

Spark Tenant Engagement Project

The Spark Tenant Engagement Project is operated by YFS Logan. Spark was funded as a pilot project by the Department of Housing and Public Works. This enabled the employment of one part-time worker for one year from March 2018 to February 2019.



The project contributes to the Department's Tenant Engagement Strategy and supports Logan public housing tenants to engage in education, training, job readiness, business development and volunteering activities.



The Evidence Base

The project was established on the basis of solid evidence as to what works in supporting people experiencing high levels of disadvantage to improve their economic engagement. In particular, support needs to be centred on individual needs and preferences, with a focus on building skills and addressing barriers.^{1,2}



Engagement with and empowerment of tenants

Spark engaged with 50 public housing tenants, 39 of whom have developed and worked towards the attainment of personalised goals. The remainder received shorter-term advice and information.



Addressing vocational and non-vocational barriers

Public housing tenants may experience multiple disadvantages, needing additional support to achieve their goals.

Addressing barriers

92%

of clients were dependent on government allowances as their main source of income

57%

reported difficulty paying an electricity, gas or telephone bill on time in the past month

Spark has supported project participants to address non-vocational issues which impact on their work readiness, including issues of domestic and family violence, mental health, parenting, financial security and housing.

Job preparation activities

All clients participated in work readiness activities of some sort.

14 were assisted with resumes and applications

10 were assisted with interview preparation

15 were assisted with employment coaching

13 were assisted with business development.

Spark clients

60%

were women

40%

were of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent.

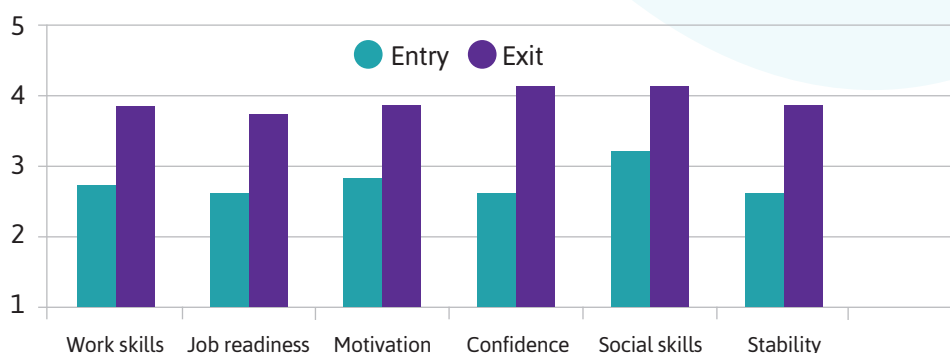
Increased work readiness

Spark has delivered measurable improvements in work readiness for participants.

20%

overall improvement in work readiness was recorded for all eight participants with work readiness assessments completed at the beginning and end of their participation. The highest level of improvement was in their confidence to secure and maintain employment.

Comparison of work readiness scores on entry and exit



Increased social and economic participation

The project has directly helped participants to increase their participation in work, business, training or volunteering, with more working towards this goal as the project continues.

- 6 Participants were supported to access or increase paid employment
- 8 Participants were assisted to start or expand a business
- 6 Participants were assisted to access training
- 4 Participants were assisted with volunteering.

Case example:

Helping people get more out of their lives

The Spark Project Worker organised opportunities for a long term unemployed public housing tenant to expand his skills. He took every opportunity available and was able to get back in the workforce and earning an income again. He has also really benefited from the social environment at work.

“The job is good. I’m working with some really nice people. I’m making some money for myself too. And that’s great. It’s fantastic. I’m getting paid every fortnight. It means I can now save up for some important things like a car.”



Success factors

The success of the Spark project has been driven by a number of key factors:

- **Individualised approach** - Participants set their own goals and move at their own pace
- **Holistic focus** – The focus is on the person’s whole life not just vocational issues
- **Range of options** - The project provides pathways into employment, training, business development or volunteering
- **Strong partnerships** - The project has a range of partnerships and working relationships which open up options for participants beyond the resources of the project itself

Continuity and expansion

The project was strictly limited in scale, yet it was able to provide concrete support to public housing tenants to improve their economic and social participation. Expanded and more secure resourcing would enable Spark to:

- Support more participants
- Expand the opportunities available to participants
- Sustain engagement over time with participants whose life circumstances lead to a pause in their engagement
- Develop resources to support replication of the project in other areas.

For more information contact communications@yfs.org.au

¹Goodwin-Smith, I & C. Hutchinson. (2015). Beyond supply and demand: addressing the complexities of workforce exclusion in Australia, Anglicare Australia.

²Scharr, S. (2016). Tackling Long-term Youth Unemployment: Discussion Paper, Yourtown.