

## Optus reveals price plans for new iPhone

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Optus has become the first carrier to reveal pricing plans for the upcoming iPhone 3G S, but without the expected price cut for the existing model.

The carrier's hero plan for the new iPhone, which goes on sale this Friday, is the 'yes' \$99 Timeless Plan offering unlimited standard nationals calls and text messages, a free 32GB iPhone 3G S and 1.5GB of mobile internet browsing for \$99 a month on a two-year plan.

Owners of the previous iPhone had to pay an additional \$14.95 a month for the 1.5GB of internet data.

Warren Chaisatien, telecommunications analyst at Telsyte, said the [rest of the plans](#) - ranging from \$19 a month to \$129 a month - were similar to those offered by Optus for the existing iPhone model.

The new iPhone 3G S looks almost identical to the iPhone 3G, but early reviews have indicated it is faster, has more memory and longer battery life and includes a few new features such as video recording and a better camera for still images.

Most iPhone users looking to get the most out of the phone's web-browsing capabilities will need to pay additional fees between \$4.99 to \$44.99 for mobile internet packs, bringing the monthly charge to well over \$100.

Buying a mobile internet pack is more of a necessity on the cheaper plans, as the \$19, \$49, \$59 and \$79-a-month plans only offer 100MB, 250MB, 700MB and 1GB of web browsing respectively. Those on cheaper plans will also have to pay an additional monthly charge for the phone itself.

"The new iPhone 3G S pricing is comparable to the old one; however, what is more interesting is that they have made the handset repayment monthly fee a little more attractive - a couple of bucks cheaper than the previous one," Mr Chaisatien said.

"Other than that the monthly allowance and in terms of the minutes of voice calls is essentially the same."

The analyst criticised Optus for [separately announcing last week](#) that it would charge users an additional \$9.99 a month to use the phone as a tethered modem for a laptop. This feature is commonly available on other phones without charge.

"They slid it [the tethering announcement] in there when nobody was paying attention - everyone was looking forward to the weekend," Chaisatien said.

Optus has yet to announce price cuts for the original iPhone 3G, the 8GB model that will continue to be sold as an entry-level model. The existing 16GB iPhone 3G model will be replaced by the new 16GB iPhone 3G S, while the 32GB iPhone 3G S will be added on top of this.

To get rid of 16GB iPhone 3G stock, Apple is offering the handset on a \$59-a-month plan with no handset costs, a saving of a few hundred dollars over the course of the two-year contract.

"We expect the original pricing for the iPhone 3G [8GB] to be revised very soon," Mr Chaisatien said.

Optus has also not yet revealed pricing details for existing iPhone 3G users looking to upgrade to the new model, and has not said whether it would allow customers to buy the iPhone 3G S outright on prepaid plans.

Mr Chaisatien said he thought one of the reasons Optus was charging extra for using the device as a tethered modem was because it was afraid giving people open access to the web on their laptop would lead to a surge in bill shock complaints.

But online forum users at sites such as Whirlpool said they suspected Optus was adding the charge to avoid people ramping up their mobile internet use, which would put a strain on Optus' already overloaded network and encourage people to use their full monthly data allocation.

Telstra has indicated it will not allow tethering, even for a fee, while some Vodafone users have already reported that they are able to turn on iPhone tethering without paying an extra charge.

Despite this, there are several hacks available that let people use the iPhone as a modem without paying the extra charge.

"This is where telcos are scared - if you allow these iPhone users to have free access to data they would use a lot of data," Mr Chaisatien said.

"I think it [the \$9.99-a-month fee] is quite excessive from a consumer point of view considering that you're already paying \$59 or \$79 a month, plus the handset cost."

Vodafone did not respond to calls asking when the carrier would release its iPhone 3G S pricing while 3, which recently merged with Vodafone, said it would have details ready soon. But 3 does not plan to begin selling the new device until July.

## iPhone Topics