



SPARK STRATEGY

IMPACT REPORT

FY 2020/21

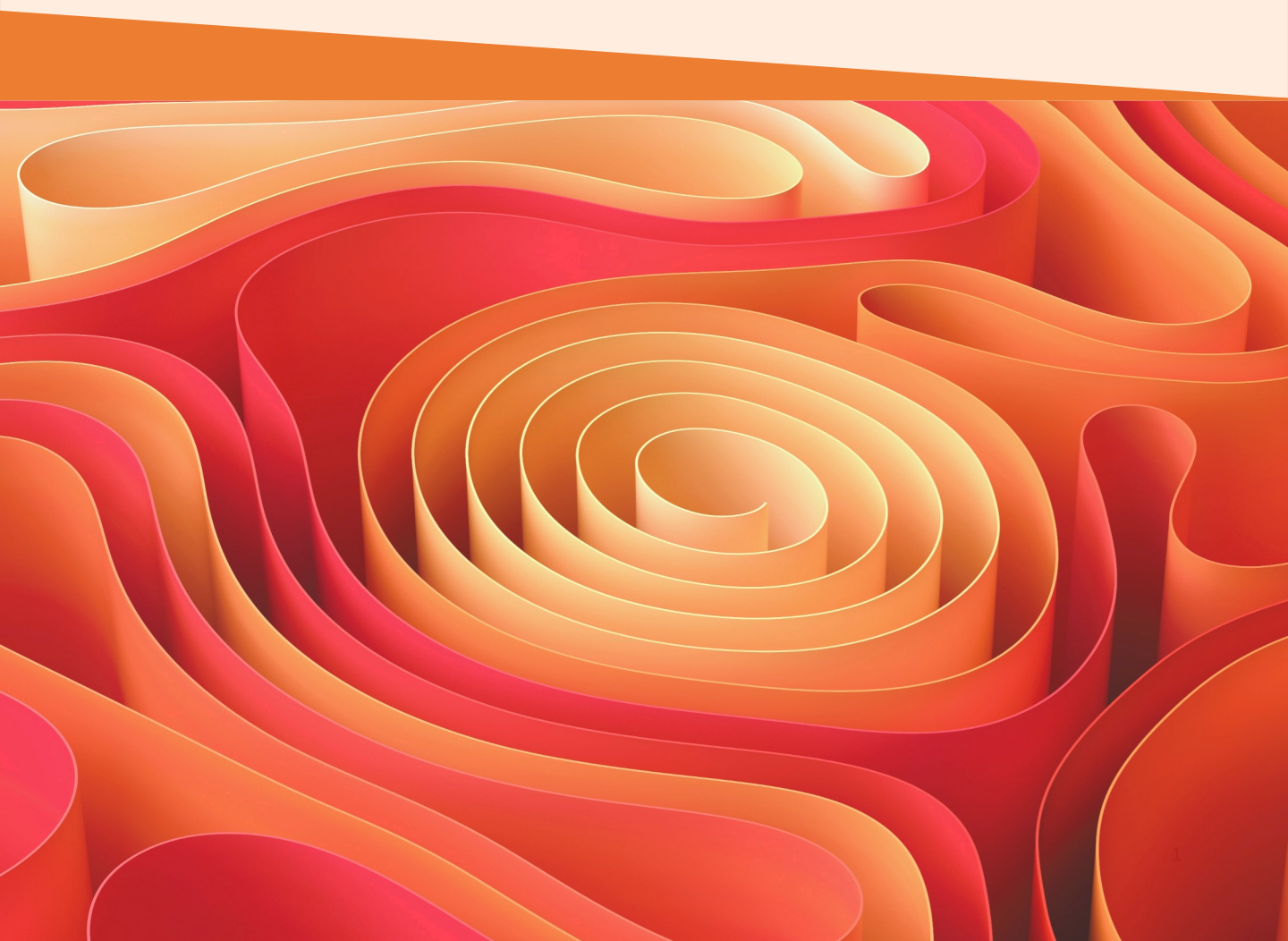


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FOREWORD

Each year we get to share with you the work we have been doing in a format that's not about us at all. It's about the magnificent humans we get to work with, the world they are changing and how they are going about changing it...Welcome to our FY2020/21 Spark Impact Report!

In this year's report, you will see we have paid special attention to two key elements, our Theory of Change and how our clients' work links to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We feel that it's important to continue to lean on this international language for change and hope you will join us as you develop your own impact report.

As we emerge from this pandemic, it's not surprising to see that over 50% of our work has been done against both the *Good Health and Wellbeing* and *Reduced Inequity* SDGs. This reflects the increased activity in these areas.

Organisations operating in these domains have been under immense pressure to meet growing demands for support and whilst we have seen unprecedented amounts of funding go into these areas, more money doesn't always mean more impact.

