



Tabletop Game Designers Australia

Submission to the Public Consultation on a New National Cultural Policy

Executive Summary

Tabletop game design is a legitimate, growing, and culturally significant Australian art form and creative practice that is currently invisible in federal arts and cultural funding frameworks. This is not a matter of oversight. It is a structural exclusion documented in the funding guidelines of every relevant agency.

Creative Australia's application guidance states that it "does not generally support" activities associated with games, and refers applicants to **Screen Australia**. **Screen Australia's** games programs explicitly exclude "games that are not completely digital, including boardgames or hybrid digital/physical games." The **Digital Games Tax Offset** requires games to be "in electronic form" with a minimum \$500,000 spend. Every state screen body follows the same digital-only model.

The result: no Australian government funding mechanism at any level currently supports tabletop game design, despite robust peer-reviewed evidence of its cultural, educational, and wellbeing value, and market data showing the ANZ sector is worth approximately AUD 1–1.2 billion annually and growing at double-digit rates.

Of the five pillars, the structural exclusion bites hardest on **Strong Cultural Infrastructure** and **Centrality of the Artist**, though tabletop has a legitimate contribution to make to all five, as this submission sets out.

This submission asks the next National Cultural Policy to close that gap. Our recommendations are structural, cost-effective, and complementary to existing digital games policy rather than a duplication of it.

The central ask is simple: direct Creative Australia to revise its guidance so tabletop game design is recognised as a supported creative practice, making it eligible under existing programs rather than requiring any new ones. We also recommend modest, supporting measures: occupational recognition, a recurring sector data program, support for community infrastructure, and inclusion in national collections.

Tabletop game design strengthens the Australian economy, connects people through in-person play, and tells distinctively Australian stories. It does all three at modest cost to government, yet it is the one creative practice these frameworks leave out. We believe there is genuine scope for productive collaboration, and we look forward to the conversation.



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About Tabletop Game Designers Australia

Tabletop Game Designers Australia (TGDA) is grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the public consultation on the next National Cultural Policy. For more than 10 years, TGDA's mission has been to advocate for and facilitate Australian tabletop game design, development, and commercialisation, alongside the growth of the community and culture that sustain them. Tabletop games include board games, card games, tabletop role-playing games (TTRPGs), escape rooms, puzzles, megagames, miniatures and wargames.

Beyond its formal membership, TGDA supports a broader Australian tabletop community of approximately 5,000 independent solo designers, small studios, emerging publishers, educators, event organisers, and the wider community of engaged practitioners who are part of the sector. Our network reaches every state and territory. We engage with government, industry partners, and the broader creative economy to grow a sustainable and internationally competitive Australian tabletop game sector.

This submission is made by TGDA as a sector peak body and is intended to serve as the representative tabletop sector contribution to this consultation. It draws on input from TGDA's State Representatives, committee members, and broader community experiences. Individual TGDA members and community practitioners may lodge separate submissions reflecting their own perspectives, which we welcome as complementary.



The Australian Tabletop Sector: Context and Scale

A Sector With Deep Roots

Tabletop games in Australia are not a recent phenomenon. First Nations games and game-like activities, including those documented in the Yulunga collection and other regional traditions, are longstanding cultural practices that are still taught and played in schools and community settings today, with training and educational support provided by bodies including the NSW Office of Sport.

Modern Australian tabletop design also has a decades-long history. Australian publishers and designers have been active since at least the early 1980s, with the Australian Design Group founded in 1982. Contemporary Australian designers continue to publish internationally and contribute to the sector. The Australian tabletop sector is therefore not an emerging activity seeking first-time recognition; it is an established creative practice operating without the structural recognition extended to comparable creative industries.

Current Market Size and Growth

Recent sector research places the Australian board games market at USD 518.84 million in 2024, with a forecast compound annual growth rate of 9.06% to 2033 (IMARC Group). Once TTRPGs, trading card games, miniatures and hobby accessories are included alongside New Zealand's market, the ANZ tabletop sector is estimated at up to AUD 1–1.2 billion annually (Cross, 2025). Narrower definitions that exclude hobby segments produce lower figures; the variability itself illustrates how poorly Australian tabletop activity is currently captured in official data. Globally, Asia-Pacific is identified as the fastest-growing tabletop region, and Australia behaves as a mature, high-income, export-oriented sub-market within it.

