Small Business Connectivity Hub

Description

Small business phone and internet connectivity hub

The Regional Tech Hub assists small businesses across rural, regional and remote Australia with personalised internet and phone advice and support.
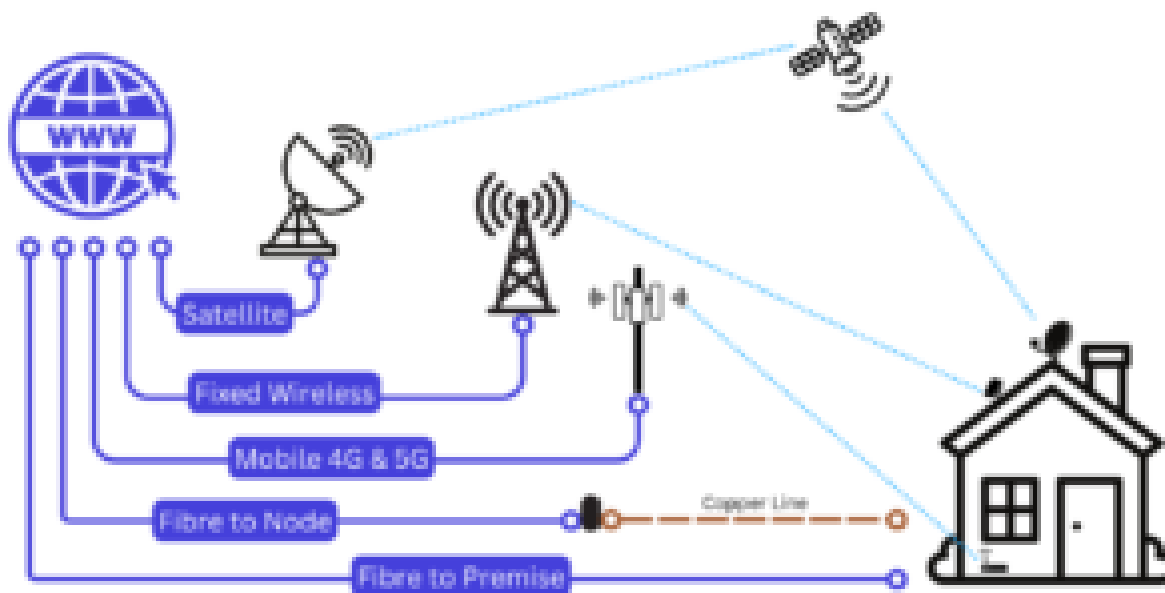
Here to assist small business

The Regional Tech Hub provides essential support to small business, helping them address their phone and internet connectivity needs. Offering **free** and **independent advice** and tailored solutions ensures that businesses in regional and remote areas have reliable and efficient communication systems, enabling them to stay connected and operate smoothly regardless of their location.

- **Providing tailored advice:** a bespoke service to regional small businesses, helping you identify the connectivity services available based on your location, needs, and budget.
- **Demystifying technology:** make informed decisions about the technology solutions that best meet your needs.
- **Building connectivity literacy:** a range of online resources designed to help inform you how to solve business connectivity problems.

Business connectivity types

How can my business achieve connectivity

In Australia, businesses have several options for connecting to the internet, each suited to different needs and locations. The National Broadband Network (nbn) is a major provider, offering a range of technologies including fibre to the premises (FTTP) and fibre to the node (FTTN),

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delivering high-speed internet across higher population areas of the country.

In rural or remote areas where fibre may not be available, fixed wireless and satellite services offer viable alternatives. Additionally, many businesses use mobile broadband through 4G and rapidly expanding 5G networks, providing flexibility and on-the-go access, particularly useful for mobile or field operations.

Fibre to the Premise (FTTP)

Fibre-optic cables run directly from the internet service provider to a business or home, offering the highest possible speeds and reliability.

