resourcing to fully engage with the program management and administrative requirements to meet the Facilitating Partners expectations.