



# Games Action Plan

2020-24



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## **Games & play amongst the Yaluk-ut Weelam Clan of the Boon Wurrung**

Council respectfully acknowledges the Yaluk-ut Weelam Clan of the Boon Wurrung. We pay our respect to their elders, past, present, and emerging. We acknowledge and uphold their continuing relationship to this land.

Many different types of games were played across the Kulin Nation. One game, called Brajerack (the wild man), was witnessed by colonial settlers in the latter part of the 1800s. It was a game of hide and seek that involved exploring space and playing in it. A player would hide in a wombat hole and then would need to be dug out of this hiding place.

Storytelling in games is a special way of sharing ideas, history, language, and stories. Through storytelling we can discover the rich history, lore and cultural diversity of the First Nations and traditional owners. Whether through oral traditional lore of the land, spirits, animals, the bay, waterways, and sky passed down by Elders. Or the contemporary stories and experiences of First Peoples connection to country.

# Message from the Mayor & Deputy Mayor

## Message from the Mayor

Art, creativity, and innovation are deeply embedded in Port Phillip. With a strong cultural heritage that brings colour and meaning to our lives, our City has a clear legacy of the arts and creative industries, and the drive to engage with the creative ambitions of our residents to support opportunity, communities, and businesses.

With innovative approaches to creative technology and community, the games sector represents clear opportunities to strengthen our creative ecosystem into the future and establish the City of Port Phillip as the games development capital of Victoria.

As a key initiative of our Art and Soul Creative and Prosperous City Strategy 2018 – 22, this Game Action Plan builds on our broader Arts and Creative Industries work, focusing on Outcome Two of that Strategy – ‘A prosperous city that connects and grows business’, however we also know that the breadth of games activity within the city connects with other outcomes, including ‘arts, culture and creative expression are part of everyday life’, and ‘being a City of dynamic and distinctive places and precincts’.

I look forward to watching its implementation and success.

## Message from the Deputy Mayor

Melbourne is home to half of Australia’s digital games industry, and many of those game development studios, animation houses and industry service providers live and work out of Port Phillip. In creating this plan, we have worked with our local game industry to respond to global trends and opportunities and consolidate our City as a place where ambitious and multi-faceted gaming work will be developed.

In delivering on those actions over the next four years, we will provide tangible support to businesses fostering their sustainability and creativity, work with communities on how they might engage with games and empower practitioners in how they can develop new ways of making and thinking through play and technology.

Those who know me know that I’m a regular attendee at Melbourne International Games Week and PAX Australia and I feel both pride and excitement at this holistic and ambitious vision for games in Port Phillip, embedding it within our broader Arts and Creative Industries strategy, and recognising the value that games play in the life of Port Phillip and its residents.

We want Port Phillip to be a leader in the games sector and this Action Plan will guide our work.

## Why are we creating a Games Action Plan

Council's ***Art and Soul: Creative and Prosperous City Strategy 2018 – 2022***, inspires us to think about how we can leverage the creativity and diversity in our City's DNA to build a more prosperous city through supporting the growth of creative industries.

The creation of a 4-year Games Action Plan for the city is a key action under Goal 2 of *Art and Soul: Build A Prosperous City that Connects and Grows Business*, in recognition of the opportunity for our growing games sector and related creative industries to continue as a significant part of the City's future economy. In addition to the economic benefit to the city, this growth also presents a clear opportunity to enhance our City by supporting creative expression in our community and through celebrating games and culture in our public life within the great places and precincts that we have in our city.

As a first step, we consulted across the games sector with local and international stakeholders to understand how we can support and encourage game making and play across our city for the next four years and beyond. We've listened to the challenges, concerns, and needs of game makers from diverse profile groups, including emerging to professional, commercial to not-for profit, bespoke to mass appeal, local to expat makers all working within or with a connection to making games in Melbourne. We listened carefully to suggestions about what Council can do directly in our role and the role of key partners, including peak bodies, state and federal government, our local academic institutions, curators, creators and artists in supporting them.

From this process, we have a broad view of games as a creative industry, encompassing the range of international games businesses resident in Port Phillip through to individual artists making playful work and how we can connect games to broad community activity and organisations. We're including makers of all types, engaged audiences, and broader communities who might not know about games, but who might also find them interesting if they encountered them in a surprising and playful setting. This also means we're exploring activity at the intersections and edges of games and the associated skills, including creative artists creating work using game engines, Virtual Reality, eSports, mental and physical wellbeing, training and education, and Visual Effects and Visualisation.

