

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public and anonymous

Individual

Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

[REDACTED] I have worked on now-defunct platforms, won an international award from a multi-billion dollar game company, [REDACTED]

Back in 2009 I created some free artistic web-games for the public. After just a year, I had thousands of messages from people saying how my work reshaped their view on games, how they found new meaning in life, how they sought to repair love. I was invited to a wedding, prevented a suicide, and was asked for my opinion on baby names. I was bombarded with life-changing news from total strangers whose lives I had permanently shifted, at the age of 18.

So despite this, despite winning awards, growing a fan-base, and gaining international recognition, why was it still near-impossible for me to find *some* stability until my first [REDACTED] grant?

In the current climate, money is the primary issue, both in the form of funding available to us and financial stability. In NSW, the cost of living is so high that many game-developers work multiple jobs (or change state) so that they can progress their game career, the one deemed a “hobby”. Public funding, both at the state and federal levels, is also painfully scarce, especially when compared to film and television. I am beyond privileged to have to be awarded so much, but I receive that support knowing that others just as passionate and dedicated, if not more-so, go without, possibly giving up, costing Australia another possible masterpiece.

Beyond funding creatives however, funding and support for industry events and organisations such as ‘Freeplay’, ‘Waypoint’, and ‘Constellations’ allows these groups to provide platforms to uplift developers such as myself. Speaking at one puts you in a spotlight that then draws more and more eyes to you, taking you to other events to rise higher. These events uplift developers and artists, give them a voice, and puts both the public and industry’s eyes on them. In my case, speaking at one event gave my game more attention, and led to more groups asking me to come speak and showcase for them as well, which ultimately allowed me to present my work on international stages twice. Despite this, events like ‘Freeplay’ (globally longest running independent games event) have their funding cut, alongside a row of other game and game-adjacent events such as ‘SXSW Sydney’.

This all harks to the second major issue; the games industry needs more fair recognition as both valid art and career. We are often told that games are not art, just violent outlets or forms of addiction, and our work is brushed aside for all other mediums. But again, I direct you to the works I did as a teenager that drew so much positivity from total strangers. Attend any of the events I also mentioned above, all of which I have had the fortune of either attending, showcasing at, or even speaking at, and you will see the artistic merit of games.

We need to continue to fund our independent developers and events, support them as artistic equals, and further encourage their preservation in our national archive so that their cultural merit can be preserved for generations to come.