

Submission to Australia's New National Cultural Policy

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I am a senior lecturer based in business at the University of the Sunshine Coast (UniSC), and Australia's leading video game and marketing scholar. I have researched video games for over 10 years, and my work has encompassed academic journal articles, a book published by Routledge, marketing workshops, work and lectures for various organisations including The Array in Darwin, CODE in New Zealand, Screen Queensland and Level Her Up in Perth, and Ubisoft. Recently, I led a research report for Screen Australia, and I regularly provide expert commentary for news organisations including the ABC, BBC, Sky News, and Seven News. I welcome the opportunity to contribute a submission to Australia's new National Cultural Policy focusing on the role and media of the video game industry in Pillar 5. The submission commences with the background of the Australian video game industry and makes four broad recommendations designed to enhance discoverability and marketing of Australian-made video games.

Background

Australians have been making video games since 1980, and the industry has long been culturally and artistically important. Australian made video games have been nominated for, and won, prestigious international awards, connected with their players, communicated meaning¹ and are being actively conserved in cultural institutions including the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI) and the National Sound and Film Archive (NSFA). The Australian video game industry was home to several large and successful nationally grown studios before contracting significantly due to the 2008 global financial crisis².

This contraction saw the rise of a rich and creative industry mostly consisting of small and independent studios. A number of globally successful titles have come from this new industry including *Untitled Goose Game* by House House, *Cult of the Lamb* by Massive Monster, *Unpacking* by Witchbeam and *Hollow Knight* and its sequel *Hollow Knight: Silksong* by Team Cherry. These games have won or been nominated for prestigious, international awards including Grammys and British Academy Film Awards demonstrating the renown, creativity and commercial success that Australian video game developers can achieve internationally.

Video games once had a reputation as a childish hobby, but they are now undoubtedly mainstream given 81% of Australians, with an average age of 35, play video games³. Video games can tell rich stories and present deeply constructed characters that touch players emotionally⁴. Video games are also highly social allowing for thriving communities to form online and share in-depth discussions, and critiques about the games they play⁵. Furthermore, video game development requires highly desirable, transferrable skills including storytelling, visual design, computer programming, software development, network coding and user-interface design⁶.

¹ Keogh, B. (2023). *The Videogame Industry Does Not Exist*. The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

² Packwood, L. (2026, 7 April). The rise, fall, and resurgence of Australian game development. *GamesIndustry.biz*. <https://www.gamesindustry.biz/the-rise-fall-and-resurgence-of-australian-game-development>

³ IGEA. (2025). Australia Plays 2025. IGEA. https://igea.net/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/AP25-Report-28_08-WITH-LINKS.pdf

⁴ Burgess, J. (2026), *Managing the Authenticity of Narrative Brands*. Routledge: Abingdon.

⁵ Pourazad, N., Abedin, E., & Burgess, J. (2026). Online brand advocacy and video game consumers. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, ahead-of-print. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JPBm-03-2025-5866>

⁶ Keogh, B., & Hardwick, T. (2024). Creative, Technical, Entrepreneurial: Formative Tensions in Game Development Higher Education. *Games and Culture*, 19(6), 804-826.

Thus, a growing and successful video game industry provides Australian society with more than just financial benefits.

Just as video games have developed as a media, so has the Australian video game industry. The Australian industry had about 1,300 employees in 2020-2021⁷ and now has 2,443 in 2026⁸. Furthermore, 49% of Australian studios have been active for at least six years, which is significant given the Australian video game industry has been considered young and precarious with studios that frequently form and disband⁹. The Australian video game industry is thus on a more secure footing now than it has been in years. Larger studios have returned, successful independent studios have been established, and funding has become available from Federal, State and Territory screen agencies.