We know that Port Phillip is already home to world-class creative talent, and we believe that this plan can contribute to the games sector being a creative engine for Victoria. We have a skilled workforce, talented students coming out of education institutes, creative artists and producers, all living in vibrant precincts with culture and quality of life, and companies that produce blockbuster content. This plan will help them all grow and to thrive.

## The Games Sector in Port Phillip

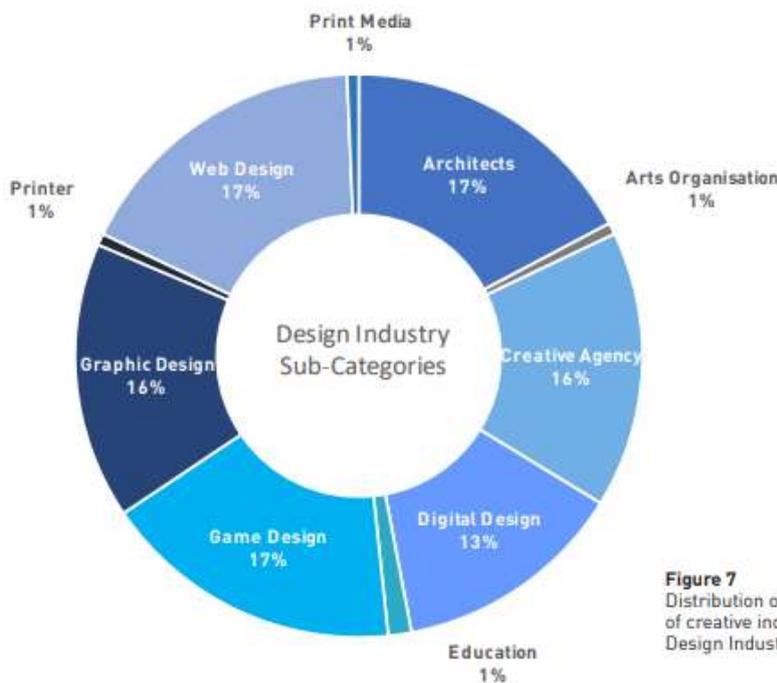
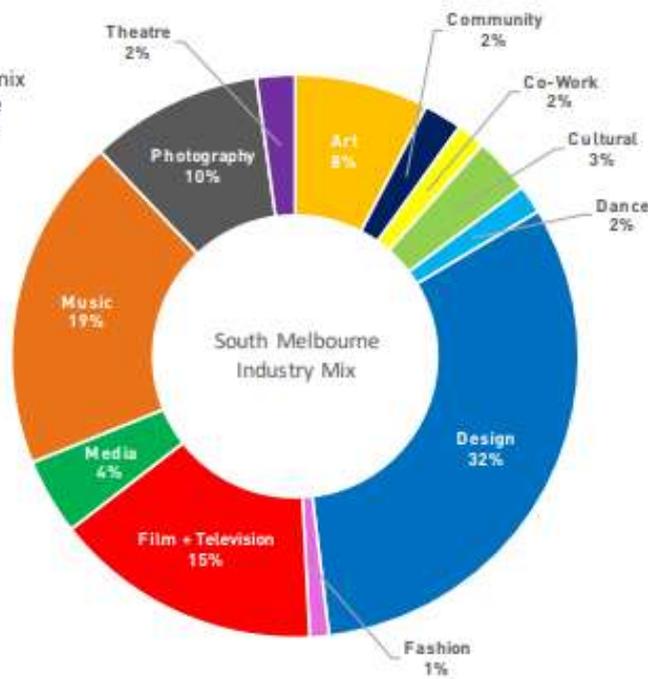
As of January 2020, there are more than an estimated 75 active games studios, creators and game adjacent business across the municipality. They are operating at all sizes and scales, with world-class talent across the full spectrum of games technologies – from mobile, PC and console, to fast developing sectors such as VR / AR, eSports and Artificial Intelligence. If we include associated or related businesses, including high-tech film production, PR and marketing, and creative technology companies, that number increases to over 100 active businesses. We know from research that games have been resilient in the face of COVID-19, and are primed for continued economic growth, so we want to expand our support for these businesses to grow, generating jobs and commercial opportunities for new experiences and practitioners.

Port Phillip is also home to established and growing arts, creative and innovation industry clusters in South and Port Melbourne, including The Arcade, a two-storey building in South Melbourne that is Australia's first not-for-profit collaborative games co-working space specifically for the digital games industry. IGEA (Interactive Games & Entertainment Association) manage The Arcade and is the peak industry association representing the voice of Australian and New Zealand companies in the computer and games industry. Our plan creates a foundation to build on the success of these initiatives and support their ability to develop capacity and networks both within game development communities, but also our wider creative and cultural communities as well. Looking towards the future, the redevelopment of Fishermans Bend presents unique opportunities for the growth sector, including placemaking and activation programs for games and playful artists, the potential for affordable space through re-use of industrial and heritage buildings, and active collaborations between State Government, landowners, and games sector leaders to explore what a new games cluster might be.

