

# CENTRAL COAST TELEWORK STRATEGY 2014 - 2020

*“Work is not where you go, it’s what you do”*



**Telework Central Coast:**  
*Working closer to home on the Coast*



*A new workforce participation model to drive productivity, the local economy and improve the environmental and social fabric of our community.*

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# Central Coast Telework Strategy 2014 - 2020



## FOREWORD

The Central Coast region of NSW is an important part of the NSW economy. Its close proximity to Sydney and the Hunter means a large component of the community travel each day to their workplaces outside the region.

With this in mind, the NSW Government is keen to develop initiatives that improve the social and economic prosperity of regional communities and recognises the importance for business to take advantage of innovative practices through the use of high speed broadband and the productivity benefits it can deliver.

The Central Coast Telework Strategy 2014 – 2020 aims to leverage the digital economy to foster a new workforce participation model to enable telework from the region to a distant employer. This will drive business productivity and workforce participation and improve the economic and social outcomes of the region.

The goal of the Telework Strategy is to create one million days of telework on the Central Coast by 2020. That represents 16% of the workforce working closer to home for one day a week. This is a very achievable and realistic goal and one that the NSW Government will seek to support.

I commend the committee for the development of the strategy and wish them success in its implementation. I look forward to following the initiatives that lead to the improvement of the social and economic fabric of the Central Coast region.

**THE HON ANDREW STONER MP**  
**DEPUTY PREMIER**  
**MINISTER FOR TRADE AND INVESTMENT**  
**MINISTER FOR REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES**



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# Central Coast Telework Strategy 2014 – 2020

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## Executive Summary

The Central Coast Telework Strategy 2014 – 2020 aims to leverage high speed broadband connectivity and the new business models of the digital economy to foster a new workforce participation model, 'smart flexibility', in which the ability to telework from the region to a distant employer, is a normal part of flexible workplace practice. It will drive business productivity and workforce participation and improve the economic, environmental and social fabric of the community.

The goal of the strategy is to create one million days of telework on the Central Coast by 2020. That represents 16% of the workforce working closer to home for one day a week.

The greatest gain in human capital in Australian society has come from participation in tertiary education. The Grattan Institute estimates that one of the three factors that will increase productivity in the economy is facilitating greater workforce participation by a growing educated workforce. To achieve this we have to deliver on smart flexibility and leverage the new technologies of digital enablement.

To achieve smart flexibility, the strategy has four primary objectives:

1. Increase the uptake and acceptability of how smart flexibility through telework can benefit both employers and employees.
2. Increase the uptake and acceptability of telework by business so they become more internationally competitive.
3. Develop a regional network of Smart Work Hubs that provides an alternative to working from home or the office and provides co-working spaces for collaborative innovative projects across sectors and different organisations.
4. Promote and monitor the positive impact of smart flexibility through telework on the region.

The strategy has been informed by the region's participation in a number of telework trials as part of National Telework Week and the University of Newcastle's research project team.

The strategy fits well with local Government plans, regional plans, and State and Australian Government digital economy and workforce participation strategies. Support for smart flexibility will achieve many of the outcomes desired by these plans and address the critical issues facing governments.



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The rationale for this strategy is to utilise the benefits of the arrival of high speed broadband to advance the region's economic and cultural vitality.

The strategy responds to the major policy drivers of:

- providing universal affordable access to high speed broadband from the node;
- responding to the changing delivery of government services, health services and education to enable a more online workforce; and
- responding to the Australian and State Government decentralisation policies without the cost and disruption of setting up regional offices.

It looks to take advantage of the productivity gains that the new workplace model can bring to the local economy and improve the social and environmental impact on the region.

The strategy has been developed by a collaboration of the leading regional stakeholders under the leadership of private industry and with the support of Regional Development Australia Central Coast (RDACC).



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## PART 1 – THE STRATEGY

### Introduction

The Central Coast is enjoying the privilege of being one of the first areas in Australia to be connected to high speed broadband with the NBN. This means that we can leverage high speed broadband to address some of the pressing issues facing the Central Coast:

- Increasing workforce participation and reducing unemployment.
- Reducing the time, stress and cost of long commutes to work, with nearly 40,000 Central Coast residents commuting daily to either Sydney or Newcastle to work.
- Capturing the productivity benefit of the increasingly highly educated workforce that is constrained by the ‘geographic leash’ in juggling work, transport and carer responsibilities.
- Stimulating and diversifying the regional economy by seizing opportunities in the rapidly expanding online economy that is transforming retail, government service delivery, health services, education, professional and technical services.

In the new ecology of the workplace, work is what you do, not where you go. Work can be done from anywhere that is digitally connected to suit the needs of employers, employees and the organisation’s customers. It can take several forms:

- Telework on one or more days combined with days in the office, or telework on a permanent basis.
- Working from your home office, connected to the main office on an agreed schedule, combined with working in the office on other days.
- Working from a smart work hub, where telework facilities are combined with co-working and innovation accelerators for freelancers and start ups.
- Working in a virtual company that doesn’t have a main office but meets face to face on an ‘as needs’ basis, whenever and wherever suits the situation.