Leaders are facing other non-monetary challenges around their workforce, digital transitions and cyber security. We are seeing leaders across the for-purpose sector bravely stepping up.

It's been our honour to help them develop new ideas for how they will meet their purpose, test these ideas and form strategies for more and better impact.

It is our expectation that demand in these domains will continue to grow. For my part, I don't believe we have even seen the tip of the proverbial iceberg when it comes to demand for mental health and wellbeing support. The sad thing is that despite the inquiries and the Royal Commissions, we are still no clearer on 'what a good system looks like'. My work internationally in this space tells me that we are not alone and in fact, are much better off than many other nations... this is as mind blowing as it is frightening.

Yet the good humans of our social sector continue to strive for health, wellbeing, equity and opportunity for all. For as long as they do, we will be there to help in whatever way we can.

In reading this report, you will see the many ways we have supported our clients' work and the case studies we have compiled in this report are heart-warming.

Since we started this journey to create positive social impact, Spark has contributed over \$1.5m in support to the for-purpose sector. This year, we contributed almost \$200k in direct pro-bono support across the 115 projects we delivered. We also spent hours developing blogs, whitepapers and webinars.

FOREWORD

Like many organisations we have seen the impact of the pandemic on our team. Whilst we have seen change, it's a credit to our current leadership and team that our Sparkies have remained healthy and engaged, and continue to live our values. I'm proud to be part of a place where leadership is demonstrated in all roles, every day. Thank you team!

There are some exciting developments in the coming year for Spark and I'm keen to see how these translate into impact in next year's report. Please check-in on our newsletter, blogs and social media posts for updates.

It would be remiss of me in introducing this impact report to not finish with a massive thank you to our clients. Thank you to all of the leaders who have asked us to join them this past year.

Thank you to the hundreds of company directors we have engaged with this year for asking us to support their governance for impact. Thank you to the many hundreds of executives, team members and key stakeholders who have been so supportive as we have worked together to innovate and strategise for the future.

One day we will be able to peer through the advisory veil and truly understand the impact that our work has on beneficiaries and communities. This understanding will allow us to do more and better.

I look forward to engaging with you over the coming year. As always, feel free to reach out to me or the team with any questions or suggestions.



George Liacos
Founder and Chair
e: george@sparkstrategy.com.au

OUR WORK IN 2020/21

For our strategy practice, the 2020-2021 financial year was full and fulfilling, despite the continued challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

We continued to work across and with the not-for-profit, government, social enterprise, philanthropic and private sectors, collaborating with our clients on solutions and strategies to drive impact and resilience. Our projects spanned health, disability, youth, gender equality, conservation, libraries, education, sports and recreation, arts and culture, community services, and more. Working across this broad range of sectors and impact areas enabled us to cross-pollinate by sharing subject matter expertise, making introductions and speaking meaningfully to intersectionality.

As well as regular (and enthusiastic) team trivia nights, we worked on over 115 for-purpose projects. This included around 56 strategic plans, 23 workshop facilitations and 36 other projects, including theory of change, impact measurement, operating models, business models and grant program reviews.

We've mapped these projects against the SDGs (found on page 9) to better demonstrate the collective impact of our portfolio, which is ultimately all about the collective impact of our clients.

As with many organisations, our own digital capability uplift continued in earnest. We continued to refine our remote facilitation skills and agreed on principles to help limit the duration and number of online workshops – we found this increased engagement and decreased fatigue, benefiting both our team and our clients.

Our commitment to sharing knowledge and building the sector's capability was a highlight of the year, which we actioned through sharing blogs, whitepapers, presentations and webinars.

Yes, it was another year of change, challenge and COVID, but it was also a year of connection, learning and purpose. A huge thanks to all of our Sparkies for their great work and good humour, and to our clients for the phenomenal and essential work that they do.



OUR COMMITMENT TO THE FOR-PURPOSE SECTOR

Spark is a profit-for-purpose organisation. All of our projects and work are geared towards creating positive social and environmental change to support our vision for equitable and sustainable communities. We are also a proud member of the B Corp community. We became a B Corp in 2015 because we believe the success of an organisation is no longer solely measured in dollars.

Ethical accountability is becoming ingrained into business practice and the more this expands the better the world will become.

The 'worker' category of our B-Corp status comprises things like ownership opportunities, job flexibility, work hours and fair chance hiring policies - all things we put a great deal of thought into. Our Sparkies define who we are, drive our impact, support our organisation and each other. They challenge us to be better as a team.

Another critical part of our commitment to impact is the work we do to support the for-purpose sector in Australia. In 2020/21, we achieved this by way of our sponsorships, events and blogs.

3

Whitepapers



7

Blogs



3

Webinars



Our whitepapers:

Beyond Sponsorships: A collaborative report between Spark and Arts Centre Melbourne to understand and articulate the value of arts and cultural organisations in times of crisis.

