



National Cultural Policy Review Submission – May 2026

To the Office for the Arts,

My name is Madeleine Mackenzie, and I'm the creative director of Melbourne-based video game studio Fine Feathered Fiends (FFF).

I established FFF in 2023, having worked for eight years as a hobbyist game maker, wanting to pursue my career goal of making games commercially. As an LGBTQ+ creator in games, I faced a lot of skepticism from other game designers about whether my work was commercially viable, despite the fact LGBTQ+ audiences are both massively underserved and statistically more likely to play games than other demographics.

Shortly after establishing FFF, I sought funding from Screen Australia and VicScreen for our debut project, [Drăculești](#). Both agencies chose to support FFF with production funding, believing in our vision of making an LGBTQ+ game for LGBTQ+ audiences. Since then, we have successfully received further funding through the crowdfunding platform Kickstarter, with 1,100 backers putting an additional \$109,000 behind Drăculești. We are due to release the game in late 2026, and we currently have 24,000 wishlists on the platform Steam, indicating tens of thousands of players intend to purchase Drăculești upon launch.

FFF's success would not have been possible without Screen Australia and VicScreen's production funds, enabling us to develop Drăculești until it reached a state where we could show it to the public and gain further support to carry it through to release. Public funding for games, especially games by marginalised developers (women, LGBTQ+, CALD, low-income, and/or disabled), is vital in a challenging industry where publishers and other traditional financial backers of game projects are shy about supporting 'unconventional' work.

Similar success stories from Screen Australia and state-agency-based funding can be seen in titles like:

- [Don't Stop Girlypop](#), an action game developed by WA studio Funny Fintan Softworks, which pairs a classic action game with feminine art direction, which was able to successfully find a publisher after being supported by Screen Australia through its early development.

- [PROXIMATE](#), a horror game by VIC developer Cain Maddox, who developed his game with the support of VicScreen, and found massive success post-release when it was [highlighted by major YouTube channel Jacob Geller](#) for its compelling ecological-horror and technological-horror storytelling.
- [GUBBINS](#), a word puzzle game by VIC team Studio Folly, who were initially backed by Screen Australia and VicScreen, before receiving support and investment from entrepreneur and influencer Hank Green, for its unique art style and clever Scrabble-inspired puzzle design.

These, and many other titles, were given their first and arguably most essential step into the international games landscape by way of Australian public games funding. Games currently receive a fraction of the public production funding given to other art forms, and almost completely lack dedicated public funding for organisations/events to support designers crafting their work and coming together as artistic communities. In the most recent Creative Victoria Creative Enterprises funding round, of 81 recipients of organisational funding, 0 were games organisations.

FFF recommends the following actions to the Office of the Arts for the next National Cultural Policy:

- Increase funding to Screen Australia's games team proportionate to funding available to other mediums, like film and TV – for instance, \$20,000,000 a year to Screen Australia would be approximately ten times their current annual funding budget, while still only being 10% of what film/TV receives. This would enable Screen Australia to support more studios and to increase its current project funding caps; in addition to their current ~\$150,000 funding for emerging studios, they could for instance establish a \$150,000-\$500,000 fund for 'intermediate' studios to support established teams with sophomore projects, in line with VicScreen's production funding options.
- Formally establish funds for games events and organisations within relevant creative agencies (Creative Victoria, Creative Australia, etc), or require review processes for multi-disciplinary event and organisational funding to have game makers involved in decision making, to prevent the medium from being dismissed out of hand.
- Investigate avenues for including non-digital games in the games production and event funding. Australia has produced several major non-digital games successes, such as [Blood on the Clocktower](#) and the work of [Storybrewers Games](#), but non-digital games are currently falling through the gaps between agencies. Non-digital games should be formally supported by an agency.
- Continue to seek input and advice from people within the games field to ensure our medium is adequately supported and included by arts bodies such as Screen Australia, state screen agencies, Creative Australia, and state creative agencies.
- Maintain agency requirements to support projects with marginalised creatives in key roles, to improve the diversity of creators in our industry. Initiatives should continue to

recognise diversity in terms of First Nations status, gender, LGBTQI+ status, CALD backgrounds, disability, and class.

Thank you for considering our submission.

Yours sincerely,
Madeleine Mackenzie
Director - Fine Feathered Fiends