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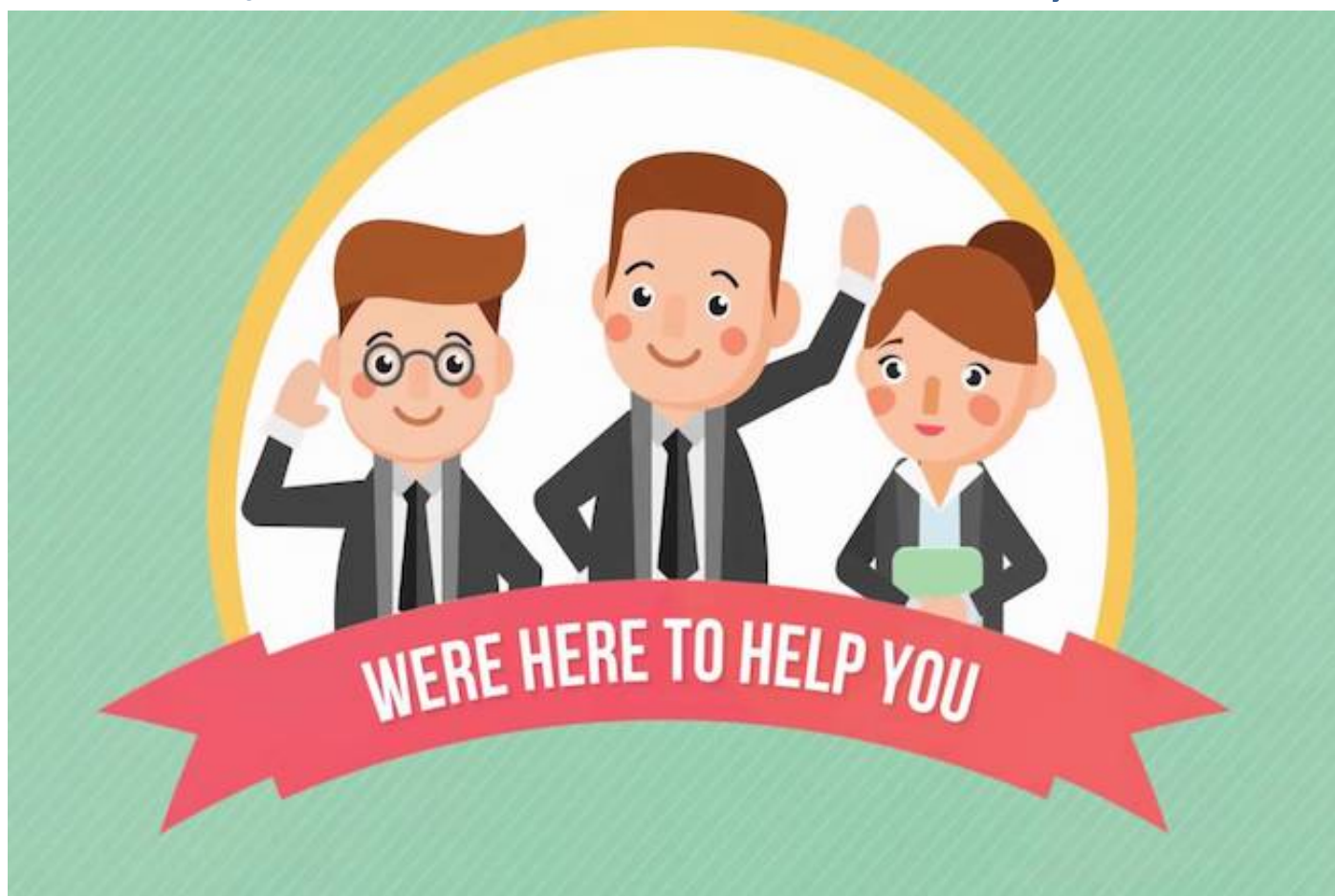
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NBN CO \$150M HELP OFFER FOR SMBS, FAMILIES



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NBN CO OFFERS \$150M TO HELP LOW-INCOME FAMILIES, SMBS

National broadband provider NBN Co has created a \$150 million fund to help low-income families with home schooling as well as small and medium-sized businesses and households who face financial issues during the coronavirus lockdown

The help will be channelled through Internet service providers, the company said in a statement, adding that it followed a short period of consultation with more than 50 providers, the government and the consumer group Australian Communications Consumer Action Network.