Fibre to the Node (FFTN)

Fibre-optic cables run to a central node or cabinet in the neighbourhood, and existing copper cables then connect from the node to individual homes or businesses, providing high-speed internet with some distance-based speed limitations.

Fixed Wireless (FW)

Data is transmitted wirelessly from a ground-based station to a fixed receiver on a business or home, offering high-speed internet without the need for physical cables, and is especially useful in rural or remote areas.

Satellite

Data is transmitted between a satellite in orbit and a satellite dish on the ground, providing internet access to remote or rural areas where other connection types are unavailable, though higher latency can be an issue for some applications (although Low Earth Orbit Satellites, like Starlink, have lowered this impact).

Mobile Internet (4G or 5G)

Uses cellular networks, such as 4G and 5G, to provide wireless internet access to mobile devices, offering flexibility and on-the-go connectivity, though speed and reliability can vary based on location and network coverage.

Common differences between Residential and Business connectivity plans

In the Australian market, there are several key differences between residential and business connectivity plans. Below we explore each of these areas to help you decide the best option for your small business.

Speed and Bandwidth

Residential Plans:

- Generally, offer a range of speed tiers with limited upload speeds.
- Advertised speeds often reflect evening peak times (7pm-11pm).

Business Plans:

- Can offer higher speed tiers.
- Often include higher upload speeds, which are crucial for activities like video conferencing and file sharing.
- Speeds are typically guaranteed during business hours (9am-5pm).

Service Level Agreements (SLAs)

Residential Plans:

- Usually do not include SLAs, meaning there are no guaranteed uptime or performance metrics.

Business Plans:

- Include SLAs that provide guarantees on uptime and performance.
- These agreements ensure priority support and faster resolution times for service issues.

Support and Customer Service

Residential Plans:

- Standard customer support.
- Support may not be available 24/7.

Business Plans:

- Priority customer support with dedicated teams.
- 24/7 support is often available to handle critical business needs.

Static IP Addresses

Residential Plans:

- Typically use dynamic IP addresses.
- Static IPs, if available, come at an additional cost.

Business Plans:

- Usually come with static IP addresses, which are essential for hosting servers and setting up VPNs.

Cost

Residential Plans:

- Generally more affordable.
- Tend to be cheaper due to shared resources and fewer features.

Business Plans:

- More expensive due to premium features, higher speeds, and additional services.
- Costs reflect the enhanced service levels and support.

These differences are designed to cater to the specific needs of residential users and businesses. Residential plans prioritise affordability and general internet usage, while business plans focus on reliability, speed, and additional services necessary for running a business effectively.

Fibre (nbn® and non-nbn providers)

Fibre connectivity provides ultra-fast, reliable internet with symmetrical upload and download speeds, essential for modern digital activities and business operations.

In regional Australia, the fibre rollout has been expanding in recent years, but it is not as extensive as in urban areas. Most commonly fibre to the premise connectivity is found in regional centres such as Ballarat, Bendigo, Launceston, Toowoomba, Tamworth, Bunbury, Cairns and Townsville.

Business Fibre Zones are a key part of the nbn®'s strategy to improve digital connectivity and support economic growth in regional Australia. These 240 zones are specifically designed to provide high-speed fibre optic connections to businesses located outside major metropolitan areas.

nbn® offers specific business fibre products called nbn® Ethernet and nbn® Enterprise Ethernet. These products have been designed to enable businesses to receive improved support, uptime and performance.

nbn® Ethernet is a type of broadband service delivered over Ethernet technology by nbn®. It provides high-speed internet connectivity suitable for businesses, offering reliability and scalability for various networking needs.

business nbn® Enterprise Ethernet is a premium fibre access network and is available to an estimated 1.5 million Australian business locations. It offers symmetrical speeds from 10Mbps to close to 10Gbps^ and was built to support data-intensive businesses. There are no nbn® up-front build costs for an estimated 90% of business locations within the nbn® network footprint.

nbn® Smart Places provide flexible connectivity solutions for government, businesses and communities looking to experience the benefits of Smart City and Internet of Things (solutions) by connecting critical infrastructure, smart devices, applications and solutions across a range of outdoor locations. nbn® Smart Places enables the extension of the nbn® fibre network to a variety of eligible non-premises locations such as traffic lights, CCTV, smart poles, digital billboards, and public Wi-Fi.