Impact Measurement Part 1: A guide for for-purpose organisations to develop their theory of change.

Build Back Better: Youth: How youth-focused organisations can 'build back better' to create better outcomes for young people.

Our webinars:

Powerfully communicating your impact: Supporting for-purpose leaders to better measure and articulate their impact.

Building financial resilience in 2021: Exploring how strategic planning, operating and business models can support financial sustainability and increased revenue.

Protect, restructure, thrive: Dynamic planning for a successful 2021: Focusing on the geopolitical state of 2021 and how for-purpose organisations can protect their funding in a challenging environment.

OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

At Spark, we are committed to creating impact, so it is essential that our work and the activities we undertake lead to short, medium and long-term positive changes for our clients and the communities they serve. One of the ways we understand our work is through our theory of change. This is detailed below:

Strategy

Impact
measurement

Business
models

Facilitation

Operating
models

Strategy
implementation

Our activities:

The things we do at Spark

Our short-term outcomes:

The immediate changes our work creates

For purpose organisations can clearly define why they exist, what success looks like, and how they will get there

For purpose organisations combine purpose with commercial acumen to create sustainable and impactful business models

For purpose organisations can clearly demonstrate what social change they create, and how

For purpose organisations have strong operating models that help them excel as a team and amplify their impact

Teams and leaders come together around a shared direction, connect with one another and work effectively

For purpose organisations spark new ideas for amplifying their impact and sustainability

Our medium-term outcomes:

The flow-on effects of our projects

For purpose organisations align, coordinate and collaborate to increase their collective impact

For-purpose organisations have the skills and confidence to amplify their impact and financial strength

For-purpose organisations retain and grow their funding

The for-purpose sector is resilient and adaptable so that it can thrive in our changing world

The for purpose sector creates meaningful and lasting positive change

Equitable and sustainable communities

Our big picture impact:

The long-term changes we aspire to create

YEAR IN NUMBERS

Numbers often help paint a better picture than words. In 2020/21, our numbers paint a picture of diversity. We have visualised below the percentage breakdown of our 115 projects across sectors we worked in and the types of projects we delivered.



25%

Health and wellbeing



7%

Youth



6%

Environment



14%

Government



7%

Gender equity



4%

Arts and culture



9%

Sports and recreation



7%

Disability



3%

Aging



9%

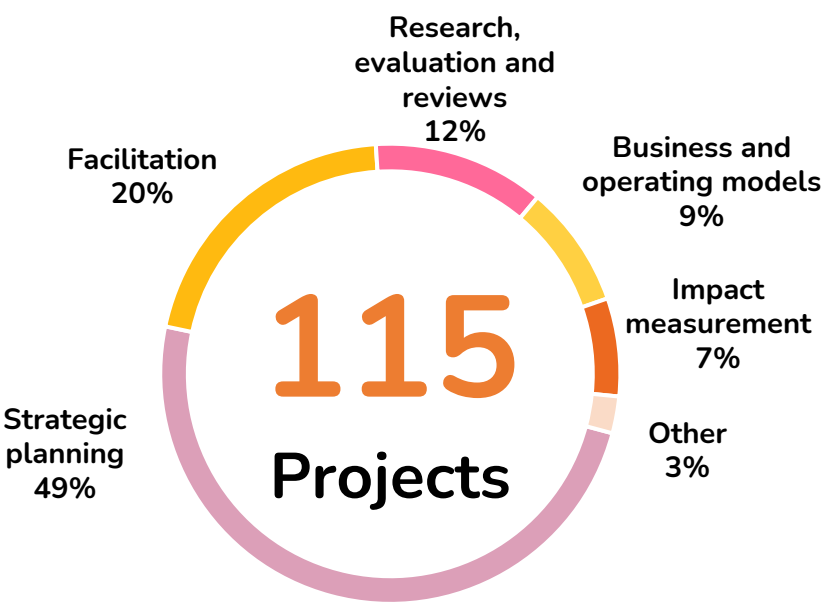
Education



9%

Other

\$200k
in pro-bono
contributions



OUR IMPACT ON THE UN SDGs

As a B-Corp, Spark Strategy is committed to having a meaningful and positive impact on its community, customers, environment, governance, and workers. Spark recognises our responsibility to create systems change at a global scale by striving towards the United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

Below is a visual representation of the number of Spark Strategy projects that contributed towards the achievement of

each Sustainable Development Goal. Spark supported clients to create a fairer society by delivering projects that led towards *Reduced Inequality* (61), *Good Health and Wellbeing* (50), *Quality Education* (22) and *Sustainable Cities and Communities* (14).

It is essential that these goals are reached by 2030. Spark will join other businesses in playing a powerful role to help all sectors work towards this common global agenda.

