National Cultural Policy Submission

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Submission: As an artist

What challenges and opportunities do you see in the pillar or pillars most relevant to you? Feel free to respond to any or all pillars:

First Nations

First Nations games and interactive culture are missing from arts curriculums. There are limited pathways for First Nations into video games and interactive. The national association for video games, IGEA, are failing to prioritise First Nations access and pathways in the industry.

Games and interactive practice and culture are restricted to cities, not on country Programs creating pathways for First Nations developers are for individuals, leaving them isolated from mob, country and peers. Developers treat First People's consultation as optional - not given the authority to create change.

Depiction of First Nations peoples in video games made here is generally poor with a high level of appropriation.

Either an organisation or program needs to be created, or enterprise funding needs to be made available to First Nations led organisations in this space. Something like Indigenous Futures in Canada - https://indigenousfutures.net/about/

A Place for Every Story

Stories in Australian games and interactive experiences are often poor and focus on American-centric fantasy and science fiction. The field of interactive storytelling is poorly understood by industry and poorly taught, or not at all, by our institutions.

The above points mean diversity of story in general is poor, even before diverse participation is considered - and diverse participation is hindered by this dominance of American culture

In a similar way to film being funded for the importance to Australian culture, there needs to be some application of that principle to video games and interactive.

Something also needs to be done about the culture of video game production - currently dominated by privileged men with poor leadership skills, creating psychologically unsafe work environments for everyone, let alone diverse voices (another area our association, IGEA is failing).

The Centrality of the Artist

There's little to no support for individual developers or small teams to improve their skills - most funding is project-based and/or commercially focused.

There's a huge opportunity for artists from other mediums to work with narrative designers, game designers or with virtual production that is not being utilised. Video games, even artful ones, are not taken seriously, and so interactive artists still struggle for legitimacy

Strong Institutions

There isn't really a center for excellence for games and interactive.

Without any coordinating body the industry isn't achieving the convergence of film, tv, games, AR, VR, etc. that the technology allows, and other countries are achieving

There's also no institution fostering excellence in mid-career and experienced interactive creatives - at the moment there are few ways and means for them to create or experiment safely and this is holding back innovation and diversity in projects

There is an opportunity for NIDA and AFTRS to coordinate or run an initiative together, but neither have the institutional resources and expertise to do so currently

The Centre Of Digital Excellence in NZ is also a model to be considered - offering funding, support, mentorship and coordinating educational institutions, including overseas partnerships

Game Center NYU is also a great model for fostering mid-career and experienced talent

Games education is also generally quite poor. Little or no interactive literacy taught in high schools, and games degrees focus on technical production, not creative development processes focusing on successfully replicating other works.

There's a general lack of leadership in the sector. The association, IGEA, is focused on the commercial success of its biggest members, ACMI is focused on its function as a museum, individual studios still look to government for support, as government often takes its cues from IGEA, developing a cycle that lacks ambition, innovation and creativity

Reaching the Audience

As a sector games and interactive have no problem connecting with a digital audience, but it is dominated by big-budget international titles - even PAX, the convention in Melbourne, is dominated by it, with only a fraction of the space for locally made games

A lot of Australians don't even know we make games in Australia, or couldn't name one

We have little cultural identity as games and interactive creators, and it is difficult for Australian audiences to find and access Australian made games of cultural significance.

It is very difficult for educators to find and access Australian made games as well.

It would be great to have a program of games licensing that would pay local developers creating games of cultural significance, so that libraries, schools, universities, etc. could pay one fee to access all of them and give access to their students

Please tell us how each of the 5 pillars are important to you and your practice and why. Feel free to respond to any or all that are applicable to you:

First Nations

It is our foundation culture and yet invisible in the interactive arts. We need their voices in the stories we're telling.

A Place for Every Story

I'm a queer working class artist – and yet we see no stories like mine in games and interactive

The Centrality of the Artist

I need to be taken more seriously by institutions and other artforms

Strong Institutions

There's such poor leadership in the games and interactive sector – we need strong institutions to ensure we're making creative and innovative experiences.

Are there any other things that you would like to see in a National Cultural Policy?

The concept of interactivity treated as part of overall literacy- interactive storytelling, game design, user experience and user interface. Crucial for current and future generations of creator