

## The link between work and wellbeing during a global pandemic



Work plays an important role in the lives of human beings and is intrinsically linked to our wellbeing. In any given week, we spend more than a third of our waking hours at work, so it is the place we most need to get wellbeing right. Our nationally representative survey of 1,160 workers showed that wellbeing is a key priority for workers, with 83% saying it is up to the employer to facilitate wellbeing in the workplace.

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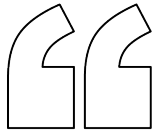
The importance of work was also demonstrated in another survey we conducted of 1,008 Australians where we asked the question 'If you had your life over again, what would you do differently?' The importance of work was regularly mentioned. Three in five (59%) said that if they had life over again they would have worked harder at their career. More than three in four (77%) stated they wish they had achieved more with their life, and 62% said they would have taken more risks.

When thinking about wellbeing, it encompasses more than just positive physical and mental health. In its holistic definition, wellbeing is about our ability as humans to flourish, and work plays a crucial role in this. Work that is purposeful, has a positive impact and connects us with others is good for us. Work is core to our wellbeing and our ability to thrive.

## **COVID-19 showed us the importance of work in our lives**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many people's job security was placed at risk, having a significant impact not only on their financial but their emotional, physical, social and mental wellbeing.

It was also during the COVID-19 pandemic that many people had to evaluate how 'essential' their jobs were. What this global event showed us is that we are all essential workers. During the crisis, despite social isolation policies, schools were kept open so that essential workers with children could carry on their jobs. It became clear that essential workers were not just those on the front lines of the pandemic such as health-care workers, but also supermarket workers, transport and supply chain workers and many more. In fact, amid this challenge, the Australian prime minister Scott Morrison championed the importance of all work when he said: 'Everyone who has a job in this economy is an essential worker. Every single job that is being done in our economy is essential.'



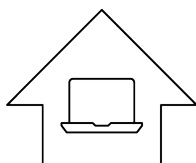
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Work gives us stability, collegiality, focus and purpose, and when that is stripped away it can have big impacts on our wellbeing and sense of contribution.

### **The pandemic gave Australians an opportunity to rethink and refocus their priorities**

After a decade of digital disruption and an increasing pace of change, Australians had been seeking simplicity. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, 35% of men and 42% of women say they are always or often rushed or pressed for time. In a world of screen saturation, 24/7 expectations and always-on technologies, Australians were struggling to find a sustainable pace of life. And then came COVID-19 and the resulting lockdowns at home.

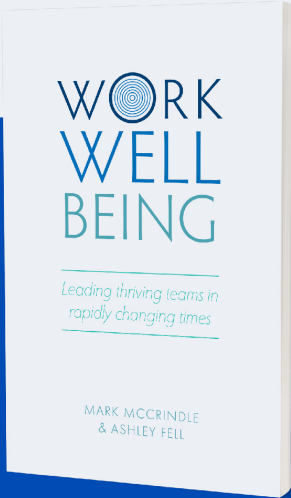
While the pandemic brought anxiety, health concerns, and financial impacts, it has also provided a much needed 'coronacation' which many Australians used to rebalance their lives and focus on their wellbeing.




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According to our national survey of working Australians, most Australians who worked from home through COVID-19 reported better work/life balance (65% cf. 15% worse) and improved productivity (51% cf. 20% worse). Although there were some challenges like social isolation and the blurring of work and home boundaries, the benefits to people’s wellbeing outweighed these.

COVID-19 has provided workers and workplace leaders with an opportunity to not just return to the old but to reimagine the possibilities for a more sustainable future. A future where slower pace of life, work/life integration, time savings and a focus on balancing the competing priorities of our health and wellbeing is championed across workplaces nationally.



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