

Table 2 Participant quotes for Theme 1 'Program strengths and challenges'

Subtheme	Example participant quotes
Relevant, helpful conversations	Olivia: . . .having that focused topic. I mean it was probably things that we would have maybe spoken about anyway amongst our peer group. You know, we're always kind of talking about sleep and food and stuff anyway. But perhaps having that facilitator to sort of focus the conversation helped us talk about specifics. (parent, focus group 3) Mia: And we knew that topic was coming up, so we had a chance to think about, okay, how's our family faring with this (parent, focus group 3) Jasmine: . . .it was a great way to bring up topics at playgroup. . . there are sometimes things we don't naturally talk about and so by having someone like myself come in and started up conversations around topics that are, like, important to everyone actually of every age really, when it comes to healthy eating and active play. (Peer facilitator) Natalie: I guess when someone's standing there telling you, "Oh, you know, you should do this or you should do that," you don't . . . but when you've got your peers telling you that, "this is the strategy that works for us," or agreeing with what the facilitator's saying, then you can kind of go, "okay, well maybe I will try that." (Playgroup coordinator, focus group 2)
Reducing parenting pressures	Rachel: I felt that the facilitator. . . was very inclusive, was very realistic. Like realising that . . . you can't have everything perfect all the time. And I thought that was, that was kind of comforting. (Parent, focus group 5) Olivia: Not necessarily like, 'You should do this', 'You should do that', because it's never sort of one thing works with all children and families. (Parent, focus group 3) Melanie: Me personally, didn't feel like I wanted to put any added pressure on them. (Peer facilitator) Natalie: What works for one [child] hasn't necessarily worked for another because all kids are different (Playgroup coordinator, focus group 2)
Fostering peer support	Hazel: They [Peer Facilitator] were encouraging every parent to share their experiences . . . okay this is something I can try, I haven't tried this before, so they would encourage us, 'why don't you try this?' (Parent, focus group 2) Veronica: I think it's the most important thing as a mum, having a connection with another mum so you can talk about things that are going on. (Parent, focus group 5) Kathryn: They made friendships, and got to know each other . . . some parents would get emotional when they were discussing these things and you could see that support coming from other members of the group, and them opening up and maybe sharing things that they hadn't shared before. That was a really positive bonding thing. (Peer facilitator) Sophia: To see all their reactions and all the relief from all of our parents that attended on those sessions . . . to see that everyone was normal and . . . invariably there was another

	parent that was suffering, so for that it was a relief to watch parents . . . they thought they were all alone, to watch that connection between the parents. (Parent, focus group 4)
Ever-changing challenges of parenting	Olivia: I think it's hard with sleep because it's like, especially in the first few years it's always changing, so it's really hard. You might think that you've got it all sorted and bedtime sorted, but then they'll go through another development phase or they'll drop a nap, and then it just gets all up in the air again. (Parent, focus group 3) Sammy: Sometimes kids change, like at the beginning of the year he may not have certain problem we talk about, but later on he started to have that and I already forgot the strategies we were talking about. (Parent, focus group 6) Grace: The eating, the sleep and the screentime, they were the really big ones that everyone sort of remembered. Whereas the movement, I don't think it was really an issue for us because we had older children, so they were all often running, so it wasn't really . . . there wasn't any issues with that. (Playgroup coordinator, focus group 2)