We mapped each of our **115 projects** during the financial year to the SDGs, noting that some projects/clients span multiple SDGs. This has been visualised to the right.



CASE STUDY:

Womens Health Goulburn North East

Strategy development in times of uncertainty: Accelerating gender equality

The Client

Women's Health Goulburn North East (WHGNE) is an independent feminist organisation committed to improving the health, safety and wellbeing of women in the Goulburn Valley and North East Victoria. It does so by providing training, information, data and resources to assist planners and service providers, as well as consultancy services on issues of equity, gender and health, and evaluation, planning and research.

Project Overview

With WHGNE's strategy nearing completion, WHGNE engaged Spark to facilitate a strategic planning process. The organisation had experienced a great deal of change. Bushfires in the region and a worldwide pandemic exposed the precarious position that women hold in WHGNE's communities. WHGNE acknowledged the need for a new strategic plan that sets out a clear and impactful path forward that is both pragmatic and aspirational.

“WHGNE found the process of working with Spark Strategy to be collaborative and very positive. They took the time to understand our needs, our ideas and our vision and they worked with us to develop a Strategic Plan that we are proud of.”

Amanda Kelly, CEO

Strategic Considerations

A number of contextual factors impacted the delivery of this project:

1. WHGNE had recently appointed a new CEO and a number of new board directors. It was critical for the leadership to be consulted throughout the strategic planning process to ensure the strategy incorporated the aspirations of its new leadership.
2. WHGNE works largely with and through other organisations. As such, the organisation was committed to developing a new strategic plan that reflected stakeholders' needs, preferences and expectations, and recognised opportunities for future growth and development. It was essential that the strategic planning process was inclusive and effectively engaged staff, managers, the board, partners, funders, decision-makers, and the voices of clients and community members.
3. The sector was recently subject to significant policy reforms such as the introduction of the *Gender Equality Act 2020* (VIC), the establishment the establishment of a new peak body Gender Equity Victoria (Gen Vic) and the Royal Commission into Family Violence. Spark needed to work with WHGNE to identify the opportunities presented by these reforms.

CASE STUDY:

Womens Health Goulburn North East

Strategy development in times of uncertainty: Accelerating gender equality

The Solution

Spark applied its unique strategic planning process to support WHGNE:

Ideation

Spark engaged with internal and external stakeholders through a survey, focus groups, 1:1 and small group interviews and workshops. We relied on the insights from these consultations to draw out key strategic concepts such as WHGNE's vision, purpose, impact and role. Spark worked with the project team to develop a 'strategy on a page' that summarised WHGNE's strategic priorities.

Stress-Testing

The draft strategy on a page was stress-tested by a number of key external stakeholders to check that the concepts and language resonated outside of WHGNE. Spark built on the feedback from these discussions to iterate the strategy and identify any conflicting priorities that the board would need to resolve.

Action Planning

WHGNE and Spark clearly mapped out the high-level initiatives and projects that would come together as a strategic roadmap for the organisation. Given the size of WHGNE and the need for its services, it was critical to have a long-term strategic roadmap that would drive the greatest possible impact.



1 Survey
65 responses



8 Interviews



3 Workshops



CASE STUDY:

Womens Health Goulburn North East

Strategy development in times of uncertainty: Accelerating gender equality

Results

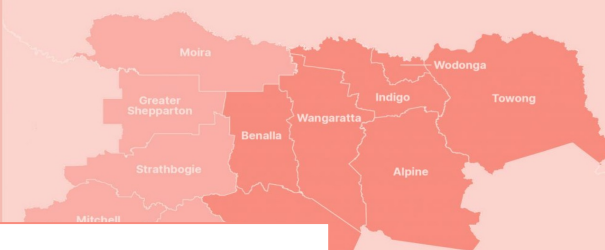
Working in a highly collaborative manner, Spark and WHGNE created a powerful and accessible strategic plan to guide the organisation. Within this strategy, the vision, purpose and principles were key strategic concepts that were designed to be inspiring and accessible. In addition, three impact areas were clearly defined: gender justice; sexual and reproductive health and rights; and climate justice.

This strategy will help WHGNE make decisions and allocate resources. It puts WHGNE at the forefront of the women's health movement by addressing gender and climate justice.

WHGNE has since converted the original strategy document into an [interactive and visually appealing online strategy](#) that is simple and user-friendly.

Our service areas

Alpine, Benalla, Greater Shepparton, Indigo, Mansfield,



Our impact areas

We recognise that our impact areas are interconnected —

Change in one space can impact and influence another area.
Our impact areas are integral to women's health, wellbeing and safety, and ultimately achieving gender equality.

