



# The Hybrid work model

## Is it the new future or can we expect more changes in the workforce?

Article 8

Coffee in hand, beach views, loungewear – many of us never would have thought that flexible working could become our reality and COVID-19 made the shift happen. As we start to go back to 'normal', we are all thinking, what arrangements will stay and what will go. No more loungewear perhaps, no more flexible working arrangements or continual Zoom calls or cooking dinner while you work. How many of us are ready to let this flexible working arrangement go or will we need to?

Recent research by EY has shown that 70% of CBD workers want to work flexibly post pandemic with many wanting to work around 3 days in the office per week. Prior to the pandemic, many employees felt uncomfortable asking to work from home. Now however, employees and employers understand that they can work at home just as effectively, if not more, than in the office. The Hybrid working model incorporates the desires of employees, giving them a sense of flexibility whilst also giving organisations an opportunity to have in-person experience with their team to enhance collaboration, teamwork and innovation. Add this to the tally – Hybrid work model is here to stay.

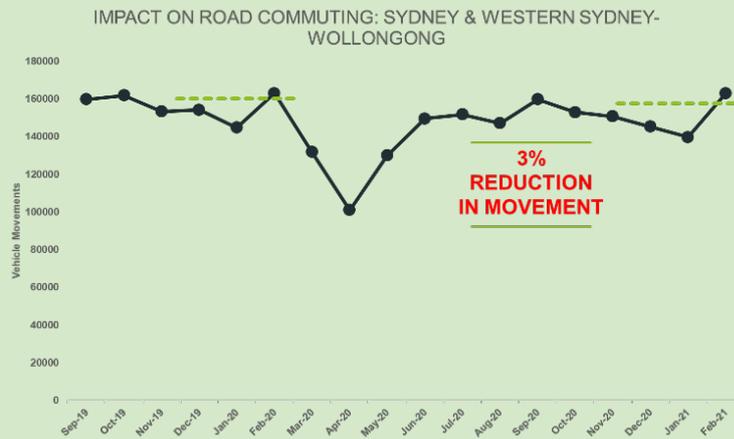
The pandemic brought to light the opportunities that can arise through remote working,

especially the on-shoring and off-shoring of jobs online. If you can work from anywhere, why not apply for your dream job in another country while still sitting on the couch of your home in Shellharbour? That is the million-dollar question and the answer is still unknown. Many believe this is an opportunity for the entire labour force market, giving many people access to jobs and services that they would have never considered prior. Scouting for talent without the costs of relocating employees would be one drawcard for utilising this profound connectivity. Even regionally in Australia, many have started working in remote locations but are able to connect to cities and participate in workplace requirements as if they were there in person. Add this to the tally – on-shoring and off-shoring of online jobs is here to stay.

IMPACT ON RAIL COMMUTING: SYDNEY-WOLLONGONG



Source: TfNSW data – Monthly OPAL trips



Source: TfNSW data: Traffic Volume Viewer – Monthly Road trips (Kingsway, Picton Rd, Heathcote Rd, Broughton – Amalgamated)

Pre-COVID, around 23,000 people from the Illawarra region commuted to Sydney daily. Many have gained extra hours in their day by avoiding commuting – and as a fellow commuter in the past, flexible working from home is a blessing.

Fifty-six percent of people stated that not commuting was the top thing they enjoyed about working from home during the pandemic. Understandably, this will fall under the branch of the Hybrid work model in the future. Shellharbour commuters will now have the flexibility under the new model of work to save time and money travelling to and from their workplace. This flexible capability will allow employees to be more productive, still engage with their workplace and create a better work-life balance. Commuters: add this to the tally. Working from home is not always rainbows and butterflies despite the immense benefits it can provide. While working from home worked for many, one in every five Australians reported suffering from loneliness during the pandemic. On top of this, hours spent on unpaid work since COVID-19 drastically increased alongside the consumption of alcohol. COVID-19 has also exacerbated existing vulnerabilities found from working at home such as connectivity disadvantages, poor heating and juggling work life balance particularly if you have children, flatmates or limited space. This evidence suggests that our homes often aren't the prime location for working and the line between work and home life can often be blurred placing more burden on employees than expected.

As humans, it is in our nature to want to connect face-to-face and foster these bonds. We all know too well that Zoom fatigue is real. Diversifying the business model and incorporating a blend between remote and face-to-face contact could eliminate a lot of the negative aspects for employees who feel lonely

and/or don't have the appropriate facilities at home to work comfortably and effectively. Many people believe the top two important aspects of working on site is social interaction and collaboration.

It became evident during COVID-19 that while some work is easier or enhanced by individual effort, organisations exist because they bring together cohesiveness and a value chain of tasks and talents. Evidence suggests that as the number of remote days increase, there is a drastic drop in connection opportunities.

All the evidence points to the Hybrid work model. When exploring the respective wants and demands of employers and employees, COVID-19 made a lot of the issues redundant and new opportunities possible for flexible working arrangements. It would be ill-advised to ignore the outcry from employees for the incorporation of the Hybrid work model. More than 70% of people want this system to continue post pandemic and if our sources are correct, the Hybrid model will become the new normal.

The Illawarra is in a prime location to be a hub for the Hybrid work model. Access to co-sharing workspaces, the flexible lifestyle, the quality of infrastructure and connectivity ultimately places the region as a leader and exemplar of the new and evolving future of work. The consolidation of employee demands for flexibility and workplace functionality will continue to be in focus as the future of the Hybrid model of work becomes the new normal.

That is the final article of eight in our 'Future of Work' series – we hope you found them thought-provoking.