About a third of this amount will go to providers to help low-income families who do not have an NBN connection. These families would be identified through the Department of Education and schools in each state.

Some of the funding will go to help provide higher speeds for telehealth providers, better service, and prioritised

connections and fault resolution.

The money would be provided to retailers between April and September but it was up to the RSPs to develop appropriate offers based on their customers' needs, NBN Co said.

As part of this offer, the NBN Co said it would waive the \$37 monthly wholesale charge on the 25/5Mbps speed tier for RSPs.

"We know that many Australian households and businesses are doing it tough, and that access to broadband services has never been more important," NBN Co chief executive Stephen Rue said.

"Helping households get connected and supporting Australian homes and businesses stay connected is a priority for the NBN Co. We are confident these funding relief and assistance measures will make a difference and help internet providers support their customers."

ACCAN chief executive Teresa Corbin said: "The Internet is an essential service for work, study, and accessing government and telehealth services.

"NBN Co is to be applauded for laying the groundwork to keep struggling families and households connected during this difficult time. We hope to see the nation's retail service providers build on these foundations to deliver financial relief to those in need."

Sam Varghese

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VERIZON BUSINESS TO ACQUIRE BLUEJEANS NETWORK

The business division of US telecommunications giant Verizon has decided to acquire Silicon Valley cloud-based video conferencing and event platform BlueJeans Network.

The coming together of these companies would provide an enterprise-grade video offering on Verizon's global networks, a statement said on Friday.



"As the way we work continues to change, it is absolutely critical for businesses and public sector customers to have access to a comprehensive suite of offerings that are enterprise-ready, secure, frictionless and that integrate with existing tools," said Tami Erwin, chief executive of Verizon Business.

"Collaboration and communications have become top of the agenda for businesses of all sizes and in all sectors in recent months.

"We are excited to combine the power of BlueJeans' video platform with Verizon Business' connectivity networks, platforms and solutions to meet our customers' needs."

The deal is expected to close in the second quarter of this year.

"The combination of BlueJeans' world-class enterprise video collaboration platform and trusted brand with Verizon Business' next-generation edge computing innovation will deliver highly differentiated and compelling solutions to our joint customers, BlueJeans Network chief executive Quentin Gallivan said.

"We are very excited about joining the Verizon team and we truly believe the future of business communications starts today!"

The company said the new offering would be tied into its 5G product portfolio as these continued to be developed.

Based in New York City, Verizon offers voice, data and video services and reported revenues of US\$131.9 billion in 2019.

Sam Varghese

AKAMAI WORKING HARD TO KEEP THE PIPES FROM BEING BLOCKED

Content delivery network Akamai has been working with game publishers during the COVID-19 lockdown to manage downloads of patches, which often run to tens of gigabytes, in order to ensure that the load on the Internet is kept to the minimum.

Ari Well, vice-president of Product Marketing, said that updates for games like Call of Duty: Modern Warfare averaged out at between 50GB and 70GB – with the initial game download running to 120Gb or even more.



Well cited the data to provide some relatable data points while discussing how Akamai was managing congestion during a period when more people are working from home worldwide than ever before.

"So when you think about tens of millions of people around the globe sheltering in place, the frequency at which publishers and distribution platforms are pushing updates, and the rising popularity of online gaming across multiple demographics, this can give you some perspective on how the concept of peak traffic is evolving right before our eyes," he said.

The company said that ever since traffic began to increase exponentially, regulators, carriers and content providers were all taking steps to cut down on the load during peak traffic times in order to avert online gridlock.

Akamai Media Product Management director Rishi Varma told *iTWire* that the company was able to manage one kind of downloads - background downloads - so that the strain on network resources was minimal.

"Downloads can be of two different types," Varma said in response to a query. "First, there are the 'foreground downloads' that happen on-screen while someone has clicked 'download now' and is waiting for it to be finished. These cannot be pushed to off-peak hours – it's an on-demand download that needs to happen while it's requested.

Varma said video streaming was in this category. "Then there are 'background downloads' and these are typically patches, firmware updates, over the air updates, etc," he said.