A YouGov global survey finds 19% of adults list board or card games as a hobby. Applied to Australia's population, this suggests on the order of 5 million Australian participants, though no Australia-specific YouGov figure is published. Australian-specific data from IGEA's national survey of video game players (Brand et al., 2023, n=3,234) found 18% selected Board/Card as a preferred game genre, indicating that tabletop play is widespread alongside digital play in Australian households. Compared with video game players globally, tabletop hobbyists skew slightly more female, are more likely to live with children, and are more likely to engage in regular, in-person social activity (YouGov).

Cultural and Creative Contribution

Australian and New Zealand designers produce tabletop intellectual property that succeeds internationally. Phil Walker-Harding (*Sushi Go!*, *Imhotep*, *Bärenpark*), Matt Dunstan (*Next Station: London*, a Spiel des Jahres nominee), Shem Phillips and S.J. Macdonald (the internationally acclaimed Garphill Games trilogies), and Martin Wallace (*Brass: Birmingham*, ranked at or near the top of BoardGameGeek) are globally recognised. *A Game Called Birds*, a Tasmanian-designed title celebrating Australian birdlife with a portion of proceeds supporting conservation, has outsold global evergreen titles at local retailers, demonstrating the commercial and cultural viability of distinctively Australian themes. Phil and Meredith Walker-Harding's company Joey Games designs games to celebrate the peoples, plants and animals of Australia and foster intergenerational play between children and adults, showing both the cultural and audience-building potential of distinctively Australian themes.



These creators represent a genuine export-capable creative industry. The financial upside, however, currently flows predominantly through overseas publishers, because there is no domestic publishing infrastructure of comparable scale to support them. The same pattern appears in reverse: internationally produced games profit from Australian cultural content (Wingspan Oceania, built around Australian and Oceanian birdlife, is one example) with none of that value returning to Australia.

Community Infrastructure

The Australian tabletop sector is sustained by a dense network of community infrastructure: PAX Australia's tabletop hall, DevCon (TGDA's annual industry event), CanCon, TableTopCon, PlayCon, MeepleCon, ShepparCon, OzBunnyCon, BorderCon, ConQuest and ALT: Games Festival in Parramatta. Complementing these are independent game stores, board-game cafés, library game programs, university clubs, and volunteer-run meetups in every state and territory. This infrastructure is built and maintained largely through volunteer labour and small-business investment, with no structural public support.

Community-organised activity sits at scale. Melbourne Meeples, one community group of many, reported for their 2025 AGM that they delivered approximately 780 hours of board game events across Greater Melbourne in 2025 alone, with the broader Melbourne community estimated to host nearly 2,000 hours annually, all through volunteer effort. This is evidence of a massive, unrecognised public service that currently lacks any state or federal investment.



The Structural Gap in Revive

Revive: A Place for Every Story, A Story for Every Place delivered genuine wins for the broader creative sector. It introduced the Digital Games Tax Offset, increased Australian content requirements for streaming services, established Creative Australia, and funded regional arts, young people, and live music. By the Government's own reporting, 75 of 85 actions have been completed.

Tabletop game design received none of this support. The policy's recognition of games as a creative and economic sector explicitly stopped at the boundary between digital and physical. That boundary is not a reflection of cultural value, audience reach, or design craft, all of which apply equally to both formats. It is a policy inheritance from an era when games were categorised administratively under either "toys and hobbies" or "screen," with no home in between.

The documented exclusion operates at every level:

- **Creative Australia.** The application FAQ states that Creative Australia "does not generally support activities associated with feature film, television, documentary or games" and refers applicants to Screen Australia.
- **Screen Australia.** Games funding programs (including the Emerging Gamemakers Fund) explicitly exclude games that are not completely digital, including board games and hybrid digital/physical games.
- **Digital Games Tax Offset.** Requires games to be "in electronic form" with a minimum qualifying spend of \$500,000, effectively excluding all tabletop production and most independent digital production.
- **State screen agencies.** Screen NSW, VicScreen, Screen Queensland, Screenwest, Screen Territory, and Screen Canberra all follow the same digital-only eligibility model.

