

A stylized white flower with a yellow center, set against a light blue background. The flower has five petals and a textured, woven appearance. The center is a solid yellow circle. The background is a light blue gradient.



Funded by the Australian Government
Department of Social Services

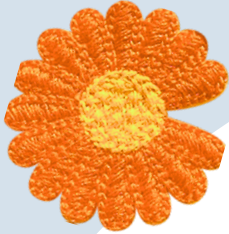


We respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the Lands where these conversations took place. We pay our respects to Elders past and present, and to the children and young people who carry hope and possibility for the future. We recognise the enduring strength, resilience and wisdom of Aboriginal 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.”*

THE TRAVELLING TEA PARTY

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.



THE TRAVELLING TEA PARTY

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.



THE TRAVELLING TEA PARTY



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."



THE TRAVELLING TEA PARTY

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 the Derwent Valley, 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

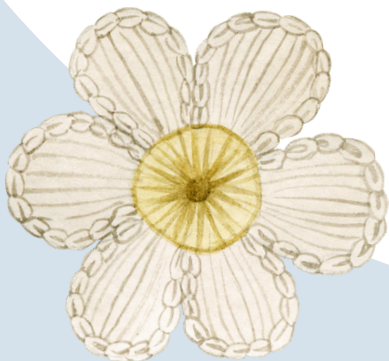


THE TRAVELLING TEA PARTY

Derwent Valley Snapshot

People in the Derwent Valley spoke strongly about the importance of community, belonging and feeling connected. Participants said families do best when they know where to go for help, feel supported by their community, and have access to trusted services. Community events, parent support programs, and local services that build relationships over time were all seen as important strengths.

Participants also reflected on the positive impact that sustained, place-based approaches can have over time. In a community that has benefited from a Child and Family Learning Centre for more than 15 years, many spoke about the value of collaborative approaches that empower children, families and services to work together, and the positive ripple effects this can have across the community.



THE TRAVELLING TEA PARTY

Derwent Valley Snapshot

Many People talked about the challenges facing local families, including cost of living pressures, housing stress, family violence, poor transport and long standing cycles of disadvantage.

Trust was a strong theme throughout the conversations, with people saying families are more likely to seek help when services are local, consistent and take the time to build genuine relationships. Participants also spoke about the importance of helping children and young people feel hopeful, valued and able to imagine a positive future.



THE TRAVELLING TEA PARTY

What was shared over a cuppa in The Derwent Valley??

WHAT HELPS FAMILIES THRIVE?

- Community connection and belonging.
- Knowledge of services and how to access them.
- Trusted relationships and long term engagement.
- Safe, non judgemental spaces.
- Transport and practical support.
- Community pride and identity.
- Child and Family Learning Centre.

WHAT HELPS CHILDREN THRIVE?

- Feeling safe and connected.
- School attendance and educational engagement.
- Positive role models.
- Strong community networks.
- Aspirations and opportunities.
- Being listened to and understood.

WHAT MAKES LIFE HARDER FOR FAMILIES?

- Cost of living pressures.
- Housing insecurity.
- Transport barriers.
- Employment pressures and multiple jobs.
- Social isolation.
- Intergenerational disadvantage and trauma.
- Adult literacy challenges.
- Misogyny and cultural barriers.
- Mental health concerns.
- Absence of safe, welcoming places where children aged 6-12 and young people aged 13-17 can connect, learn and access support with their families.

WHAT GETS IN THE WAY FOR CHILDREN?

- Poverty and housing stress.
- Family violence.
- Intergenerational trauma.
- Lack of aspiration and opportunity.
- Young people feeling unheard or negatively perceived.
- Social exclusion and disengagement.

THE TRAVELLING TEA PARTY

What was shared over a cuppa in the Derwent Valley?

WHAT'S WORKING WELL?

- Child and Family Learning Centre.
- Kids and Teens in the Valley programs.
- School holiday activities.
- Tuning into Teens/Kids.
- Community events and festivals.
- Long term trusted local services.
- Collaborative community networks.

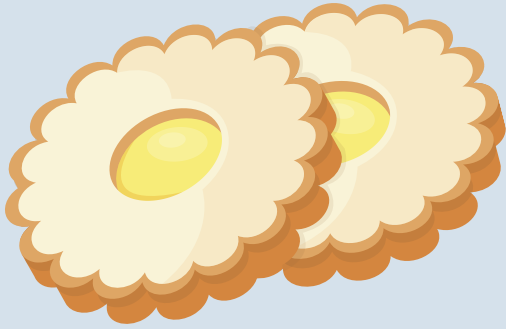


WHAT WOULD MAKE THE BIGGEST DIFFERENCE?

- Better promotion of services.
- More face to face outreach.
- Increased long term funding.
- Reduced siloed service delivery.
- More youth-led programs.
- Stronger trust-building approaches.
- More locally based services rather than outreach only models

THE TRAVELLING TEA PARTY

What was shared over a cuppa in The Derwent Valley?



Education and Opportunity

- "Children value education and attend school/are happy to attend school."

Community Culture

- "There is an attitude that we don't deserve good things here."
- "Tall poppy syndrome - don't get above your station, know your place, or you will be cut down."

Community Connection & Belonging

- "Connected families - Connected communities."
- "Being part of a community & feeling it."
- "Knowing people and being known."

Trust and Relationships

- "Trust is slow to build; people will only share with those they trust."
- "Services need to develop relationships and trust with families first."

Challenges and Disadvantage

- "They don't know how to dream, they don't feel like they have permission to dream."
- Cost of living is putting huge pressure on families."
- Family and domestic violence is such a massive issue in this country - the impacts are so wide ranging and deep."

THE TRAVELLING TEA PARTY

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



THE TRAVELLING TEA PARTY

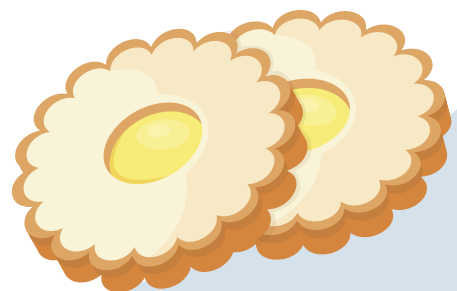
**But before we put the kettle and the tea pot away,
we want to say Thank You!**

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.



THE TRAVELLING TEA PARTY



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