Visiting the nbn® website will allow you to search your business address to view service type and availability.

In regional Australia, several non-nbn fibre providers offer high-speed internet services specifically tailored for businesses. These providers often operate their own infrastructure or partner with private networks to deliver reliable and fast connectivity.

Here are examples of non-nbn fibre providers:

OptiComm

- Predominantly found in new developments and specific regional areas where OptiComm has established its infrastructure.

Spirit Telecom

- While heavily focused on Melbourne, Sydney, and the Gold Coast, they also serve various regional centres.

Lightning Broadband

- Operates in selected regional areas across Australia, often in places where traditional

services are limited or unavailable.

RedTrain Networks

- Available in selected new developments and specific regional centres in NSW and Victoria.

Taipan Networx

- Currently, Taipan Networx covers the rural areas of Yeppoon and Winton.

Fixed Wireless

nbn® Fixed Wireless is available in many regional locations and can suit businesses, providing reliable broadband with decent speeds and relatively low latency compared to some satellite internet options, However, it might not be ideal for high-bandwidth applications or large enterprises due to potential limitations in speed and network congestion during peak times.

Currently nbn® does not offer a Fixed Wireless business specific product.

Numerous **non-nbn® fixed wireless** operators provide high-speed internet services suitable for businesses, particularly in regional areas where fibre connections may not be available.

To find out more about these operators and their locations please click here.

Fixed Satellite (nbn® Sky Muster® & Starlink)

In regional Australia, businesses can choose from several satellite internet providers that offer robust and reliable connectivity solutions. These services are particularly valuable in remote areas where other forms of high-speed internet, such as fibre or fixed wireless, are not available. Here are the main satellite products available for businesses:

Sky Muster® by nbn Co

- **Overview**: Sky Muster®, Sky Muster® Plus and Sky Muster® Plus Premium are satellite services provided by nbn®, designed to deliver high-speed internet to remote and rural areas of Australia. This includes areas across mainland Australia, Tasmania, and remote islands like Norfolk Island, Christmas Island, Lord Howe Island, and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands. To set up a satellite connection, you'll need a rooftop satellite dish and an nbn®-provided modem installed where the cable from the dish enters your business. This modem requires power and must be installed by an nbn®-approved technician

Starlink by SpaceX

- **Overview**: Starlink is a satellite internet constellation constructed by SpaceX, providing high-speed, low-latency internet across the globe, including remote regions of Australia. Typical download speeds range from 50 Mbps to 250 Mbps with unlimited data. Starlink satellite solutions are available for a variety of different modes including fixed (i.e placed on a rooftop), roam (used while travelling but can be stationary or fitted to a vehicle) and mobility (fixed to a plane or ship). Numerous companies provide custom mounting equipment depending on your requirements.
- **Business Product:** Starlink and its partners (Telstra, Vocus, Skymesh, Hypha and Optus) offer business and enterprise plans/ solutions depending on your requirements.
- **Equipment:** In addition to Starlink's website or the above providers, satellite kits can be purchased from JB Hi-Fi, Officeworks, Bunnings Warehouse, and Harvey Norman. Specialised mounts can be purchased from numerous different suppliers.

Mobile broadband

In Australia, three mobile network carriers (**Telstra**, **Optus** and **Vodafone**) provide the ability to connect to 4G and 5G internet connectivity.

The current 3G networks are being phased out from 28 October 2024. Further information on the 3G shutdown can be found here.

4G Coverage is available extensively across Australia, including regional and rural areas, ensuring businesses can maintain connectivity in many locations. However, 5G is much more limited to urban areas or large country towns.

