



For women impacted by crisis, employment and education is about more than just 'getting a job', it can provide a pathway out of domestic violence, homelessness and financial insecurity.

However these women face many barriers to entering or re-entering the workforce which are often not addressed by mainstream employment services.

The Spark Women's Employment Mentoring program provides tailored coaching and mentoring, to help women identify and achieve education and employment related goals, fast.

Spark is funded by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet through the Women's Leadership and Development Program.

## Who participated in the Spark program?

In the 18 months since the program started Spark has worked with

**360 women**

**213** through one-on-one employment and education mentoring

**147** through **24** skill building workshops



## Spark works with women from diverse backgrounds

**22%** are culturally and linguistically diverse

**16%** identify as First Nations women

**23%** are young women aged under 26

**7%** are older women aged over 55



*"When I contacted Spark I was really in need of help. I had been in an abusive relationship for over 20 years. I had zero confidence and no skills. I had been out of work for 14 years and had no money. I didn't know where to start."*

At the first appointment Spark got to know me and suggested aged care. They booked me into a course that day. It was the guidance I needed. They organised money for the uniform I needed, and arranged a fuel voucher.

I love aged care. I applied for a position where I did my placement. On the last day they called me in for an interview. They said they really liked having me working there. I was walking on air all the way home.

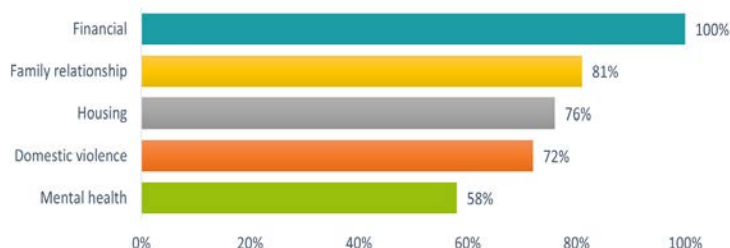
Now I have the confidence to speak to people. For the first time in my life I don't dread being around people.

***I can't say enough good things about everyone involved with Spark."***

## Presenting issues

All participants were experiencing financial difficulties when they first came to Spark and also reported a range of other issues including family relationships, housing, domestic and family violence and mental health issues.

Presenting issues



## More than a job

Participants told us that Spark gave them much more than a job or pathway to employment. Other important outcomes were

**confidence, independence and optimism.**



## Outcomes and achievements

**96%** of participants improved work readiness

**48%** obtained employment

**33%** enrolled in education or training

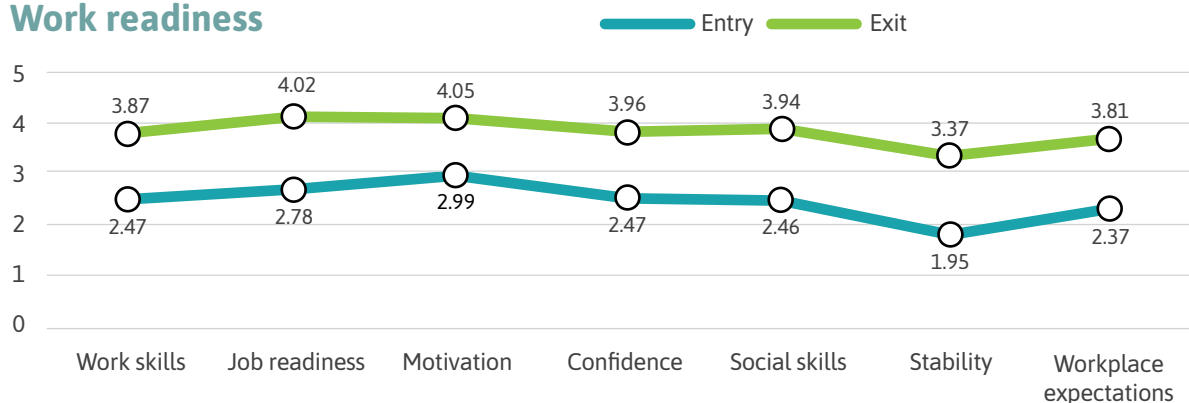
Through our linked-up approach working with other specialist services, broader benefits were identified which contribute to the overall wellbeing and stability of participants. These benefits help to facilitate education and employment outcomes and improve work readiness, and enhance the sustainability of outcomes, which are more likely to stick if other things are going well in the person's life.

For example:

- 52 women transitioned from homelessness or risk of homelessness into stable housing
- 36 women who were feeling unsafe, felt safe at the end of service
- 87% of those who accessed a financial counsellor improved their financial literacy.

Two thirds of participants were linked in with another service including domestic and family violence, financial counselling, family support, multicultural services and housing.

### Work readiness



## Success factors

Key strengths contributing to Spark's success include:

- a personalised, flexible and supportive approach that tailors support to meet each individual's needs
- having passionate, relatable, female staff who inspire motivation and confidence in participants
- rapid responses – getting fast outcomes for those who want work now
- a focus on addressing barriers and building skills to support women into work
- working holistically with other specialist services to address ongoing and emerging issues.

## Future focus

There is consensus that the program is worthwhile and should be rolled out further. Next steps could include:

- targeted responses for young women and First Nations women tailored to their unique needs
- refining and documenting essential elements of the program for scaling to further boost outcomes and work readiness for women experiencing crisis.

**"I feel like a person instead of a number... They make me feel welcome, like they care and want to help."**

**"I got a job!!! After 22 years without one. This service is AMAZING!!!"**

**"I have learnt skills to apply for jobs and feel more confident."**

**"I have money to pay bills and it's not just living week to week."**

For more information contact [spark@yfs.org.au](mailto:spark@yfs.org.au)

YFS acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as Australia's first peoples and the traditional owners of the land on which we meet and work.