The consequence is that an Australian designer working on a digital game can access federal and state support totalling up to approximately 75 cents per dollar of qualifying spend. An Australian designer working on a tabletop game (including one with demonstrable educational, community, or First Nations cultural significance) can access none.

It is worth noting that the Australian Research Council does fund tabletop research: Dr Melissa Rogerson at the University of Melbourne holds a DECRA grant (2024–2026) for hybrid board game research. The research value of tabletop is federally recognised. The design and community value is not.



What Tabletop Offers That Digital Does Not

The case for tabletop in policy is not that it replicates digital games in a different format. Tabletop produces distinct outcomes that digital cannot, and that distinction is what justifies separate recognition rather than absorption into existing digital games policy.

In-person presence. Tabletop play happens at a shared table with co-present people. The medium requires it. Digital play can be social, but it is mediated through screens, headsets, and asynchronous communication. Tabletop produces face-to-face time as a structural feature of the medium itself.

A counterweight to screen-mediated leisure. Australians who play video games average 90 minutes of daily play (Brand et al., 2023), in addition to time spent on streaming, social media, and other screen-based entertainment. As public health bodies, educators, and parents increasingly seek alternatives, tabletop is one of the few cultural forms positioned to meet that demand without trading away social or creative engagement.

Intergenerational play. Tabletop is one of the few media forms regularly played by grandparents, parents, and children together in the same session. Digital games can support intergenerational play; tabletop does so by default.

Lower cost per participant. Tabletop games are typically a one-time purchase that supports repeated play across many players. Digital play generally requires ongoing investment in devices, hardware refreshes, and increasingly subscription-based access. For households with limited disposable income, regional families, and community programs operating on tight budgets, tabletop offers a lower cost-per-participant entry point to interactive play.



Why Tabletop Matters Culturally

Tabletop game design is an art form. Designers compose systems the way a composer arranges music or a playwright structures a scene, and the finished game is an authored creative work, not a hobby product or a manufactured good. Tabletop games make a distinctive contribution to Australian cultural life that is not substitutable by other media. The contribution is grounded in four characteristics:

Face-to-face social ritual. Tabletop play is not just in-person; it is scheduled, recurring, and sustained. Weekly game nights, multi-session campaigns, and conventions create long-term social structures and dense local networks that hold across years. In a period of documented social isolation, particularly among young adults and older Australians, the public health value of sustained, ritualised social contact is significant and not easily produced by other media.

Accessibility and democratic creation. While the capital requirements to bring a tabletop game to market are still quite substantial, the skills and tools required to start a design are comparatively modest. Without specialist programming or animation skills, any person can prototype and test a game using paper, common components, and a local playtest group. This lowers the financial gate that excludes participation from other creative industries, making the practice genuinely available to regional designers, designers with disabilities, First Nations designers, and designers from migrant and culturally diverse backgrounds. Accessibility is one of the sector's quiet strengths. It is the entry point, not the endpoint. Sustaining a practice, reaching national and international audiences, and producing professional-quality work requires structural support, mentorship, and infrastructure that this policy framework extends to other comparably-sized creative industries and not to tabletop.

Systems literacy and interactive cultural engagement. Tabletop games are, at their best, models of real-world systems (economic, ecological, historical, social) that players inhabit and manipulate together. Where film and television represent culture and most digital games script the player's role inside it, tabletop puts a system on the table and gives players agency to act inside it, negotiate with others, and produce outcomes that the designer did not pre-script. This is interactive engagement with cultural and social pretexts, not consumption of them. It produces a kind of cultural and civic literacy other Australian creative media do not produce in the same way.