"Heavy game downloads are under this bucket and given the large size of files, they are usually left to run in the background.

"By working in tandem with publishers, we help to schedule these off-peak downloads depending on the geography. This helps the network operators considerably. Some publishers also choose to pre-position content depending on user behaviour and recommendations."

Varma said Akamai used the massive distribution of its network — it has more than 4100 locations globally — to control how content was delivered.

"This [the distribution] gives customers the scale and the geographic reach to deploy and reach users across the globe," he explained.

"The control for how you want to deliver this across the network is controlled online and policies and configurations can be pushed to all of the geographies quickly, in a matter of minutes. This gives companies the flexibility to set rules and configurations that are applicable to different geographies from the Control Centre."

Asked about best practices that users could follow during this period to avoid contributing to the congestion, Varma replied: "We like to think of the Internet in three segments: the first mile, what connects data centres to the rest of the larger Internet; the middle mile, which forms the large bulk of different interconnected networks that form the Internet; and the last mile, the links that users connect from homes and desktops and mobile phones.

"Most of the connectivity issues including network congestion are really in the middle mile. Our strategy is to go right to the edge, as close to the end users as possible. We are a single hop away from 90% of Internet users.

"We solve the middle mile problem by bringing the content down to these servers close to the end users, so they can be served locally – versus hauling the traffic all the way across the pipes and blocking them."

Varma said Akamai could not provide guidance for companies that chose to use applications like Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Skype or other apps; it was left to corporate CIOs to manage things.

"With more people working from home than ever before, businesses are facing new challenges including users' local devices struggling to run the latest version of apps or home Wi-Fi being congested with four people simultaneously streaming," he said.

"The challenge of supporting these demands of working from home rests with corporate CIOs, who must adapt their connectivity and access to support remote workers. As a result, we're seeing more businesses expand their VPN capacity and implement new methodologies like Zero Trust access architectures, to support an increase in remote user volumes and provide secure access to technologies."

Sam Varghese

BT TO USE ERICSSON GEAR FOR CORE OF 5G NETWORK

Now that Huawei is out of the picture, Britain's largest telecommunications provider BT will use equipment from Swedish manufacturer Ericsson for the core parts of its 5G network, with the dual-mode 5G core to be deployed on BT's network cloud.

BT will also use Ericsson gear to replace Huawei equipment in the core of its 4G network, in keeping with [a decision](#) it took when it acquired EE, a telco that was earlier known as Everything Everywhere, in 2016.

EE has used gear from China's Huawei since 2012. The British Government in January decided to allow the Chinese firm a role only in supplying up to a third of non-core equipment for 5G. Parts of the network that service Westminster, where government offices are concentrated, will not use any Huawei gear.

The Ericsson contract with BT for 5G equipment will enable the British carrier to move to a single converged IP network, a statement from Ericsson said.

The containerisation of core network functions will make BT's operations more efficient as it will be able to deliver enhanced mobile broadband, network slicing, mobile edge computing, mission critical vertical industry support and advanced enterprise services.

BT chief technology officer Howard Watson said: "Having evaluated different 5G core vendors, we have selected Ericsson as the best option on the basis of both lab performance and future roadmap.

"We are looking forward to working together as we build out our converged 4G and 5G core network across the UK. An agile, cloud-native core infrastructure is at the heart of our ambition to enable the next generation of exciting 5G services for our customers and give the UK the world-class digital infrastructure it needs to win in the future global economy."

The other options available to BT were Finnish company Nokia and Chinese firm ZTE.

Marielle Lindgren, head of Ericsson in the UK and Ireland, said: "Ericsson and BT have a long history of working together and we are delighted to continue that relationship with this new dual-mode 5G core deal."

The US has campaigned for more than two years to try and push countries it considers allies to avoid using 5G equipment from Huawei in their networks. Thus far, only Australia and Vietnam have said openly that they would follow the US' lead.

Japan, South Korea and Poland have indicated that they are likely to toe the US line.

The UK [broke ranks](#) with the US in January, saying it would allow Huawei to supply up to a third of equipment for non-core parts of its 5G networks. Since then, India, the UAE and Cambodia have said they would allow Huawei to participate in 5G trials.

Sam Varghese

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