There are two main benefits to businesses using mobile connectivity:

- **Flexibility and Mobility**: Ideal for businesses that require internet access on the move or in locations without fixed-line infrastructure.
- **Backup Solution**: Provides a reliable backup connection for businesses that primarily rely on fixed-line broadband.

However, several limitations can affect mobile connectivity:

- **Network Congestion**: Can experience slower speeds and higher latency during peak usage times, which may impact performance. Even more noticeable during large events or gatherings.

- **Data Limits**: Many mobile plans have data caps, which can be restrictive for businesses with high data usage.
- **Latency**: Higher latency compared to fixed-line connections, which can affect real-time applications like VoIP and video conferencing.

Conclusion

Both 4G and 5G networks can be suitable for business internet use, especially when required for flexible and mobile situations. However, it is also recommended to be aware of the limitations (network congestion, data limits). Many times a fixed-line (Fibre, Fixed Wireless or Satellite) connectivity solution will provide a much more reliable result.

Satellite mobility

In many areas, when travelling for business, a lack of connectivity is a major challenge to overcome, especially when you rely on receiving/sending emails or data files to clients. In recent years, Low Earth Orbit (LEO) satellites have improved this situation, with Starlink offering several products and plans depending on your needs.

Credit: Peter de Kruijff

Consumer Grade Plans

Starlink Roam

The Starlink Roam plan allows you to connect to their satellite network while travelling, either set up on-the-ground portably or in-motion attached to a vehicle. Additionally, you may take it overseas and/or use it for boating up to 12 nautical miles offshore.

There are two plan options available: 50GB of data per month or unlimited data per month.

Starlink Boats

The Starlink Boats plan is designed for use on pleasure craft travelling in international waters. This plan requires a flat high-performance satellite dish, which is designed to handle the extreme conditions encountered while at sea.

Business Grade Plans

Starlink Land Mobility
The Starlink Land Mobility plan is designed for use in motion, making it perfect for use on truck fleets and mobile businesses. The service includes network prioritisation and priority support.

Starlink Maritime
The Starlink Maritime plan suits businesses operating on the open ocean, including commercial fishing boats, merchant ships, and offshore energy operations. The service includes network prioritisation and priority support.

Starlink Aviation
The Starlink Aviation plan supports charter operators, from small operations all the way up to commercial jet services, with a 24/7 dedicated aviation team providing individual client support.

Equipment Types

Flat High-Performance Satellite Kit
The flat high-performance satellite kit has a wider field of view and enhanced GPS capabilities, connecting to more satellites for consistent connectivity while in motion. It is designed for harsh environments and can withstand extreme cold, heat, water, and cyclonic winds.

Standard Satellite Kit
The standard satellite kit can be used for both a commercial fixed connection and on a 'land mobility' plan. You can either set it up and pack it down when heading to your next destination while camping or travelling or fix it to your vehicle through various mounts available on the market.

The version 3 kit was released in 2024 and uses a newer style wide array antenna, making it well-suited for in-motion use. The kit also features an IP67 exterior rating for better resistance to bad weather and harsh climatic conditions.

Starlink warns that earlier version 1 & 2 kits are not designed for in-motion use.

Mini Satellite Kit
The mini satellite kit's compact size, built-in router, and PD USB-C power compatibility make it perfect for camping, travelling, and remote work. Users can enjoy reliable internet connectivity wherever they are, with minimal setup.

With a USB-C connection, the Mini can be powered by a wide range of compatible power sources, including power banks and vehicle cigarette socket adapters.

One drawback is the mini kit's lower speed capabilities compared to the standard kits, largely limited to 100 Mbps maximum download speeds.

Additional Information
Over the last 12 months, several vehicle/trailer fires have occurred, likely due to poor and/or incorrect installation methods of satellite equipment/wiring. Therefore, we highly recommend using an experienced installer and licensed auto electrician when installing into a vehicle, trailer, or boat.