Melbourne is internationally recognised as having a vibrant creative games development scene, delivering global events and initiatives such as Melbourne International Games Week, PAX Australia, Freeplay Independent Games Festival, and the Playable Cities network. With its rich heritage of festivals and public engagement, Port Phillip is perfectly placed to add to this vibrancy, bringing new experiences to the city while developing the capacity and talent for innovative events that connect makers and audiences. At a more local level, we know that those audiences are more diverse than ever and that civic and cultural spaces can play key roles in presenting exciting work such as connecting musicians and storytellers with games, supporting community play parties, or advocating for playable public art.

This plan encourages working with developers, artists, libraries, and our cultural spaces, galleries, and festivals to look at how we can bring games and players together. In doing so, we will empower artists and communities to share in the experiences of thinking and making, finding tools to express themselves and tell new stories. We know that games are part of people's everyday lives, and that alongside the bold and global connections and opportunities, there also needs to be a space for the intimate and the personal.

**Figure 12** Industry mix of identified creative businesses in South Melbourne.



**Figure 7** Distribution of sub-categories of creative industries within the Design Industry.

*“Like people have to understand, people around the world right now are saying What the [heck] is going on now in Melbourne? I get called with people asking me what’s going on. So people, especially post [Untitled] Goose Game [by House House, a Film Vic supported game], understand that something really special is going on. It is internationally known that it is a really good place to be ... it’s definitely known that Melbourne is an interesting place to be ... that’s already starting to attract people.”*

– Col, 37 years, International & Melbourne based studios

# Impact of COVID-19 on the Australian Games Sector

The IGEA (Interactive Games & Entertainment Association), in May 2020 published survey results on the impact of COVID-19 on the Australian Games Industry. The findings demonstrate the resilience of the industry in the face of the pandemic where 84 per cent of respondents reported that they are not planning to make any staff cutbacks or redundancies in the immediate term.

Additional indicators include 44 per cent of surveyed developers reporting stable or increased sales revenues along with 62 per cent reporting costs are remaining static. Overall, 55 per cent of respondents are confident for the foreseeable future.

In line with the wider economy, smaller to medium sized studios and organisations, as well as education providers, face a level of uncertainty, while fearing financial hardship. Almost a third of surveyed developers reported reduced revenues due to the loss or delays to contracts.

*“IGEA’s latest survey findings are a reminder that while our industry may be more resilient than many, it has not been immune to COVID-19 and should not be ignored when implementing arts, creative and screen stimulus measures”*

*- Ron Curry, CEO of IGEA*



# Our vision is for Port Phillip to be the Games Capital of Victoria

Delivering on this vision means that the broad range of creative businesses, players, artists, and creative producers find a home in Port Phillip, and that Council's priorities, resources, and programs support their activities.

To achieve that, we will work towards two priority outcomes through the actions in this plan.

## **Outcome 1**

A thriving games sector that plays a significant part in the City's economy

## **Outcome 2**

The life of our City is enhanced through the growth of games, play and culture

Working together, these outcomes support and connect to each other to bring economic benefit, enhance our cultural life, provide opportunities for play, creative expression and celebrate the diversity within our community.

## Council's role and Stakeholders

The City of Port Phillip has been working closely across the games sector, and already offers a number of collaboration and partnership opportunities.

Based on the feedback that has been collected for this plan, community members validated that they see the City of Port Phillip as a natural collaborative leader to build on our existing services and guide this action plan working in partnership with others including Creative Victoria, our local academic institutions, creators and industry organisations.

### Council's Role

<b>Connect</b>	Council can help drive collaboration, linking all parts of the sector with opportunities, networks and mentors. This includes business to business as well as local creatives across all disciplines to engage with the existing games sector through expanding existing council services, alongside connecting practitioners with information and opportunities both within games and broader creative industries.
<b>Attract</b>	Through targetted support and activities, Council can develop programs to attract and retain a diversity of game makers, events and creative technology practitioners through our ongoing work on creative hubs, clusters, affordability, talent development, and investment.
<b>Amplify</b>	By connecting with state, national, and global activity, Council can amplify the work of our local game developers, showing the value of our diverse creative community. At the same time, the City of Port Phillip has a diverse community with an estimated resident population of 108,000 people, creating the opportunity to showcase the value of including games in everyday life for community wellbeing and the City's livability.
<b>Empower</b>	In planning for the future of games, Council can help empower developers and audiences of all type in taking ownership of how they make and play by creating spaces for them to safely share and grow, and supporting our most innovative, adventurous, and ambitious game developers to reach their full potential as creative and cultural leaders
<b>Facilitate</b>	By facilitating the coming together of diverse communities of makers and players, Council can support the development of skills, knowledge, and mentorship, as well as provide the spark for new opportunities across the full range of making and playing
<b>Program</b>	Creating opportunities in programming games into Council's own festivals, grants, events and programs such as St Kilda Film Festival, St Kilda Festival, Seniors Festival, and across art, heritage and libraries uncovers new ways of engaging audiences and delivering exciting, experimental playful experiences throughout our City

