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Minister for Jobs, Investment, Tourism and Western Sydney

MEDIA RELEASE

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COVID-19 LEADS TO CHANGES IN HOW WE WORK

Time and cost savings, greater productivity, and increased flexibility are some of the benefits which could be realised by NSW workers and businesses after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Minister for Jobs, Investment, Tourism and Western Sydney Stuart Ayres said the NSW Innovation and Productivity Council (IPC) had this week released its *NSW Remote Working Insights* report, which unpacks the lessons of widespread remote working.

“This has been an incredibly tough time with huge upheaval and change for the NSW workforce. Thousands of jobs were lost through this crisis and those who kept working were put under immense pressure and had to adapt quickly. Many NSW workers and businesses were prompted to try remote working for the first time,” Mr Ayres said.

“The IPC’s report looks into what we learned from the experience, and how it could affect the future of work. While the NSW Government is now encouraging public servants to spend more time back in the office, we can expect long term changes to how our working week takes shape.”

IPC Member Steve Sammartino, an economist and futurist, said the report showed the pandemic has sparked a cultural shift on remote working, with many employees and businesses experiencing benefits and with more appetite to work remotely.

“The biggest benefit is the time we save from commuting, which on average is more than an hour a day. Reducing traffic congestion makes life better for everyone, even people who don’t work remotely,” Mr Sammartino said.

“We are also more productive when we work from home, with NSW remote workers 13 per cent more productive than when they work on-site.

“But COVID-19 pushed remote working to an unhealthy extreme, with a lot of work unable to be done remotely, it can get lonely, and collaboration is difficult.”

“In the future, NSW workers want the best of both worlds - a hybrid of remote and onsite work. Cities and offices will be buzzing again, and central business districts will be crucial for collaboration, innovation and consumption.”

The report surveyed 1,500 remote workers to find out about their experience of remote work during COVID-19, and what they want to do in the future.

The IPC also harnessed technology from Sydney-based artificial intelligence company Faethm to analyse the 'remoteability' of the NSW workforce, revealing what types of workers can work remotely, and to what extent.

Findings include:

- Half of the workforce can work remotely for at least two days a week, where only a small fraction did so previously.
- By working remotely, NSW workers save an average of 1 hour and 17 minutes per day from not commuting. Two days per week of remote work equates to over three extra weeks of annual leave, and about \$860 in saved travel costs per year.
- Most who could work remotely reported higher productivity, but much work is not 'remoteable' (56 per cent), and collaboration and social isolation are key challenges for remote workers.
- NSW remote workers want a balance with two to three days of remote work per week.
- A 'hybrid model' could combine the best aspects of remote work with the benefits of offices for collaboration, team-building, and non-remoteable tasks.

For the full report, please visit:

<https://www.treasury.nsw.gov.au/nsw-economy/nsw-innovation-and-productivity-council>