

THE TRAVELLING TEA PARTY



WHAT'S BREWING IN BRIGHTON?

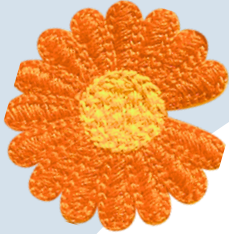


We respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the Lands where these conversations took place. We pay our respects to Elders past and present, and to the children and young people who carry hope and possibility for the future. We recognise the enduring strength, resilience and wisdom of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We are deeply grateful for the opportunity to meet, listen and learn on Country.



THE TRAVELLING TEA PARTY

A cuppa, a biscuit and a conversation about what matters most



How it all started

For almost 20 years, Communities for Children South East Tasmania, facilitated by The Salvation Army, has worked alongside local families, schools, services and community organisations across Brighton, Derwent Valley, Central Highlands and Southern Midlands. Along the way we've learned something important - communities know what they need, and are happy to if someone takes the time to ask and really listen.

When the Department of Social Services announced a new approach to supporting children and families, we saw it as an exciting new chapter. We also saw it as the perfect opportunity to pause, pull up a chair and tell our communities about these changes and to ask what they thought should come next.

In times of
uncertainTEA &
possibilitTEA it
makes sense to have
a cup of TEA!

THE TRAVELLING TEA PARTY

A cuppa, a biscuit and a conversation about
what matters most



So, what exactly is a Travelling Tea Party?

Imagine less “formal consultation” and more “chatting
around the kitchen table”.

With tea, coffee, biscuits and plenty of curiosiTEA, we hit
the road and visited community halls, Child and Family
Learning Centres, schools, community hubs, local events
and gathering places across the region. Some
conversations involved a handful of people around a
table. Others happened in busy community spaces filled
with families, children and service providers.

The idea was simple: create welcoming spaces where
people could talk openly about what helps children and
families thrive, what challenges they're facing and what
they'd like to see in the future.

As one tea party friend put it:

*"Connection is the biggest thing - to be connected to
people who are about you and your child."*

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Tea Party by the numbers

Between February and May 2026, the Travelling Tea Party made its way across South East Tasmania.

The scorecard looked something like this:

- More than 240 people joined the conversation.
- 14 Tea Parties, community conversations and stakeholder gatherings were held.
- Conversations took place across Brighton, Southern Midlands, Central Highlands, Derwent Valley and Sorell.
- Approximately 100 cups of tea and coffee were consumed.
- Somewhere in the vicinity of 200 biscuits were gratefully devoured.
- Countless stories, ideas, challenges, hopes and opportunities were shared.
- We saw new connections and friendships blossom.



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What did we want to know?

We entered the Tea Parties with a specific list of research questions, but to be perfectly honest, the script went out the window for almost every tea party! Instead, the Travelling Tea Parties focused on a more natural conversation and people sharing ideas and stories about what helps children, young people and families thrive?

Through conversation, stories and shared experiences, we explored what empowers parents and caregivers, what helps children grow into healthy and resilient adults, the challenges families face, and the programs, services and community support that make the biggest difference. The insights shared shaped the themes and stories captured throughout this report.



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What did we hear?

Although every community had its own unique stories and experiences, some common themes emerged again and again. People talked about the importance of belonging, trust and relationships. Many described the impact of local services, schools, volunteers and community spaces that take the time to build connections with families.

As one Tea Mate captured this perfectly:

"Workers need to work with community, not for community."

Another reflected:

"Trust is slow to build; people will only share with those they trust."

Our Tea Party friends repeatedly highlighted the importance of listening to families and working alongside them rather than making assumptions about what they need.

"Families need to be listened to, not done to."

THE TRAVELLING TEA PARTY

Families told us they are experiencing significant challenges. Rising living costs, housing insecurity, limited transport options, and difficulties accessing services were common themes across nearly all communities. Both adults and children spoke about the impact these issues are having on their daily lives.

Many conversations spoke about the pressure families are currently under.

