



Lisa Messenger, CEO of Collective Hub, recently made the switch to a virtual workplace.

'Work and live where you want'

ENTREPRENEUR, author and CEO of Collective Hub, Lisa Messenger, has been an employer for almost two decades and recently made the switch to a virtual workplace. Her goal was for her team to reap the financial and lifestyle rewards of living where they choose.

Travelling across Australia as a keynote speaker, Ms Messenger said regional areas are home to some inspirational people so career-minded people shouldn't feel they need to cling to the city.

"Some of the smartest entrepreneurs and innovators I've come across were in some of the most remote places geographically. Now technology means you can literally work from wherever and live anywhere and I love that," she said.

"Now all you need is a laptop and a good idea. I'm getting the best talent from the happiest people because they're living where they want, and that's very cool."

Young people fleeing the big cities

REGIONAL AREAS ARE BECOMING MORE OF A DRAWCARD FOR AUSTRALIANS OF WORKING AGE THANKS TO TECHNOLOGY, WRITES KIRSTEN CRAZE

JOBS help hold up real estate prices — at least that's what property experts used to say, but the internet is turning that old-school thinking on its head.

There is nothing new about the retiree "tree change" or "sea change" movement, but younger Australians are increasingly escaping the cities and making their mark on property prices thanks to technology.

Ashley Fell, social researcher with McCrindle Research, said their analysis has shown many of those leaving Sydney (which suffered the highest net loss of all greater capital cities with 27,300 people leaving town between 2017 to 2018) are of working age. Dramatic increases in house prices, coupled with other "pain points", has had them packing their bags in droves.

"There's certainly an incentive for people to move into regional areas where there are shorter commute times and ways to downshift lifestyle and experience less stress," she said.

"And for those affected by property prices, they can take a bit of a

breather with the mortgage by moving somewhere that's more affordable." Ms Fell added a key barrier in the past for career-minded city slickers looking to regional areas has been availability of jobs.

"Teleworking now allows people to work more remotely and have more flexibility without being in the city or in an office," she said.

While researching Workplace Wellbeing, a new book to be released by McCrindle Research later this year, Ms Fell said a key finding was a desire for workplace flexibility.

"Workers said they wanted a location less than 30 minutes commute from their home. It was 'extremely' or 'very' important for over half (56 per cent) of the workers surveyed to be relatively close to work. And that's what you get when you leave the

major cities; you reduce that commute time and increase time with families," she said, adding that figures out last month showed that Sydneysiders had the longest daily commute times in the country, averaging 71 minutes, followed by Melburnians enduring 65 minutes in transit.

Although metropolitan house prices have come off the boil after their 2016-2017 peak, CoreLogic data to April showed the 12-month median house price for Sydney was \$920,000, and \$710,000 in Melbourne.

Cameron Kusher, senior researcher for CoreLogic, said while the strongest areas for population growth remain in Australia's capital cities, it's only logical that regional areas are becoming more of a drawcard for those seeking affordability.

"We are seeing price-sensitive buyers realising certain areas nearby to capital cities offer similar proximity to the city centre, but at a much lower price than those areas still within the capital city," he said.

Mr Kusher said although median house price data doesn't reveal the

REGIONAL VS METRO

940

Thousand dollars is Sydney's median house price

545

Thousand dollars is the Hunter median

648

Thousand dollars is the Illawarra median

motivation for moving, the numbers do show a pattern.

"We are already seeing this happen in markets like the Illawarra and Newcastle over recent years. As Sydney became increasingly unaffordable, people were moving further afield. The reality is that living in Wollongong and commuting to Sydney will take a similar length of time to living in the outer western suburbs and commuting."

According to CoreLogic's Regional Market Update for the first quarter of 2019, the median house price for the Newcastle and Lake Macquarie region was \$545,000 and in the Illawarra region \$648,000.

Mr Kusher said that as housing affordability is a more significant issue for young Australians, employers would need to consider remote options for all workers.

"While housing is cheaper in regional Australia if younger workers aren't given the freedom to work remotely, it is unlikely it will become a viable alternative to living in the capital city," he said.