



Media release

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NBN Co creates \$150 million COVID-19 relief and assistance package to help keep Australia connected

Helping internet providers to connect low-income families with home schooling needs and assisting small and medium businesses and households facing financial hardship

NBN Co today announced it will establish a \$150 million financial relief and assistance fund to help internet providers to support their residential and small and medium business customers affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The relief fund, created following a short industry consultation led by NBN Co, is aimed at helping internet providers connect low-income households with home schooling needs, supporting emergency and essential services, and assisting small and medium businesses and residential customers who are facing financial hardship. The consultation involved more than 50 internet providers, government and consumer group Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN) and identified specific customer segments that require immediate support.

Approximately \$50 million will be directed to helping internet providers support low-income households with school-aged children who do not currently have an active **nbn** connection at home. NBN Co is working with the Department of Education and schools in each state and territory to ensure this initiative reaches those most in need.

As part of this package, NBN Co will also be implementing relief measures to help internet providers support struggling households and small and medium businesses stay connected during this pandemic, and has created a dedicated support package for essential and emergency services, which focusses on providing internet providers higher speeds for telehealth providers, enhanced service levels, and prioritised connections and fault resolution via case management through **nbn**'s Business Operations Centre through this period of increased demand.

The package also extends to supporting small and medium businesses by providing internet providers with discounted access to new connections of specified wholesale business grade products to help them to maintain or re-establish their businesses, once this crisis passes. The total support package for small and medium businesses will be approximately \$50 million and the relief measures for residential financial hardship will be approximately \$50 million.

The NBN Co relief and assistance package will be made available to retailers in accordance with applicable terms and conditions from April to 30 September but it's a matter for retailers to determine when and what offers they develop for their customers.

nbn Chief Executive Officer, Stephen Rue, said:

“We know that many Australian households and businesses are doing it tough, and that access to broadband services has never been more important.

“As a national wholesale provider of broadband services, **nbn** has an important role to play in supporting internet providers connecting families with remote schooling needs for their children and keeping Australian households, small and medium businesses, as well as essential and emergency services connected.

“The unprecedented measures we are announcing today reflect our commitment to the Telecommunications industry in helping to deliver a whole of industry solution to these consumer and business segments which have been hit hard by the pandemic.

“The financial relief and assistance measures we have announced today are about providing financial assistance to help internet providers support low-income households with school children at home who are not currently connected to the **nbn**. We want to do what we can to ensure all school children have access to the internet during this period. They are about keeping emergency and essential services, including telehealth, connected, as announced by Minister Paul Fletcher recently.

“This package also aims to give small and medium businesses the resilience they need to stay connected and emerge in a position to grow again in the future and provide relief measures to help households and small and medium businesses who are facing financial hardship.”

Residential and business financial relief measures:

To help unconnected low-income families with school children get connected, **nbn** will be waiving its \$37 monthly wholesale charge for internet providers for many services on the 25/5 Mbps speed tier between April and September. This is intended to enable internet providers to create more affordable offers to connect these families as Term Two of school starts across the nation.

Funds will also be allocated for internet providers to help residential and small and medium business customers who are struggling to pay their monthly bill because they have been impacted by the pandemic. The support measures are directly aimed at helping these customers stay connected during this period of uncertainty.

NBN Co is introducing a range of measures to build resilience for essential and emergency services, and telehealth providers as online demand for these services grows. To help ensure service continuity, NBN Co will offer internet providers enhanced service levels, and prioritised connections and fault resolutions for these customers via case management through **nbn**'s Business Operations Centre. To further support the expected increase in telehealth activity, internet providers will be offered support to grant health providers that have basic or standard **nbn** services upgrades to eligible higher speed tiers at no additional charge. NBN Co will also provide financial support to internet providers for new connections of specified business-grade services, helping businesses to re-establish themselves when the pandemic passes.

NBN Co Chief Executive Officer, Stephen Rue said: “Helping households get connected and supporting Australian homes and businesses stay connected is a priority for **nbn**. We are confident these funding relief and assistance measures will make a difference and help internet providers support their customers.”

CEO of the Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN), Teresa Corbin, welcomed the announcement as an important step towards ensuring that there is no Australian left offline during the challenging months to come.

“The internet is an essential service for work, study, and accessing government and telehealth services,” said Ms Corbin. “NBN Co is to be applauded for laying the groundwork to keep struggling families and households connected during this difficult time. We hope to see the nation’s retail service providers build on these foundations to deliver financial relief to those in need.”

Resources

Tips for managing your broadband:

- Check your speed is suitable for your changing needs. If your internet is slow it may be because you are on an entry level internet plan. Contact your internet retailer and ask them about the number of devices you have connected and how you are using the internet to find out if you have the right retail plan to support your needs. **nbn** has made a number of wholesale price changes over the last 6 months with further changes in May to assist internet providers to offer more affordable broadband plans suitable for different customer needs.
- Get the right plan. Most home internet plans are used primarily to download (web browsing, movies, music) and as such have great download speeds, but are not as strong when it comes to uploading. When it comes to working from home you may have a greater need for uploading files and joining video conference calls so get in touch with your internet retailer to make sure your plan has the upload speeds you need to work from home.
- Check your in-home set-up. Check your Wi-Fi router is in a central location in the home, ideally close to where you need to connect. Some routers may not deliver the best performance and speeds. If you are concerned about the age or quality of your router or modem, seek advice from your internet retailer on possible upgrade options.
- Got a medical alarm? Check nbn's Unmonitored Medical Alarm Upgrade Offer to see if you can upgrade to one that uses a mobile connection at a reduced price. Always have a charged mobile phone at hand for use in a power outage or other emergency. Contact your internet retailer about whether you're eligible for Priority Assistance or other similar services.

For **nbn** latest updates: <https://www.nbnco.com.au/workingfromhome>

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