With up to 40,000 Central Coast residents commuting daily to either Sydney or Newcastle, the project aims to educate and inform these employees and their employers of the many advantages of telework. Smart flexibility through telework will benefit the people of the Central Coast, whether they are employees or employers and their families by:



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- making work increasingly portable
- advancing technologies linked to information and communication
- changing lifestyles
- supporting flexible work patterns
- reducing travel times
- having positive impacts on pollution, energy consumption and traffic congestion
- increasing motivation and productivity
- offering benefits for 'encore careers' (retirement years)
- reducing absenteeism
- utilising vacant office space through the establishment of collaborative smart work hubs.

For telework to be successful on the Central Coast, a relationship involving a shift in culture and trust between employees, employers and relevant employee/employer organisations is essential.

## The Vision

The Central Coast is a world leading region of smart flexibility through telework, where:

1. the community reaps the economic, environmental and social benefits of working closer to home;
2. the prosperity of the region is enhanced through the emerging digital economy and the new workforce participation ecosystem; and
3. the region is associated with a vibrant culture of collaboration and networking.

## The Purpose

- To improve the social fabric of the region by reducing the hours spent commuting to and from work.
- To improve the ability of working parents to better support their school age children with educational and sporting activities.
- To strengthen the local economy of the region by having more people work in the region, increasing the local spend.



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- To drive productivity in businesses with fast broadband offering a new workplace model.
- To improve the environment by reducing the carbon footprint that is generated by the commute to Sydney and Newcastle each day.
- To reduce the tension on government infrastructure - roads, rail and gridlock.

## Goal

**By 2020, we will have one million telework days on the Central Coast.** That is, 16% of the Central Coast workforce (16% of 130,000 workforce x 48 days = approx 1,000,000 days) to telework at least one day per week by 2020, including the internal commuters who travel within the region.

## Key Objectives

1. Increase the uptake and acceptability of how smart flexibility through telework can benefit both employers and employees.
2. Increase the uptake and acceptability of telework by business so they become more internationally competitive.
3. Develop a regional network of Smart Work Hubs that provides an alternative to working from home or the office and provides co-working spaces for collaborative innovative projects across sectors and different organisations.
4. Promote the positive impact of smart flexibility through telework on the region.

## Actions and Tactics

1. **Increase the uptake and acceptability of how smart flexibility through telework can benefit both employers and employees.**

### Actions and Tactics

- Engage the University of Newcastle in applied research projects that inform the strategy and the appropriate actions for employees.
- Seek support from the employee and employer organisations and gain their assistance in the promotion of more flexible work options.
- Focus on the commuters who work in the target industry groups of government, IT and service industries.



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- Develop education programs to support employees in preparing a business case to put to their employers.
- Develop support packages for employees wishing to work closer to home.
- Identify the 3600 State Government workers that currently commute and engage with their managers to enable and support telework.
- Engage with the motor organisations and their membership on the Central Coast to reduce the commute and work closer to home.
- Gain the support of NSW Trains to reduce pressure on rail infrastructure.

**2. To increase the uptake and acceptability of telework by business so they become more internationally competitive.**

**Actions and Tactics**

- Develop education programs on the benefits and the improved productivity for business.
- Develop best management practices for managers of flexible workplaces.
- Develop support packages for small-medium enterprises wishing to offer a more flexible workplace environment.
- Identify the government departments and major corporates who employ Central Coast commuters.
- Assist the State Government in meeting its Decentralisation policy and targets by utilising telework for its State Government employees.
- Engage with professional groups, NSW Business Chamber and recruitment agencies, TAFE, University of Newcastle and OHS trainers to deliver more flexible workplace models.
- Promote telework options for local companies in the region for people to work closer to home.
- Investigate the workplace environment policy to allow for more flexible working environments and to include flexible workplace initiatives in the policies of government and major corporates.
- Engage the University of Newcastle in applied research projects that inform the strategy and the appropriate actions for business.



- 3. To develop a regional network of Smart Work Hubs that provides an alternative to working from home or the office and provides co-working spaces for collaborative innovative projects across sectors and different organisations.**

**Actions and Tactics**

- Encourage Wyong Shire and Gosford City Councils to support the development of Smart Work Hubs.
  - Assist private smart work hubs establish by developing sustainable business cases and business model data.
  - Network the hubs to collaborate on best practice models and look for collaborative opportunities.
  - Trial smart work hub 'pop ups' as part of National Telework Week.
  - Promote the opportunity for co-working spaces for small businesses working from home to improve networking and interaction.
  - Engage industry groups and clusters to use Smart Work Hubs to interact.
  - Engage universities to participate in Smart Work Hubs to drive innovation, new ideas and approaches.
  - Promote the concept of 'liquid space' for local unused office space to make it available to teleworkers on an adhoc basis.
  - Promote the creation of telework spaces in local libraries.
- 4. Promote the positive impact of smart flexibility through telework on the region.**

**Actions and Tactics**

- Measure the economic, social and environmental impact of telework on the region.
- Report to local, State and Australian Governments on the impacts of telework on the region.
- Develop positive case studies of commuters and businesses to capture the increase in productivity, sustainability and social impact.
- Seek local, State and Australian Government assistance to pilot a three year project to act as a catalyst for the uptake of telework and creating more liveable cities.
- Financially resource the entity responsible for the innovation plan, Innov8Central, to manage and deliver the project.



