



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

MEDIA RELEASE

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GP clinics to get free NBN boost for telehealth

NBN Co is supporting the delivery of enhanced telehealth services by upgrading Australian GP clinics to 50Mbps download and 20Mbps upload connections at no extra cost for a period of six months. This will enable clinics to deliver multiple telehealth consultations simultaneously following the major expansion of telehealth delivery announced by the Minister for Health, the Hon Greg Hunt MP, recently in response to COVID-19.

Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts, the Hon Paul Fletcher MP, welcomed NBN Co's decision, which follows the Morrison Government's introduction of Medicare-subsidised telehealth services for all Australians.

“The near ubiquitous availability of high speed broadband via the NBN means Australia is very well placed to deliver telehealth services: if both patients and GPs have the connection they need for high speed broadband, then a two way video consultation becomes a practical option for many,” Minister Fletcher said.

“As Minister Hunt has said, whole of population telehealth will allow people to access essential health services in their home and will support self-isolation and quarantine policies, while helping doctors to continue to deliver services to their patients.

“The public health objective is clear – and we have the telecommunications network capability to support that objective.

“Telehealth services require a fast, reliable broadband connection, particularly when you have several doctors operating from the same clinic, each undertaking consultations online at the same time.

“Today's announcement means that clinics that have purchased a residential 12/1Mbps or 25/5Mbps service can upgrade via their retail service provider to access extra bandwidth to support increased online activity at no additional cost. A 50/20Mbps service can comfortably support the upload and download requirements of multiple video conferencing streams simultaneously.”

To support this shift, Sydney based medical software provider, MedicalDirector, has recently announced that their fully integrated telehealth solution will be made available for free to their customers for at least the next 3 months in order to support General Practitioners during this unprecedented time.

Matthew Bardsley, the CEO of MedicalDirector, said: “Without the support and collaboration of the NBN, our ability to respond to the needs of General Practices during this time would have been challenged. With this announcement today we look forward to enabling ideal General Practice

services in Australia under the new social distancing requirements. Keeping patients healthy and our customers, the doctors, the nurses and staff as safe as possible.”

This assistance for GP clinics is part of a broader set of measures being considered to further support Australians, including small-to-medium businesses and families with school-aged children who do not currently have home broadband, through the COVID-19 crisis. NBN Co has released a discussion paper on additional relief measures and will consult with retail service providers over the coming days before finalising additional support arrangements.

“I strongly encourage retailers to review the proposals NBN Co is putting forward so we can quickly adopt new ways of assisting and supporting Australian families and businesses during this challenging time,” Minister Fletcher said.

More than 11 million Australian homes and businesses are now able to connect to the NBN and more than 6.8 million already have an active service.

For more information visit: www.nbnco.com.au

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