

NBN—Beam Me Up!

NBN Internet Services via the Sky Muster Satellites

Northcliffe households are now connecting to NBN internet, by means of the Sky Muster satellite; beam 68, no less.

NBN sells Sky Muster services through ISPs (Internet Service Providers) such as Skymesh, iiNet, Westnet, Activ8me, Ant Communications, and others. Phone any of these providers, or visit their websites, to get into the installation queue. The wait between sign-up and install is 2 to 6 weeks.

What are the installation costs?

Installation, including a satellite dish and modem, is free. Your ISP may try to sell you some optional hardware when you sign up. These optional *routers*, costing around \$100, have turned out to be a good investment for many. Without them you will only be able to connect one computer to your NBN satellite modem, via a cord. The optional routers generally provide wifi and connections for all your computers, phones, tablets, and house guests. The pre-configured equipment can also reduce the hassle of getting your satellite connection up and running. The satellite installers will conduct their own tests after setting up your equipment but they will not necessarily leave you with a working internet connection. Contact your ISP if it isn't working.

So that's installation. What are the regular monthly fees?

Generally a premium speed plan (25Mbps Download Speed, 5Mbps Upload) will cost around \$50 per month for a data allowance of 30-40GB (data allowance counts downloads AND uploads). The plans also provide an additional data allowance you can use 'off-peak' (between 1am and 7am).

No matter which plan you have, the maximum data available to any household, is 75GB plus another 75GB off-peak. These limits have been set by NBN Corp to prevent the users from overloading the Sky Muster satellite service.

Can I get a better internet service than NBN's Sky Muster?

Perhaps. Have you heard of ADSL2?

If you are close enough to town and you have a landline phone line, of sufficient quality, you may be eligible for an ADSL2 connection. You have to pay to connect as well as phone line rental fees of around \$30 per month and internet connection fees will be \$50 to \$150.

ADSL2 is potentially more expensive than satellite, however you may find that it offers better download allowances, more reliability, and similar connection speeds to satellite NBN. At NCRC our ADSL2 provides a download allowance of 600GB per month. Try doing that on satellite!

Telstra Mobile Broadband, connected via a dedicated mobile broadband modem or via your mobile phone, is also an option. Telstra has a few resellers, such as Aldi. Unfortunately the plans all suffer from tiny download allowances.

The best value seems to be pre-paid plans starting at around \$30 per month. Post-paid/contract options are worse value.

a little CRC...

When will Northcliffe get better internet?

Pemberton is due to receive 'true' (non-satellite) NBN internet in 2018. Manjimup already has this.

Without up to date internet connectivity Northcliffe will start slipping further behind Pemberton and Manjimup. We're already far enough behind. This puts our town at risk in the longer term, jeopardising the continuing slow arrival of retirees, tree changers and new businesses (including online businesses). In time people may become very reluctant to move outside of the NBN fibre-optic 'footprint'. We will start seeing this reflected in property prices (relative to Pemberton) for residences in town, sooner rather than later. Property prices are not the problem; the underlying economic reality of less opportunities, lower quality of life and disconnection from a growing global economy is.

A new development is that NBN is offering quotes, for communities and individuals, to apply for fibre-optic NBN internet connections. From the NBN's website:

Applicants may include incorporated associations, bodies corporate of MDUs, local government authorities and state government bodies. Applications must be submitted by an individual representing a group of premises (the size of an area is recommended to be 150-350 premises).

Contact NCRC if you are interested in exploring NBN FTTP (fibre-optic internet) options for the Northcliffe town grid area. The costs will no doubt be extreme but let's find out how far off the money we are.

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