## Key Performance Indicators

### By 2020:

- We will have 1,000,000 days of telework on the Central Coast
- 20,800 workers telework closer to home every week
- If 20% work from smart work hubs, we will have 4160 work spaces per week
- We will reduce the congestion on the M1 by 14,000 cars per week
- There will be 6,000 less commuters using public transport per week

### By 2018:

- We will have 873,000 days of telework on the Central Coast
- 18,200 workers telework closer to home every week
- If 20% work from smart work hubs, we will have 3,640 work spaces per week
- We will reduce the congestion on the M1 by 12,740 cars per week
- There will be 5,460 less commuters using public transport per week

### By 2016:

- We will have 624,000 days of telework on the Central Coast
- 13,000 workers telework closer to home every week
- If 20% work from smart work hubs, we will have 2,600 work spaces per week
- We will reduce the congestion on the M1 by 9,100 cars per week
- There will be 3,900 less commuters using public transport per week



## **PART 2 – HOW DOES THE TELEWORK STRATEGY ADDRESS CRITICAL ISSUES FOR GOVERNMENT?**

### **What's in it for Government?**

- Improve the efficiency of the government spend on facilities
- Save major infrastructure spend on roads and rail
- Reduce the gridlock of major cities and improve their liveability
- Reduce the impact on the environment
- Affordable access to fast broadband
- Respond to the changing delivery of government services, health services and education
- Drive innovation for whole of government collaboration at the regional level
- Find new and more efficient ways to decentralise government offices without the need of relocating offices to regions
- Leverage productivity by facilitating workforce participation among highly educated parents with carer responsibilities by overcoming the geographic leash
- Reduce the cost of living pressure on people living in more affordable housing areas of outer urban locations and increasing their access to employment opportunities
- Provide stimulus to regional communities to create employment opportunities for all, including people with a disability and the aging worker
- Provide a balance of population growth between metro and regional areas



## Regional Plans

### Central Coast Regional Plan

The Central Coast Regional Plan (Regional Plan) is a collaborative strategy for the future of the region. The plan is prepared by Regional Development Australia Central Coast, in consultation with State and Australian Government Agencies, Gosford City and Wyong Shire Councils, as well as other key stakeholders including industry groups, education providers, Central Coast Tourism, local business chambers and the not-for-profit sector.

The Regional Plan presents an easy-to-read 'snapshot' of the Central Coast, describing the region, its attributes, industry, employment base and advantages. It also provides an economic, social and environmental vision for the region, articulating drivers of change, identifying strengths and opportunities as well as its risks. The plan sets strategic priorities for action.

The primary purpose of this Regional Plan is to present a co-ordinated representation of the Central Coast's aspirations and priorities, ensuring our region's needs are heard and addressed by way of investment and local action.

The Regional Plan is a 'living document' and annual reviews keep it 'fresh and targeted' on immediate priorities as well as longer term goals.

Each year, workshops, meetings and discussions with local councils, government and community representatives inform the content of this Regional Plan – this consultation ensures that the document continues to evolve as a key strategic roadmap for the Central Coast.

One of the major priorities of the Regional Plan is to take advantage of the arrival of the National Broadband and Innovation Plan implementation to enable the development of a local high speed knowledge economy and to address the issues of the high volume of commuters.

### Regional Economic Development and Employment Strategy (REDES)

Workshops, meetings and discussions with local councils, government and community representatives have informed the content of this plan, and consultation will continue as the document evolves and builds to be recognised and adopted as a key strategic roadmap for the Central Coast.



To develop the strategy, the Government consulted with more than 80 large business and regional stakeholders, 300 small to medium enterprises and 400 individuals.

The REDES is a partnership between the NSW Government, RDACC, Gosford City Council and Wyong Shire Council. RDACC leads the implementation of the REDES with a review of the strategy to be undertaken every five years.

The REDES focuses on strengthening the regional economy, developing future skills, increasing knowledge and innovation, and ensuring the delivery of key infrastructure to support economic growth.

The extent of job commuting is a major issue for the region. From the ABS Census 2006-2011, there were 131,009 employed persons living on the Central Coast. The number of residents working on the Central Coast is 90,094. Some 40,915 travel outside the region to work.

In the Plan's Objective 3, Increase Knowledge and Innovation, its goals are to develop university/business links in research and innovation and to create a knowledge centre. The planned support for Teleworking/Smart Work Hubs would allow these objectives to be met.

