

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public

Individual

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Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

I'm making a submission in my capacity as a director of a non for profit community arts organisation, and as a practitioner of digital arts.

Games — including the broader ecosystem of gaming culture and interactive art — is one of the artforms most often engaged with by Australians of all ages. This is no exaggeration. 4 out of 5 people play digital games regularly, and well over 9 out of 10 have played games more broadly.

However, the industry that creates them receives little financial support. When directly compared to the television and film industry:

- Funding received: roughly 3% compared to F&T funding
- Employment: 10% of F&T employment
- Sales: 65% (\$600 million) in domestic sales compared to F&T

It's important to note that with that small percentage of funding, the lion's share is left to the states to offer and manage — resulting in gamemakers being forced to move cities to pursue even brief opportunities.

Furthermore, the majority of games are made by very small studios or solo practitioners, including many of Australia's most successful games. Like many other artforms, a gamemakers' first game is often very experimental (and rarely profitable) but often still expensive. That first independent project defines that gamemaker's voice, practice and viability for investment in future projects, but is out of reach financially for many gamemakers to pursue. Decision-makers from other arts and screen sectors do not understand this, and many do not understand gamemaking at all, which often leads to games programmes being devalued or mis-allocated. Decisions about games, whether that's policies, strategies or funding, should be made at least in part by gamemakers.

Games let people actually live Australian stories rather than merely watch them. In an artform that is so regularly engaged with by Australians, in a medium rich with complexity in style, genre and access, an increase in funding lets us better tell Australian stories written in Australian voices in diverse ways.

Key asks:

- Governing boards, executive teams and others responsible for promoting, funding and policymaking for games must appoint people with games industry experience or games research background.
- The majority of appointees to decision-making panels and peer assessment responsible for funding games should be working gamemakers.
- The federal government should top up games funding to make sure games get at least 10% of what film and television production gets nationally.
- Set up a dedicated national games agency led and run by people with gamemaking experience to manage games programs and funding, build sector capacity, champion Australian games globally, and act as an interface between the interactive arts sectors and arts and cultural agencies.
- Create a dedicated category of "interactive arts" in Creative Australia to make sure that non-digital games have access to funding and program support because they cannot access this through screen agencies, and that funding outcomes can be accurately captured.

- Regulations to ensure harmful, anti-social or anti-worker “artificial intelligence” technologies are not used in or in the development of publicly-supported games projects.