

# THE TRAVELLING TEA PARTY



## WHAT'S BREWING IN SORELL



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!

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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."*

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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."*

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## What we heard along the way

The insights shared in this report reflect the conversations our Tea Party Friends had with community members in Sorell, 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](mailto:cfctas@salvationarmy.org.au)



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## Sorell Snapshot

In Sorell, people talked about the value of trusted local services that make it easy for families to access help when they need it. The Nest Child and Family Learning Centre was highlighted as a welcoming and well used service that connects families with information, support and specialist services. Early intervention and access to assessments and diagnosis were seen as particularly important.

A major concern was the lack of support and activities for older children and teenagers.



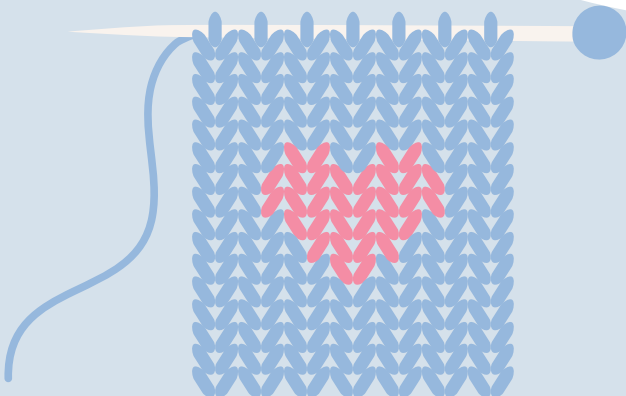
# THE TRAVELLING TEA PARTY

## Sorell Snapshot

Our Tea Mates identified gaps in mental health supports, psychology services, allied health services and transport.

There was a strong desire for more opportunities that help young people connect, build confidence and develop a sense of belonging. Many people spoke about challenges that can be hidden from view.

While Sorell can appear relatively advantaged on paper, community members felt that some families are experiencing significant disadvantage that isn't always visible in the data and is not picked up in the SEIFA index.



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**What was shared over a cuppa in Sorell?**

## **WHAT HELPS FAMILIES THRIVE?**

- Continued support beyond the early years.
- Access to developmental assessments and diagnosis.
- Wraparound services.
- Trusted community hubs such as The Nest Child and Family Learning Centre.

## **WHAT HELPS CHILDREN THRIVE?**

- Early diagnosis and specialist support.
- Trusted community spaces.
- Strong social capital and support networks.
- Youth pathways and training opportunities.

## **WHAT MAKES LIFE HARDER FOR FAMILIES?**

- Lack of psychology services.
- Shortage of paediatricians.
- Financial barriers.
- Transport issues.
- Limited activities for older children and young people.

## **WHAT GETS IN THE WAY FOR CHILDREN?**

- Delayed diagnosis.
- Lack of youth activities.
- Poor transport access.
- Mental health challenges.
- Limited allied health and NDIS support.

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**What was shared over a cuppa in Sorell?**

## **WHAT'S WORKING WELL?**

- The Nest Child and Family Learning Centre.
- Salvation Army programs.
- Trusted local workers.
- Emerging youth and employment initiatives.

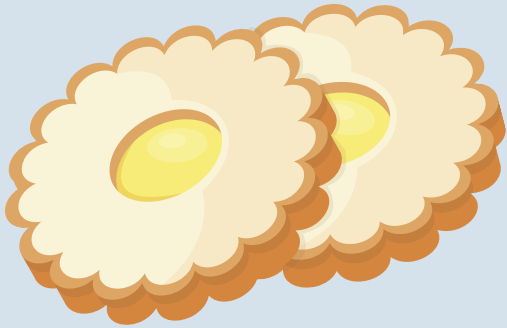
## **WHAT WOULD MAKE THE BIGGEST DIFFERENCE?**

- Programs for 6-12 and 12-17 years.
- Transport services.
- Psychology and Occupational Therapy access.
- More arts and non sport activities.
- Stronger youth mental health supports.



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What was shared over a cuppa in Sorell?



## Mental Health and Diagnosis

- "Parents who would benefit from psychology, knock on effect and children who carry the load when untreated."

## Youth Gaps

- "What is missing? - gaps for 6-12 year olds and 12-17 year olds."
- "Little activities for upper primary and youth who are not into team sports."

## Importance of Trust

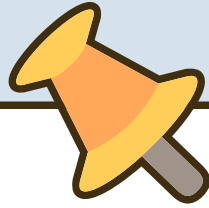
- "Trusted source for both new parents and grandparents."

## Model of Success

- "The Nest has two paediatricians visit fortnightly."
- "New parents go to The Nest and are comfortable that someone there will know and be able to support."

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## Cross-Local Government Area Themes



### **The strongest themes appearing across all LGAs were:**

- Cost of living and housing stress.
- Transport barriers in rural and regional communities.
- Need for trusted relationships and community connection.
- Early intervention and early diagnosis.
- Service gaps for middle years and teenagers (6–17 years).
- Importance of locally based place-based services.
- Intergenerational trauma and disadvantage.
- Need for longer term funding and sustainable programs.
- Value of Child and Family Learning Centres and hub models.
- Strong demand for coordinated wraparound services rather than siloed delivery.



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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](mailto:cfctas@salvationarmy.org.au)



# THE TRAVELLING TEA PARTY

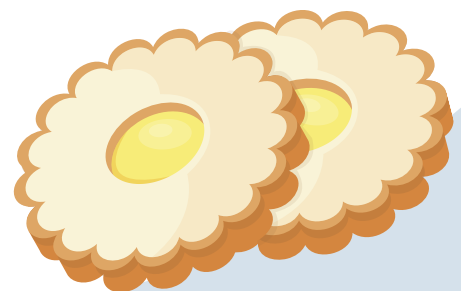
**But before we put the kettle and the tea pot away,  
we want to say Thank You!**

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.



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