## Central Coast Innovation Plan

Enterprise Connect's Innovative Regions Centre (IRC) works in ten regions across Australia including the NSW Central Coast. The Centre takes an innovative approach to helping expand markets, boost local economies and create new jobs. The Centre works collaboratively with local governments, businesses, researchers and communities in regions across Australia to encourage and facilitate innovation and entrepreneurship. An IRC Innovation Facilitator was appointed to the Central Coast in February 2010.

In August 2010, the Innovative Regions Facilitator, along with RDACC, formed an Innovation Advisory Committee. Under the leadership of the University of Newcastle, they assisted in the development of this Regional Innovation Plan for the Central Coast. NSW Trade & Investment was involved in the consultation period of the plan's development, in particular, in its relationship with the REDES from which the Innovation Plan is informed.



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Developing a more innovative culture on the Central Coast is the purpose of the plan. The Innovation Plan has four key components - an Innovation Champions Program, a Gazelle Program, an Innovation Monitoring Program and a Cluster Program. The four components or programs are expected to change the innovative landscape on the Central Coast in the short and long term. Put simply, regional cultures built around innovation transcend obstacles and nurture a “can do” attitude. The vision of nurturing and facilitating open innovation feeds into a broader social and business ecosystem and this will benefit the whole of the Central Coast community.

The telework project was identified as one of the ten cluster groups in the Innovation Plan.

## Central Coast Regional Employment Strategy

The Central Coast Regional Employment Strategy is focussed on a set of objectives agreed to by the regional advisory committee, and is essentially designed to support and drive increased employment on the Coast. The plan is informed by and linked to the REDES.

Increasing the utilisation of telework on the Central Coast is very much in keeping with the intent of the plan to have the jobs placed in the region. This would drive an increased need for local business to support the added number of non commuters thus leading to increases in employment opportunities.

The flow-on effects of an increased utilisation of telework may help to ease current issues around access to transport in the region and a whole range of family-related issues which impact on reduced participation in education and employment.

Whilst there isn't a specific strategy around increasing the utilisation of telework, the overall aspirations of the concept would drive the objectives of the plan to increase employment on the Coast.



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## Australian Government Plans

In 2004, the Australian Government established a *telework* taskforce to advise on options and impediments to the development of *telework* for employees and business. This taskforce, the Australian Telework Advisory Committee (ATAC), had its final meeting on 27 February 2006 at which it recommended that Government encourage the growth of telework. In support of the recommendations made by ATAC, a telework online resource centre has been developed to help promote the benefits which telework can deliver to business. It is available on the internet at [www.teleworkaustralia.net.au](http://www.teleworkaustralia.net.au).

In 2012, the Australian Government supported a National Telework Week to raise the awareness of the concept. A website was established at [www.telework.gov.au](http://www.telework.gov.au) and a telework broader engagement strategy was developed that established strategic stakeholder networks. These networks focus on the main drivers and barriers to the uptake of telework in Australia. They include telework partner organisations ([www.telework.gov.au/partners](http://www.telework.gov.au/partners)) and other key influencers and stakeholders. Each network is coordinated by a member of a Telework Partner organisation and supported by staff of the Telework Section, Department of Communications.

- **Telework Leadership and Management Network (TLMN)** is working with stakeholders to embed telework leadership management skills and capabilities in the tertiary, vocational and industry training sectors. This network is being coordinated by the Executive Director, Graduate School of Business, Queensland University of Technology.
- **The Teleworkforce Participation and Social Inclusion Network (TPSIN)** will encourage increased workforce opportunities and social inclusion through telework opportunities, particularly among groups disadvantaged by location, disability and carer responsibilities. This network is being coordinated by Infoxchange Australia.
- **The Sustainable Digital Cities Network (SDCN)** will seek to work with urban and transport policy and planning professionals to explore the contribution of telework and 'anywhere working' to improve the livability and productivity of Australia's largest cities by overcoming the time, stress and cost of daily commuting, reducing urban congestion and reducing pressure on transport systems at peak commuting times. This network is being coordinated by the Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of Technology Sydney.





- **The Australia Anywhere Working Research Network (AAWRN)** was launched in November 2012 during National Telework Week. It aims to provide a framework for collaborative national and international research around flexible working practices that include telework to support evidence-based policy in the public and private sectors. This network is being coordinated by the Centre for Workforce Futures at Macquarie University. The AAWRN held its first national conference in Sydney on Monday, 17 June 2013.



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## State Government Plans

The State Government is committed to a diverse, skilled and motivated workforce supported by policies to attract and retain skilled staff. The Government recognises the importance of flexible work arrangements for the successful performance of public agencies.

Flexible work practices offer mutual benefits for public agencies and their employees. This can be achieved within the current framework of employment arrangements that apply within individual agencies.

The changing nature of work and personal life has intensified the need for effective policies that will assist employees to combine paid employment with other responsibilities eg family obligations, study and personal health.

The Government encourages public agencies to develop management practices that facilitate flexibility in employment arrangements and recognise both women's and men's lifestyles and family responsibilities. Agencies should inform employees of the flexible work practices designed to best meet their business and employee needs.