<b>Advocate</b>	Taking an active role in the sector, Council can actively work to promote the community’s interests across our networks, including at State and Federal level, encouraging the recognition and inclusion of the games sector across initiatives. Similarly, we can lead in the way in how we integrate games, playful arts, and creative technologies into our own operations, advocating for their value across community engagement, cohesion, and wellbeing.
<b>Partner</b>	Through partnering across industry and agencies, we can help to scale up opportunities for makers and audiences within our community, exploring ways to deliver broad benefits to our community such as promotion of local independently developed games to our community, urban play, and business support
<b>Fund</b>	Council has an existing structure of grants, funding, and opportunities that can be extended to include the work of artist-gamemakers and creative producers. Similarly, we can directly support strategic programs and initiatives that benefit our communities, helping to ensure that the sector thrives and grows.

### Who we will work with

With our partners, the City of Port Phillip can help shape and support a games community that is bold, inspirational and sustainable – where all types of businesses, creatives and people can thrive.

<b>Games Businesses</b>	Collaborating to understand their needs, best practices, and opportunities, and how Council resources can support their development  Connecting with our local creative and cultural community
<b>Industry Bodies</b>	Improving Council’s understanding of the global and local context shared across all games businesses  Connecting to state and federal government  Sharing of information and opportunities  Brokering with members and partners where appropriate
<b>Games Educators</b>	Creating opportunities to connect students with games businesses  Identifying opportunities to showcase student work  Collaborating on unique engagement opportunities and skills development for communities, students, and businesses
<b>Creative Technology Businesses</b>	Identifying opportunities to embed businesses in games sector clusters  Improving Council’s understanding of the diverse ways they are working with games and interactive technology  Act as broker across Council activity to explore opportunities
<b>Games Events</b>	Working with us to understand their creative ambitions and opportunities  Developing new and innovative programs that support diverse communities and audiences

	Amplifying the work of game developers in Port Phillip
<b>Artist-Gamemakers</b>	Working with us to understand their ambitions and opportunities for their practice Connecting them with cross-artform creative collaborators Designing and delivering supportive and appropriate capacity development programs
<b>Government</b>	Collaborating and sharing information on programs, resources, and opportunities Partnering on programs that deliver benefits to our local community
<b>Creative Producers</b>	Exploring ways of engaging our communities with exciting public programming Brokering connections and networks across Council, including festivals, events, and public space
<b>Community Groups</b>	Identifying how games and play happen across their communities Collaborating to deliver games and playful arts projects and experiences Identifying how games can contribute to social cohesion and wellbeing
<b>Public Audiences</b>	Engaging them with new, innovative public programming that spans the full range of games and play Creating opportunities to learn more about game making and the sector through civic and cultural programming

## Plan Overview

Our 2 key outcomes, are broken down into 6 further goals, informed by current activity and future growth across the City.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Outcome 1</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>A thriving games sector that plays a significant part in the City’s economy.</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Outcome 2</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>The life of our City is enhanced through the growth of games, play, and culture.</b></p>
<p><b>Goal 1: Supporting Games Businesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacity Building</li> <li>• Access to and affordability of space</li> <li>• Start-up and scaleup support</li> <li>• Creative careers</li> <li>• Connecting businesses to opportunity</li> </ul>	<p><b>Goal 4: Arts and Creative Practice</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create showcasing and exhibition opportunities for artist-gamemakers</li> <li>• Support cross-artform collaborations with games, playful art, and digital technology.</li> <li>• Develop grants strategies to support artist-game makers</li> </ul>
<p><b>Goal 2: Technology Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support crossover and new market opportunities for local industries in interactive and creative technology use.</li> <li>• Develop CoPP pilot projects around creative technology and showcase technology to create new markets and support for local creative industries</li> </ul>	<p><b>Goal 5: Community Engagement &amp; Games Culture</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embed games and play in existing civic and cultural spaces and events, including libraries, galleries, festivals, etc.</li> <li>• Explore how games can improve social cohesion and inclusion across CoPP activities and programmes.</li> <li>• Explore how CoPP can use games &amp; creative technologies for community engagement</li> </ul>
<p><b>Goal 3: Advocacy and Future Strategy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working with government and peak organisations</li> <li>• Embedding opportunity in major developments, including Fisherman’s Bend</li> <li>• Advocating for games through the South Melbourne Inner Metro Partnership Creative Industries Project</li> </ul>	<p><b>Goal 6: Everyday Play</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support artist-gamemakers and creative producers in developing playable public art in CoP</li> <li>• Develop new experiences and showcasing opportunities for a wide range of artist-gamemakers</li> <li>• Explore attracting major esports and community games events to CoPP</li> </ul>