Sustaining endangered craft skills. Tabletop game design is one of the few contemporary contexts in which a cluster of endangered craft and traditional skills continues to be practised: woodworking, miniature sculpting, model-making, casting, letterpress, hand illustration, hand-drawn cartography, and paper engineering. These practices find new audiences through this medium and are often passed informally between makers. This is intangible cultural heritage in the UNESCO sense, sustained inside a sector that policy does not recognise.



Documented Outcomes

The peer-reviewed evidence for tabletop games in education, neurodiversity and wellbeing is robust and growing:

- **Education.** Vita-Barrull et al. (2024), a cluster-randomised controlled trial with 522 primary school students, found significant improvements in executive function, reading, and mathematics in the board game cohort compared with controls. Sousa et al. (2023), a systematic review of 45 studies found board games improved science learning, memory, problem-solving, creativity, and empathy. Active Australian communities of practice include MAGPIE (Melbourne Academic Games, Play and Interactive Entertainment), the Learning Game Playground, and the recent Melbourne Play-Based Learning Conference, which drew participants from universities, schools, not-for-profits, and the game design sector.
- **Neurodiversity.** A 2025 literature review presented at the Royal College of Psychiatrists International Congress (Thompson & Majumder, BJPsych Open Supplement) synthesised five studies and concluded that tabletop role-playing games offer benefits for neurodiverse individuals in social skills, communication, and social functioning. Atherton et al. (2024), in the journal *Autism*, conducted a qualitative study of eight autistic adults taking part in a six-week Dungeons and Dragons campaign and found participants experienced more successful social interactions during structured tabletop play than in everyday settings. In Australia, practitioners deliver tabletop role-playing programs for neurodivergent young people and adults through community organisations, therapeutic recreation services, and disability support providers. Many of these programs previously operated under NDIS-funded Capacity Building supports prior to the removal of Gaming Therapy from allowable supports, removing funding from a clinically aligned, evidence-supported practice that the policy framework had previously recognised.
- **Wellbeing and dementia prevention.** A 20-year French prospective study of 3,675 participants found dementia risk was 15% lower in regular board game players. Chen and Tsai (2022) showed a 4-week board game intervention with older adults produced significant improvements in interpersonal communication, self-efficacy, and perceived loneliness. A 2026 *Conversation* article synthesising recent research highlighted board games as supporting connection and stress reduction (*The Conversation*, 2026). IGEA's 2023 national survey found Australian adults already perceive games as supporting healthy ageing: 81% agreed games help mental stimulation, 63% dementia prevention, 64% mindfulness, and 61% maintaining social connections in older adults.

In Australia, several organisations and government bodies are already operating in this space:

- The Melbourne-based Game Therapy Network connects practitioners delivering therapeutic gaming programs across Victoria.
- THERAGAMES has developed 15 therapeutic games used in schools for social-emotional learning and is a registered vendor with the NSW Department of Education.
- The NSW Government endorses game-based learning, citing Deakin University research.

The peer-reviewed evidence is in. Australian practitioners are delivering outcomes that align with public health, education, and disability policy priorities. The structural recognition that would let those outcomes scale is the missing piece.



Response to the Five Pillars

TGDA supports the continuation of the five pillars first established in Revive. The following sections set out how tabletop game design contributes to each pillar, and what the next National Cultural Policy should include to enable that contribution.

Pillar 1: First Nations First

TGDA acknowledges that First Nations pathways in tabletop game design are at an early stage and that responsibility for designing those pathways rests with First Nations designers, communities, and cultural authorities, not with a non-Indigenous peak body. TGDA is committed to supporting sector-led development of mentorship and cultural protocol frameworks in partnership with First Nations designers and communities.

First Nations games and game-like activities are a longstanding cultural practice in Australia, documented in the Yulunga collection (Australian Sports Commission, 2008) and sustained through education, sport, and community programs across every state and territory. The Yulunga collection covers ball games, physical games, memory games, board-style games, and more, drawn from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies across the continent. It is used as a curriculum resource in schools, by state and territory Aboriginal community-controlled organisations, and by national education bodies, under First Nations cultural authority and protocols. Contemporary First Nations-led tabletop design draws on and adds to this heritage, but currently operates without structural support and without a clear pathway into arts funding.

