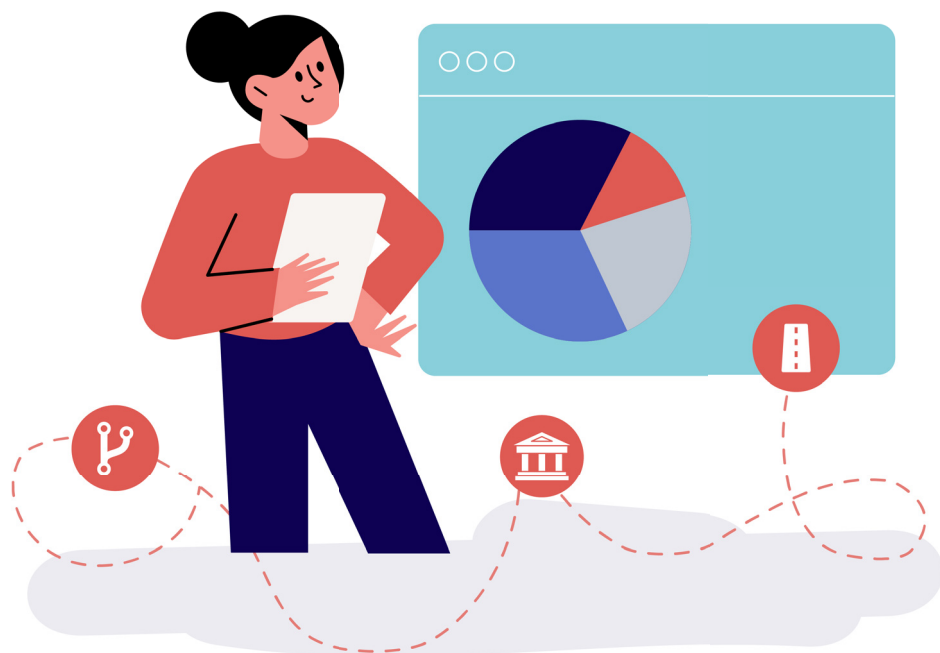# 3 E-Change Local Councils

E-changers are people who have moved away from large cities to smaller regional, coastal, or rural towns, and are working remotely using information technology and digital services.

They are often seeking to live a more affordable, less congested, non-metropolitan lifestyle whilst remaining digitally connected to the city through their employment.

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the rate of e-change migration, as work from home policies allowed people to work and collaborate remotely without physically attending a workplace on a daily basis.

E-changers may have different service needs than longer term residents engaged in standard employment arrangements in the area. E-changers also tend to be professionals in the knowledge work sectors and many will bring above-average incomes to regional areas. This group is also likely to bring challenges around infrastructure support. Some common examples of needs for councils to consider include:

Remote workers require high quality, reliable internet connections and mobile reception to perform their work on a daily basis. These issues will be of great concern to these residents and you may receive complaints about interruptions or requests to improve these services (regardless of whether this sits within the purview of councils).

E-changers can be surprised that local government rates are sometimes higher than they were accustomed to paying in larger cities. Councils may need to engage with new residents early to explain the cost of new building and infrastructure in high growth regional areas.

Areas experiencing an influx of new residents may experience increased pressure on local services such as roads, health services, and data networks. Councils should plan for how to accommodate these new demands on services and infrastructure.

Some highly desirable e-change hotpots are experiencing rapidly increasing property prices, reduced affordability and availability of housing. Council may need to plan for affordable housing and other services to ensure residents are not forced away from the area.

Strong investment in local services by councils may also allow locals longer term locals to access jobs in nearby cities, increasing workforce participation.

Some councils have reported new kinds of renovation planning requests, which include home office workspaces to be built separate from the main dwelling (similar to 'granny flats').

Many e-changers will still need to access the city as part of their flexible and hybrid work arrangements. Regional areas that have high speed public transportation systems (e.g trains & buses) to urban areas will be more attractive to e-changers.

Some remote workers prefer to work remotely from a location outside their home, such as in cafes, the library or coworking space. Considering the provision and suitability of these 'third' workspaces can attract remote workers to the area and facilitate them to interact more regularly with other local residents.

A common reason for people to e-change is a desire for community. Consider the needs of this special group of newcomers, who, while they will bring spending power and new vitality to their new home area, may lack local ties and connections. How might council tap into this set of desires and drivers, through orientation sessions and buddy systems for newcomers, community events, and opportunities for volunteering.

E-Change and Remote Work in Australia
Advice Sheets for Stakeholders

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