The NSW Public Service has several sector-wide flexible work practice policies as outlined in two current Premier Memorandums, M1995-40 Flexible Work Practices and M2000-10 Strategies for Flexible Workplace Arrangements, as well as a Department of Premier and Cabinet Circular, C2011-11 Flexible Working online toolkit. This toolkit includes a dedicated flexible work practices website outlining options, solutions and implementation of flexible workplace practices, including telework.

Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) has done a lot of work specific to telework and has telecentres established in [West Gosford and Penrith](#). It has also developed the following resources:

- [RMS Teleworking Policy](#)
- [RMS Teleworking Guide](#)

Aside from the overall Flexible Work Policy, the following resources are also available:

- [Flexible Working Online Toolkit: Flexible Working](#)
- [About Flexible Work Practices](#)
- [Strategies for Flexible Workplace Arrangements](#)
- [Success with Flexible Work Practices](#)



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In the **NSW 2021 – A Plan to Make NSW Number One** telework can assist in achieving a number of the plan's goals. In its efforts to rebuild the economy by driving economic growth in regional NSW (Theme 3), telework can play a part in the effort to decentralise and create a balance of population growth between metro and regional areas. Telework has shown that it can increase the competitiveness of doing business (Theme 4) by reducing office space and improving employee productivity. The cost saving for commuters can place downward pressure on the cost of living (Theme 5) and increase the skill base for firms by the fact that telework allows people to work from anywhere. Telework can increase the opportunities for people with a disability to work (Theme 14) and it can help the State Government build liveable centres (Theme 20) that are great places to work and live. Telework can make it easier for people to be involved in their communities (Theme 24) by reducing the commute and can increase the opportunities for seniors (Theme 25) to participate in work for longer.

**The NSW Digital Strategy and the Creative Industry Strategy** highlight the need to take advantage of the emerging benefits of fast broadband in allowing business to become more productive and providing a more flexible approach for workers who normally commute long distances to work every day. Work on Smart Hubs is well advanced in some areas of NSW. In terms of Creative Industries Action Plans, opportunities exist for smaller Innovation Hubs to be extended to regional areas based on specialisation and existing regional strengths.

It is also indicated that the establishment of Smart Hubs/Innovation Hubs would need to be a collaborative effort between government, industry associations and education providers. More detail on these plans can be found at:

<http://www.business.nsw.gov.au/doing-business-in-nsw/industry-action-plans>



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## Local Government Plans

Understanding where workers come from is important information for Local Government. It assists in planning and advocacy for roads and public transport provision. It also helps to clarify the economic and employment drivers across areas and assists in understanding the degree of employment self-containment within a local government area. This data is a part of the 'journey to work' data set.

### Residential location of workers

RDA Central Coast	2011	
	Number	%
Live and work in the area	83,306	92.5
Live and work in the same SLA	49,587	55.0
Live in the area and work in different SLA	33,719	37.4
Work in the area but live outside	6,788	7.5
Total workers in the area	90,094	100.0

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, [Census of Population and Housing](#) 2011. Compiled and presented in profile.id by [.id](#), the population experts.

### Employment location of residents

RDA Central Coast	2011	
	Number	%
Live and work in the area	83,306	63.6
Live and work in the same SLA	49,587	37.9
Live in the area and work in different SLA	33,719	25.7
Live in the area, but work outside	30,339	23.2
Work location unknown	17,364	13.3
Total employed residents	131,009	100.0

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, [Census of Population and Housing](#) 2011. Compiled and presented in profile.id by [.id](#), the population experts.

## Wyong Shire Council Plans

There are two proposed smart work hubs being considered in the Wyong Shire - the Council driven Northern Hub and a private business initiative known as the Nexus Hub to be developed at North Wyong. Both are possible telework centres.



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Wyong Shire Council has a flexible work policy titled “Flexible Work Practices”, Document No D00850871. Its objective is to have flexible work practices that aim to achieve the best possible match between the interests of the employer and those of individual employees. Flexibility in working arrangements can improve customer service and productivity and provide employees with choices to achieve a balance in meeting their work and personal obligations. The Policy states, “*Wyong Shire Council supports the use of Working from Home as one of a range of flexible workplace practices developed with the aim of achieving an optimal balance between the needs of our people and our organisation.*”

### Gosford City Council Plans

Gosford City Council has a telework policy for council employees and has undertaken feasibility for a smart work hub catering for teleworkers known as Kibbleplex.

Kibbleplex is a concentration of co-located learning, information resources and small scale commercial enterprises that derive mutually reinforcing benefits from being located in a space that maximises opportunities for interaction and collaboration.

The location is Park Central, the Gosford City Council-owned building on the eastern side of Kibble Park, and offers a number of advantages that suggest it works as the venue for Kibbleplex. These include scale and access, parking and public transport, 'sunk' investment, profile within the urban environment and community, and availability. An additional public benefit of using this facility would be its contribution to the activation of the Gosford City Centre and its ability to cater for teleworkers.