Tabletop is a medium with structural features that suit certain forms of cultural transmission: collaborative play, sustained social ritual, oral and procedural knowledge, and accessible production. These features make it a potentially significant vehicle for First Nations storytelling, language, knowledge transmission, and community practice, in ways where decisions about scope and protocol rest entirely with First Nations designers and communities.

TGDA recommends that the next National Cultural Policy:

- Explicitly recognise tabletop game design as an eligible creative practice under First Nations First funding programs.
- Direct Creative Australia's First Nations Arts programs to clarify that tabletop projects (including those delivered by, or in partnership with, organisations such as TGDA) are within scope.

The aim is to ensure First Nations designers working in tabletop are not excluded from the pathways available to First Nations filmmakers, visual artists, and writers.

Pillar 2: A Place for Every Story

Tabletop is a creative medium with expressive capacities other forms cannot reproduce. A tabletop game tells its story through systems, decisions, and shared experience rather than through narration or performance. Players don't watch the story unfold; they produce it together, inside the rules the designer has built. This makes tabletop one of the few media forms where Australian stories can be experienced rather than received, and where the player's own agency, negotiation, and outcome become part of the work.



A Game Called Birds, a Tasmanian-designed, conservation-linked title that outsells Monopoly at its local retailer, is one example of what happens when local stories find a tabletop form. There are many others: games about Australian workplaces, Australian landscapes, Australian histories. But they are made in spite of, not because of, Australian cultural policy.

TGDA recommends that the next National Cultural Policy recognise print-and-play (digital files that players print and assemble at home) and low-cost distribution formats (E.g., rules and common components) as legitimate funded outcomes, alongside retail-ready commercial products.

This modest clarification would acknowledge that a game being played, shared, and used in classrooms, libraries, or community settings is a cultural outcome, not only a commercial transaction.

Pillar 3: Centrality of the Artist

Australian tabletop designers are working creative professionals who are currently invisible to every federal workforce and arts funding framework. Industry norms reported across the sector indicate typical royalty rates of approximately 5–8% of wholesale price, with 3–4 years between beginning a design and receiving a first payment. Self-publishing through crowdfunding typically requires \$20,000–\$100,000 or more in upfront capital. Very few Australian designers generate sustainable full-time income from tabletop design alone.

TGDA has engaged with Jobs and Skills Australia through the 2026 Occupation Shortage List stakeholder survey, and continues to advocate for the formal recognition of tabletop game design within the Occupation Standard Classification for Australia (OSCA). The sector currently has no dedicated occupation code; its practitioners are distributed across codes for illustrators, graphic designers, industrial designers, writers, and digital game designers. This is not a coincidence. A single tabletop project routinely brings together writing, illustration, systems design, graphic design, manufacturing, printing, and physical object-making. The distribution across categories reflects the inherently interdisciplinary nature of the practice, but the practice itself goes uncounted.

The absence of recognition extends to training pathways. Collarts offers Australia's only undergraduate program in analogue game design. There are no Certificate-level vocational qualifications available either, meaning no entry-level or pre-tertiary pathway exists. Comparable creative industries have both vocational and higher education tiers, allowing practitioners to develop at different career stages.

The role of AI in creative practice is a live, evolving, and divisive issue across the tabletop sector, with significant and varied effects on designers, illustrators, writers, and publishers. TGDA has not yet conducted the sector consultation required to take a representative position, but recognises this itself underscores the recognition argument: tabletop should be in the room when AI policy affecting creative practice is being shaped. TGDA will engage substantively in future AI-specific consultations on terms developed through member consultation.

TGDA recommends that the next National Cultural Policy:

- Explicitly include tabletop game designers in any programs, grants, fellowships, or protections aimed at supporting working artists.
- Clarify that eligibility for Creative Australia individual-practitioner funding includes tabletop designers.



- Support coordination between the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts and Jobs and Skills Australia to ensure tabletop design achieves occupational recognition.