"Cost of living is putting huge pressure on families."

"Some are forced to go back to work because they can't afford not to work."

"Affordable housing draws people, but then there is no services."



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The biggest takeaway

The communities were different.

The venues were different.

The biscuits were different (in a good way).

And some folks were very clear that they would prefer a Coffee, Lemonade, or Can of V, to a cup of tea, but the message was remarkably consistent.

People want children to feel safe, loved and connected. They want parents and caregivers to have support when they need it. They want communities where people know each other, services that work together, and opportunities for children and young people to thrive.



Or, as Participants told us time and time again:
"It takes a village to raise a child."

THE TRAVELLING TEA PARTY

What we heard along the way

The insights shared in this report reflect the conversations our Tea Party Friends had with community members in Brighton, during the Travelling Tea Party journey. They provide a snapshot of what people shared with us at that point in time.

While we heard many valuable experiences, perspectives and ideas, this report is not intended to be a comprehensive list of every strength, challenge or opportunity. Rather, it captures the themes that were most commonly raised and the stories people chose to share with us.

Every community has many stories to tell, and these conversations represent just one part of the broader Brighton story.

If you would like a copy of the report that captures the stories from all of the communities involved, please email cfctas@salvationarmy.org.au

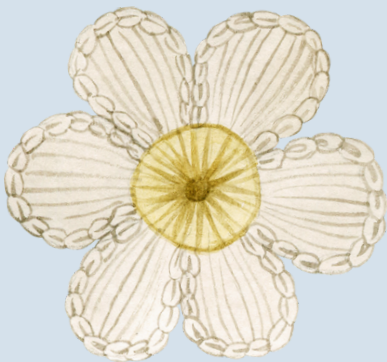


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Brighton Snapshot

Children and families in Brighton talked a lot about the importance of connection, support and having places where families feel welcome. The Child and Family Learning Centre was seen as a key strength, helping parents meet other families, access support and reduce isolation.

Participants said that when parents are well supported, children do better too. Early intervention, parenting support, community events and affordable activities were all seen as important for helping families thrive.



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Brighton Snapshot

Our Tea Party Friends highlighted the importance of services being visible, accessible, and connected to their communities. In some areas, families and local providers were unaware of services funded to provide outreach support or had experienced changes in how those services were delivered, without being provided with updates. These discussions reinforced the value of clear communication, strong local relationships and a consistent community presence so families know where and how to access support when they need it.

There was also strong concern about the challenges families are facing. Cost of living pressures, long waitlists for services and ongoing disadvantage were common issues. Participants felt there are not enough programs and opportunities for children once they move beyond the early years, particularly for young people aged 6-17 years. More arts, recreation, youth programs and community spaces were identified as key needs.



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What was shared over a cuppa in Brighton?

WHAT HELPS FAMILIES THRIVE?

- Strong community connections & social support
- Child and Family Learning Centre (CFLC) as a trusted hub.
- Parenting programs, playgroups & peer support.
- Early intervention and access to paediatricians & specialist services.
- Practical support such as volunteering pathways, childcare & opportunities for parent respite.
- Free community events and affordable family activities.

WHAT HELPS CHILDREN THRIVE?

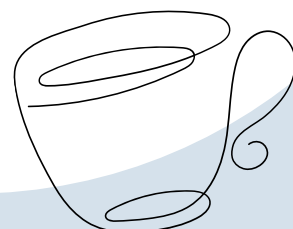
- **Early socialisation.**
- **Early assessment, diagnosis and support.**
- **Trusted local workers.**
- **Strong parent-child relationships.**
- **Access to inclusive schools and support services.**

WHAT MAKES LIFE HARDER FOR FAMILIES?

- Cost of living pressures.
- Long waitlists and poor access to services.
- Lack of support for fathers.
- Social isolation.
- Schools perceived as less welcoming for families.
- Lack of services and community infrastructure, particularly in Gagebrook.

WHAT GETS IN THE WAY FOR CHILDREN?

