



# Industry hits a homer

**Paula Beauchamp**

EMMA Tinning and Cheryl Hardy are co-workers at Multimedia Victoria in Melbourne — yet the respective views from their office windows belies that.

For Ms Hardy, the vista sweeps across farmland teeming with horses, goats and sheep.

From Ms Tinning's home office, the view takes in a park.

As teleworkers employed by the state government, both women work about half their weeks at Multimedia Victoria's headquarters in Collins St.

The remainder is done from home.

While neither has much time for the scenery, both say they are happier and more productive due to teleworking.

"It's about getting more bang for your buck," Ms Hardy, a project manager who runs a website, says.

Called e-work, virtual teaming or telecommuting, telework is work done at a location removed from the employer and made possible by information and communications technology.

And Victorian businesses are set to hear a whole lot more about it.

The Federal Government is planning a telework online resource centre to raise awareness about teleworking.

An associated promotion and marketing campaign will target small and medium-sized businesses, outlining the benefits of telework and the best ways to implement it.

The government's tender for the work — with a price between \$75,000 and \$100,000 — closes on Friday.

The Victorian Government, through Multimedia Victoria, is also drafting a telework strategy due for release mid-year.

Ms Hardy lists improved produc-

tivity and staff retention as key ways employers can benefit from telework.

"If you trust your employees and are flexible about work arrangements, your company will go ahead in leaps and bounds," she said.

Companies not prepared to move with the times, insisting on having workers within their line of sight at all times, will stagnate, she said.

Living on a property near Flowerdale 80km north of Melbourne, Ms Hardy began teleworking for Multimedia Victoria in 1999, four months after daughter Tilly was born.

Ms Hardy regularly works 45 to 50 hours a week and rarely calls in sick.

"If you're technically crook but can still operate at 60 per cent, you're more likely to get out of bed and work if you can do it from home.

"If you had to navigate public transport and get yourself to work, well, you'd probably stay in bed."

Ms Hardy says the working arrangement has suited her lifestyle. And Multimedia Victoria continues to reap its investments in Ms Hardy's training and 10 years' experience.

Senior policy adviser Emma Tinning can work almost entirely from home. But it wasn't until her son was born that she chose telework to enjoy more time with him.

The flexibility of telework enabled Ms Tinning to return to work when her son was just seven months.

These days a nanny enables Ms Tinning to meet her deadlines.

But seeing her son the moment she logs off drives the arrangement.

"I get to spend early morning with my son. I see him over lunch and I don't miss out on the time I would spend travelling to work and back... even an hour saved on travel a day makes a difference."



**Rat race:** working from home means no more traffic jam stress.