Nine out of ten Australians are confused about mobile Internet

Virgin Mobile releases a guide to demystify mobile data

Sydney, 20 May 2010 – Mobile Internet use is increasingly becoming more and more mainstream, with recent Neilson Research showing nearly one in three mobile users is already accessing the internet from their phone.

However, according to new research commissioned by Virgin Mobile most Australians who are using the internet on their phone don’t really understand mobile data. The survey of more than 1,000 people revealed that nine out of ten Aussies using Mobile Internet don’t actually know how much data is required for the activities they are enjoying online, such as Facebook, Twitter or GPS access.

“The fact is that a little bit of mobile data can go a long way but the key is understanding how much data you need, ensuring you have the right data plan and being aware of the danger zones so you can avoid them,” said Anthony Hearne, Marketing Director of Virgin Mobile Australia.

“Our research shows that 60% of mobile users want to start using Mobile Internet more, so Virgin Mobile has created a guide to demystify mobile data and help people choose the best data plan. From now until the end of June, we are offering our customers a ‘surprise’ 1GB of data so they can explore and enjoy the internet on their phone – that will allow you to send about 200,000 emails or update your status on Facebook 546,000 times.”

Mobile Internet is still a relatively new capability and despite the rapid uptake (40% of those who use it only started doing so in the last six months) there are still a lot of people who don’t understand or trust it.

Even amongst those who do use mobile data, many are cautious in their use for fear of ‘bill shock’. As a result three quarters of mobile data users said they consciously limit online activity on their phone because they are worried about going over their data allowance. With the proper advice and appropriate plan, this doesn’t need to be a worry.

To help those who are wondering what mobile data is all about, are unsure how to get the best value or are nervous about going over their chosen data allowance Virgin Mobile has created The Mobile Data Guide. The following guide has all the key things you need to know about using the internet on your phone and choosing the right data plan.
Part one – understanding Mobile Internet:

What is Mobile Internet?
It’s just like the Internet on your computer except you can access it on your phone, so the only big difference is the size of the screen and the fact that you can use it on the go.

How do I access Mobile Internet?
You need a 2G or 3G phone (a 3G handset is faster for browsing than a 2G) to access the internet and Virgin Mobile strongly recommends you get a data plan before going online on your phone, in order to take get the best value and avoid paying a premium unnecessarily.

How is data measured?
Mobile data is measured in kilobytes (KB), megabytes (MB) and gigabytes (GB).
1,024 KB = 1 MB
1,024 MB = 1 GB

How do I know how much data things use?
Most things that people do online use very little data. To give you an idea of how much (or little) data is required to do things online on your phone Virgin Mobile has looked at some of the things you can do with 1GB:

- Send 200,000 emails
- Update your status 546,000 times on Facebook
- View Perez Hilton’s blog 245,000 times
- Post 536,870 tweets

The richer the content the more data it will use. So a high quality video will use a lot more data than a photo, which in turn will use more data than a simple text email or a status update. Feature films for example are approximately 750MB.
How big are applications?
Applications all vary in size and each application should tell you how big it is before you download it. As a safety net, your phone won’t let you use mobile data to download anything larger than 10MB and it will tell you to use a WiFi connection to download applications 10MB and above.

What's the difference between downloading and uploading?
Downloading is what happens when you view, listen to or read things online. For example when you watch a video, open an attachment, visit a website or buy an application you are downloading.

Uploading is what happens when you add something to the internet from your phone. For example if you update your Facebook status, share a picture, add a video online or send an email you are uploading.

Most mobile phone carriers count uploading as well as downloading when calculating your data usage.

Are there hidden costs I should be worried about?
There are no hidden costs but it’s your responsibility to check your contract to see what your carrier charges you for uploading and downloading data. Data is usually competitively-priced if you have a data plan or a data allowance included in your plan. However if you have no data included in your plan or go over your limit that it can get expensive very quickly.

“Bill Shock” is becoming an increasingly used term but it’s really easy to avoid if you have the right data plan to suit your needs and monitor your usage (which is not as hard as it sounds!).

Part two - choosing a data plan:
Will I use my phone to surf the web?
Checking email, updating Facebook and tweeting on a phone is more popular than ever but if you plan to use your phone to browse the web, make sure you choose a plan with a data allowance to suit your needs. When choosing a data plan, think about the type of things you might want to do on your phone and how often you might want to do them.

From now until 30 June 2010, Virgin Mobile is giving all its new and existing Members a ‘surprise’ 1GB of bonus mobile data to explore and enjoy the internet from their phone in any way they choose. It gives Post-Paid mobile Members the opportunity to get a 1GB data plan for three months, a 1GB bonus with Your Cap recharges for Pre-Paid mobile, and a 1GB bonus on activation for new Pre-Paid Broadband Members.

This is a great opportunity for those curious about Mobile Internet to go nuts online and, at the same time, figure out how much data they use in a typical month.
How much data do I want to use on my mobile?
First of all, check if your mobile phone contract comes with a data allowance included. All
Virgin Mobile's latest Pre-Paid and Post-Paid Caps come with a Mobile Internet data
allowance included.

If you plan to just check your email once or twice a day a 50MB data plan will probably work
for you. If want to use the internet on your phone regularly go for a 300MB plan and if you
like to be always connected you may want to go for a 1GB offer.

Don't get sucked in to paying extra for more than 1GB on your phone unless you’re
absolutely sure you need it. 1GB, given the current average persons monthly data usage, is
a huge amount of data, and is mainly purchased by those using their phone as a “tethered
modem”. A tethered modem is when you connect your phone to your computer, usually
through W-Fi, and use your phone's data allowance to upload and download on your
computer.

Talk to your mobile phone provider about what you want to do on your phone and how long
you might spend doing it. They should be able to recommend a plan that suits you.

What if I sign up for a data plan but love Mobile Internet so much I end up needing
more?
Increase your data plan. Talk to your carrier about increasing your data plan – most should
let you do this starting the following month for a minimal charge, or perhaps none at all.

How do I keep track of how much data I'm using?
To avoid any nasty shocks at the end of the month, ensure you choose a mobile phone
provider with a tool to help you monitor your usage. Virgin Mobile’s Bill Preview helps you do
just this.

Also, you can download an application that monitors your data usage so you can check
where you are up to at any time during the month. These apps are available for all carriers
and are usually only a couple of dollars to purchase.
For example: http://www.shihab.com.au/mobileusage/

Whatever your Mobile Internet needs, Virgin Mobile strongly recommends that you shop
around to compare data plans and charges. Spending a little bit of time thinking about the
way you want to use the internet on your phone can mean huge savings in the long run!

-ENDS-

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