Gender justice	✓
Sexual + reproductive health rights	✓
Climate justice	✓


Sexual + reproductive health rights

We commit to:

- Ongoing consultation with priority groups of women to identify and better support their sexual and reproductive health needs. This will include co-design projects in which women inform and guide our decision-making.
- Continuing to meaningfully engage and collaborate with our key stakeholders and trusted partners in sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) at regional and state-wide levels.
- Undertaking research on reproductive coercion and integrating the findings with regional SRHR and prevention of gender-based violence initiatives.
- Advocating for the adoption of sex-positive sexuality and consent education in schools within the region.
- Showcasing best-practice SRHR initiatives focused on gender rights and justice so that partners and other key stakeholders can easily replicate and roll out these initiatives.

We will track

- + Extent and quality of our consultation and co-design with women
- + Number of partners with SRHR as an identified priority
- + Positive policy change in SRHR



CASE STUDY:

Baw Baw Shire Community Vision

Putting community front and centre: A new Community Vision for Baw Baw Shire

The Client

Baw Baw Shire Council (Council) works in partnership with all levels of government, private sector partners and community to deliver a range of services to the Baw Baw community. These services include maternal and child health, strategic and town planning, roads, drainage, urban operations, community compliance, environmental health, arts and culture, building surveying, emergency management, and aged and disability services.

As the name suggests, the Council governs the Baw Baw Shire municipality which is made up of the former Shires of Buln Buln and Narracan, Rural City of Warragul and part of the Shire of Upper Yarra. The current population of Baw Baw is approximately 55,000 people and is growing rapidly, at around 2.8% per year, which means there will be approximately 850,000 people living in the municipality by 2041. Through its vision, mission and values, the Council works towards the best possible outcomes for the Baw Baw community.

Project Overview

In January 2020, Spark Strategy was engaged by Council to facilitate the development of *Baw Baw Shire's Community Vision*. Council needed a Community Vision that complied with the *Local Government Act 2020* (VIC) and built upon *BawBaw 2050*, a key strategic document that was developed in 2011 to articulate the community's vision for Baw Baw in 2050.

The Community Vision is focused on understanding and articulating what community members most value about the Baw Baw region and community. It also sets out the future vision and aspirations for the community. This will shape decisions around how Council can best support the community.

Strategic Considerations

In line with the *Local Government Act 2020* (VIC), Council and Spark employed deliberative engagement practices to develop the Community Vision. The deliberative engagement process was driven by workshops with a community panel, who comprised a representative sample of the Baw Baw community, reflecting the demographics and diversity of the municipality.

Spark designed engagement activities that enabled community members to provide insights into the many different elements of life in Baw Baw. Through the community panel and a series of other engagements, we heard from Councillors, business owners, industry representatives, Aboriginal elders, local environmental groups, and new residents to the region.

Supporting robust discussion and building consensus among the panel of 42 community members was central to the success of the project.

CASE STUDY:

Baw Baw Shire Community Vision

Putting community front and centre: A new Community Vision for Baw Baw Shire

Solution

Designing the project

Spark worked with the Council Project Team to design the project's approach. This included confirming the time period for the Community Vision and who within the community to engage, and ensuring that the stakeholder engagement methodology aligned with Council policy.

Getting the logistics in place

Spark worked behind the scenes to set up the structures and activities necessary for the project to succeed. This included confirming key workshop dates and times, and collaborating with an external recruiter to ensure a representative sample of community members made up the panel.

Delivering key engagement activities

Meaningful engagement informed by desk-based research was at the heart of the project.

Key activities and deliverables included:

- Research to develop two pre-reading packs for the community panel
- A survey open to all community members
- Focus groups with different segments of the community
- A series of online and in-person workshops with a community panel

Development stage

Spark worked with Council and the community panel to develop a draft Community Vision that went through multiple iterations. Both the community panel and the broader community were given opportunities to provide feedback on the draft Community Vision. Spark was involved in the communications to the community, including a series of videos that featured community members talking to the Community Vision.



9 Months



1 Community
Survey
305 responses



8 Community
Focus Groups



5 Visioning
Workshops



3 Council
Presentations

CASE STUDY:

Baw Baw Shire Community Vision

Putting community front and centre: A new Community Vision for Baw Baw Shire

Results

Due to wide-ranging and high-quality engagement, Spark drafted a Community Vision with the community panel for Baw Baw, which had strong community buy-in and ownership. Following iteration through a community exhibition process and endorsement by Council, this document is now publicly available and a key resource which can assist Councillors

and Council staff to make decisions and determine priorities. For example, the Community Vision was the guiding light in shaping the current Council Plan, which outlines where Council will focus for the next four years. The new [Baw Baw Community Vision](#) is a powerful and inspiring strategic document which will guide Council, community and other organisations for the coming years.