The project goal is to set up a 'branded' learning and enterprise hub that supports innovative economic development and telework. It is also to be supported by the University of Newcastle. It has been announced in the recent election to receive Federal Government support for \$7 million.

Gosford City Council’s telework policy is titled “Working From Home (Telecommuting)”, Policy No C34. Its objective is to provide a flexible work practice that allows Council staff to perform various work activities (as negotiated between the staff member and their manager) at a location other than a Council office (for example, the staff member’s place of residence). The Policy states, “*Gosford City Council supports the use of Working from Home as one of a range of flexible workplace practices developed with the aim of achieving an optimal balance between the needs of our people and our organisation.*”



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## PART 3 - RATIONALE

### SWOT of the Central Coast for Telework

#### Strengths

- Central Coast is a unique outer urban region to Sydney.
- Ready market for telework with some 40,000 commuters who travel outside the region to work.
- Because of this market, the region has created private and public sector interest in the formation of smart work hubs to accommodate commuters wanting to work closer to home as an alternative to working from the home or the office.
- Telework on the Central Coast is linked in with State and Australian Government action plans, particularly in the skills/education development.
- Engaging disability and the drive for more livable cities and carbon sustainability.
- Telework will create significant economic impact on the Central Coast and is a benefit of the early rollout of fast broadband that began in 2013.
- The Central Coast is good at collaboration. It has been a leader in advancing the uptake of telework.
- Central coast has trialled telework hubs as part of Telework Week in May 2013.
- Central Coast has interacted with many government agencies in this trial – the ATO, AusIndustry, Enterprise Connect, NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet, TAFE, Councils, NSW Trade & Investment (NSW T&I), RDACC and major corporations like Telstra.
- Utilise the Regional Development Australia national network and the Department of Communication who are driving most telework initiatives. A ‘Anywhere Working’ research team has been established at the Business School, University of Newcastle (Central Coast).



## Opportunities

- Opportunity for the Central Coast is that 40,000 people commute outside the region each day to work. According to ABS, 20% of the workforce travel to Sydney and 5% to Newcastle.
- 3,600 State Government workers travel to Sydney each day. This gives the region a major cohort of possible teleworkers.
- Possible for the project to help Sydney address the liveable cities issues around gridlock. The Central Coast could create a new sustainable model for major urban centres like Sydney. It could act as change agents and reduce the ever increasing need for hard infrastructure like roads, motorways and public transport. It has the potential to reduce road accidents by reducing the commute.
- Telework has the opportunity to drive greater productivity into the firms who employ commuters. This is achieved through reduced CBD office space and a greater flexible and more productive workforce.
- Many young families are looking for a better work/life balance - telework would offer immense social benefit.
- The cost of the commute to Sydney from the Central Coast (\$16.80 return train fare and 4 hours travel per day) makes the smart work hubs viable business propositions if working from home is not an option.
- The State Government's wish to decentralise, and its creative and digital strategies to develop "Smart and Creative Work Hubs" to foster creative collaborative development, offer the possibilities for development of hybrid hubs that also provide teleworking space.
- According to ABS, 6% of the workforce currently participate in telework some time during the week. They generally work for some of the major corporates such as Telstra, Cisco, IBM and the major banks. This pool of commuters could offer the knowledge, expertise and experience through case studies to convince others of the benefits in participating in teleworking.



## Weaknesses

- For telework on the Central Coast to be successful it requires Sydney and Newcastle employers to be receptive to the idea. The compliance costs, management culture, safety and IR are all factors that might stop employers from embracing telework.
- It will be difficult to identify the major employers of Central Coast commuters.
- There will be concern about the region's ability to create a critical mass or acceptance to manage the supply and demand formula, and a lack of resources to undertake the project will hinder the initiative.
- Generally the Central Coast residents are not seen as early adopters. There is a perception that the region lacks the ability to action ideas and is seen as 'uncool' or irrelevant in the 'big smoke', and that has social and professional implications. Many people regard a position in Sydney as prestigious and necessary for career advancement.
- Potentially telework could be seen as a low priority for politicians and a low priority compared to transport infrastructure needs.

## Threats

- Flexible workplace policies have been in place for over 15 years, yet there has been little uptake in Australia, as little as 6% of the workforce. This indicates that there are unknown cultural issues in the workplace that are not well understood in this country.
- The Department of Communication has taken a national leadership role in promoting telework and has an aspirational goal that 12% of the workforce will be teleworking by 2020. However, there is no State Government equivalent nor local regional body charged with driving this initiative. A lack of government support and the politics around the national broadband could jeopardise the growth of telework initiatives.
- Developing sustainable impact measures will also present a threat for the project to quantify the outcomes for continued support.





## Drivers and Barriers to Telework on the Central Coast

While the “Drivers” have been developing their knowledge, evaluations, HR policies and IT platforms in support of teleworkers for over 10 years, the “Barriers” appear constricted to the point of absolute disengagement by ignorance. These non-participants are very comfortable sitting and asking ... “what’s in it for me?” This applies to both employees and employers, government and non-government.

