



My time ... Mum Carla Thomas and daughter Taylah both enjoy the My Time group. 66712

Picture: SARAH MATRAY

For parents, time is of the essence

BY CHARLENE GATT

IT'S hard to get some me time when you're a parent, even more so when one or more of your kids are disabled or chronically ill.

That's where Tweddle Child and Health Service comes in.

The centre, which has spent over 90 years helping families in the West and North, runs My Time – a weekly support group for parents of children up to school age with a disability or

chronic medical condition.

The groups run across Footscray, Altona Meadows, Hillside, Point Cook, Deer Park and Hoppers Crossing and gives parents a chance to stop and talk with people in the same position while their kids are entertained by play helpers.

Facilitator Eleni Matskaofski said members also use My Time to discuss research, find other local services, and to go on excursions.

Ms Matskaofski said parents fre-

quently tell her what a miracle it is to have a hot cup of tea or coffee when there's so much to do.

"There was a need out there," she said.

"It's not just about coffee, it's about breaking the isolation and taboo of having kids with a disability. It's building confidence in the parents.

"If the mum's okay, everyone's okay."

Deer Park mum Carla Thomas has been using the My Time program for

more than two years, coming to both the Footscray and Deer Park groups.

Her eight-year-old son Dylan has type 1 diabetes, five-year-old Mason has autism and her two-year-old daughter Taylah just likes to come to the sessions and play.

"I find it fantastic...it's just a good support network where parents share information in a relaxed atmosphere," Ms Thomas said.

To find out more about My Time, call Tweddle on 9689 1577.