

THE TRAVELLING TEA PARTY



WHAT'S BREWING IN THE SOUTHERN MIDLANDS



Funded by the Australian Government
Department of Social Services

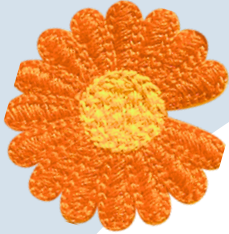


We respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the Lands where these conversations took place. We pay our respects to Elders past and present, and to the children and young people who carry hope and possibility for the future. We recognise the enduring strength, resilience and wisdom of Aboriginal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

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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 Community Members 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 the Southern Midlands, 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 Southern Midlands 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

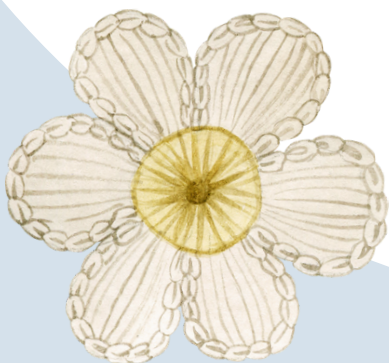


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Southern Midlands Snapshot

People in Southern Midlands spoke about the important role schools play in supporting children and families. Schools were seen as more than just places of learning – they are often where families connect with services, health supports and community activities. Participants highlighted the value of different organisations working together to provide coordinated support for children and families.

The biggest challenges raised were linked to living in a rural area. Families often struggle with transport, housing and accessing specialist services. People also highlighted a lack of opportunities and services for teenagers and older young people. There was a strong message that communities need trusted local workers, long term programs and services that work together rather than operating separately.



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What was shared over a cuppa in The Southern Midlands??

WHAT HELPS FAMILIES THRIVE?

- Schools as community hubs.
- Wraparound and integrated support systems.
- Early intervention.
- Childcare and after school care.
- Access to sporting and recreational opportunities.
- Local leadership and coordination.

WHAT HELPS CHILDREN THRIVE?

- School based wraparound supports.
- Positive peer connections.
- Mental health support.
- Opportunities to participate and build resilience through challenge.
- Strong school-community partnerships.

WHAT MAKES LIFE HARDER FOR FAMILIES?

- Difficulty obtaining diagnosis and specialist support.
- Housing shortages.
- Transport barriers.
- Limited access to childcare and holiday care.
- Parental mental health challenges.
- Limited service access for rural families who must travel for support.

WHAT GETS IN THE WAY FOR CHILDREN?

- Poor service access due to living in a rural area.
- Lack of transport.
- Mental health issues.
- Disconnected service systems.
- Lack of support for teenagers and older youth.

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What was shared over a cuppa in the Southern Midlands?

WHAT'S WORKING WELL?

- Hub models, including the Oatlands Community Hub.
- Therapy dogs in schools.
- Skilled local workers.
- Collaborative service networks.

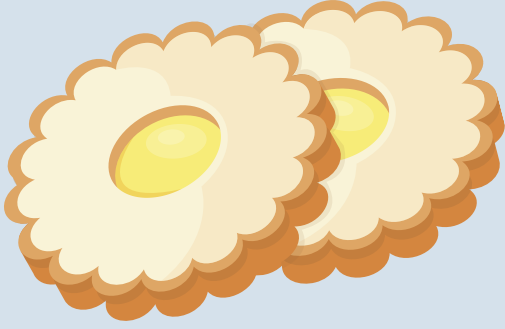


WHAT WOULD MAKE THE BIGGEST DIFFERENCE?

- More services for young people aged 14 years plus.
- Better transport solutions.
- Longer funding cycles to ensure continuity of services.
- Stronger collaboration between schools and external providers.
- More consistent service delivery.

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What was shared over a cuppa in The Southern Midlands?



Importance of Schools

- "School community/small community - school is key."
- "Wrap around approach is crucial."

Youth Support Needs

- "No services for 14+ years in Southern Midlands; they've been left out."

Community Strengths

- "Skilled local workers who know all the 'young roosters' and ask them what they want."

Rural Disadvantage

- "Many families who really need it don't access the services in the city due to their capacity, anxiety/trauma."

Funding Concerns

- "Short term funding cycles are a big problem - just get a program established and then funding ends."

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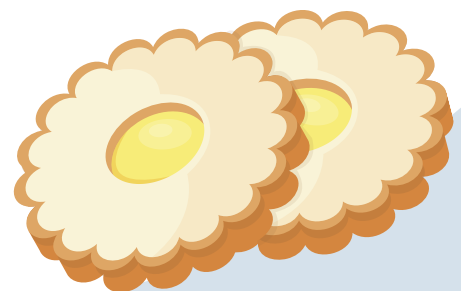
**But before we put the kettle and the tea pot away,
we want to say Thank You!**

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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