- Intergenerational disadvantage.
- Social isolation.
- Poor service access, ie transport.
- Unsupportive or non inclusive school environments.



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What was shared over a cuppa in Brighton?

WHAT'S WORKING WELL?

- HIPPY program.
- LIFT literacy program.
- Live Wires program.
- Under One Rainbow events.
- Community events.
- Locally employed workers.
- Parent-to-parent support models.

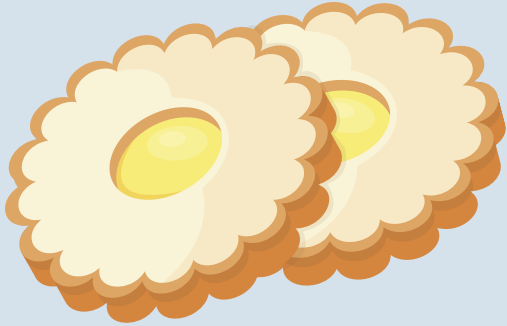


WHAT WOULD MAKE THE BIGGEST DIFFERENCE?

- More services for 6-17 year olds.
- More arts and music opportunities.
- Better support for young mothers.
- Improved school capacity for complex needs.
- More community facilities and service locations.
- Greater inclusion and reduced stigma between communities in the Brighton LGA.

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What was shared over a cuppa in Brighton?



Youth Service Gaps

- "There are still gaps in service delivery for the middle years, once they are over 5 - there is little on offer."
- "We've lost lives out here because kids felt lost."

Challenges Facing Families

- Intergenerational disadvantage, it just keeps going down through the generations and the cycle keeps going."
- "Parents and children both end up feeling unwelcome at school."

Service Access and Trust

- "Workers need to work with community, not for community."
- "Please workers - don't wear stilettos and take off your lanyard!"

Parent and Caregiver Support

- "Connection is the biggest thing - to be connected to people who care about you and your child."
- "If you have strong healthy parents you will see strong healthy kids, it's as simple as that."
- "Parents need a break in order to be good parents."

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What Happens Next?

The conversations don't end here. Everything we heard through the Travelling Tea Parties will help shape the next chapter of The Salvation Army's work. The stories, ideas and experiences shared by our Tea Time Companions will help inform future programs and priorities under the Department of Social Services' new Child and Family Services Program.

Most importantly, the voices of local children, families and communities will remain at the centre of what comes next.

Later in 2026, we'll be hosting a series of community Data Parties. These conversations are a chance for local people to come together, share what they know about their community, and explore what information tells us, and what it misses. We know that statistics only tell part of the story, so we're creating space for community knowledge, lived experience and local stories to help shape a fuller picture of our communities. Together, we can help influence the services, funding and opportunities that support local children, families and communities. If this sounds like something you'd like to be part of, we'd love to hear from you. Please email the Communities for Children team cfctas@salvationarmy.org.au



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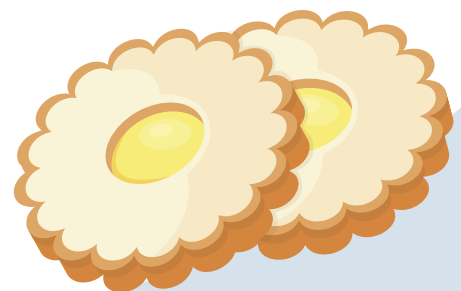
**But before we put the kettle and the tea pot away,
we want to say Thank You!**

Thank you to everyone who joined a Travelling Tea Party, shared a story, completed a questionnaire, offered an idea, or simply sat down with us for a cuppa and a chat.

We heard stories of challenges, strengths, hopes and possibilities. We laughed, reflected, learned and gained a deeper understanding of what matters most to children, families and communities across South East Tasmania.

A special thank you to all of our Tea Time Companions for your honesty, generosity and trust. Your experiences and ideas are woven throughout this report and will help shape our future work to support children, young people and families.

To everyone who pulled up a chair, shared a biscuit, picked up a marker, or stopped by for a conversation – thank you.



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