However, despite these successes, the Australian video game industry requires further support to continue to mature as a cultural and creative industry and stay on its growth pathway. This submission presents four broad recommendations aligned to Pillar 5 of the National Cultural Policy. These recommendations are to: (1) establish a central hub for video game resources and support in Australia; (2) increase funding and support targeted to enhance discoverability of Australian-made games; (3) support the development of business skills in the Australian video game industry and; (4) recognise and support that video games can be both artistic and commercial outputs. These recommendations are explained below.

Recommendation 1: Establish a central hub for video game resources and support in Australia

Many developers are attracted to the video game industry by their passion for video game development¹⁰ and thus have little experience with the business aspects of game development⁹. Financial sustainability in the video game industry in Australia has long been a challenge for a variety of reasons^{11,12}. However, a lack of marketing knowledge and skills is an important contributor because marketing is essential for small businesses, which is what many Australian video game studios are. Marketing knowledge and skills are necessary for video game developers to understand and identify customers, offer them value and innovate and achieve financial success and sustainability⁹. Higher education is a common pathway into video game development¹⁰, but of the 119 higher education video game programs identified by Keogh and Hardwick (2024), only five contained a course that explicitly focused on marketing. Furthermore, many video game higher education graduates start their own small studios because there are more graduates than jobs⁶ and thus need marketing knowledge and skills to be successful^{13, 14}. However, my research has found that many Australian video game developers' have an uneven knowledge of marketing⁹. Among commercially minded developers there is a strong appreciation that marketing is important, yet they have limited in-depth knowledge of how to approach marketing or when to start marketing a video game.

This lack of marketing knowledge and skills is exacerbated by the fact that in Australia, Victoria and Queensland are the centres of the video game industry. Thus, developers located outside of Melbourne and Brisbane are far

⁷ Taylor, T. (2025, 10 August). Tax relief and Carmen Sandiego: Australia's once-dismissed video game industry is finally getting a leg-up. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2025/aug/10/australia-video-game-industry-tax-relief-and-carmen-sandiego>

⁸ IGEA. (2026). Australian Games Development: 2025 Industry Snapshot. *IGEA*. <https://igea.net/2026/03/agds-2025/>

⁹ Burgess, J., Muscat, A., Grace, A., & Jones, C. (2024). Local issues and global challenges: understanding marketing within the Trans-Tasman video game industry. *Creative Industries Journal*, 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17510694.2024.2389805>

¹⁰ Keogh, B. (2023). *The Videogame Industry Does Not Exist*. The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

¹¹ Golding, D. (2019, 28 October). Market minesweeper: surviving in the videogames industry. *Metro Magazine*. <https://metromagazine.com.au/market-minesweeper-surviving-in-the-videogames-industry/>

¹² Banks, J., & Keogh, B. (2021). More than one flop from bankruptcy: Rethinking sustainable independent game development. *Game Production Studies*, 159-176. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9789048551736-010>

¹³ Zackariasson, P., & Dymek, M. (2016). *Video Game Marketing*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

¹⁴ Ren, S., Eisingerich, A. B., & Tsai, H-T. (2015). How do marketing, research and development capabilities, and degree of internationalization synergistically affect the innovation performance of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)? A panel data study of Chinese SMEs. *International Business Review*, 24(4), 642-651. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ibusrev.2014.11.006>

away from knowledge and resource centres¹⁵ making it harder to learn from mentors and networks. Many developers in my research have noted that they learnt marketing and localisation lessons from making mistakes or facing challenges in their first game or left marketing activities later than they would like to in the game development process. To enhance sustainability and discoverability of Australian video games, there should be a focus on making more resources available that target discoverability and business knowledge and skills including marketing and localisation. Currently, resources for video game developers are scattered across various websites, associations, consultancies and in-person events. One location or repository is needed to provide Australian video game developers with guides, links, templates and resources. A single repository would allow government and industry associations to be more efficient by directing developers to one location, rather than hosting or providing their own bespoke resources.