CASE STUDY:

Libraries for Health and Wellbeing

Developing the world's first strategic framework for libraries in community health and wellbeing

The Client

The State-wide Public Library Development Projects (SPLDP) is led by State Library Victoria, Victoria's preeminent public library and Public Libraries Victoria, the peak body for all public libraries in the State. A working group consisting of library CEOs and staff from across the State was established to support the delivery of the *Libraries for Health and Wellbeing Strategic Framework*. Public libraries in Victoria have long played a significant role in supporting the health and wellbeing of the communities they service. However, this role has not been acknowledged by Government, partners and the broader community.

Overview

The project sought to develop a strategic framework that would guide how public libraries across Victoria support community health and wellbeing. The project commenced in December 2020 when State Library Victoria, under the banner of the SPLDP engaged Spark to develop the Framework. The Framework consisted of a strategy, impact assessment framework and action roadmap and was the first of its kind globally. It articulates the current role and activities of public libraries in supporting health and wellbeing. It also builds on and strengthens this role through new ideas, responsibilities and priorities.

"I'm overjoyed to see this document produced for the sector and see the connections being made between libraries and health and wellbeing outcomes...I actually got a bit emotional when I heard Dr Sandro Demaio say:

"You, in the library sector, have been doing health promotion for decades, in fact, I think libraries are one of the original health promotion platforms"..."

Mark Hands, CEO of the Goldfields Library Corporation

Strategic Considerations

A number of contextual factors impacted the delivery of this project:

1. Spark needed to be able to engage and accurately represent a wide representation of voices and individuals throughout the process of developing the strategy. We consulted with over 1500 stakeholders across the state of Victoria.
2. The project team needed to narrow down the scope of health and wellbeing issues addressed to both leverage the strengths of specific public libraries while addressing the overall health and wellbeing challenges of the State.

CASE STUDY:

Libraries for Health and Wellbeing

Developing the world's first strategic framework for libraries in community health and wellbeing

3. This project needed to be applicable and relevant to all public libraries in Victoria while remaining sensitive to the difference in capability and capacity between libraries. The Framework needed to address state-wide priorities while leaving sufficient scope for individual libraries to tailor their approach according to place-based challenges.

Solution

Spark applied a modified version of its co-design process:

Ideation

Spark engaged with over 1,250 people through a series of workshops, surveys, focus groups and interviews. We engaged with local stakeholders as well as national and international thought leaders operating in this space. We verified and built on these insights through a series of workshops and stress-testing interviews.

Impact Assessment

Spark prepared and facilitated a series of impact assessment workshops designed to test and refine the thinking, including identifying causal links and assumptions between activities, outcomes and impact. From these workshops, we developed a theory of change that would allow libraries to measure their performance against outcomes.

Action Planning

In the final stages of the project, we worked with the project team and relevant stakeholders to identify the key projects and initiatives that would need to be completed in the near future for libraries to work towards meeting the strategic outcomes.



6 Workshops



24 Thought-leader Interviews



11 Focus Groups



1 Audit Survey of 38 libraries and 1 Community Survey



3 Council Presentations

CASE STUDY:

Libraries for Health and Wellbeing

Developing the world's first strategic framework for libraries in community health and wellbeing

Results

The project culminated in a [Framework](#) that articulated the role and priorities of Victoria's public library network in supporting community health and wellbeing. It provided direction as to how they will measure impact and listed the specific projects and activities that would support the implementation of the Framework. The project has shaped and paved the way for libraries to play a

greater role in enabling and improving the health and wellbeing of the communities they serve. We anticipate that we will see libraries making focused efforts to support this by way of partnerships to co-design and co-deliver services to community members and programs, services and collections aimed at supporting the health and wellbeing of individuals which will reduce health and wellbeing inequities in our communities.

Our impact areas



Determinants of Health

These are the non-medical factors that influence our health and wellbeing. They include our life conditions and experiences, and broader systemic and structural factors. We recognise the critical role libraries play to influence the social determinants of health and will continue to support our communities through the provision of education support, employment support and digital inclusion.

Our community priorities

Skills and habits: Communities are empowered

Our communities are equipped with the capabilities to understand and optimise their health and wellbeing. Making informed decisions and building healthy habits prevent illness and help with recovery. Of note, we have a crucial role to play when it comes to literacy for children and adults alike. Literacy takes many forms, each of which enables people to understand and improve their health and wellbeing.

Our Core

Supporting our communities with the foundational skills to understand, navigate and interpret information.

All libraries focus on:

- Early years and adult literacy – reading and writing
- Digital literacy – finding, assessing and sharing information online, and using technology with confidence

The Stretch

Enabling people to understand health information, and establish and maintain healthy habits.