## Success Measures

We know we will have succeeded, when Port Phillip is recognised as the key destination in Melbourne for game makers of all kinds, players seeking new experiences, businesses looking to work at the intersection of creative technology and future economies, and artists connecting their practice to playful media and technology.

From our consultation so far, we know that capturing this success will be an iterative process, working to understand the needs of different communities, their ambitions, and how Council can support them. The plans of our action recognise that, with a focus on consultation and baseline metrics, program design, and ongoing evaluation throughout its lifecycle.

At a high level, we will measure success of our outcomes and goals against our Art and Soul Creative and Prosperous City Strategy, new metrics in response to feedback from the sector, as well as high level measures, including:

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Outcome 1</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>A thriving games sector that plays a significant part in the City’s economy</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Outcome 2</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>The life of our City is enhanced through the growth of games, play, and culture</b></p>
<p><b>Goal 1: Supporting Games Businesses</b></p> <p>Increase in the number of games and related creative industry businesses in Port Phillip, contributing to the local economy</p>	<p><b>Goal 4: Arts and Creative Practice</b></p> <p>Increase in the number of games and playful arts events across Port Phillip</p>
<p><b>Goal 2: Technology Opportunities</b></p> <p>City of Port Phillip leads on integrating games into broader Council activity, including planning, consultation, and community engagement</p>	<p><b>Goal 5: Community Engagement &amp; Games Culture</b></p> <p>Increase in the number of artist-gamemakers and creative producers working with Council and communities through funding, partnerships, showcasing, and production opportunities</p>
<p><b>Goal 3: Advocacy and Future Strategy</b></p> <p>Visible outcomes from advocacy at State and Federal level for games businesses in Port Phillip, including increased access to data, funding, and global opportunities – highlighting Port Phillip as the Games Capital of Victoria</p>	<p><b>Goal 6: Everyday Play</b></p> <p>Increase in the number of community-led and embedded projects that include games and playful arts practice, including from Council funded key organisations</p>

## Funding

For Year 1 of this plan, \$40,000 is allocated from the existing CPC Strategy. This will be allocated to the actions from **Goal 1: Supporting Games Businesses**

- Develop baseline metrics for games businesses through consultation and advocacy
- Develop attraction and retention actions for games businesses, integrating them into ongoing iterations of this plan

In Year 1, we will also work to connect our existing funding programs to actions from **Goal 2: Technology Opportunities**, **Goal 4: Arts and Creative Practice**, and **Goal 5: Community Engagement & Games Culture**

- Connect creative technology businesses to existing hubs, opportunities, and Council plans
- Connect artist-gamemakers to existing hubs, opportunities, and Council plans, including existing funding and support programs
- Connect community groups with games and arts practitioners, including civic and cultural spaces

Actions from **Goal 3: Advocacy and Future Strategy**, and **Goal 6: Everyday Play** will come from Business As Usual allocations, as well as funding applications and partnership for special projects

Funding and budget allocations for future years will be responsive to our ongoing consultation, feedback, and iteration.

# Actions

Games as a sector moves quickly, and our plan of action needs to be iterative and adaptive in response. Our actions are staged and stacked throughout the delivery of the plan between 2020-24, to help us balance resources, explore opportunities, respond to feedback, and be agile as new opportunities emerge.

## Outcome 1: A thriving games sector that plays a significant part in the City's economy

These actions focus on games as a high capital creative industry that crosses over other areas including the knowledge economy, training, creative technology, startups, innovation sector, and draws together practitioners from programming, music, visual arts, writing, and performance. Through our actions, we will attract and retain games studios, support creative careers, and connect new and existing businesses with opportunity to help them thrive.

