

## OPINION 19

# Share the WFH win with the frontline

**Paul Nicolaou**



**I**t might be time to reluctantly raise the white flag on unproductive work from home arrangements while recognising that WFH also sets in stone a rough deal for essential workers.

WFH fans love it because they save on commuting costs and get more quality time with their families. So, they want to lock in the financial benefits of WFH and a better work-life balance.

In contrast, essential workers, who have no choice other than to turn up don't share the WFH benefits. Health professionals, public transport employees, teachers and cleaners still have to pay to commute, buy fuel and pay for parking.

It's time they shared in the benefits now that WFH has become entrenched on the back of becoming an issue in the recent federal election campaign.

If WFH is no longer to be contested, it's also time to compensate essential workers for the higher costs they have to carry. And if WFH employees are saving up to \$5000 a year, an equal benefit should be paid to essential workers.

It could be added to workplace enterprise agreements or, at the very least, these costs could be made tax deductible.

We also need to get serious about making home ownership more affordable for essential workers so they can live closer to where they work. There are some attractive housing developments taking shape close to hospitals and other workplaces where there are many essential workers.

More of them are needed. This is especially necessary in the wake of frightening information about the cost of housing in Sydney.

The median house price in our city is now a whopping 13 times the average salary – three times more than 50 years ago.

It's little wonder the young are giving up on home ownership.

According to the Australian Property Institute's (API) Valuation Report new buyers have been shut out of the market by unprecedented price surges.

This is untenable for our city, particularly in respect of essential workers. We keep hearing of emergency services personnel having to commute from as far as Newcastle and Wollongong because they can't afford Sydney rents or mortgages.

We can start making life better for essential workers by putting them in the same financial position as WFH warriors.

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