

Mobile carriers start new iPhone 3GS price war

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- Comparing new iPhone 3GS plans
- Optus prices "most aggressive"
- Upcoming 3 Mobile plans could surprise
- **iPhone in-depth:** Latest news, reviews

FOUR Australian mobile carriers are fighting for your iPhone dollar and another is due to join the battle soon.

But the new iPhone 3GS plans are a study in contrasts and could make the difference between an enjoyable experience and 24 months of contract hell.

Telstra principal research analyst Warren Chaisatien says Optus has again released the "most aggressive" iPhone plan prices, increasing data allowances for the internet-savvy phone and introducing plans with unlimited phone calls and messaging.

Optus iPhone 3GS plans include the company's popular \$59 plan with data boosted from 500MB to 700MB a month and so-called "timeless" plans with unlimited calls and messaging starting at \$99 and including 1.5GB of downloads.

Shortly before its midnight launch, Optus also launched a \$79 plan with 1GB of data widely tipped to counter Vodafone's offerings.

Vodafone also boosted the downloads allowable on its plans, with its \$69 cap now promising up to 1GB of data a month, and is the only carrier to offer Apple's Visual Voicemail service.

Mr Chaisatien says one of the smartest things the challenger did was to introduce the iPhone 3GS as a pre-paid phone that "non-committal" users could buy outright: \$929 for the 16GB model or \$1129 for the 32GB model.

Existing contract customers with Optus have been offered discounts on an "upgrade fee" which varies according to the amount and duration of their plan.

Apple, however, killed some enthusiasm for Vodafone's offering by selling the phones in its stores for \$879 and \$1040. Large queues outside the Sydney Apple Store followed its announcement.

Virgin Mobile also launched two iPhone plans, at \$70 and \$100, offering 1GB and 5GB data downloads.

However, Telstra, in stark contrast, did not reveal its iPhone 3GS plans until 7am on the day of its launch. The company's plans feature no or limited data downloads, with data packages sold



Decisions, decisions ... carriers are battling over the iPhone dollars / AP

separately, and Telstra is the only carrier not to offer iPhone tethering, allowing use of the iPhone as a modem.

A Telstra spokesman said the company offers "Australia's largest, fastest and most reliable 3G network ...(and) we price accordingly".

Mr Chaisatien says the best iPhone 3GS plans may be yet to come.

"The thing to keep an eye out for is the launch of the 3GS by 3 Mobile," he says.

"3 has been a very aggressive player so I would expect something quite groundbreaking when they launch the new iPhone."

3 Mobile is due to launch its first iPhone plans in the coming weeks and a spokeswoman confirmed it would offer tethering for free.