	Council Role	Partners & Stakeholders	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Measures of Success
<b>Goal 1: Supporting Games Businesses</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Capacity Building</li> <li>Access to and affordability of space</li> <li>Start-up and scaleup support</li> <li>Creative careers</li> <li>Connecting businesses to opportunity</li> </ul>	Connect Attract Facilitate Amplify	Games Businesses Industry Bodies Games Education Government	Develop baseline metrics for games businesses through consultation and advocacy Develop attraction and retention actions for games businesses, integrating them into ongoing iterations of this plan	Continue working with attracting new games businesses to startup in Port Phillip Continue working with existing games businesses to retain them in Port Phillip and support their sustainable growth Continue tracking and reporting on metrics		Revisit community consultations for feedback and progress mapping	Increase in the number of games and related creative industry businesses in Port Phillip, contributing to the local economy
<b>Goal 2: Creative Technology Opportunities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support crossover and new market</li> </ul>	Connect Attract Facilitate	Creative Technology Businesses	Connect creative technology businesses to	Broader technology sector consultation,	Continue working to attract new Creative Technology	Revisit community consultations for feedback	Increase in the number of games and related creative industry businesses in Port



<p>opportunities for local industries in interactive and creative technology use.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop CoPP pilot projects around creative technology and showcase technology to create new markets and support for local creative industries</li> </ul>	<p>Partner Advocate</p>	<p>Industry Bodies</p>	<p>existing hubs, opportunities, and Council plans</p>	<p>focusing on those using games + interactive technology</p> <p>Develop baseline metrics for creative &amp; interactive technology companies</p> <p>Develop Attraction and Retention actions for Creative Technology businesses, integrating them into ongoing iterations of this plan</p> <p>Continue connecting creative technology businesses to existing hubs, opportunities, and council plans</p>	<p>businesses to startup in Port Phillip</p> <p>Continue working with existing Creative Technology businesses to retain them in Port Phillip support their sustainable growth</p> <p>Continue tracking and reporting on metrics</p> <p>Continue connecting creative technology businesses to existing hubs, opportunities, and council plans</p>	<p>and progress mapping</p>	<p>Phillip, contributing to the local economy</p> <p>City of Port Phillip leads on integrating games into broader Council activity, including planning, consultation, and community engagement</p>
<p><b>Goal 3: Advocacy and Future Strategy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working with government and peak organisations</li> <li>Embedding opportunity in major developments, including Fisherman's Bend</li> <li>Advocating for games through the South Melbourne IMP</li> </ul>	<p>Facilitate Advocate</p> <p>Partner Connect</p>	<p>Games Businesses</p> <p>Industry Bodies</p> <p>Creative Technology Companies</p> <p>Games Education</p> <p>Government</p>	<p>Engage with state and federal government agencies to understand their needs, advocate for game development in Port Phillip</p> <p>Embed opportunity in major developments, including Fisherman's Bend</p> <p>Advocate for games through the South Melbourne Inner Metropolitan Partnership Creative Industries Project</p> <p>Connect the actions from this plan to other Council plans, including the Library Action Plan, Live Music Action Plan, and future sector strategies around Creative Industries, Screen, and Creative Technology</p>	<p>Visible outcomes from advocacy at State and Federal level for games businesses in Port Phillip, including increased access to data, funding, and global opportunities – highlighting Port Phillip as highlighting Port Phillip as the Games Capital of Victoria</p>			

Creative Industries Project		Artist-gamemakers Community / Audiences / Players		
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**Outcome 2: The life of our City is enhanced through the growth of games, play and culture**

Games audiences are wide and diverse, and the spaces and communities we play in are just as diverse. Whether that’s esports in libraries, board game events in pubs, or playable art that takes you across the city, how and where we play in our community creates new opportunities for engagement, participation, and storytelling. These actions focus on supporting that diversity of making and play.

	Council Role	Partners & Stakeholders	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Measures of Success
<p><b>Goal 4: Arts and Creative Practice.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create showcasing and exhibition opportunities for artist-gamemakers</li> <li>• Support cross-artform collaborations with games, playful art, and digital technology.</li> <li>• Develop grants strategies to support artist-game makers</li> </ul>	<p>Connect</p> <p>Attract</p> <p>Amplify</p> <p>Empower</p> <p>Facilitate</p> <p>Program</p> <p>Fund</p>	<p>Creative Producers</p> <p>Artist-gamemakers</p>	<p>Connect artist-gamemakers to existing hubs, opportunities, and Council plans, including existing funding and support programs</p>	<p>Continue connecting artist gamemakers to opportunities and support</p> <p>Community consultation, focusing on artist-gamemakers &amp; community engagement</p> <p>Develop baseline metrics for artist-gamemakers in the community</p> <p>Develop advocacy and support strategies that empower and</p>	<p>Continue connecting artist gamemakers to opportunities and support</p> <p>Continue advocacy and support strategies that empower and support artist-gamemakers</p>	<p>Revisit community consultations for feedback and progress mapping</p>	<p>Increase in the number of artist-gamemakers and creative producers working with Council and communities through funding, partnerships, showcasing, and production opportunities</p>

