

Computer Tips

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Michael's Computer Services

Which Internet Access Should I Use?

Recently, some of our customers have been contacted by Internet providers offering them Wireless Broadband Internet access. Taking up what these companies offered, our customers had their Internet plans changed—but only to be disappointed. Despite the promises of the Internet provider, our customers found they were disadvantaged by the new Internet setup.

Sadly, marketing by Internet providers has blurred some of the facts about wireless broadband. Lets review some of these facts in our next few columns.

There are 3 main methods of connecting to the Internet in our area: ADSL, Wireless Broadband (also called Mobile Broadband), and Satellite. ADSL uses your fixed phone line, and connects you directly to the local exchange, offering fast, reliable Internet speeds, and generous download limits. The disadvantage of ADSL is you must live within 6.5 klm of your local exchange in order to have it. This is due to the limits of the copper wire to transmit data at high speed over great distances.

The next method of accessing the Internet is by Wireless Broadband. Wireless Broadband is a fast Internet connection that uses the mobile phone tower network. Wireless broadband piggy-backs the mobile network, and instead of voice and conversations, transmits data over the network. Wireless Broadband is available wherever there is mobile network signal, and thus does not have the same distance restrictions as ADSL.

However, wireless broadband does have some disadvantages. One major one is bandwidth. Each mobile tower has a limit on how much traffic (bandwidth) it can handle at once. If you are one of 1000 using that mobile tower, your internet speed will be greatly reduced. If the mobile tower is congested, your wireless broadband will frequently drop out, have reduced signal strength, or not connect at all.

Along with tower bandwidth, another issue with wireless broadband is the cost and size of download limits, when compared with ADSL. For ADSL, it is common to have 50, 100, or even 500GB download quotas for \$30—\$99 per month. With wireless broadband, limits of 5, 10, or 15GB, for \$30—\$90 per month are common. Wireless broadband is more expensive to operate and maintain, and this is reflected in the monthly prices charged to the customer.

Recently, the mobile towers in our area have been receiving the NBN upgrades to 4G. Previously signal has been transmitted as 3G, which has a speed of up to 200kbps. 4G however as a speed of up to 1Gbps, 5 x the capacity. Where you can receive it, and if you have a compatible 4G modem, you should be able to experience faster and more reliable Internet speeds.

One advantage of wireless broadband over ADSL, is that it is mobile. This means you can take your broadband internet with you when you go travelling. Because it uses your providers mobile network, you have pretty much Australia wide access, limited of course by the availability of your providers mobile signal.

To be continued ...

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