

# 1 E-Change Households



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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.



# Before you make the move



Choose a location outside the city that is affordable for you. Housing prices in some regional areas have increased rapidly in recent years as more people move away from urban areas.

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If your work is likely to require you to attend a city location on occasion, consider how you will access the city for this. Check the availability and frequency of public transport, such as the availability of quiet carriages on regional trains and access to reliable Wi-Fi while commuting.

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E-changers tend to spend more time at home than they did when living in the city, so consider the energy efficiency of the home and remember to account for these other utility costs.

# Before you make the move



Certain regional areas are growing rapidly and changing as more people migrate there. Take a look at the population projections of the town you're planning to move to (e.g. [ProfileID](#)) if you are concerned about the changing demographics and affordability of your area.

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Consider housing diversity in the area, especially if you end up needing to downsize to a smaller residence.

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Spend some time in the location you're considering moving to, to see whether it will suit your needs. Visit public amenities such as libraries, parks, sports centres etc. Browse the shops and consider the availability of products and services that you frequently use, e.g. food brands.

# Before you make the move



See what type of internet connection is available in your target area using the [NBN address checker](#). Telecommunications companies can also provide predicted coverage maps that may provide information about mobile coverage.

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Speak to people in the local area about their experience of digital services to see whether the available services will support your needs.

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Take and test your devices in these areas if you are unsure whether the information provided by other sources is accurate (you might want to test several telecommunication service providers for signal strength if relevant).

# Before you make the move



Think about peak load times for the data network - if possible, test the quality of data connectivity at the times when you will be using it. Internet speeds may vary throughout the day, as more people use digital services, or be disrupted by weather (e.g heavy rain).

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If the area you're moving to is served by FTTN, check to see how far away your premise may be from the node as this may decrease speeds available.

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If your work requires premium internet access (high speeds, low latency), and your area does not have fibre-to-the-premises connectivity, consider choosing an address that is close to the node for higher quality services.

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Remember, if needed, you can also pay for fibre to the premise. It is costly but might be able to be claimed as a work or business expense.

## Before you make the move



If you are concerned about maintaining reliable internet connectivity, consider having a backup way to connect (e.g fibre + mobile data network). Some internet service providers sell modems with 4G Sim back-ups, or you can hotspot off your phone.

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Low Earth Orbit satellites (e.g. StarLink) could be an alternative for people living remote rural areas. This service can provide high speeds and low latency, but is not available everywhere and is generally more expensive than other forms of connection.

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Many people find that their Internet and phone usage changes when they e-change. For example if you are predominantly working from home, you may need less mobile data etc. Consider evaluating your broadband and mobile plans accordingly.

# Before you make the move



Some households have found solar power and batteries can be helpful for more secure electricity power, which is essential for remote work. NBN access requires electric power, however this may still allow you to operate devices and work offline.

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Consider choosing a home that has a space for a dedicated home office - this will make remote work easier long term. People often find a space removed from the main living spaces works best (eg converted garage/granny flat etc). Think about how the design and layout of your new house, including the garden, will accommodate your lifestyle needs more broadly given you will be working, living and resting and relaxing at home much more than previously.

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## After you've moved



Working remotely can be isolating for some people, and it can be difficult to make new local social connections when working from home. Develop a plan for how to meet local people, such as joining a community group, sporting clubs, online community page, volunteering etc. Even if you didn't engage in these activities in a larger city, they can be a great way to connect with a smaller community.

## After you've moved



Be aware that working remotely is likely to change your daily routines, particularly with regard to exercise and diet. You might find that you have to be more intentional about scheduling activities such as exercise and other things that maintain your wellbeing.

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Working from home may increase your reliance on your electricity supply. An NBN connection won't work in a blackout, and you may need to heat or cool your home throughout the day. Installing renewable energy (e.g solar panels and batteries) may help reduce these costs, and increase energy reliability.

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Some regional and remote areas experience more frequent power outages than urban areas. Be mindful of this when considering locations to live and work remotely, and/or consider solar/onsite energy independence.

# After you've moved



Remote work often involves many virtual meetings. Consider managing your schedule to avoid 'Zoom fatigue', by scheduling short breaks between meetings. If you can, consider reducing the number of video meetings and adopt more asynchronous processes.

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Remember that many smaller towns are changing rapidly due to urban migration, so locals may have concerns about newcomers. Invest time and effort in connecting with locals and becoming part of your community. This will allow you to tap into community knowledge, build a sense of belonging, and improve personal wellbeing.

# E-Change and Remote Work in Australia

## Advice Sheets for Stakeholders



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