

MEDIA RELEASE

AUSTRALIAN WORKFORCE PRAISE EMPLOYER EFFORTS AMID CHAOS OF 2020

The evolution of the workplace shows the hybrid worker is on the rise and here to stay according to new research

SYDNEY, 19 November 2020 – While many Australian businesses had to implement a new way of working when COVID-19 social distancing regulations came into play in March 2020, *The Evolving Workplace Report by Choosi* shows these changes have led to more than half (54.1%) of Australian workers transitioning to remote* and hybrid working models*, as well as an increase in job satisfaction (83.1%).

In fact, a large majority (92.4%) of the country's hybrid and remote workers are appreciative of how their employers dealt with this transition. At the same time, more than four in five (83.3%) of these workers report how much they love working from home, with a similar amount (81.5%) agreeing that working from home is a change that's here to stay.

The Evolving Workplace Report by Choosi is part of an ongoing research series that explores the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Australian workforce. The initial phase looks at how Australian workers have adapted during this time, their feelings towards their current workplace, and their predictions for the future.

Nearly half (49.0%) of remote or hybrid workers report that working from home has increased their productivity. More interestingly, a large proportion (95.5%) believe this increase in productivity is sustainable for the longer term.

Following this large-scale social experiment, three-fifths (67.6%) are confident their employers will continue with flexible work arrangements and feel as though they'll want to take advantage of these post-pandemic. A similar amount (63.6%) believe this way of working could be sustainable for themselves, and over half (52.5%) feel the same about their workplace.

Shadé Zahrai, career and workplace performance expert and keynote speaker on resilience, transformation and leadership, shared her comments on the future of the hybrid and virtual workforce:

“If employers take heed and move to a hybrid-virtual workforce, this will have considerable impacts on the future of work. Some of the challenges include the need to mitigate the negative impacts of working from home by finding ways to increase employee engagement, encourage greater collaboration and teamwork, roll-out proper training of leaders to manage remote teams, integrate learning and growth experiences for employees, and develop innovative and engaging ways to spruce the ‘boring’ dynamics of video meetings to reduce ‘Zoom fatigue’.”

Throughout the pandemic, employees have noticed their managers and bosses have become more understanding and supportive (43.3%), more flexible in expectations and

arrangements (59.9%), and more trusting of them (38.4%). And, over a third (38.5%) of remote workers say that their employers have made special efforts to support them during this time.

When it comes to employee mental health and general wellbeing, Australians have high expectations of their employers supporting these needs. Nearly three-quarters (74.5%) of remote or hybrid workers highlight that it's either a critical responsibility, or at least partly their employer's responsibility to back these areas. Fortunately, two-thirds (66.7%) state their workplace has done enough to support these aspects during the pandemic.

“Given the increase in anxiety and uncertainty around job security, it's imperative that organisations develop and implement specific frameworks to address mental and general wellbeing which will continue to be an important aspect of the employee experience and a necessity for organisational culture and wellbeing,” Zahrai added.

Australian workers also agree certain accommodations need to be made in order for remote or hybrid working to continue. Employees expect their employers to provide ergonomic working equipment (55.9%), and support and training on remote work (43.6%) and technology use (40.4%).

When it comes to the transition back to the workplace, close to three-in-five (59.4%) believe it could be challenging. The key hurdles anticipated include getting used to a routine again (55.9%), safety fears (50.5%), dealing with commuting (46.1%), and loved ones/pets adjusting to them being gone again (36.3%).

Out of over 1,300 respondents to *The Evolving Workplace by Choosi* survey, four in 10 are permanently on-site, meanwhile three in 10 are permanently at home/remote. The remainder are working between the two locations or have since returned to work after a period of remote working.