<p><b>Goal 5: Community Engagement &amp; Games Culture</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embed games and play in existing civic and cultural spaces and events, including libraries, galleries, festivals, etc.</li> <li>• Explore how games can improve social cohesion and inclusion across CoPP activities and programmes.</li> <li>• Explore how CoPP can use games &amp; creative technologies for community engagement.</li> </ul>	<p>Connect Amplify Program Facilitate Advocate Fund</p>	<p>Artist-gamemakers Community groups Public audiences</p>	<p>Connect community groups with games and arts practitioners, including civic and cultural spaces</p>	<p>support artist-gamemakers Community consultation, focusing on community-facing games activity Develop community-games activities, connecting across council and integrating into future iterations of this plan</p>	<p>Continue delivery of the community games activities Continue supporting groups with games and arts practitioners, including civic and cultural spaces</p>	<p>Revisit community consultations for feedback and progress mapping</p>	<p>Increase in the number of community-led and embedded projects that include games and playful arts practice, including from Council funded key organisations</p>
<p><b>Goal 6: Everyday Play</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support artist-gamemakers and creative producers in developing playable public art in CoP</li> <li>• Develop new experiences and showcasing opportunities for a wide range of artist-gamemakers</li> <li>• Explore attracting major esports and community games events to CoPP</li> </ul>	<p>Connect Advocate Program Faciliate Partner Fund</p>	<p>Artist-gamemakers Creative producers Public audiences</p>	<p>Support existing playful arts + events projects, and collaborate to develop new showcasing opportunities for makers and players Work with artist-gamemakers and creative producers in developing playable public art in City of Port Phillip Explore working with new and existing major games events, including festivals, forums, esports</p>	<p>Increase in the number of games and playful arts events across Port Phillip</p>			

# What we heard

## Connections to Opportunity

### Diverse resources and making environments for sustainable game making practices

Game makers want easy to access, and “on hand” information that is important to them – grant calendars for games funding, local events, contract templates and FAQs. They require scaffolding to help them be creative, so they can focus on their core endeavor.

Multiple sites and sources exist for game makers, however embedding oneself in these disparate online communities takes time. This may be information on funding, residency or travel opportunities, or showcasing events for their projects.

*“What is clearly missing is knowing that these (funding) opportunities exist.”*

*– Stan, 29 years, Melbourne based studio*

Studio affordability is an ongoing challenge for game makers from emerging to established. Game makers with previous attachments to the City of Port Phillip clarified that their new studio rent outside the municipality is significantly more affordable, more personal, less hierarchical, and easier to access than maker spaces in Port Phillip.

*“I would work in Port Phillip in a heartbeat if there was [community] space or low rent and access to hardware and just commute.....”*

*– Dru, 30 years, regional Victoria, emerging studio, regularly commutes to CoPP for maker events*

Expert networks are vital for game makers. For new makers, the local and national game maker scene can be a daunting prospect.

Opportunities exist to include support of less formal making spaces (emerging maker/game spaces) and work-in-progress events. Additionally, a “neutral” information hub could offer other kinds of services, connection points, and visibility to local game makers to offset social network building and “cultural cache”, which is not within reach of all makers.

## Community and Cultural Infrastructure

### Opportunities to make, share and showcase. Planned events involving creative and cultural input as consistent features on maker calendars

*“When I first started freelancing, [South Melbourne] The Arcade was a great resource. Not only could I hot-desk there, but their free talks ... By attending I got to meet industry members and learn how they got to where they are. It has helped me refine my craft.”*

*– Pat, 29 years, Melbourne based independent maker and games contract worker*

Game makers call for continuing events that bring together local and international experts to support game makers visibility and connection outside of the “crunch season” of major conventions (Game Developers Conference & Melbourne International Games Week).

Festivals have been a cornerstone of Council’s commitment to arts and culture. Opportunities exist to continue to leverage our assets, festivals and events to create a calendar of opportunities across the municipality to include game making and play.

Libraries are an existing space that could achieve a games profile within their public offerings, from after-hours opportunities to residencies for game makers. Maker spaces are highly desired by independent game makers in particular, for access to industry standard hardware and software, which is otherwise unobtainable as a hobbyist or contract maker.