Such an approach will help reduce the disadvantage of video game developers, who do not live in or cannot travel to industry centres, as well as supporting future regional video game industries. Australia's smaller video game industries, such as those in the Northern Territory and Tasmania, were formed and grew on the back of a central community and hub that supported developers and encouraged and allowed knowledge sharing. A digital repository would allow developers without a community to gain some of the benefits of one by accessing resources.

Recommendation 2: Increase funding and support targeted to enhance discoverability of Australian-made games

In recent years, funding for video games has increased from all the states and territories as well as the Federal government. Grants are now available for video game development as well as other support such as travel grants and tax offsets. However, this support is still limited compared to the funds available for traditional screen industries. Funding and grants are key to success for independent video game studios, which are the majority of the Australian studios, so they can continue given the high levels of competition and precarity of the global video game industry. Furthermore, in addition to increasing financial support, to enhance discoverability more specific grants devoted to marketing, localisation and commercial development tasks should be introduced for commercially minded developers. In my research, examining marketing, localisation and internationalisation processes in the Australian video game industry, I have found many examples of developers who were not able to dedicate resources to marketing or localisation of their video games as development costs rose or required more time than initially budgeted. Putting aside specific funds to assist with these tasks would help with the discoverability of Australian-made video games given over 21,000 games were released on Steam in 2025 alone¹⁶. Localisation is key for discoverability given 95% of the revenue made by Australian video game studios was generated from outside of Australia⁸. Without access to specific funding and grants for marketing and localisation, small developers will continue to struggle to reach markets.

Recommendation 3: Support the development of business skills in the Australian video game industry

In addition to providing specific funds or grants for developers for localisation and marketing to make their games discoverable, Australian video game developers need more opportunities for training and professional development in these key areas. Because each state and territory operates their own funding and support schemes, what developers can access depends on their location and the resources that their local screen agency or industry association can provide. Australia should look at the Centre for Digital Excellence (CODE), headquartered in Dunedin, New Zealand, as an example of a body dedicated to video games that both funds video game production as well as providing wrap around support. CODE provides workshops, resources and other training measures to ensure that video game developers are not just provided with funding but also the

¹⁵ Morris, J., Morris, W., & Bowen, R. (2022). Implications of the digital divide on rural SME resilience. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 89, 369-377. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2022.01.005>

¹⁶ Steam DB, (2026). Steam Game Releases by Month. *SteamDB*. <https://steamdb.info/stats/releases/>

knowledge and skills needed to manage the business aspects of their video games including marketing and discoverability. My research indicates that small Australian video game developers, particularly those making their first game, would benefit from training in market research, value propositions, identifying a target market, brand management, localisation planning and other marketing and discoverability skills. Furthermore, there is no evidence as to what kind of training is most effective for video game developers or even small business generally: in-person, online synchronous or online asynchronous. Training could be offered in conjunction with evaluation to determine the most effective kind to scale up.

Recommendation 4: Recognise and support that video games can be both artistic and commercial outputs

The Australian video game industry can be considered a broad church with sectors focusing on commerce and financial sustainability and others on creativity and artistic expression^{9,10}. Video games can thus be an artistic focused or commercial focused media. That is not to say that developers, who focus on financial sustainability, are not creative or artistic. My research has found that developers, who focus on the commercial, do not necessarily see a tension with making decisions that they believe will appeal to more players⁹. Developers can be creative and artistic, while also trying to appeal to a large enough group of players to generate sufficient financial return. However, developers, who are motivated purely by art, have different support needs ranging from funding to professional development. A one-size fits all approach does not work for artistic and commercially motivated developers and is evidenced by the fact there are associations and community groups dedicated purely to artistic games. Therefore, any specific support or funding for video game developers, who create artistic rather than commercial video games, should be offered separately. Commercial and artistic-focused developers should not be competing for the same funding given their different motivations. Funding for video game art and artistry should be available from different funding bodies than the screen agencies to avoid confusion and frustration.

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