Additional key findings are as follows:

Remote vs. essential workers

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the way Australians view certain workers is changing

- More than half (52.9%) of those surveyed agree the pandemic has made them realise essential workers** should be paid more. Almost the same amount (52.2%) feel they should be given special working conditions
- The majority of those (77.4%) also believe pay and special accommodations should be made for essential workers after the pandemic has passed
- Over three in five (64.7%) workers overall respect essential jobs more now
- The experience of working onsite for essential workers is more likely to be positive than negative, but nowhere near as positive as remote workers
 - 48.1 per cent absolutely love it
 - 59.3 per cent are adapting well
- When it comes to working onsite, over half (56.7%) of essential workers report they're glad to have an 'essential' job
- For essential workers who are still working on site, or recently returned, more than a third (36.2%) feel somewhat more positive about their job. This is largely linked to the

gratitude they have for still being employed (68.8%). Only close to one in five (18.2%) feel more negative about their occupation.

COVID-19 and career path

The pandemic has created more loyalty to jobs and limited the job search

- Half (50.3%) of all respondents say they've become more loyal to their workplace
- Close to two in five (37.6%) report they're less likely to look to change jobs due to limited options and/or concerns about an economic downturn
- Over one in 10 (13.7%) have changed their career or job-role as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic
- About a third (32.7%) have considered a new career path because of the pandemic, most (26.1%) are just considering, but some have taken active steps to pursue it (6.6%). The active steps taken include self-driven study (50.6%), formal training (48.9%), as well as applications (62.3%) and work experience (22.5%)

The post-pandemic workforce

Lowered expectations of the 'perfect' job and shift in priorities

- Close to half (48.4%) of Australian workers say they now have lower expectations of finding the 'perfect job' to at least some extent
- Over half (53.1%) feel COVID-19 has shifted their view on how appealing various jobs are
- Three in five (60.0%) agree their priorities around what's important in their work have also shifted. They now prioritise security (66.0%), stability (61.5%), and personal safety (49.1%) above all else
- Interestingly, over a third feel that self-employment has become more appealing due to flexibility (37.2%) and self-sufficiency (41.8%)

The 'new collar' workforce

Reskilling and upskilling have increasingly become popular during COVID-19

- The large majority (92.5%) say it's more important than ever before to have a broad range of skills in order to stay employable
- One in seven (71.0 %) believe the most critical skills to have for future jobs are adaptability, flexibility, and resilience
- However, only one in six (16.4%) respondents have undertaken reskilling or upskilling
 - Of those that have either undertaken or plan to take-up upskilling and reskilling, nearly half (49.8%) say this has been required of them to avoid redundancy
 - More than a quarter (27.0%) have undergone training or upskilling in digital skills and capabilities, while close to a third (32.8%) are planning to
- Job roles are becoming increasingly mixed. Over three in five (60.9%) believe that technology is blurring the lines between white-collar and blue-collar occupations
- Nearly half (47.4%) identify as having a 'no-collar' job now—neither blue nor white collar, but a blend of the two

Notes to editors:

*Remote or Hybrid workers:

- A quarter (25.4%) are doing a mix of remote and onsite (Hybrid)
- About three in 10 (28.6%) are still fully remote (Permanently Remote)
- A smaller proportion (4.6%) have returned to onsite after remote working (Returned)

**Essential workers:

- About three in four (72.4%) are essential workers, while 27.6 per cent would classify themselves as non-essential
- Of those who are essential, the top industries include health and science services (11.5%), public services (10.1%), construction and manufacturing services (9.4%), education and childcare services (7.9%) and retail services (7.8%).

Other

- Four in 10 (39.1%) are working onsite all the time (Permanently Onsite)
- The rest (2.2%) have not been working

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About Choosi

Choosi provides information to help customers compare, choose and apply for a range of insurance products online and over the phone. Choosi's free comparison service lets you compare the benefits and prices of a range of popular insurance products, so you can confidently choose cover that suits your needs, your budget and lifestyle.

About The Evolving Workplace Report by Choosi

The Evolving Workplace Report by Choosi Report forms part of the Choosi Research Series and explores the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Australian workforce. From the role the health crisis has had in gaining a greater appreciation of certain jobs to how it's shaping the future of the workplace, this research sheds light on what's important to the Australian workforce and how we've all had to adapt.

The report is compiled based on research commissioned by Choosi and conducted by CoreData between 25 August and 2 September 2020.

The research was conducted via a quantitative online survey, gathering 1,336 responses from Australians aged 18 and above and have been largely employed in the last three months.