

## **IPSTAR launches free satellite internet to assist families during COVID-19 shutdown**

IPSTAR Broadband has launched a free Sky Muster Plus plan for families in regional, rural and remote areas. Eligible families will also receive installation free-of-charge.

Managing director Shannon Fisher told Space and Satellite AU that families receiving Family Tax Benefit A or B could now sign up to the plan free-of-charge. “This plan is designed to help low-income families with kids at school to learn from home during the COVID-19 pandemic,” he said. “With the typical household having 70% of all Internet usage unmetered, including web browsing, reading and sending emails, and scrolling through social media.”



He added that only metered services – still free of charge – will be video streaming and activities on virtual private networks, covered by a 10GB monthly allowance. “Once the 10GB are used their service will be shaped, but only for the metered traffic like Netflix, Stan and so on,” said Fisher.

“Droughts, bushfires, floods and now COVID-19 are hindering Australian families and their livelihoods,” he said. “We are providing these families with free-of-charge plans to ensure they can continue to earn a wage or obtain an education when they are being asked to stay at home.”

Following moves by NBN, IPSTAR Broadband is increasing its capacity by 40% to cater for extra demand to decrease network congestion while prioritising education traffic during the critical hours of 9am to 3pm such as Google Classroom and other education applications.

“The recent Sky Muster Plus enhancements have been great, from our customers’ feedback we are seeing that approximately 70% to 80% of a household’s typical data usage is not unmetered, so they are effectively receiving 70% to 80% more usage from their Sky Muster Plus plans,” he said.

He added that while NBN had been doing a good job there was an opportunity to do more. “Based on customer feedback, we would like to see NBN expand the Sky Muster Plus plans to include a permanent basic entry-level or prepaid and a high-end 300GB plan option,” he said.

Fisher told Space and Satellite AU that IPSTAR is engaging with federal and state governments and non-profit organisations to collaborate with this initiative. “We hope to be able to provide more details soon.”

The company has also been in contact with the NSW, VIC and QLD education departments to see how it can support them.

Fisher said that since the pandemic began, IPSTAR had seen an overall traffic increase of 70% during business hours and 50% in the evenings. “The peak hours now between 10am to 10pm due to the increase in learning and working from home, plus the normal evening streaming,” he said.

On the customer front IPSTAR has seen a decline in its SMB and corporate segments and an increase in consumer: “which is what we had anticipated with COVID-19.”

Simon Dux