Pillar 4: Strong Cultural Infrastructure

This is the pillar where the structural gap described earlier in this submission lands most directly. Cultural infrastructure for tabletop (conventions, festivals, cafés, clubs, library programs) is sustained almost entirely by volunteer labour and small-business investment. There is no tabletop equivalent of Screen Australia, no peak funding body with tabletop in its remit, no institutional infrastructure comparable to AFTRS for training, and no inclusion of tabletop in the national collections mandate.

Data infrastructure is similarly absent. While IGEA produces regular, high-quality data on the Australian digital games industry, there is no equivalent recurring survey of tabletop revenues, employment, exports, or participation. Policy-makers are rightly cautious about investing in sectors they cannot measure; the absence of measurement has become self-reinforcing.

TGDA recommends:

- **End the Creative Australia / Screen Australia exclusion loop.** The next National Cultural Policy should state explicitly that tabletop game design is a supported creative practice, and direct Creative Australia to revise its funding guidance accordingly. This is a change in policy signalling, not a creation of a new program.
- **Establish a tabletop data program.** Fund, through Creative Australia or Jobs and Skills Australia, a recurring ANZ tabletop sector survey, ideally delivered in partnership with TGDA and university research partners. This would produce, for the first time, a national evidence base comparable to IGEA's digital games data.
- **Support community infrastructure.** Provide stable support for conventions, festivals, and community organisations that demonstrably grow participation, modelled on existing support arrangements for music festivals and regional arts events.
- **Include tabletop in national collections and libraries.** Ensure Australian tabletop games are collected by the National Library and state libraries in the same way Australian books, films, and music are, creating both a cultural archive and a discovery pathway for future researchers and players.

Pillar 5: Engaging the Audience

Tabletop reaches audiences that screen-based media does not reach in the same way. It reaches children and parents playing together at home. It reaches older Australians at risk of social isolation. It reaches neurodiverse adults whose best social interactions happen inside structured play environments. It reaches regional communities at game cafés, libraries, and community halls. It reaches international audiences through export, with Australian-designed games on shelves from Essen, Germany to San Francisco, USA. IGEA's 2023 national survey found Board/Card games are the second most preferred game genre among Australians aged 65 and over (47%), indicating tabletop is already a major leisure format for this demographic, not a niche one.

The education and wellbeing evidence summarised earlier in this submission is, from a policy perspective, an audience engagement argument. Tabletop games demonstrably engage audiences in ways that produce measurable learning outcomes, mental health benefits, and social cohesion, outcomes that align with priorities across health, education, and community portfolios.



Tabletop also generates culture beyond the game itself. Titles like *Blood on the Clocktower* are now performed as live social events, and a growing ecosystem of actual-play shows, reviews, and online content turns individual games into ongoing entertainment that reaches audiences far larger than the players at any one table. This is additional cultural and economic activity built on top of Australian-designed games, and it is currently unsupported.

Cultural value in tabletop is produced by players themselves, too. Players bring memories, humour, lived experience, local knowledge, and imagination into the shared space of a game, shaping the stories, decisions, relationships, and meanings that emerge through play. Tabletop games do not only have cultural value as designed objects; they generate cultural value through participation, often in the settings named above. Policy recognition would make this cultural production visible and supportable.

Public support for the use of games in education and wellbeing is already strong. IGEA's 2023 national survey found 91% of Australian adults agree games can help students learn reading, 88% science, 76% creativity, and 73% overcoming learning difficulties. The mandate for integration exists; what's missing is recognition that tabletop games sit within scope and are one of the most cost-effective ways to deliver it. The recent removal of Gaming Therapy from allowable NDIS supports illustrates how evidence-supported practice can lose policy recognition without clear cross-portfolio safeguards. A cross-portfolio framework would help prevent similar gaps in future.

TGDA recommends that the next National Cultural Policy:

- Enable cross-portfolio partnerships between Arts, Education, Health, and Social Services so that tabletop games can be integrated into schools, libraries, social prescribing trials, aged care programs, and disability and community-supported activities.
- Support coordinated "Team Australia" representation at major international tabletop trade events such as Essen Spiel and Gen Con, in partnership with Austrade, to build on existing export strengths.

