

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public

Individual

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Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

My name is Leanne Taylor-Giles and I've been a video game developer, researcher, and lecturer for the past 20 years.

When I started in the industry in 2006, the only viable option for a long-term career was to move to North America or the UK. When the GFC hit, and the Australian dollar reached parity with the US, all of the overseas companies that had subsidiaries in the Australian gamedev community shuttered operations here, since it was no longer 40% cheaper to pay Australians than it was to pay Americans. This wouldn't have happened if the majority of gamedev companies had been Australian companies. At the time there was no support from the government - I was one of many lobbying to try to keep our games scene alive, but talent drain took hold and the people we'd been able to attract from overseas left again.

In 2012, my husband and I moved to Montreal, Canada, where we worked in AAA for 10 years. Moving back to be closer to family created a lot of additional employment-related stress, given the state of the Australian industry when we left. I've been fortunate to find a position at Gameloft Brisbane, where I'm working with some truly world-class talent. My husband has not been so fortunate.

I've authored and co-authored multiple academic chapters and papers on the concept of place-making in games, and embodiment as a form of empathy building (c.f. <https://eprints.qut.edu.au/227389/> & https://www.gamejournal.it/i11-05_taylor-giles-turner/). Nothing helps you understand someone else's point of view more than literally stepping into their shoes. Games have an extraordinary ability to teach us about each other, about our country, and about our culture, and to share all of what makes us Australian with the entire world. Players are clamoring for unique perspectives, and Australia seems impossibly exotic to many people elsewhere. By creating games ourselves, we can shape the global conversation around what it means to be Australian. And, I hope, reclaim some of the pride we once had in this very lucky country.

Without support, artists won't stay. They won't create. They'll take a different job that pays better because, believe me, gamedev wages across the world border on unlivable. The cost of living crisis here just adds another dimension to the problem. Few people put out their best work when they're hungry or worried about becoming homeless. I've had more conversations on those two topics in the past 3 years than I ever did in the 17 years before that.

We make games because we're passionate. But generating 65% of the revenue of film & TV with only 3% of the government funding leaves developers susceptible to predation, exploitation, and underpayment. At my last role, I was paid thousands of dollars below the award for up to twice the number of maximum weekly hours. Now imagine what that's like for someone just starting out. We owe it to our future developers to protect them in the present. More funding is the key to a vibrant – and sustainable – community.