

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Individual

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Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

I am a researcher and PhD candidate at [REDACTED] University. I have been researching the Australian videogame industry for the past three years, with a focus on the conditions of those who work in the game industry and their experiences with public funding and support.

Games are important to Australians, but the industry lacks consistent leadership, guidance and support from the federal government. The next National Cultural Policy is a key opportunity to seriously recognise and engage with games as an important cultural and economic sector.

My research shows that while the industry is productive and financially and culturally successful, Australian games workers are dealing with precarious conditions and struggle to make a sustainable living wage through their games work. Currently, most games made in Australia are produced by very small teams of less than ten employees, many of whom work on a contract or part-time basis.

We have an abundance of talented and passionate game developers in Australia. Given the proper infrastructure, these workers could develop a thriving, sustainable industry and support increased and higher-quality employment for games workers. As it stands, however, there is a chronic lack of long-term, structural support for the industry which prevents the development of sustainable game development companies.

The great success of the Victorian games industry in recent years provides a useful case study. In periods where VicScreen has provided robust and consistent funding and support to the industry, we have seen immense returns on this support with breakout financial and cultural successes such as *Cult of the Lamb* and *Untitled Goose Game*. A key component of this success is not just the provision of development and production funding for individual games projects, but also reliable funding for bodies like Freeplay, which provide crucial infrastructure to game workers.

This level of support has historically been delivered by the states in a patchwork and inconsistent manner. It is not feasible to expect micro-sized game studios to remain sustainable and employ more workers without consistent, long-term financial and infrastructural support. Therefore, I recommend that the federal government commit to funding games by at least 10% of the national film and television budget, or \$20 million per year.

To ensure that this funding is distributed fairly and efficiently, I also recommend that a reasonable proportion of appointees to governing boards and executive teams involved in policymaking and funding around games have a background in games work or research on games. A key finding of my research is that games workers are frustrated by the lack of understanding and knowledge of games at high levels of policymaking. This issue would be easily rectified by a commitment to include games industry stakeholders in decision-making processes.