Summary of Recommendations

The recommendations above can be consolidated into the following structural asks across four areas. Each is designed to complement, not duplicate, existing policy settings for digital games and other creative industries.

Recognition and funding eligibility

- **End the funding exclusion.** The next National Cultural Policy should explicitly recognise tabletop game design as a supported creative practice. Direct Creative Australia to revise its funding guidance to make tabletop projects eligible under existing programs, alongside the screen and community funding programs that currently exclude them. This is a change in policy signalling and guideline language, not the creation of a new program.
- **Clarify individual-practitioner eligibility.** Confirm that tabletop game designers are eligible for Creative Australia individual-practitioner funding, fellowships, grants, and protections aimed at supporting working artists.
- **Enable First Nations pathways.** Explicitly include tabletop game design within Creative Australia's First Nations Arts funding programs. Support sector-led development of mentorship and cultural protocol frameworks, in partnership with First Nations designers, communities, and peak bodies such as TGDA.
- **Recognise low-cost and print-and-play formats.** Confirm that print-and-play games and other low-cost distribution formats are eligible funded outcomes alongside retail-ready commercial products, recognising that a game played and shared in classrooms, libraries, and community settings is a cultural outcome, not only a commercial transaction.

Workforce and data infrastructure

- **Achieve occupational recognition.** Coordinate between the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts and Jobs and Skills Australia to ensure tabletop game design achieves recognition within the Occupation Standard Classification for Australia (OSCA). Recognition would allow tabletop practitioners to be counted in workforce data for the first time.
- **Establish a tabletop data program.** Fund a recurring ANZ tabletop sector survey through Creative Australia or Jobs and Skills Australia, ideally delivered in partnership with TGDA and university research partners. This would produce, for the first time, a national evidence base comparable to IGEA's digital games data and remove the measurement gap that currently blocks investment decisions.

Cultural infrastructure

- **Support community infrastructure.** Extend existing arts and music festival support mechanisms (such as Festivals Australia and Live Music Australia equivalents) to include tabletop conventions, festivals, and community organisations that meet participation and accessibility thresholds.
- **Include tabletop in national collections.** Ensure Australian tabletop games are collected by the National Library and state libraries in the same way Australian books, films, and music are, creating both a cultural archive and a discovery pathway for future researchers and players.



Cross-portfolio and export

- **Enable cross-portfolio integration.** Support integration of tabletop games into education, libraries, social prescribing trials, aged care programs, and disability-supported activity where evidence supports doing so. This may operate through Arts portfolio partnerships with Education, Health, and Social Services rather than through any single funding mechanism.
- **Support coordinated export representation.** Work with Austrade to support coordinated "Team Australia" representation at major international tabletop trade events such as Essen Spiel and Gen Con, building on existing sector export strengths.

Most of these recommendations require no new funding programs, only the extension of existing mechanisms to a creative sector currently excluded from them. The data program and modest community infrastructure support involve some incremental investment, but the structural cost of recognition is small compared with the cultural, economic, and wellbeing value the sector already produces and the additional value that recognition would unlock.



A Unique Opportunity

Australia is part of the region where tabletop game consumption is growing faster than the rest of the world, yet has one of the smallest industries and exports. Solving the funding gap could uniquely place Australia as a global leader for growth in these cultural practices, and build a thriving sector that can share Australia's unique culture to the rest of the world unlike any other government so far. Germany recognises board game culture as intangible heritage through its UNESCO Federal Inventory, and France sustains approximately 1,500 ludothèques (game libraries) and 500+ annual board game festivals. Both are meaningful cultural commitments. Neither, however, provides direct design grants for tabletop creators. The international tax-credit and games-fund instruments that exist are universally digital-only.

Australia has a genuine opportunity to be the first country to close this gap, and to do so at modest cost, with broad cross-portfolio benefit, and in a way that complements rather than competes with existing digital games policy. The cultural, educational, and community evidence base is already in place. What is required is policy recognition.

TGDA is committed to engaging in further dialogue with the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts, with Creative Australia, and with state and territory agencies on the practical design of these recommendations. We believe there is genuine and exciting scope for collaboration, and we look forward to the conversation.

Contact

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