



NBN: A Guide for Consumers

NBN: Fast Facts

- The National Broadband Network (NBN) is public utility infrastructure that will cover all premises in Australia.
- It is being built by NBN Co Limited – a wholly Government-owned company.
- The NBN will consist of fibre-optic cable to 93% of premises. The remaining 7% of premises mostly in rural and remote areas will get fixed wireless or satellite connections.
- You will still buy your phone and internet from service providers such as Telstra, Optus, iiNet and Primus. You won't deal with NBN Co.
- Connecting your premises to the NBN doesn't mean you have to sign up immediately for a phone or internet service if you don't want to.
- The NBN will be used first for the internet and for carrying phone calls, with more services such as TV, movies, video telephony, smart metering and health monitoring becoming available in the future.
- If you are happy with your existing phone handset, in most cases you can keep it.
- The existing copper-wire telephone network will be disconnected in stages as the NBN is rolled out. In wireless and satellite areas, the copper network will be maintained for at least 20 years.
- You will get a Network Termination Device or "NBN box" inside your premises or in a few cases on the outside wall.
- NBN Co will provide a one-off back-up battery to people who get connected. This back-up battery will power a regular phone plugged into the NBN box for up to five hours in the event of a power failure.
- In apartment blocks, some equipment will be installed in a central location such as a basement and then each apartment will have its own NBN box.



1. So what is the NBN?

The National Broadband Network, known as the “NBN”, is a high-speed telecommunications network being constructed by NBN Co Limited, a company set up by the Commonwealth Government in 2009.

The NBN gives everyone a high-speed link between their premises and their service provider. Today this type of high-speed broadband is only enjoyed by a very small number of Australians. It is expected that the NBN will be fully completed by 2021.

2. What is the technology?

NBN Co will use three types of technology to deliver broadband to all Australians:

- Fibre-optic cable capable of delivering speeds of 100 megabits per second (Mbps) or more to 93% of premises;
- Fixed wireless and satellite connections delivering 12 Mbps to the 7% of premises that are unable to be connected via the fibre-optic cables.

Fixed wireless and satellite will be used mostly in rural and remote areas.

3. Will I deal with NBN Co?

NBN Co won't deal directly with consumers, except during the first-time installation of your NBN box. NBN Co deals with service providers and is required to allow all service providers to plug in to the network for the same price.

You will deal with your service provider as you do now – i.e. companies such as Telstra, Optus, iiNet, Primus, TPG and others.

4. Will I need a back-up battery?

NBN Co will provide a one-off back-up battery to people who get connected. This back-up battery will power a regular phone for up to five hours in the event of a power failure. The battery will have a life of around three years and it will be the responsibility of everyone to replace and maintain their own battery.

It is important to note that many people have cordless phone handsets that already rely on the mains power. You can continue to use these but the NBN Co back-up battery won't power these phones in the event of a power failure.

5. What will the NBN be used for?

The NBN is public utility infrastructure that will cover all premises. Think of it as similar to the power grid. A hundred years ago, the first electricity network was built for one purpose: street lighting. Much later, it started being used for indoor lighting in homes. Later still, it started being used for new appliances like electric stoves, heaters and refrigerators.

In the same way, the NBN will first be used for high-speed access to the internet and for phone calls. But soon it will start being used for a range of other services which are separate from the internet. In the future you may get TV delivered over the NBN,



or you might have video consultations with your doctor, or a range of other in-home services.

6. Will fibre cables be installed overhead or underground?

If your current phone lines are underground then the NBN fibre cables will probably also be underground. If your current phone lines are overhead then the fibre will probably also be installed overhead. NBN Co will make these decisions on a case-by-case basis, so we can't be sure what will happen in each case until the rollout is more advanced.

7. What if I live in an apartment or other multi-dwelling unit?

In general, NBN Co will install fibre to every dwelling it can. Because there is a lot of variation in the layout and facilities in apartment buildings, the installers will check the buildings in advance and figure out the best way.

In some apartment buildings, they may need to install equipment in a central location, such as the basement of the building. This equipment will be owned by NBN Co, not by the building owner.

8. Should I connect now or later?

There are advantages in having the connection to your premises done at the time the network is first being rolled out. Advantages may include:

- Saving money on the installation. Connection is **free** at the initial rollout. It is uncertain whether people will have to pay if they decide to connect later;
- Avoiding hassles. Remember that around 18 months after the NBN fibre-optic cable is rolled out in your area, the existing copper-wire telephone network will be disconnected. When that happens, being connected to the NBN will be the only way to have a fixed-line phone service. To ensure you have an uninterrupted service, it makes sense to be connected at the start.

Want to know more? The full report, *NBN: A Guide for Consumers*, can be found at www.accan.org.au/NBNGuide

ACCAN is the peak body that represents all consumers on communications issues including telecommunications, broadband and emerging new services. We provide a strong, unified voice to industry and government as we work towards availability, accessibility and affordability of communications services for all Australians.

The Internet Society of Australia (ISOC-AU) is a non-profit society founded in 1996 which promotes Internet development in Australia for the whole community – private, academic and business users. ISOC-AU is a chapter of the worldwide Internet Society and is a peak body organisation, representing the interests of Internet users in this country.