

News

Netflix 'fear' a replay

Streaming to hit shores this month

TV AND movie streaming service Netflix will launch in Australia on March 24, exciting TV and film buffs who predict the service will provide the shake-up the Australian film and TV industry needs.

It will also provide a minor alternative for those fearing an internet piracy crackdown, which would see three warnings before possible fines and prosecution.

While it was yet to be revealed how much Netflix would actually cost in Australia, internet service providers such as iiNET and gaming companies have already started promoting deals to entice customers. But will the service really be value for money and help with piracy?

The service has allowed US and UK users to "binge" on content for years, but sceptics say it's unlikely Australians

will get the same deal.

Considering the history of "Australian versions", it's likely we will be dished up a sub-par version of the original.

Netflix confirmed this by announcing that while the packaging will be the same, the availability and timing of content will be restricted for Australians compared to its overseas customers.

Users hoping to get an endless and unlimited stream of content on one provider were setting themselves up for disappointment as licensing agreements meant popular TV series would be split up across streaming services such as Stan and Presto.

As for Game of Thrones, the most pirated, rented and viewed on pay TV series of all time, it's unlikely it will appear on a streaming platform any time soon.

THERE has been a lot of assumption surrounding Netflix and the subsequent "death of video and pay TV".

But an industry insider for more than 30 years felt that couldn't be further from the case. Managing director of Network Video Australia, Keran Wicks, said she was happy Netflix was finally here as people would see it for what it was.

"People like to talk about the death of video stores but the reports are greatly exaggerated, they've been talking about it for 30 years," Ms Wicks said.

"They said piracy would, they said Foxtel would but it's clearly not the case. People still love to rent.

"Our Coolum store stats show the best sales they've had in a number of years."

Ms Wicks said video stores still held relevance in the streaming age as they provided more variety, customer service knowledge and on-demand accessibility.

"They're (Netflix) not going to have any more product available than any other video on-demand site in Australia, with the exception of exclusive series like House of Cards and Orange is the New Black."

Despite popular belief that video store profits were on the decline, Ms Wicks said the independents were still doing well.

"Australians love to rent, nobody can see around the corner but certainly for the next three years and foreseeable future rental stores are doing perfectly OK business and will continue to do so," she said.

However she did admit the franchise model as seen in larger chains like Video Ezy and Blockbuster had taken a beating. When it came to Foxtel Ms Wicks noted that the pay TV provider was already preparing to be hit by the rise of streaming.

"They've had to halve their pricing, which has given them a slight increase in subscription but they have been hit harder than us," she said.

As for piracy Ms Wicks felt there would always be people who wanted to watch high quality.

"People spent so much money on their home theatres, why would they go for anything less than great quality?" Ms Wicks said.



STILL IN THE MARKET: Keran Wicks at Coolum's Network Video store. PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED