

Screen Australia announces over \$1.6 million in support of the games industry

Thursday 21 March 2024: Screen Australia has announced over \$1.6 million in support of 12 games through the Games Production Fund and 15 games through the Emerging Gamemakers Fund. This is in addition to the [five recipients selected to travel to San Francisco](#) to attend the Game Developers Conference (GDC) through Screen Australia's Future Leaders Delegation, which is taking place this week.

[Announced in October](#), the Games Production Fund, Emerging Gamemakers Fund and the Future Leaders Delegation were introduced by Screen Australia to provide Australian independent gamemakers with direct funding for original games with budgets below \$500,000, support new projects from emerging gamemakers and offer additional opportunities for professional development. The new programs are supported by the Federal Government's National Cultural Policy [Revive](#), which includes a commitment of \$12 million over 4 years of dedicated games funding through Screen Australia.

Minister for the Arts, **Tony Burke** said, "Australia has a proud history of game development going right back to *The Hobbit*. What this does is support the future of Australian game development, making sure we don't miss out on the next *Unpacking* or *Untitled Goose Game*. Many of these games might not be set in Australia - or even on this planet - but they do show the best of Australian creativity and storytelling."

CEO of Screen Australia, **Deirdre Brennan** said, "Australia is home to some of the world's most talented, independent gamemakers and we're thrilled to support this dynamic community. We're seeing unprecedented demand for these programs, and as Screen Australia's focus on games expands, it will allow our domestic industry to demand attention at an international level. This innovative funding support, as part of the National Cultural Policy, enables bold local-storytelling that will engage gamers around the world."

Since reopening in March 2022, Screen Australia's games funding has provided over \$10 million in support of the local games industry, including [Gubbins](#), [Earthlingo](#) and [The Master's Pupil](#). The agency has supported games across a variety of platforms, such as PC, Mac, Nintendo Switch and iOS/Android, with games aimed at release on App stores, Steam, itch.io, Nintendo eShop and more.

GAMES PRODUCTION FUND

The Games Production Fund provides grants of up to \$100,000 towards supporting the development of original, Australian independent games, with a budget of up to \$500,000 at the time of applying to support the game towards a significant milestone of its development.

The funded projects are:

- ***Ascending Inferno* (ACT):** A 2.5D precision platformer that blends voxel and pixel art together to reimagine Dante's Inferno. Players follow the journey of the recently deceased Dani, and her sibling Vincent who is oddly shaped like a soccer ball. Dani must kick, header and juggle Vincent to ascend out of Inferno. The team includes the four co-founders Isaac Iozzi, Rebecca Haller-Trost, Ben Anderson and Bas Anderson, 3D artists Martin Daniel Widdowson, Ricky-Lee Hudson-Stephens and Lachlan Smith, 2D artists Chris Ottey and Fauzi Raisyuli, community manager Div Randev and composer Dan Poole.
- ***Anvilheart* (SA):** In this story-driven shop management game, a vagrant's dream of a better life is suddenly realised when they find themselves stumbling into a blacksmithing apprenticeship. As if from nowhere, they suddenly have everything they were missing - a warm home, friends and a mentor. But they soon discover this miracle is founded on a monstrous secret: the house fire which triggered it all was masterminded by a madman, who made this life for the vagrant after peering into their dreams. *Anvilheart* is from co-founder and creative director Sean Dee, co-founder and programmer Emma Waters, programmer Elle Valentine, character artist James Hobbs, environment artist Harry Mickan and composer John Oestmann.



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- ***Finch and Archie (WA)***: A co-op murder mystery where players become one half of a crime-fighting duo: Jack Finch the detective or Archie the police dog - using skills to find evidence, interrogate suspects, and catch the culprit in a gritty, noir 1930s setting. Attached are producer Dickson Dic Shen Hee, developer Aubrey Vigus, level designer Tom Lorenti, composer Harry May, writer Liz Glass and designer Rhys Veale-Chan. It is financed with support from Screenwest.
- ***Kādomon: Hyper Auto Battlers (SA)***: In this auto-battle deckbuilder roguelike game, players can collect and battle over 180 unique creatures called Kādomon. They can level-up, evolve and assemble their Kādomon into the ultimate team, creating synergies to beat big bosses and discover secrets. *Kādomon: Hyper Auto Battlers* is from CEO/MD/founder Patrick Sigley and producer Rhiannon James.
- ***Lighthaze World (TAS)***: A story-driven puzzle game where players adopt the role of anxious Nym. Nym is on a mission to retrieve food for his pet dog Chewie at their local shopping centre, Lighthaze World. Overwhelmed by the crowd, Nym passes out and, after regaining consciousness, finds himself in a new mental realm crafted by his own mind to cope with the overwhelming reality - requiring players to complete puzzles and navigate this surreal mall to obtain the dog food. *Lighthaze World* is created by CEO/MD/founder Anthony Hilkmann, composer Lynden Woodiwiss and 3D artist Liam Gibbs.
- ***Momento (QLD)***: A room decorator game that invites players to decorate their space and choose meaningful objects that influence the life they experience. With branching narratives, *Momento* will be a warm ode to the challenge of following dreams down the winding road of life. Attached are lead artist Jasmine Phillips, lead narrative Jessica Lyon and lead developer Julian Beiboer. *Momento* is financed with support from Screen Queensland.
- ***Mystiques Haunted Antiques (NSW)***: A haunted, exploration game about four horrible women, Gem, Aspen, Winnie and Barb, who save a failing antique store by adopting a new business strategy: developing psychic powers. Financed with support from an Epic MegaGrant, it is being created by game director/writer Ally McLean, technical director Adam Matthews, art director Inge Berman, composer Sarah Wolfe, 3D artists Benjamin Retter and Robbie Archer, designer Shaun Bright and producer Nicole Archer.
- ***My Arms Are Longer Now (VIC)***: A comedic stealth/narrative game where players play as a long-armed criminal mastermind. They'll avoid security systems, decipher blueprints and seduce lonely guards – whatever it takes to pull off the perfect heist. This is Toot Games' debut title, with lead developers Matthew Jackson (design and technical lead) and Millie Holten (art and narrative lead). Developed with the assistance of VicScreen.
- ***Rat Trap (VIC)***: From lead developer Beau Whitehead, *Rat Trap* is a 2D hand-drawn Metroidvania adventure platformer where players adopt the character of a lab rat trying to escape captivity. On the route to escape, players fuse together a mobile mech, explore a sprawling map, complete dastardly puzzles and obtain the necessary powerups to take on the captors - in hope to escape the Rat Trap.
- ***Squidge (QLD)***: A story-driven exploration game following Squidge, a captured alien who crash-landed on earth, and whose ultimate goal is to return home - rescuing his friends, finding the missing pieces of his ship and destroying the secret government laboratory along the way. *Squidge* is from designers Jeff van Dyck and Shaun Trainer and is financed with support from Screen Queensland.
- ***Which Way Up: Galaxy Games (NSW)***: The ultimate gravity-defying party game in space - where up to four players compete in unique bite-sized events. Players can eject friends into space as they race across gravity fields, collect comets by guiding and shooting them into their home base, leap across planets to escape a black hole, and capture and hold zodiacal constellations. *Which Way Up* is from

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founder, creative director and lead programmer Nicholas Cellini, lead artist Sydney Liao, 3D artist Adam Canto Galiana and composer and sound designer Kobe Anthony (MEMODEMO).

- **Winnie's Hole (VIC):** In this dark comedy roguelite strategy game, players join Winnie the Pooh on a new adventure, from within - playing as a virus within his body to specialise the host, grow mutations and refine Winnie's form to adapt for survival. *Winnie's Hole* is from creative director Simon Boxer and programmer Mesut Latifoglu.

EMERGING GAMEMAKERS FUND

The Emerging Gamemakers Fund provides grants of up to \$30,000 to support the development of original, new projects from Australian independent gamemakers. It can fund the creation of a prototype or the completion of a micro-scale game from emerging and/or established creators who are interested in creative and artistic experimentation.

The funded projects are:

- **Apothecary of City X (QLD):** A cosy, strategy, simulation game where players own an apothecary in a dark, dystopian city - adopting the role of a single mother trying to make ends meet. *Apothecary of City X* is from CEO/MD/founder Anna Zou, composer/sound designer Alex Prenzler and 2D artist Ben Scherhag.
- **Bones (WA):** In this 2.5D adventure puzzle game, players follow the story of Bones, a small skeleton in a big city, who is separated from his coffin by a crane relocating graves to make way for new apartments. Needing to find his home again, players will guide Bones as he overcomes a range of obstacles to discover who he is and where his home has been relocated to. The team includes creative director Amber Stacey, animator Yee Hui Wong and senior rigging technical director Robbie Reid.
- **Catto's Post Office (QLD):** In a friendly town filled with adorable kitty inhabitants, players take on the role of 'postcat', "Catto", in this casual, story-driven game - navigating around the town to find the correct location to deliver the mail to, before completing a task for a resident. *Catto's Post Office* is from creative director Ha Young Lee, environmental artist Jack Dunphy and programmer Sam Vidler.
- **Clownbaby! (VIC):** In this comedic, dating, horror deckbuilder, Clownbaby, is a clown desperate for love. Living in a strange and ethereal world known as Midnight City, players will take on the role of Clownbaby, to date mysterious creatures, win conversations, and most importantly, try not to destroy the world. *Clownbaby!* is created by solo developer Lauren Temos (T-Dog eXtreme).
- **Crimson Cutlass (SA):** In this two-player rogue-lite co-operative multiplayer game, players roleplay as Priscilla, the fearless warrior who seeks the fun of the fight, along with her lovable gentle giant childhood friend Gym(maine). In *Crimson Cutlass*, time travel meets post-apocalyptic ocean world, thousands of years in the future. New age cultures are founded upon ancient relics, which each society has independently stumbled upon - where they must either find peace amongst themselves, or resist the peace imposed upon them. The team includes creative director Arthur Ah Chee, animator Evan De wolf and lead programmer Peter Cowen.
- **Deficit - The ADHD RPG (VIC):** An RPG narrative game that explores ADHD. Players experience the life of someone with ADHD and make choices that shape the story as they navigate an ADHD diagnosis and therapy, alongside the stigmas often associated with both. *Deficit* is from creative director Gabriella Lowgren, lead designer Ceri Hutton, producer Caitlin Lomax, audio designer Amy McNickle, 2D artist Lauren Temos, programmer Jordan Cook-Irwin, narrative designer Jordan Le Quesne, with Bones Hillier handling lead narrative.

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- ***Gale from the Mantle (WA)***: From solo developer Cody Lehman, *Gale from the Mantle* is an action-adventure story-driven exploration platformer. Stirred by a dream of a mountain emitting red smoke, Gale is pulled into a volcano rescue mission that unveils realms bustling with spirits and vibrant subterranean worlds, where she must prevent an impending spiritual takeover and the destruction of worlds.
- ***Key Fairy (QLD)***: A stylised 2D action RPG that makes use of mixed mediums and a limited colour palette to create a world filled with ancient forests and hungry monsters - where players take on the role of a character who can slide, dance and grapple around monsters at high speed. *Key Fairy's* team consists of lead programmer Tex Barnes and lead artist Mars Bleach.
- ***King Tidal (VIC)***: In this post-apocalyptic dress-up game, accompany Mount Isa's last drag queen on her journey across a sunken regional Australia. Sailing towards the big smoke, players can barter, scavenge and borrow their way from op shop to op shop, rebuilding a wardrobe and a community at the intersection of regional and queer Australia. Attached to the project is art director Tyler Hilder, narrative lead William Hinz and lead programmer Jae Stuart.
- ***Planet B (VIC)***: A dystopian, narrative branching mobile game which explores the inevitable destruction of the Earth, where players are catapulted into 2054 and must take on the responsibility of a space mission to confirm if a planet in a neighbouring solar system could hold hopes of a second chance. The team includes creative director, narrative designer and audio designer Amy McNickle, programmer and game designer James Smith, 2D artist and animator Steffie Yee and quality assurance tester Callum Harrington.
- ***River Scene Zine (VIC)***: From developers Max Myers and Tim Snowdon, *River Scene Zine* is an exploration point and click, queer game about co-presence, attention and gayness. The player explores a public space, in which they are invited to observe and participate in experiences of queerness and diverse masculinities - revealing vignettes exploring play, togetherness and physical proximity.
- ***Roots (ACT)***: In this point and click puzzle game, players step into the shoes of a young adult grappling with the recent loss of their mother, which prompts an investigation into their family history - becoming an exploration of identity and encouraging players to question and redefine the definition of family. The team includes creative director Chloe Brett, art director Alyce Warmington, lead programmer Adam Pattrick and Harry Lynch on lead design.
- ***SPÜTWEISER (VIC)***: A narrative-focused rogue-lite point and click survival game where the player takes control of a moving settlement while navigating a post-apocalyptic map. Players interact with the world's story alongside other players - being weary of the consequences down the line. *SPÜTWEISER* is created by solo developer Dana McKay.
- ***Tea, Please! (NSW)***: A point and click, story-driven game from solo developer Siobhan Willoughby that explores the contrast between the drudgery and noise of office life and the surprising happiness and peace gained through remote work during lockdown. This is expressed through handcrafted interactive life vignettes punctuated with the simple action of making tea.
- ***Tomorrow's Pasts (VIC)***: A narrative, role-playing adventure game where the player experiences and navigates a world in which generations of activism have altered the course of history to create a better, future Australia. By securing a key piece of a fractal puzzle, players will work towards confirming this timeline where characters cross race, gender, culture, age and ability - acknowledging the real world we live in. *Tomorrow's Pasts* is from creative directors Tony Briggs and David Pledger.

For the full list of funded gamemakers and projects, please see the Games blocklines [here](#).

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Applications are currently open for the Emerging Gamemakers Fund and the Games Production Fund. [Click here](#) for the Emerging Gamemakers Fund guidelines and [here](#) and for the Games Production Fund guidelines.

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