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5 February 2025

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ACT Budget Consultation 2025-26

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**BACKGROUND**

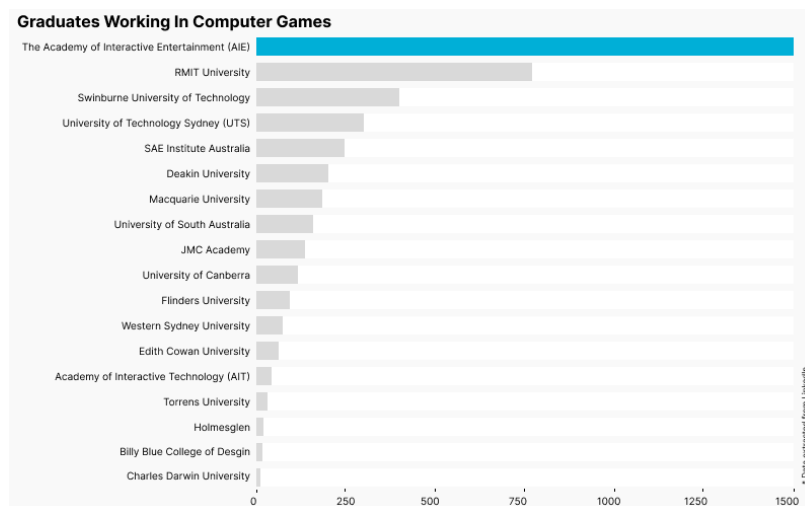
The Academy of Interactive Entertainment Limited (AIE) welcomes the opportunity to provide input into the ACT Budget process.

**Melbourne Campus**  
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18-38 Siddeley Street,  
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AIE is a non-profit educational institution that is committed to investing in Canberra and delivering vocational and higher education qualifications in the areas of games, animation, film and visual effects. AIE is also the parent company of AIE Institute Limited, which is a newly accredited degree-granting institute of higher education that commenced delivering a Bachelor of Game Development specialising in game art, game design and game programming in 2024.

**Online Campus**  
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AIE is the educator with the highest graduate employment outcomes in the Australian games industry. Research based on LinkedIn company insights showed just how many more AIE graduates are working at games studios than any other educator. In fact, AIE outperformed the next two closest educators combined, however most of the jobs are in NSW and Victoria who provide strong industry support to the games and film industry.



Source: [Want a Career in Games? Here's Where You Should Study](#)

AIE is highly focused on supporting innovation and job creation through its work-integrated learning and industry partnership model that it plans to expand through the delivery of Stage 1 of its Watson campus renewal masterplan. Included in Stage 1 is studio space which is due to break ground mid 2025 (depending on receiving approval of its amended Future Intentions Plan and DA approval turn around).

## **INVESTMENT IN THE SCREEN INDUSTRY**

The ACT Government has made long-term investments in the screen industry through the core funding of Screen Canberra and the provision of the ACT Screen Investment Fund and the ACT Screen Attraction Fund (The Funds).

The work of Screen Canberra, the ACT Government and the Funds have led to a dramatic increase in production and jobs and has positioned the Territory as a viable, cost effective and desirable location of choice.

Historically AIE has invested in the industry through education, cash and in-kind investment into local and incoming productions such as AACTA nominated Sissy and horror comedy ME AND MY MATES VS THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE.

## **AIE STUDIO**

AIE is further investing in the industry through significant funding in the Watson AIE campus renewal project. Not only in the physical infrastructure, which includes a 1300m<sup>2</sup> film studio, but also in developing a unique system of film production and backing at least one, \$20million plus high VFX content project, per annum.

The AIE is also making ongoing purchases of high-end equipment – from a large array of LED volume screens to professional camera packs, lighting, Technodolly and other equipment as yet not available in the ACT.

This new state of the art facility will be of benefit to the AIE, but also to UC, ANU and CIT film students and alumni and local and incoming productions.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **1. FUNDING**

There is genuine concern amongst local and incoming producers re the renewal of funding for investment. Continuity is key, along with an enticing and realistic level of support to retain local talent and attract production.