Our tasks:

1. To convince those who “think they could” to become engaged (employers first and then employees).
2. To build a “new” model for the Central Coast based on the existing and evolving corporate and government platforms.
3. To engage with government departments and businesses to educate on the tangible benefits from creating a flexible telework model for their organisation.
4. Create a “bricks and mortar” iteration of our telework model that “future focused” politicians (at all levels) can touch and champion based on efficiencies, productivities, community and societal benefits!

How hard can that be? We just build from “what’s in it for them”.



## Central Coast Participation in Telework

### National Telework Week November 2012

With the support of the Hunter Institute of TAFE appointing a project manager, a working party and a research committee from stakeholders was formed to support the Central Coast's involvement in National Telework Week in November 2012.

The following outcomes were achieved:

- A submission to the NBN Readiness Fund was made on behalf of RDACC.
- Marketing material and local telework logo, with acknowledgement of supporting stakeholders, was developed.
- A web presence and Facebook page was developed and utilised to promote the concept and the national event.
- Promotions at major train stations were held to engage with commuters and potential teleworkers.
- An RDACC 'Focus on the Coast' event was held to highlight the issues and case studies of teleworkers.
- Publicity for the concept was achieved with radio interviews, NBN Television news reports, and local newspaper and web based publications.
- A launch event was held at the Central Coast Leagues Club, hosted by RDACC and supported by the local Federal Member for Robertson.
- \$25,000 was granted from the NBN Readiness Fund to support Central Coast Teleworking Week in May 2013.
- A regional research program was scoped by the "Anywhere Working" Research Team in the Business School, University of Newcastle (Central Coast) to investigate the issues for sustainable uptake of telework, including the implementation and other issues for business managers and the adopting workers.
- Hunter Institute of TAFE developed an outline for telework workshops for teleworkers and their managers.



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## Central Coast Telework Week May 2013

With the successful application for support from the NBN Readiness Fund, RDACC and Innov8Central conducted a Central Coast Teleworking Week from 20-24 May 2013.

The following outcomes were achieved:

- A committee was formed to develop a Central Coast Regional Strategy.
- A Central Coast Telework project team of interested stakeholders was developed that included Innov8Central, TAFE, NSW T&I, Central Coast Regional Development Corporation, NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet, RDACC and private enterprise.
- A database of 60 interested teleworkers was developed.
- A website to promote and take registrations was developed at [www.teleworkcentralcoast.com.au](http://www.teleworkcentralcoast.com.au).
- Temporary 'pop up' smart work hubs in Wyong Shire and Gosford City were established for the week and 60 teleworkers participated.
- Participants were surveyed (see below).
- A marketing plan was developed and implemented (see attached report of outcomes).
- A research program was begun with the "Anywhere Working" research team at the Business School, University of Newcastle (Central Coast) to better understand the issues for teleworkers and managers (see report included).
- An announcement of the development of a permanent telework hub at North Wyong was made by the Nexus Hub Group.
- Another 8 organisations have shown interest in establishing hubs in the region.

### Central Coast Telework Week May 2013 Survey Results

- 53 people stopped the commute for the week. These people were in roles as varied as directors, assistant regional managers, business owners and interns, and from companies such as Telstra, ATO, NSW T&I, ANZ, KC Editing Services and RailCorp. Together they worked 468 hours on the Central Coast, saving 117 hours of commuting time. This included saving a total of 75 hours of train travel, 40 hours of car travel and 2 hours of bus travel.



- Some of the things the teleworkers valued about the experience were:
  - The opportunity to engage with others / networking / connections made
  - Quiet space / no distractions
  - More time at home with family / sleeping-in
  - Internet speed / facilities / ease of access
  - Trust from boss that was involved
- The things that concerned them were:
  - Security / privacy / no lockable storage
  - Connection issues
  - Room temperature being cold/ chair and desks uncomfortable/ ergonomics
  - Finding the locations
  - No teleconference facilities
- On average the amount of money spent in Gosford/Wyong or surrounds by teleworkers was \$21.23 per person per day. Their money was spent on lunch, coffee, groceries, petrol and shopping.
- When asked if they would telework again, 100% of participants who answered the question, replied yes!

“Yes in a second. I love working collaboratively, reducing my carbon footprint and being productive. I also work from home sometimes which is good, but the Hub adds a little je ne sais quoi.”

“Yes I would because I found the change in environment meant that I approached tasks in a different way, which improved my outlook on the project I was working on. I would also appreciate time without interruptions in which I could concentrate for longer periods on producing reports and briefs which require time to think without interruptions.”

- The survey responses from the teleworker managers listed their main priorities as:
  - Positive environment
  - Work/lifestyle balance for staff members
  - When asked if they would support their employee’s teleworking again, 100% answered yes



## Research Project

With the imminent arrival of fast broadband to the region and with up to 40,000 commuters leaving the Central Coast daily to commute to work outside the region, the 'Anywhere Working' research team of four researchers from the Business School, University of Newcastle (Central Coast) are exploring the factors that influence employers and employees in taking up the opportunity to telework in a regional context.

