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Setting the standard for IPTV delivery to smart devices

New Zealand's new Freeview On Demand service is setting the standard for Video On Demand delivery to smart TV's via HbbTV, the CEO of Freeview Jason Foden told delegates of Mediatech Pacific Conference 2018 in Auckland yesterday.

The service provides viewers with a major upgrade to the previous FreeviewPlus platform with seamless browsing, effortless streaming and optimised playback of TVNZ, Three and Maori Television content.

Developed by leading Over the Top solution provider Switch Media, the On Demand service commenced a rolling launch earlier last month to replace the previous FreeviewPlus offering.

Mr Foden said the solution, a single Freeview App supported by the Switch Media back end, met the needs of the changing face of media and entertainment consumption in New Zealand for now and the future.

"Switch Media provided a flexible and innovative framework for on-boarding of participating broadcaster content compatible with a range of popular Smart TVs in the NZ market," Mr Foden said.

"The viewer-centric approach taken in its development means viewers can now enjoy easier access to On Demand and a more seamless viewing experience."

Switch Media delivers world-class OTT solutions for clients across a diverse range of industries, from broadcasters and content providers, through to educational institutions and government. They work with the major broadcasters in Australia - including Channel 7, Network Ten, SBS, ABC and Foxtel - and developed the world-first multi-award-winning Freeview FV mobile app.

Its Chief Technical Officer, Luke Durham, said the new delivery solution not only immediately enhances the viewing experience, but also presents Freeview and their member broadcasters the chance to grow the audience and realise new revenue opportunities.

"If we look at why leading streaming companies around the world are so successful, it's because they give people what they want and make it easy for them to access it," Mr Durham said.

"The Freeview On Demand platform makes the viewing experience consistent across all programs and expands the features to improve the overall experience.

"By pooling resources into a single service, it has enabled Freeview NZ and its member broadcasters to lower costs, as well as improve quality and reliability, and foster innovation.

"The platform we have delivered for Freeview NZ can easily be extended in the future beyond smart TVs and made available on companion services, so people can watch live and on-demand TV shows and movies anywhere at any time."

- The Freeview On-Demand Platform also enables a range of new features that are, or soon will be available for viewers, including the ability to: browse and search the program guide without interrupting the current program they are watching;
- plan viewing on the go using reminders and notifications;

- control their Personal Video Recorders (PVR) from anywhere so they can set up recordings remotely; and,
- record and playback programs without a PVR, where the recordings are created in the 'cloud'.

The development of IP streaming on the Freeview service will also enable niche content offerings to be made available which is not feasible using the traditional broadcast approach. Mr Durham said the most significant optimisation that benefits advertisers and viewers alike is the introduction of server-side ad insertion.

“The ads are stitched into the VOD streams before they are sent to the screen, which eliminates buffering and gives a more seamless TV-like experience,” Mr Durham said.

“Furthermore, the solution provides insights that enable broadcasters to deliver a personalised viewing experience for their audience. They can serve ads tailored to the viewer based on information such as viewing history, location or by specific rules, ensuring maximum ad revenue.

“Not only is this good for broadcasters but also for viewers. Research we recently conducted shows viewers don't mind advertising, especially on free-to-air TV, provided it isn't too intrusive or disruptive, and is relevant. Server-side ad insertion technology, such as AdEase, is a key solution to this problem.”

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For further information:

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About Switch Media: Switch Media is an Australian company founded in 2006 that is a world leader in delivering online video solutions for a diverse range of industries, from broadcasters and content providers through to educational institutions and government. Utilising its multi-screen video platform, Media Manager, coupled with a world-class technical team, Switch Media delivers OTT solutions for a superior Live and Catch-Up viewing experience – anywhere, anytime, on any device. Its services include content editing platforms, app development, tools to monetise content, through to the delivery of video to end users across multiple devices. <https://www.switch.tv/>