## **Support and Networks**

### **Improved structural, long-term support for game makers**

Game makers want a local community that invests in them and values them as cultural producers. Makers made clear their main challenge in making games was access to funding. This was evident for both emerging and established independent/small studio makers. As emerging makers who are developing their career profile (which can impact established makers moving into a new domain), many say they are unable to break out of the “bootstrap & breadcrumbs” funding cycle (underfunded to get to events or not waged fully for grant based development work which are key stepping stones for emerging makers). Emerging makers (independent/small studio) can be stuck in this cycle for up to 10 years. The funding they require to make an impact on this cycle includes low time-intensive funding applications for development resources, and/or funding with a quick turn-around from submission to response.

*“[We] could always use more budget and expertise in marketing [and] seed money and grant money is so important for my particular biz model, (as an emerging studio with a focus on diversity and Indigenous inclusion in games.) We are creating games in a new space, and we undertake cultural consultation, so we need extra funding for these ethical processes.”*

*– Lyn, 27 years, indigenous identifying, emerging CoPP based studio*

## **Connections to creative neighbourhoods**

### **Expanding the impact of play into digital placemaking and playable public art**

Opportunities for game makers to have impact across a diverse range of creative industries exist through intersection with public art, digital placemaking, town planning and community engagement. Increasingly, urban play is seen as a methodology for co-creation of community and cultural infrastructure.

Game makers are uniquely placed to play a leading role in the broader social and cultural impact of urban play in digital placemaking, public art to reach audiences, address themes and transform spaces in new ways that recognised play as part of everyday life – both inside the home and on the street, in parks, on beaches and along walking trails.

*Government bodies, not-for-profit and industry organisations and the commercial sector can participate in an urban play network established to share knowledge and pool*

*resources around playable cities. Melbourne is already home to many thriving play communities engaging with independent, experimental and creative game development. Exploring the potential of play in the city requires experts from these communities and a diverse range of other disciplines including: urban design, live art, computer science, ethnographic research, game studies, public art, architecture and sound art. Collectively, the urban play community can work together to playtest, workshop, design, develop and realise opportunities for play in the city ranging from experiments and prototypes through to large-scale collaboration and research.*

*Dr Troy Innocent – Playable Cities Melbourne*

## Diversity of Practice

### Mentorship matters

*Mentorship extending to games adjacent makers and ongoing access are important to developing competency and confidence.*

*– CoPP Indigenous Arts Officer*

Mentorship needs are not exclusive to emerging makers, experienced game makers and studios also require mentorship opportunities. This is evident in inexperienced maker conversations around developing into new distribution systems and creating innovative intellectual property and groundbreaking into new, untested markets.

*“Look to develop collaborative, supportive spaces, not extraction zones. [Some workshops I’ve been to] it just felt like people trying to hustle, trying to get something out of you.”*

*- Stan, 29 years, Melbourne based studio*

*“I feel like I’d love an incubator specifically for new or emerging studio directors [is missing]. Geek Girl Academy was really great for its general incubator, but I would have loved some stuff tailored to me.”*

*– Pat, 27 years old, Melbourne based studio.*

*“I would love to see more women leading in this [esports] industry. Sometimes in meetings you get that feeling that they’re looking at you like “She’s a girl, she doesn’t know what she’s talking about”, so maybe more women-led events”*

*– Lit, 30 years old, regional studio.*

## There’s a lot more to consider

### What else we heard:

Game makers discussed a range of **health and well-being issues** affecting them as makers in Australia. Their financial insecurity drove many of their concerns (crunch/project culture, uncertainty of sustainable career), alongside of a steady social burden to evidence new and

exciting work locally. Many makers stated they were or had been “burnt out” at one time or another while making games for the public.

**Regional game makers** who use CoPP as a hub for networks, shows, and knowledge sharing discuss their distance from the “Melbourne scene”, and difficulty in being a part of it. Their own regional councils are supportive of digital games, however local facilities are lagging behind city spaces. Regional makers use CoPP, and want to be a part of the growing scene of game makers in Victoria.

Women who were interviewed spoke about the **ongoing impact of working in a gendered industry**. Studio diversity was impacted by standard hiring processes, game events and safety issues and subtle everyday issues around belonging were raised.

**Esports** are intimately involved in the local game making industry, from game makers designing competitive esports titles, to events which house independent games alongside of new IP – hardware and software – for esports play. Esports are under-supported in Australia, through innovation in hardware and through development of software. Key grant schemes for games have told esports makers that they are not suited to their calls. Esports teams and tournaments bring regional and international “esports tourists” to the city. Esports teams employ games adjacent makers across their organisations and as digital entertainment organisations they offer alternative skills that bridge digital games and sports sectors.