### The Research Team

The research program team brings together research strengths in leadership and organisational behaviour, change management, decision-making, innovation and strategic human resource management, as well as services marketing.

The research team is part of a larger inter-disciplinary research group based at the Business School, University of Newcastle (Central Coast) called the Regional Innovation Management Systems Subject Interest Group which examines how regions can grow through innovative practice.

The research team is also part of the Australian 'Anywhere Working' Research Network based in Sydney which comprises researchers from universities, Government agencies and business and industry, all with a common interest in telework.

### The Research Program

The research program on the Central Coast comprises three inter-related parts.

The first analyses the extensive literature on teleworking from across the globe and identifies lessons learnt elsewhere that can be utilised here on the Central Coast. It also identifies emerging themes in the development of telework practices globally and new areas that may require future research in this developing area.

The research reveals that there are many:

- different forms of telework
- industries are using it
- different kinds of jobs are subject to it
- countries and cultures are involved in it, and
- different kinds of people are adopting it.



With so many factors that can impact on the telework decision, this research will not be delivering universal ‘best practice’ principles but will focus on the unique circumstances of telework in regions and, in particular, this region. This research will deliver ‘good practice’ guidelines based on the specific context of operation, namely the Central Coast, to guide and support telework decisions across the region.

This design approach explains why Parts 2 and 3 of the research program build on the initial research literature and explore the rich context of the Central Coast.

The research analyses the ABS data for the Central Coast to better understand the incidence and mobility demographics of Central Coast workers.

This work will help inform further research in exploring the individual and organisational factors that influence the uptake of telework in the Central Coast region and involve survey and interviews with decision-makers in organisations. It will include those managers who can support teleworking initiatives, those actual and potential teleworkers who seek to adopt it, and those workers who do not want to telework.

### **Emerging Themes**

In its early work, the research team affirms the research literature supporting the case that telework can make good business sense. If done well, telework –

- meets all three of the triple-bottom-line criteria for organisational success (financial, social, environmental); and
- has been successfully used by many organisations as a deliberate strategy to retain and engage staff otherwise potentially lost to the organisation eg older workers not wishing to retire completely and newer generations that expect flexible working arrangements.

However, the global research also tells us that there is a variety of attitudes, beliefs and perceptions about telework held by managers and by workers that can either act as a catalyst or inhibit the adoption, and ultimate success, of a telework program.

There are other factors that can affect the prospects of success for a telework initiative such as:

- organisational strategy,
- organisational structure, its processes and policies, as well as
- the managerial and leadership style being adopted by those leading its implementation.



This focus on the individual is important and success is affected by the personalities and other characteristics of those involved, their perceptions of the opportunities offered by telework work roles, the nature and arrangements around communication and the level of sophistication around telework worker induction, ongoing support and professional development training.

The Central Coast research aims to draw upon those parts of the global research that are relevant to this region, distil findings from its own regional research and ultimately deliver 'good practice' guidelines that are relevant to the business and citizens of the Central Coast.



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## Telework Strategy Committee

Organisation	Contact
Big Paddle Company	Mark Cleary
Business School, University of Newcastle, Central Coast	Martin Fitzgerald
Central Coast Regional Development Corporation	Helen Polkinghorne
Department of Communication	Barbara Lepani
Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations	Jack Ritchie
Enterprise Connect	Graham Baker
Gosford City Council	Stephen Fairham
NSW Business Chamber	Daniel Farmer
NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet	Tina Davies
NSW Trade & Investment	Eddie Bernard
Regional Development Australia Central Coast	Greg Combes
TAFE	Kevin Bryan
Wyong Shire Council	Gary McLachlan

### **“Anywhere Working” Research Team** Business School, University of Newcastle (Central Coast)

Associate Professor Martin Fitzgerald  
Dr Anton Kriz  
Dr Ashish Malik  
PJ Rosenberger III



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## Acronyms

<b>ABS</b>	Australian Bureau of Statistics
<b>ANZ</b>	Australian New Zealand Bank
<b>ATO</b>	Australian Tax Office
<b>DEEWR</b>	Department of Education, Employment & Workplace Relations
<b>NSW T&amp;I</b>	NSW Trade & Investment
<b>OHS</b>	Occupational Health and Safety
<b>RDACC</b>	Regional Development Australia Central Coast
<b>SWOT</b>	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
<b>TAFE</b>	Hunter Institute of TAFE

## Glossary

<b>Liquid space</b>	Additional office space, meeting rooms and co-working spaces booked by the hour or day.
<b>Sunk investment</b>	A retrospective cost that has already been incurred.
<b>Branded learning</b>	Where acknowledged institutions are recognised as safe providers of knowledge and competence.
<b>Je ne sais quoi</b>	From French literally meaning “I don’t know what...” something distinctive or attractive.
<b>Geographical Leash</b>	Formally where people needed to live where they worked.

