

DEFINITIVE 2026 GUIDE

Hosted PBX vs On-Premise PBX: 2026 Australian Guide

What a PBX actually is, how phone systems evolved from PABX to cloud, and a rigorous comparison of hosted (cloud) PBX vs on-premise PBX on cost, TCO, reliability, security, and AI.

A **PBX** (Private Branch Exchange) is the private phone network that routes calls inside your business. The old model was an **on-premise PBX**: a physical box you buy for \$10,000 to \$50,000+ and maintain yourself. The modern model is a **hosted PBX** (also called cloud PBX, virtual PBX, or IP PBX in the cloud): the same features delivered as a monthly per-user subscription with nothing to install on site. Across a 3 to 5 year total cost of ownership, hosted PBX is almost always cheaper, scales instantly, survives office outages through automatic mobile failover, supports remote teams natively, and is the only option where genuine AI call agents are built in. On-premise still suits a shrinking set of edge cases (no reliable internet, strict on-site data rules, heavily customised legacy contact centres).

The short version

Cost Factor	On-Premise PBX	Hosted / Cloud PBX	Uniden Voice Over Cloud
Cost Model	CapEx + maintenance	Monthly OpEx	Simple per-user OpEx
Ongoing Maintenance	\$1,000–\$5,000+/yr	✓ Included	✓ Included
Upgrades & Patching	Manual, chargeable	✓ Automatic	✓ Automatic
End-of-Life Replacement	Full re-purchase (3–5 yr)	✓ None	✓ None
Remote / Mobile Users	Extra hardware / VPN	✓ Included	✓ Free apps
AI Call Agents	✗ Not possible	~ Often add-on	✓ Included
Support	IT contractor callouts	~ Varies	✓ 24-hr local
Predictable Monthly Cost	✗ Lumpy	✓ Yes	✓ Yes, beats any quote

■ Key points

- What an on-premise PBX costs upfront
- Number porting: keeping what customers already dial
- Your Next Reads

Why OpEx Matters Beyond the Balance Sheet

Shifting from CapEx to OpEx does more than preserve cash. It removes the "sunk cost" trap where a business clings to outdated hardware simply because it paid so much for it. With a hosted PBX, you are never locked into ageing equipment, and you never face a five-figure re-investment when the hardware reaches end of life.

■ Questions the full guide answers

- ☐ What is a PBX phone system?
- ☐ What is the difference between hosted PBX and on-premise PBX?
- ☐ Is hosted PBX cheaper than on-premise PBX?
- ☐ Can I keep my phone numbers when moving to a hosted PBX?
- ☐ How reliable is a cloud PBX compared with on-premise?
- ☐ Does a hosted PBX work for remote and hybrid teams?
- ☐ Who still needs an on-premise PBX?

This is the summary. The guide has the detail.

Every point above is worked through in full on our site, with the Australian context, the numbers and the exceptions. If you would rather talk it through, call **1300 881 662** or visit **unidenvoice.com/get-started**.