

Smarter way to watch TV coming with FreeviewPlus

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A smarter way to watch TV is heading into Kiwi homes thanks to an extended partnership of New Zealand broadcasters TVNZ, Mediaworks and Māori Television.

The trio (with support from Radio New Zealand) launched Freeview in May 2007 to help Kiwis transition from free-to-air analogue TV to digital TV. Now eight years later, with that transition complete, another transformation is about to occur with the launch of FreeviewPlus mid-2015.

FreeviewPlus will marry broadcast television with on-demand content allowing viewers to watch catch-up and premiere shows on their TV rather than solely a tablet or other connected device.

The launch of FreeviewPlus is aided by the local release of hybrid broadcast broadband (HbbTV) TVs and set top boxes sold through all major electronics retailers.

Sam Irvine, General Manager at Freeview, believes FreeviewPlus signals the most important advance in free-to-air television since the introduction of digital TV in 2007.

"Online viewing and on-demand are becoming increasingly popular alongside the continued strength of traditional live viewing. So bringing live TV and ondemand together to the big screen is a natural next step in Freeview's innovation path as we look to continuously improve the free-to-air TV viewing experience in New Zealand.

"We've worked closely with our joint venture partners TVNZ, MediaWorks, Māori Television and Radio New Zealand on this project over the past six months to ensure optimal performance and usability for our viewers. We're pleased to be in final testing and looking forward to sharing the end result with Kiwi viewers."

FreeviewPlus will allow viewers to find, bookmark, watch or stream their favourite shows directly to their TV. The new electronic programme guide(EPG) will bring together all available content from TV One, TV2, TV3, FOUR, Māori Television, The Edge TV, Te Reo and the other 20 plus channels on Freeview | HD as well as TVNZ OnDemand , MediaWorks' 3NOW and Māori Television OnDemand as one consolidated content library.

New Zealand's first multi-screen report recently released by Nielsen found Kiwi's love affair with the TV set continues to beat strongly after 46 years on the market. As of this year, nearly 3.6million watch content on a TV set (92% of the population) with around 10% of homes having a hybrid or smart TV.

TVNZ Chief Executive Kevin Kenrick says FreeviewPlus responds to Kiwis desire to watch content on bigger screens. "FreeviewPlus is a smart, simple solution that seamlessly brings OnDemand onto the big screen. There is nothing technical required of the viewer beyond being able to turn on their TV and yet they will have the best of both worlds – free to air television and the freedom of our OnDemand service."

MediaWorks Group CEO, Mark Weldon says FreeviewPlus is an important new development in the New Zealand media landscape.

“By enabling viewers to move between linear free-to-air TV and ondemand services in a frictionless manner, FreeviewPlus delivers clear benefits for audiences and customers. MediaWorks is delighted to be announcing FreeviewPlus alongside our JV partners.”

Maori Television CEO Paora Maxwell says he's excited to be a part of improving New Zealand audiences' viewing experience. “Freeview Plus will allow easy access to the wealth of programmes we have available on our two traditional channels, combined with our extensive catalogue of on-demand content, now all available to them in one place, on their TV screen”.

FreeviewPlus features:

- Switch seamlessly between live and ondemand TV with a click of a button
- Scroll through an 8-day TV guide that displays multiple channels at the same time
- A catch up guide goes back a week so you can catch up with ease
- Search across live and ondemand TV content
- Featured sections showcase selected programmes
- Browse TV and movies libraries by genre
- Set reminders and favourites
- More than 600 ondemand shows and movies
- And of course viewers will continue to receive all the benefit of Freeview | HD with many of their favourite shows broadcast in high definition and surround sound free from subscriptions.

FreeviewPlus is planned for release on the Freeview | HD platform in mid-2015.

LG, Samsung, Sony and Panasonic FreeviewPlus Smart TVs and Dish TV FreeviewPlus set top boxes will be available in all leading electronics retailers from April / May 2015. Viewers who upgrade to these Smart TVs or boxes and connect them to their UHF aerial and home broadband, will automatically pick up the FreeviewPlus service on go live.

For further information, please visit www.freeviewplus.co.nz

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