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Get ready for next-gen Google phone

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The second-generation Google phone will go on sale in Australia from the middle of next month, with a sleeker design and updated features aimed squarely at the iPhone's youth market.

The HTC Magic, based on Google's Android platform, is the successor to the [HTC Dream](#), which went on sale in February as the first Google phone for the Australian market.

[Vodafone](#) and [Three](#) said they would be selling white and black versions of the Magic, respectively, from the middle of June.

Three, the only carrier to reveal pricing plans so far, will offer the device on a range of plans including for free on a \$99 a month contract. Adding on 3GB of data for web browsing, the 3G phone can be had for just under \$120 a month.

In the new device, the slide-out keyboard of the Dream is replaced by an on-screen virtual keyboard, similar to the iPhone. Its curved design fits the hand better than the Dream's square, angular chassis.

The Magic also contains several new features such as an updated operating system, video recording, longer battery life, better web browser with flash support and updated Bluetooth A2DP connectivity that allows users to stream music to a wireless headset.

As with the BlackBerry, Windows Mobile and iPhone platforms, Google phone users can expand the functionality of the device by installing applications from the "Android Market" - similar to the iTunes App Store.

There are 3200 free and paid-for applications to choose from, but so far Australians can only access the free apps. HTC's sales and marketing director, Anthony Petts, said the ability to buy apps would be coming to Australia "soon".

Telsyte mobile analyst Warren Chaisatien said the suite of third-party applications on the Android platform was "amazing" but without the marketing clout and brand presence of Apple the Google phone would have trouble toppling the iPhone.

"I don't think it will take hold rapidly ... it's going to be a niche product," he said.

Conversely, Three's director of sales and marketing, Noel Hamill, said the response to the HTC Magic had been "phenomenal" and hundreds of people had pre-registered to buy the handset.

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The phone also comes preloaded with a suite of Google online applications including Gmail, Google search, Google Maps, Google Calendar, Google Talk and YouTube. YouTube has been redesigned to be speedy and intuitive on a mobile screen, while, with Google Maps Street View, users can pan the view 360 degrees just by moving around with the phone.

The Google Latitude app lets users broadcast their current location to approved friends and family.

Other notable apps available through the Android market include Wikitude (point the phone at landmarks and it will tell identify them and provide a description), Sky Map (for finding constellations), "near you" (find bars, restaurants, cinemas and cafes around you) and Buddy Runner (monitor exercise and daily calorie intake).

"The typical user is the youth user, the online user ... who wants that simple and integrated access," said Potts.

The Magic's 3.2 megapixel camera lacks a built-in flash, but GPS and Wi-Fi are both included and the 3.2-inch touch screen is similar to the iPhone's 3.5-inch screen.

This story was found at: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2009/05/28/1243456665227.html>