

# Submission to ATAC on teleworking

## Background

The Australia Telework Advisory Committee (ATAC) has made a call for public submissions from interested individuals or organisations on telework. CPA Australia is the largest Australian accounting membership body and on behalf of our members, have prepared a response to the call. In addition to this, CPA Australia is also in the process of adopting a “working from home” policy and comments on this are also contained in the submission.

The areas considered in this submission include the identification of the critical issues in the adoption of teleworking and impact of increased adoption of teleworking. The submission is supplemented with discussion on areas in which the government can assist in the adoption to teleworking.

## CPA Australia – the organisation’s approach to teleworking

CPA Australia is in the process of developing a formal policy on “working from home”. The policy addresses the issues of OH&S and provides a checklist for each employee to review and execute before undertaking “work from home”. The checklist moves the accountability to the employee to ensure that the place of work adheres to workplace OH&S standards.

Other issues that CPA Australia has identified in the adoption of working from home include:

- Culture of the organisation in supporting remote work
- Work ethic of the individual to ensure full productivity
- Teleworking is very dependant on the type of work conducted – some work practices do not support teleworking
- A clear requirement of mutual respect and clear communication between the employee, the manager and most importantly the peers

## CPA Australia members

To assist in our submission, we conducted a short survey of our members through our weekly newsletter – CPA Update, which is distributed online. The question was posed ‘What would be the principal reason to adopt teleworking?’

Of the 266 responses, 65% stated that it would be to achieve work / life balance, 23% responded that it would reduce travel time, 9% stated that it would reduce productivity and savings and the balance noted that it would improve the environment. Specific, detailed responses were also received and a summary is noted:

- Consideration needs to be given to loss of informal professional debate that occurs usually when employees join together in offices or meetings
- The nature of the work will have a large determining factor on the success or otherwise of telework
- The work / life balance is very subjective to each individual and how the work practice design is developed
- The model should also include consideration into re-centralisation of employee back into the traditional workplace in the event that teleworking does not work to the satisfaction of both parties.
- There is an anticipated large loss of skill set due to employees not having the benefit of teleworking. The adoption of teleworking could bridge the gap between lack of skilled employees available, which would also address the issue of aging work force.

- Generation X and Y are currently living under a teleworking model – they connect to internet for school and University studies and communicated with friends and associates through the internet. It is anticipated that there will be a “demand pull” for a teleworking model as they enter the workforce.

#### **Areas in which the Government could assist**

- Ensure that there is affordable regional access to telecommunications, through broadband connectivity and government subsidised network / telecommunications infrastructure.
- Public education and manager training into the barriers and benefits of teleworking to induce a supportive culture
- Guidelines or standards of work practice design that support telework for both employee and employer
- Further research that provides current statistics into the adoption of telework both current and desired, across a range of industries. This research should encompass the Generation X and Ys and their perception of effective teleworking. (CPA Australia would be pleased to work with the Government on this)
- Consideration given to a more appropriate title. “Teleworking” often is perceived as a type of “processing” function – similar to say “Telemarketing”. A suggestion could be “Remote employment” or similar.
- The Government could provide financial business incentives to companies developing the teleworking model, similar to say the apprenticeship grants etc.
- The Government should consider providing technical and other support to SMEs who do not have the resources to provide 24/7 support to teleworking – i.e. shared help desk and implementation processes.

#### **Summary**

CPA Australia and our members believe that the area of teleworking is an integral part of technology development within the workforce and that the issues outlined above need to be considered to ensure that both employee and employer benefit from the many advantages that can be achieved from teleworking.

CPA Australia would be willing to assist in areas of research and development of the teleworking model.