Small business connectivity guide

Internet options for small business can be confusing, and there is a lot of misinformation about what is available. The following table has been designed to help you work out what options might suit your needs, based on budget, speed, latency, equipment, and contract length.

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	nbn Fixed Line	Business nbn Ethernet
Price (monthly fee + install costs)	$55+ & Free install	$79+ & Free in...
Contract Length	Contract free with many providers	Contract free ... many provic...
Speed	Up to 1Gbps	Up to 1Gbp...
Availability	City and regional locations	City and regi... locations
Choice of providers	Yes	Yes
Business Service Level Agreements	No	Yes

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Small Busine

	Telstra Home Starlink	Starlink
Price (monthly fee + install costs)	$125 & Install costs	$139+ & Install
Contract Length	Contract free	Contract fr
Speed	Up to 50Mbps	Up to 250Mb
Availability	Everywhere	Everywher
Choice of providers	No	No
Business Service Level Agreements	No	No

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How we can assist you

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We can help you understand all your phone and internet options, tailored to your business needs. Our service is completely free and independent. Request a connectivity report to get started.

Request a report

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We can also assist you with any existing connectivity issues. While your first point of contact should be your Retail Service Provider, if your issue remains unresolved, we can help escalate it for you.

Escalate my issue

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We are happy to speak with you at a time that suits you. Simply book an appointment with one of our team members, and we'll ensure you get the assistance you need to solve your connectivity issue.

Book an appointment

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We understand how frustrating network outages can be and are here to assist you.

Check our outage information page to stay updated on current connectivity issues in your area. Find outage links to all major telecommunications providers.

[Network outages](#)

- # Business Help Guides

- ○

    Connectivity Resilience

    Having an internet backup is essential to ensure payment systems and smart devices remain operational during outages, preventing disruptions and revenue loss. Learn to develop a strategy.

    [Download](#)

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Business Connectivity Checklist

Started a new business and deciding on your internet requirements? Or have an existing business requiring a better solution? Our connectivity checklist has all the common questions to consider.

Download

Stallholder Connectivity Tips

For stallholders, reliable connectivity is crucial to ensure payment systems and smart devices work seamlessly, preventing transaction disruptions and keeping business operations smooth.
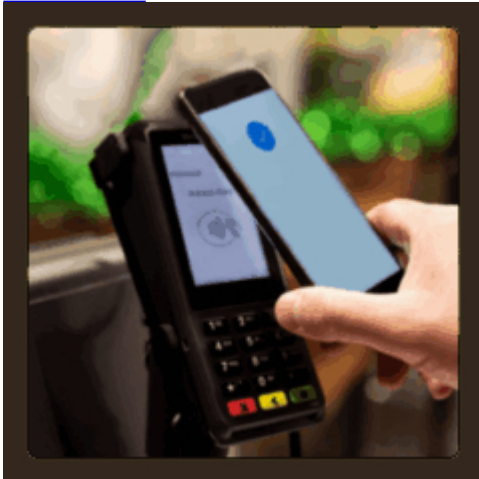
Download

Power Backup Solutions

Having a power backup is vital to ensure the continuous operation of payment systems and smart devices during outages and disruptions. Read our guide on your power backup options.

[Download](#)

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A Guide To Payment Systems

Not all payment systems are created equal. There are lots of options now available to suit almost every business need. We can help you navigate what is right for your business.

[Download](#)

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Find us at upcoming events

Aust Agrifood Summit – 29-30 October 2024

- Wagga Wagga, NSW

Agtech24 – 20-21 November 2024

- Emerald, QLD

West Tech Fest – 2-6 December 2024

- Perth, WA

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Can't find what you are after? Give us a call!

Call our hotline to chat with a team member and start a conversation. If we miss your call, we'll get back to you as soon as we can.

[1300 081 029](tel:1300081029)

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