

Bush communications coalition welcomes Sky Muster game change

The Regional, Rural and Remote Communications Coalition (RRRCC) has welcomed the launch of the new Sky Muster Plus service, that will see essential internet uses, such as browsing, email and software updates, exempt from monthly data allowances.

"This enhancement represents a game-changer for internet connectivity in the bush and is a direct result of the advocacy of the RRRCC," National Farmers' Federation President Fiona Simson said.

"The introduction of Sky Muster Plus demonstrates that the Government understands the connectivity needs of regional Australians and is willing to think outside the box to fulfil these needs."

Set to be available next year, Sky Muster Plus will provide faster speeds by providing access to a wholesale 25 megabytes per second product.

The new plans will not count the use of monthly data allowance towards essential internet services – like internet banking and email.

"Australian farmers are amongst the most dynamic and tech-savvy businesses in the country," Ms Simson said.

Today's announcement will bring us closer to a service that can meet the requirements of modern farming businesses."

NFF Telecommunications Committee Chair nominee, representative of Agforce Queensland and Better Internet for Rural, Regional and Remote Australia, Kylie Stretton agreed.

"Every day, we hear from people seeking more data for their day-to-day operations.

"We have received numerous representations from people having issues with something as simple as uploading their drought assistance forms.

"Having a more realistic focus on what data requirements are, as well as what's metered and unmetered is very welcome."

President of the Isolated Parents and Childrens' Association, Wendy Hick, emphasised that the enhanced Sky Muster would offer significant opportunity for remote schools and students.

“Having both increased capacity and the possibility for data use to be attributed against actual usage, rather than software updates and other menial tasks, has the potential to transform how remote families manage their data.”

Ms Hick said she was delighted to host NBN CEO Stephen Rue at her family's home near Camooweal, Queensland.

"I was able to demonstrate first hand not only the challenges we face with connectivity but also the opportunities, should our connectivity be improved.

"Connectivity offers even the most remote student the opportunity to keep pace with the outside world and experience meaningful educational opportunities.”

Australian Communications Consumer Action Network, Chief Executive Officer Teresa Corbin praised the NBN's recognition of the ongoing collective efforts of the RRRCC.

"Last year we welcomed NBN's increased data allowance on Sky Muster. However, the RRRCC has been calling for data use to reflect the reality of internet use in remote areas; internet services should allow both residents and businesses to have contemporary internet accessibility.”

"We are delighted that the NBN has listened and worked closely with the RRRCC to develop a practical solution in Sky Muster Plus, “said Ms Corbin.

“We now look forward to hearing the outcomes of the Regional Telecommunications Review, which we hope will offer further enhancement to the services available to rural, regional and remote consumers.”

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