

Vodafone v Optus: iPhone 3G S plans compared

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Australians hanging out for tomorrow's debut of the [iPhone 3G S](#) are spoiled for choice compared to their American brethren, with five major carriers duking it out to provide the most competitive plans.

Analysts have identified Optus as the best value carrier for low-end users, while Vodafone should appeal to data-hungry hardcore users who make lots of calls and regularly access the web from the device.

[Optus](#) and [Vodafone](#) are the only carriers to have announced their pricing plans so far, while 3 said it would unveil its plans closer to July, when it will begin selling the device.

Virgin said it would reveal prices this week, while Telstra will lift the lid on its plans tomorrow.

"Contrast this against the USA, where the iPhone is only available from one carrier (AT&T), which has been heavily criticised for its poor performance," said Jason Hill, founder of the [mobile phone plan comparison site](#) WhistleOut.

"Competition has got us some pretty nice iPhone choices this year and data plans have been given a bit of a boost as well."

A spokesman for Telstra said pricing details [leaked](#) to the MacTalk website were not authentic.

The leaked prices had Telstra, as expected, offering the most expensive plans. Warren Chaisatien, telecommunications analyst at Telsyte, said this was because its Next G network was the fastest and had the broadest coverage.

"For low-end users (\$49 monthly plan), Optus offers the best value - which explains why Optus has risen to become Australia's leading iPhone service provider, given that most iPhone users' monthly spend is hovering around the \$49 to \$59 mark," Mr Chaisatien said.

"For high-end users (\$99 monthly plan or more), Vodafone offers the best value."

Chaisatien noted Vodafone was the only carrier to sell the device on a pre-paid basis for \$49 a month.

Hill also offered some praise to Vodafone, saying it was the only carrier so far to offer a new iPhone 3G S for free for under \$70 a month. The carrier lists the 16GB model as free on a 24-month contract with 1GB of web data a month, \$400 worth of including calls and no extra charge for using the iPhone as a tethered modem for a laptop (Optus charges \$9.95 a month for this feature).

The \$69 Vodafone plan also includes unlimited free Vodafone-to-Vodafone calls during the evening and on weekends.

"But the Optus \$79 cap gives you even more calls and only [charges] \$3 for the new 16GB 3G S, which makes this a strong offer also," Hill added.

Apple will begin selling the iPhone 3G S in its retail stores from 8am, while Optus plans to open its main CBD stores in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane at [midnight tonight](#).

Vodafone and Telstra will not be holding midnight launch events but both will open their stores early tomorrow. Vodafone said its brand ambassadors, Lara Bingle and Gian Rooney, will be "hand delivering" on



Lara Bingle will apparently be hand-delivering iPhones to pre-order customers on Friday morning.

Friday morning to customers who pre-ordered online.

"Pricing dynamics are expected to change significantly when Hutchison 3 announces theirs in July. We expect Hutch 3 to be very price-aggressive and appealing to low-end users, given their legacy and positioning," Mr Chaisatien said.

Hill warned prospective buyers to watch out for seemingly cheap plans such as the \$19-a-month offer from Optus. Handset costs bring the total monthly cost to \$46 a month and the amount of calls and data offered is paltry, which can cost you a lot more in the long run if you exceed the included calls and data.

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