We aspire to partner and work in:

- Health literacy – obtaining and understanding health information and making good health decisions
- Physical literacy – developing fine motor skills, fitness, coordination and active lifestyles
- Healthy habits – setting up and maintaining the routine for ongoing healthy lifestyles (e.g. diet, exercise)

Chronic disease and mental health challenges

Our communities are facing a number of multi-faceted health and wellbeing challenges. One in six Australians are currently experiencing depression, anxiety or both, with one in eight people experiencing high or very high psychological distress. Many Victorians are physically inactive and have a poor diet. These challenges pose significant risks to our health and wellbeing, increasing the likelihood of type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease, as well as cancer, chronic diseases and depression.¹

Different locations and communities are affected by these challenges in varying degrees, and there are markedly different views about which areas of health and wellbeing libraries should focus on (see below). This framework recognises this and provides public libraries with the scope to address the critical health and wellbeing challenges facing our local communities.



1. Australian Bureau of Statistics (2018) 'Mental health and wellbeing in Australia: 2018' (cat. no. 4626.0). Canberra: Australian Bureau of Statistics. 2. Australian Bureau of Statistics (2018) 'Physical activity and sedentary behaviour in Australia: 2018' (cat. no. 4627.0). Canberra: Australian Bureau of Statistics. 3. Australian Bureau of Statistics (2018) 'Diet and nutrition in Australia: 2018' (cat. no. 4628.0). Canberra: Australian Bureau of Statistics. 4. Australian Bureau of Statistics (2018) 'Healthcare in Australia: 2018' (cat. no. 4629.0). Canberra: Australian Bureau of Statistics. 5. Australian Bureau of Statistics (2018) 'Wellbeing in Australia: 2018' (cat. no. 4630.0). Canberra: Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Key health system considerations

A system driven by response
With an ageing population, increasing rates of mental illness and chronic disease, there is a growing demand for healthcare services at times of emergency, in response to injury and illness, and for ongoing recovery. This can result in a vicious cycle as we concentrate resources into response and rehabilitation, prevention and early intervention can be overlooked. In turn, this can mean increased frequency and severity of ill health and injury, resulting in even greater demand for response and recovery.

To break this cycle, there is growing recognition of the need to invest in disease prevention and health promotion. Equipping individuals with the skills, information and confidence to manage their own health and wellbeing is a core component of preventing injury and illness.

Libraries are not and do not want to be trained health professionals. However, our teams and resources can support people to understand and manage their own health, by helping them access services, interpret information and develop healthy habits.

Health 2042: advancing health, access and care presents a clear vision for the health and wellbeing of Victorians and for the Victorian healthcare system. Health 2042 is built on three pillars.

Better health: prevention, early intervention, community engagement and people's self-management to maximise the health and wellbeing of all Victorians.

Better access: reducing waiting times and delivering equal access to care via statewide service planning, targeted investment and unlocking innovation.

Better care: people's experience of care, improving quality and safety, ensuring accountability for achieving the best health outcomes and supporting the workforce to deliver the best care.⁴

Victorian Government
Department of Health



CASE STUDY:

Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras

Designing a transformational strategic plan for one of the oldest LGBTQI+ institutions in Australia

The Client

Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras (SGLMG) is one of the oldest continuously operating LGBTQI+ organisations in Australia and around the world. SGLMG has a history of passion, protests and pride and is a platform for the LGBTQI+ community and its supporters to gather and celebrate self-expression, solidarity and social change.

Overview

SGLMG were looking to write a new and transformational strategic plan during a time which was characterised by high challenge. Covid-19 pandemic was still heavily effecting NSW with severe lockdowns in place. This period also presented great opportunity with Sydney World Pride arriving in 2023.

Solution

Spark supported the board and executive to develop a transformational strategy. A high-engagement approach was taken to gather the perspectives of a broad range of stakeholders using focus groups, interviews and a community survey.



7 interviews



3 workshops



10 hours of
research on Mardi
Gras history



Sydney Mardi Gras On

Mardi Gras has thousands of every step of the way.

Called on the Federal
Government to
#CountUsIn
the next Census.

#UnitedWeShine



CONCLUDING REMARKS

Detailed below are a few quotes from our team about their experiences, work and impact over FY 2020/21:

“Helping a business going through the difficult process of divestment is always challenging. It was inspiring to see that no matter the internal complexity, our client kept the people that they serve at forefront of every decision they made.”

“Our whitepapers, blogs and other content enable us to share what we’ve observed, learnt and tried – both with those who can and can’t afford to work with us. The intention being to build sector capability in the interest of positive change.”

“A highlight for me was working with Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras (SGLMG). It was the first time SGLMG developed a strategic plan with deep consultation with stakeholders. Key insights from focus groups uncovered themes around social justice, advocacy, intersectionality and cultural diversity.”

“

I feel privileged to be a trusted advisor to leaders across the social sector.”

“I enjoy working in Spark because our approach is always impact-led - we are not afraid to provoke and encourage our clients and sector to think about the tangible impact they deliver for the world. Being at Spark makes me hopeful for the future.”

