

Spark Dignity First

The Spark Program supports employment pathways for people in Logan who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Mainstream employment services are not equipped to meet the needs of many people. Through tailored coaching and mentoring, participants are supported to identify and rapidly achieve education and employment related goals.

Spark was funded by the Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy in 2020 through the Dignity First Fund. A second short-term grant from the department's Dignity First COVID-19 fund in May that year enabled Spark to supply computers, phones and hands-on support to help people learn digital literacy skills to study or apply for work online.



“I have so much gratitude to everyone in the program.

“Without it, I would still be looking for a job and struggling.

“My life has changed tremendously, from being unable to pay our bills to, day-to-day, having food on the table.”

Anne arrived in Australia from Papua New Guinea in 2019 and found it impossible to find work, especially at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Just two weeks after connecting with Spark, Anne secured two jobs, in disability and aged care. Spark also backed her husband to find a job soon after he arrived in the country.

Program review

This review presents a summary of activities and achievements during the first year implementation period from 20 January 2020 to 19 January 2021.

Program participants

Since inception, Spark Dignity First has engaged 109 people, well above its target of 100 clients by January 2021.

Participants primarily presented with employment or training needs, and financial and housing difficulties.

96% of clients were homeless or at risk of homelessness.

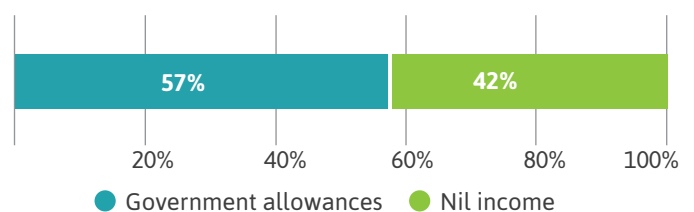
96% of clients were struggling financially.

Homelessness and housing instability were underpinned by financial difficulties.

57% of clients depended on government allowances as their main sources of income.

42% of clients had no income.

Main income source



Spark works with clients from vulnerable priority groups.

21% young people (under 26)

6% Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander

25% culturally and linguistically diverse.

Goals

Eight in 10 program participants were primarily interested in pursuing employment goals. The remainder were focused on education and training goals.



Outcomes and achievements

45 clients obtained full-time or part-time employment.

16 clients partially or fully completed training and assessment.

5 clients obtained a license.

86 clients partially or fully completed coaching and mentoring.

88% of clients improved their work readiness.

The program has offered a lifeline to people facing homelessness, particularly those with no income who have lost work due to COVID-19.

In addition, Spark has assisted clients to enrol in training or education programs to improve their employability and provided personalised mentoring for each client to build the skills necessary to pursue and achieve their goals.

As a result, a 43% increase in work readiness was recorded.¹ The largest change was in relation to stability at home as clients were better able to manage issues in daily life.

Work readiness



Success factors

- Collaborating with services to build on the foundation provided by stable housing
- Combining employment-related and non-vocational support to address employment barriers
- Proactively marketing clients to a growing network of employer contacts
- Linking with specialist supports to address underlying, ongoing issues such as mental health and domestic violence
- Enhancing digital literacy and purchasing ICT equipment to enable access and promote inclusion
- Adapting ways of working during the peak COVID-19 period to enable continuity of service and outcomes achievement
- Using brokerage to overcome barriers, such as lack of access to identity documents and licences.

“I was getting support for DV when I told the team I was struggling financially since I left my partner and not getting enough work.

“They suggested I go see Vanessa and find another job.

“I don’t think I would have achieved it all without her help.”

With Spark’s support, **Amber** applied for a full-time job in aged care and got it. She looks forward to the new opportunities that stable work can provide to her family.

For more information contact yfs@yfs.org.au



¹ Based on pre and post service assessments.