



THE HON PAUL FLETCHER MP
Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts

THE HON MARK COULTON MP
Minister for Regional Health, Regional Communications and Local Government

MEDIA RELEASE

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NBN Co boosts data for rural and regional customers

The Morrison McCormack Government welcomes new initiatives from NBN Co that will provide more broadband data for Sky Muster satellite customers living in rural and remote Australia.

The initiatives announced today include permanent enhancements to NBN Co's Sky Muster Plus offering, and a temporary increase to data allowances for standard Sky Muster plans to support the increased data needs of rural and regional Australians in response to COVID-19.

Sky Muster Plus enhancements

Launched in August 2019, Sky Muster Plus has until now offered unmetered usage for selected internet essentials including web browsing, emails and internet banking. From 1 April, unmetered activities will be significantly expanded to cover all online content and applications, with only two exclusions – video streaming and VPN traffic – which will continue to be metered.

Other enhancements include the introduction of a new 25GB entry plan offering 25GB of peak data and 25GB of off-peak data for households with lower data needs that still require the flexibility of unmetered data, and the option of 'top up' data, should customers exhaust their monthly metered data allowance, which will become available in coming months.

The new features will provide customers with access to more data and offer peace of mind that they can continue to access the internet month-long without exceeding their monthly data allowance.

These permanent enhancements to the Sky Muster Plus offering have been in development for several months in line with NBN Co's commitment to refine its product offering to meet the broadband needs of regional Australians.

Sky Muster data boost

In addition to the Sky Muster Plus enhancements, NBN Co has also announced satellite broadband retailers will have temporary access to an additional 45 Gigabytes (GB) of download data for each standard Sky Muster plan from 31 March.

The additional 45GB will effectively double the average monthly download limits on retail plans offered by Sky Muster retailers to 90GB, and will provide greater flexibility for regional and remote Australians to accommodate expected increases in data usage while people implement COVID-19 social distancing measures.

The additional data will initially be available for one month. NBN Co will review demand and determine the appropriate level of allocation for an additional two months.

Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts, the Hon Paul Fletcher MP, welcomed NBN Co's commitment to rural and regional Australians, particularly during the challenges arising from the spread of COVID-19.

“As we all adapt to new ways of living and working to help play our part in slowing the spread of COVID-19, we anticipate higher than usual internet usage across the NBN, including in regional and remote areas,” Minister Fletcher said.

“The extra data that NBN Co is making available over the Sky Muster satellites – both permanent enhancements adding greater flexibility on Sky Muster Plus and the short term data boost on standard Sky Muster plans – will offer relief to regional and remote communities as their internet needs change over the coming weeks.

“Under the new Sky Muster Plus offering, approximately 70 per cent of all data use is expected to be unmetered compared to about 30 per cent under the current plans, with the product also supporting unmetered usage for education applications and apps such as Skype and FaceTime for the first time.”

Minister for Regional Health, Regional Communications and Local Government, the Hon Mark Coulton MP, thanked NBN Co for supporting regional Australians in connecting with their loved ones, essential services and the economy.

“The NBN plays a critically important role in keeping rural and regional Australians connected, and this is particularly true as we face uncertain times,” Minister Coulton said

“The new measures announced today will undoubtedly help families access the internet for work, essential government services, education and even entertainment over the coming months.”

Last week, NBN Co also announced retail service providers will have access to up to 40 per cent more Connectivity Virtual Circuit (CVC) at no additional charge for at least three months. This applies to all NBN access technologies, including fixed wireless and Sky Muster satellite service.

The capacity boost takes advantage of the flexibility in the NBN to account for changing data usage patterns, which are expected to result in higher traffic levels during the day and increased activity in the suburbs as compared to business districts.

NBN Co has also committed to suspend the managed disconnection of legacy copper services to the 70 per cent of regional premises that can access the NBN via fixed line services, and to suspend all non-essential work on its fixed wireless network to minimise disruptions to services and keep regional Australians connected.

More than 6.7 million homes and businesses across Australia now have an active NBN connection and are enjoying the benefits of fast and affordable high-speed broadband.

For more information about the Sky Muster Plus satellite service visit: www.nbnco.com.au

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Additional information

On 16 March 2020, Minister Fletcher convened a virtual roundtable with Australia's major telecommunications companies to discuss COVID-19 preparation and planning continuity measures to support services.

Outcomes of the meeting included establishing a special working group of major carriers, led by NBN Co, to share relevant information and discuss emerging engineering, security and operational issues.

The first meeting occurred on 18 March 2020, and a second meeting on 20 March 2020. The group will continue to meet regularly to monitor and manage network performance.