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Detailed below are a few quotes from our team about their experiences, work and impact over FY 2020/21:

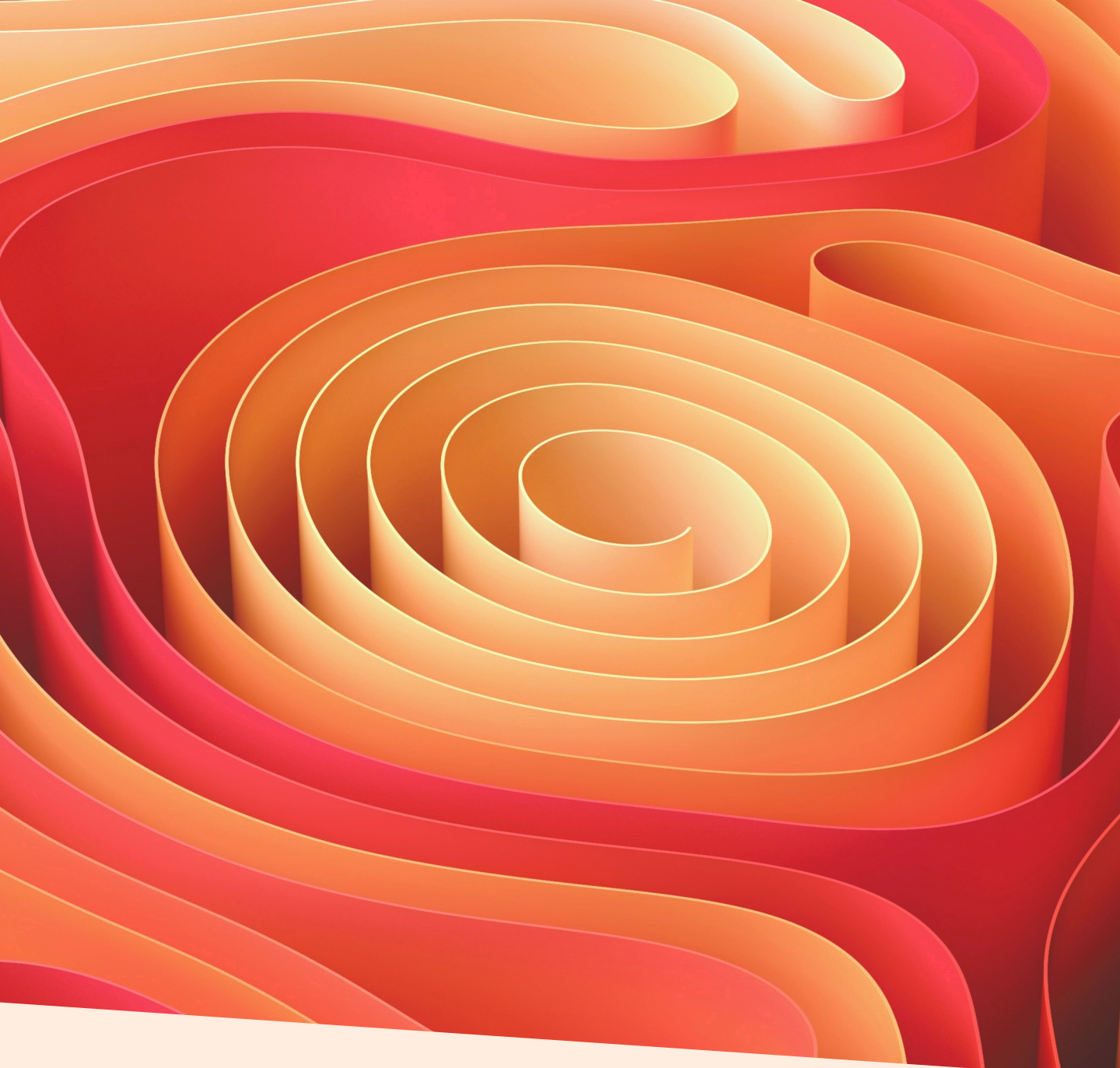
“We’re really lucky to work across sectors, industries and impact areas, which enables us to connect ideas, opportunities and people in a unique and meaningful way.

”

“Spark’s strategy development work with our clients has resulted in some pragmatic yet innovative plans that leverage cross-sector partnerships. Coupled with our recent partnerships research and whitepaper, these innovations show that overarching pursuit of shared value for collective impact is key to driving transformative change.”

“We’re witnessing a tipping point where silos across the for-purpose sector are giving way to systems thinking and human centred design principles. This is really exciting as it creates potential for an more resilient and influential sector.”

“I feel so lucky that I get to work on impactful projects with my fellow ‘Sparkies’. They are intelligent, compassionate and helpful. While we take our work seriously, we don’t take ourselves too seriously. We get exposed to wicked problems, injustice and inaction. This can bring you down and make you cynical but having a caring and supportive team makes it worth it. Thank you Sparkies!”



Melbourne

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