As the ACT's production capacity increases, and this will be spurred along by AIE Studios, it is highly likely that much larger budget projects will be looking at Canberra. As such, the Funds may not be sufficient to attract \$20million plus productions. A timely process and facility should be developed in consultation with industry, for these important, economic and job boosting projects.

## **RECOMMENDATION 1 – Funding**

- 1a. Both Funds, which are up for renewal in July 2025, are significantly replenished with a long-term investment horizon of 10 years, with a suggested level of funding of \$2million a year.
- 1b. Consider other funding sources such as tax incentives and rebates alongside equity and loans.
- 1c. Develop a facility and timely process within Government on a case by case basis for investment into larger budget projects \$20million+. This is in line with the offerings from other States and Territories and keeps the ACT competitive.

## **2. GAMES**

As outlined in IGEA's Budget Consultation:

*“According to IGEA’s consumer sales data, video games are worth around \$4.4 billion annually in Australia<sup>1</sup>. In 2024, the Australian game development industry employed 2,465 full-time workers and generated \$339 million in revenue in the 2024 financial year (FY2024).<sup>2</sup> As a global-facing industry, 93% of revenue was generated overseas, making video games one of Australia’s most successful cultural and economic exports. For context, the global video game industry is more than twice the size of the global film and music industries combined. Hence, the potential scope for local industry growth is significant.”*

Screen Australia and all “state agencies” except for the ACT invest significantly in games from development through to production. The ACT is not leveraging the 30% federal funding allocated to games and is losing talent to other states.

Gaming skills are not just for video games – for example games development skills are using in such industries as design and architecture and the Defence and medical fields.

Games skills are also the driver of the LED volume screens, which is now the norm for most features and TV content and the lines between games and film/tv are further blurred.

It should be noted that whilst AIE has been supported by the ACT Government as a games and film educator to meet skills shortages, acquire new technology and develop and deliver courses to build capacity for future careers and create job opportunities, this is not supporting the professional and independent games industry with funding for development and production.

As such, the lack of funding support for the games industry means loss of talent and opportunity in the fastest growing sector of the creative industries.

Games should not be ignored for investment and should be treated as any other screen project that is eligible for local government investment through the Funds.

**RECOMMENDATION 2: Games**

2a Include games as an eligible format with the same guidelines as other screen projects.

**3. SCREEN CANBERRA**

As the peak body for the screen industry, Screen Canberra has an important and vital role in the continued development of industry. They have maximized and leveraged the existing Funds and brought investment, spend and exposure to the ACT and have built a solid reputation in the Australian screen industry.

**RECOMMENDATION 3**

3a Support Screen Canberra to continue to service and grow the industry through appropriate core funding.

3b Continue to deliver The Funds with an independent board and industry assessment committee to ensure timely decisions and disbursement.

3c Consider the interest earned by the Funds, to be used by Screen Canberra for development of projects and talent.

**IN SUMMARY**

The AIE endorses both Screen Canberra's and the IGEA's budget recommendations.

Our recommendations are as follows:

1. Substantially replenish the Funds with a long-term investment horizon of 10 years
2. A \$2million per annum investment into the Funds
3. Consider other support mechanisms such as tax incentives
4. Develop a process in collaboration with industry, for case by case basis, large budget project support
5. Include games as eligible content
6. Increase base support for Screen Canberra to deliver meaningful services to the industry including delivery of the Funds.
7. Allow use of interest on Funds for development

Thank you for your time. We look forward to discussing this submission further as part of the peak body round tables (both as an educator and screen industry infrastructure contributor).

For further information, clarification or discussion, please feel free to contact John De Margheriti on [jdm@aie.edu.au](mailto:jdm@aie.edu.au) or Monica Penders on [monica.penders@aie.edu.au](mailto:monica.penders@aie.edu.au)

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John De Margheriti". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "John" being the most prominent.

**John De Margheriti,**

CEO

The Academy of Interactive Entertainment Ltd