

To whom it may concern,

I only found out about this submission process today and I am short on time so I hope this brief response helps.

SWiSHzone.com P/L employees approximately 20 contractors and employees of which only 2 work full time from an office environment. Everyone else, including all management, work from home.

SWiSHzone.com is a privately held company based in Sydney, Australia. It was established in February 1999 and now has more than 200,000 customers in 120 countries. Over 95% of our customers are outside Australia, with 50% residing in the USA. The SWiSHzone.com website receives 500,000 unique visitors per month, and SWiSHzone.com products have been downloaded over 5 million times.

In response to your specific questions:

-----

*Where do you telework?*

I work from home in suburban Sydney ~40min from the registered office which is in Balmain (Sydney).

*Approximately, how many hours per week do you telework?*

Approx. 50-60+ hours per week. Undoubtedly I work more because my work is at home, however I have a management role which requires long hours.

*What proportion of your working week is spent teleworking?*

95%

*What facilities and equipment do you use to telework?*

I have a full home office: fax, laser printer, scanner, PC with multiple screens, laptops using WiFi, broadband internet access, multiple phone lines.

*What facilities and equipment are provided by your employer?*

All equipment and services are supported by my employer.

*Has the introduction of teleworking had a positive impact, a negative impact or no real impact on you?*

Positive:

- Access to my young family immediately before/after work which I would not have if I had to travel long hours to/from work

Negative:

- there is a huge reduction in social interaction from working long hours from home. There is little or no opportunity for coffee room, or 'water cooler' chit-chat. On the positive side because most staff interaction is via email, instant messaging (IM) and forum posting there is very little office politics making a more harmonious workplace.

Members of the public that employ teleworkers on a permanent or occasional basis, or who are considering introducing telework arrangements, are invited to provide comment on issues including:

*How many of your employees telework?*

~18 where employees includes FT, PT and contractors. Being a software company work facilities only require a PC and fast internet connection. Staff work from interstate and outer Sydney suburban areas. Some staff meet bi-weekly regularly at the Balmain office other staff meet only every 4-6months as we host a bi-annual 2 day company conference for feedback and forward planning. Our work is highly specialised and offering telework gives us access to excellent and highly qualified employees who would otherwise be unable (or unwilling) to relocate to Sydney. Staff relish the exciting work, flexible work hours and lack of need to travel/relocate.

*How many of your employees do not telework?*

Two. These staff work at an office where we share space to house system (computer) servers for email, code sharing and other telework infrastructures. One of these staff is needed to work from the office to maintain these facilities whilst the other chose to work at the office after unsuccessfully telecommuting for awhile - he decided he preferred an office work environment for more social interaction.

*How many of your employees would like to telework?*

Everyone that wants to can. You can chose to work from home or office.

*If you do not utilise telework, do you intend to introduce teleworking in your business?*

n/a

*Do you have formal agreements in place to telework, or is teleworking managed on an informal basis?*

Managed informally. We have systems in place for OH&S and other workplace issues. If not teleworking there is an obligation to work from Balmain office so in practise those remote from Sydney chose telework from the start of their employment.

*What are the main reasons that employees in your business telework?*

Access to expertise from people far removed from Sydney.

*Has the introduction of teleworking had a positive impact, a negative impact or no real impact on your business?*

I would like to have more time for this response. As stated previously teleworking gives us access to expertise not available locally. Having many telecommute reduces the need for more substantial office rental. However we do have the overhead of equipment and services at each remote site and we invested a lot of time and money into server systems to permit online collaboration on software development and customer support - I imagine our online systems are far more sophisticated than any other Australian company of our size. Staff coordination and general communication is very difficult.

I coordinate bi-weekly operations meeting for support and server staff. We also have bi-annual meetings for all staff for a social get-together and forward planning. Otherwise all communication is via instant messenger, email and posting on a company (community) forum. However though everyone is proficient at written communications, nothing written can be guaranteed to be read at all, as intended or read entirely. Written communication will never replace a brief face to face conversation. Video conferencing is not viable yet as broadband rates are too slow. ADSL2 may help but it will be quite awhile before this is available to our staff.

The most useful and immediate support the government could offer to a business like ours is more accessible, more reliable, and faster broadband services. More accessible to broadband because in out of city areas there is very little cable or even ADSL. One employee lives in a new suburban housing estate close to Newcastle and took years until very recently to get ADSL.

More reliable to ensure we have the most up time since all our systems are live to office servers - disconnection causes downtime and inefficiency to staff. Faster will enable us to use VoIP and video conferencing more successfully to improve inter-staff communications.

Sincerely,

Hugh

-----  
Hugh D. Boyd  
Chief Operating Officer  
SWiSHzone.com Pty. Limited