

# **Submission to the National Cultural Policy Review**

Games and Interactive Entertainment

May 2026

I am a games industry professional of over 30 years, working in the Australian and New Zealand market. I am submitting because the current policy settings are leaving serious economic and cultural value on the table — and because the data that does exist almost certainly understates the problem.

## **The Scale of the Industry Is Being Underestimated**

Australia's games industry is reported to generate around \$600 million in domestic sales — roughly 65% of film and television — yet receives only 3% of the public funding film and video production receives. That disparity is already indefensible. But the reported figure is itself a known undercount.

Australia lacks a mandatory, comprehensive reporting mechanism for games revenue. The figures that exist rely on voluntary surveys and industry estimates — and the studios most likely to opt out are precisely the most commercially successful ones. Globally, games revenue now exceeds film and music combined by most industry measures. There is no credible reason to believe Australia's games sector is categorically smaller than its film sector. The data gap is a policy failure in itself, and any review that takes the reported number at face value is working from an incomplete picture.

## **What Other Countries Understand That Australia Doesn't**

The countries producing the world's most successful games studios didn't get there by funding artistic projects in isolation. The UK's Games Tax Relief and UK Games Fund, Canada's CMF Interactive and provincial tax credits, and Turkey's government-backed games grants all share a common design principle: they support the full commercial lifecycle of a game, not just its creation. Development funding is the starting point, not the whole answer.

Australia funds making. It does not meaningfully fund the business of making games sustainably. That distinction is why Australian studios are regularly acquired by foreign publishers or dependent on overseas distribution infrastructure to reach audiences — exporting the revenue, the IP, and often eventually the people.

## **Marketing Is Part of the Creative Pipeline**

A game no one discovers has no cultural impact and no economic return. Marketing, distribution, and publishing infrastructure are as integral to a game reaching an audience as the code and art that make it. Yet these costs are routinely excluded from funding eligibility. The result is Australian studios making games that disappear — not because the work wasn't good, but because there was no support for getting it seen.

Funding a game without funding its path to market is like funding a film and then refusing to pay for the cinema. The creative investment is wasted if the commercial infrastructure to support it isn't there.

## **The Publishing Problem: Revenue Is Leaving Australia**

Most successful Australian studios are eventually acquired, distribute through foreign publishers, or rely on platform storefronts that extract significant margin and export the revenue offshore. Australia currently has almost no domestic publishing infrastructure — no mechanism for studios to repeatedly release games under their own commercial terms, building audiences and revenue that stays in the country.

This is the equivalent of Australia producing world-class music and having no local labels, no local touring infrastructure, and no mechanism for artists to build sustainable careers without signing to a foreign major. The talent is here. The commercial infrastructure to retain the value of that talent is not.

### **Specific Recommendations**

1. Establish a dedicated federal games fund of at least \$20 million annually, benchmarked against UK and Canadian models, with eligibility explicitly covering development, marketing, and commercial launch costs.
2. Commission a mandatory, standardised games industry revenue reporting framework — without reliable data, the sector will continue to be systematically underfunded relative to its actual size.
3. Create funding and incentive structures that explicitly support Australian-based publishing operations — not just game development — to retain IP, revenue, and talent onshore.
4. Appoint working gamemakers — not adjacent screen industry figures — to any governance or assessment body responsible for games funding decisions.
5. Set up a dedicated national games agency led by people with gamemaking experience to manage programs, build sector capacity, and act as a genuine interface between the games sector and state and federal screen, arts, and cultural agencies.

Australia is producing world-class games with one hand tied behind its back. The studios doing it are small, founder-led, and largely self-funded. The ones that survive long enough to publish a second or third game do so despite the system, not because of it. The countries pulling ahead have figured out that supporting a games industry means supporting the full commercial lifecycle — making, marketing, publishing, and retaining the value domestically. That is the gap this policy review has an opportunity to close.