

Are Northcliffe's Internet Woes Over?

a little CRC

There have been 3 huge improvements in internet services for Northcliffe, and across rural Australia: 1. The launch of *Sky Muster Plus* plans; 2. *Starlink* internet services, and; 3. Improvements in *Telstra* mobile internet.

These things are linked. Starlink and Telstra's mobile internet is taking a lot of pressure off the Sky Muster satellites launched by NBN Corporation in 2015. This is enabling NBN to offer more generous Sky Muster plans:

OPTION 1. Sky Muster Plus

Sky Muster **Plus** plans are available from most, although not all Sky Muster **Regular** resellers:

AVAILABLE FROM: Skymesh, Activ8me, ANT & more...

NOT AVAILABLE FROM: Westnet, iinet and Bordernet.

Sky Muster NBN satellite plans are Northcliffe's **only** available NBN internet services. Sky Muster **Plus** plans provide unlimited downloads in some circumstances while Sky Muster **Regular** plans have strict download quotas.

Sky Muster Plus plans start at around \$60 per month and go right up to \$200-ish, depending how much data you need during the critical 4pm to midnight period. Starlink installation is free, although you may need to pay for a home router.

Unlimited data on Sky Muster Plus plans now includes video streaming and vpn data. There's a 'gotcha' though: unlimited video streaming and vpn use is only available between midnight and 4pm each day. Other activities such as online shopping, email, internet banking, audio streaming, video and wifi calling are unlimited data all day, every day.

This means the only data which is counted toward your monthly data quota is video streaming and vpn usage between 4pm and midnight. While this is only 8 hours of restriction out of each 24 hours, it is a significant limitation. 4pm–midnight is peak time for watching Netflix, Youtube, Kayo Sports and other video streaming services.

Visit nbn.com.au/skymusterplus to find out more.

Gamers Rejoice ! !

With Sky Muster Plus, game downloads are unlimited at all times. This is big news for gamers. In the past, a 120GB game download could use up a families entire download allowance for 2 months. A gamer's reputation might never recover from destroying their family's ability to watch Stranger Things.

Sky Muster satellite plans will always cause issues for online gamers with intolerable 'lag' / ping times. Fortunately for competitive gamers there is now another option...

OPTION 2. Starlink—suddenly available everywhere

The international satellite mega-constellation, Starlink, provides unlimited download for everything, all the time. Starlink has much higher download and upload speeds than the home grown 'Sky Muster' satellites. Starlink also has excellent ping times which should satisfy most online gamers.

Starlink is proving to be highly reliable and excellent value. That said, it is a little more expensive. Starlink is currently about \$1,000 start up costs, then \$139 per month. Considering Starlink's technical superiority and the fact it receives no Government subsidies, this price is actually remarkable.

OPTION 3. Telstra Mobile Internet

I'm sure we all have history with Telstra, but their progress with mobile internet has been remarkable. 10 years ago Telstra mobile internet plans were a bit of a joke, with paltry download allowances and ridiculously high prices.

Today, for \$85 per month, you can get a 400GB data allowance on Telstra mobile internet. Your initial equipment can cost anything from \$100 to \$1,000, depending on your needs. If you only have a limited mobile phone signal you will need a Cel-Fi Go repeater, adding \$1,500 to this up-front cost.

Many get better value by upgrading their Telstra phone plan, and using their phone as a mobile internet hotspot. If you're already paying for a mobile phone plan, a small upgrade can save you from needing to pay for separate home internet.

The downside of Telstra's improvements is that our local cell tower is now suffering from peak hour congestion (generally 6pm-11pm). Let's hope Telstra keep upgrading the local tower to keep up with demand.

What's Next?

The next big internet upgrade for Northcliffe, if it ever arrives, is likely to be an NBN upgrade to provide either fixed wireless or fibre optic connections. While the chances of this are not zero, the prospects are remote and uncertain.

NCRC have been working on this important future-proofing for Northcliffe, with lots of partners, results are far from guaranteed and not likely to be experienced soon.

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday 10am to 5pm | Thursday, Friday 10 am to 6pm