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# Price jolt on NBN access

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CONSUMERS will face higher prices to use the national broadband network than initially promised if the first retail prices released yesterday are an accurate guide.

While people will pay comparable prices for the same services available in metropolitan areas today, the prices released by mid-sized internet provider Internode are higher than those predicted by the National Broadband Network last December.

Internode's prices start at \$60 per month for a line rental and some telephone calls, and climb as high as \$190 per month for a 1000-gigabyte download limit.

The entry-level \$60 service, with 30 gigabytes, compares with NBN prediction of between \$53 to \$58. In the mid-range, Internode customers will pay \$90 for 200 gigabytes, compared with NBN's prediction of between \$62 and \$68. High-

volume users will pay \$120 for 300 gigabytes with Internode, compared with NBN's estimate of \$79 to \$85.

A simple voice service without any broadband capabilities that will not require a new telephone will also be available. The price has not been released yet but is expected to be cheaper than the broadband plans and comparable to current prices of about \$30 per month.

While NBN welcomes the prices as "comparable with what is in the market today", opposition communications spokesman Malcolm Turnbull said Australians would struggle to pay the prices revealed yesterday.

A spokesman for Communications Minister Stephen Conroy said Internode's prices were "comparable with current prices for a bundled internet package which includes telephone line rental. They also

provide much higher speeds than are currently available."

Internode's proposed prices — which will be available for people in the Brunswick trial area from late September — are more expensive than services currently available on the Telstra and Optus cable networks.

Consumer groups said the pricing reflected the faster services available on the new network.

"At first glance, for customers who want to have a similar speed and download allowance as they do now — living in a metropolitan area, for example with 12 Mbps — the price for these bundles are comparable to what's available today," said the chief executive of Australian Communications Consumer Action Network, Teresa Corbin.

"If you are living in a regional area, you will get higher speeds for your money that what would

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## Price jolt on fast broadband access

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be currently available. The phone line bundled in is going to make it much cheaper for some people."

But the chief executive of broadband comparison site Whistleout, Craig Cameron, said voters might feel misled.

"It looks like retail [service providers] will have to charge way more than today's prices to offer the advertised prices from the federal election, at almost \$40 per month more for the same usage allowances.

"Most voters are probably all expecting something completely different from the election messages, with the feeling being that we'll get faster, affordable broadband."

Mr Turnbull said: "If the government can't deliver on a crucial promise made to the country independents after the election about national uniform pricing, then I would encourage those independents to revisit their decision to support this government."

Altogether, 11 companies have been approved to re-sell

the new broadband service, but the other 10 are yet to reveal retail prices.

NBN Co is the government-owned company building a broadband network in which 93 per cent of premises will have a direct fibre-optic cable connection.

The remaining premises will be connected by satellite services, which are now on sale, or fixed wireless, which will be available within a year.

A further 14 towns and suburbs will fibre-optic installed next year.