

Kitchen Table conversations are an opportunity for people to express their ideas, opinions and concerns in a safe environment. It is not about reaching conclusions, it is to share ideas and opinions about the issues that which concern us and that we care about.

Hosting Kit

These conversation kits have been initiated by the Bendigo- a Thinking City group. We hope that they will encourage, inspire, engage and facilitate us as community members to think deeply, creatively and strategically, to share our views and speak our minds about the future. We believe that a more prosperous, liveable and sustainable society is possible when we hold conversations about the things that are important to us.

The role of the Host is to: help the conversation flow and stick to the ground rules.

- Set a meeting time and date and invite around 9 friends, neighbours, family members, co-workers or community members to a suitable venue for two hours of conversation. Include someone who is prepared to be the reporter and understands that role.
- Collect contact details for the group. Name, suburb, phone number and email address.
- Introduce the Kitchen Table Conversations approach and give some background on the coordinating group.
- Explain the ground rules (see next page), request agreement to adhere to them throughout the course of the conversation. If necessary be confident at any time to respectfully draw people back to any ground rule that was agreed to and is not being adhered to.
- Ask participants to introduce themselves and say briefly why they are participating.
- Initiate the conversation, raise the topic for discussion.

The group does not have to reach consensus. In fact diversity of opinion is a must for great conversation. What is important is that people feel they have been able to contribute their ideas and opinions and for these to be recorded accurately and impartially.

At the conclusion of the conversation identify and confirm the main issues shared by the group.

The role of the Reporter is to: distil the conversation into a meaningful half page dot point report.

- Try not to leave out any ideas and opinions- but you don't have much space.
- Be transparent and reflect back to the group for confirmation, read out conversation summary and check for confirmation of accuracy.
- Type up the dot-points for circulation to the group, and email the dot points to thinkingcity@Bendigo.vic.gov.au

The 3 Roles Needed:

The Host, the Reporter and the Action Capturer

Creating conversation is easy. Sharing the love around between three people makes it even easier. We suggest 3 roles, a Host, an Action Capturer and a Reporter.

The Host- organises the event and initiates the conversation.

The Reporter - distils the conversation into a meaningful half page, dot point report, approved by the other conversation participants and sends that report to the Bendigo a Thinking City Community Group
thinkingcity@Bendigo.vic.gov.au

The Action Capturer - records each participant's next steps as a result of the conversation and any topics raised by the discussion that could be used for future conversations.

The role of the Action Capturer:

- Record each of the participant's next steps because of this conversation (e.g. host another Kitchen Table conversation, drive less, care more).
- Record any topics that may make useful future Kitchen Table conversations. Dot point and no more than half a page.
- Send them to the email address or add these recordings to Reporter's dot-point report for submission to thinkingcity@Bendigo.vic.gov.au

Ground Rules for conversation:

Meetings of people with good intent can still come unstuck. A simple set of ground rules can help a conversation to be productive. It's important that the host establishes the ground rules at the beginning of each Kitchen Table conversation and gains agreement from the whole group once introductions are over.

There are 3 ground rules.

- Everyone gets heard,
- Focus on the question,
- Keep it respectful,

Some principles that will help the conversation be effective:

- Diversity of opinion is a MUST.
- Make sure your voice is not the only one.
- Please be open minded, be willing to hear how others think.

Through these conversations with neighbours, friends and new acquaintances we can enjoyably exchange ideas and opinions and consider ways to strengthen our democracy, our community and our confidence in the future.

(Thanks to The Voice of the people Hosting Kit, SEE-change ACT, 2014)