



Careers and Frontiers 2026 Speakers

Host

Angharad 'Rad' Yeo is an award-winning television and radio presenter, MC, and critic. Her deep passion for technology, science, arts, and culture puts her in a unique position to dissect the rapidly changing landscape we find ourselves in - including the rise of AI - with insight, intelligence, and an energetic spirit. Her credits include pop culture podcast Game For Anything, Double J, ABC ME's Good Game Spawn Point, Catalyst, Queens of the Drone Age, ABC Science's Elevator Pitch.

Opening Keynote Speaker

Kate Edwards is a geographer and award-winning 33+ year veteran of the game industry where she's worked on over 320 games, and the CEO/Principal Consultant of Geogrify, a consultancy which pioneered game culturalization. She is also the CXO/Co-Founder of SetJetters, the screen tourism app. She is also the former Executive Director of the International Game Developers Association (IGDA) and the Global Game Jam. In 2021, she was included in the Forbes' "50 Over 50" Vision List and was also inducted into the Women in Games Hall of Fame.

Other speakers:

Oscar McKittrick, Product Manager, Tripledot Studios

Oscar McKittrick is a Product Manager at Tripledot Studios in Melbourne. He joined Tripledot in London as a Product Analyst in 2023 and moved into product management, building on his experience using data to inform product decisions. Before getting into games, he worked as a pricing analyst at Virtuo, a car rental startup.

Ross Symons, Chief Executive Officer, Big Ant Studios

Ross Symons founded the Australian game development studio Bullant Studios Pty Ltd in 2001 (later renamed to Big Ant Studios Pty Ltd). He is the CEO of the company. His history stretches back to the 1970's when he first authored a number of internationally published books on programming and games for platforms including the TRS80 and Commodore PET/VIC20/64 series of personal computers. (*ref mobygames.com*)

Harry He, Publishing Director at UltraPlayers

Harry has over a decade of marketing experience across gaming, entertainment and international markets. He began creating gaming content in 2008 and built an audience of more than 100,000, becoming one of China's leading Warcraft III and Pokémon commentators. Harry has contributed to the publishing and marketing of multiple games generating millions in revenue. At UltraPlayers, he led market expansion and content creation for Tingus Goose, helping the Australian indie title reach players across China and the broader Asia-Pacific region.

Dr Jens Schroeder

Jens joined IGEA in 2019 after working in various leadership roles in game-related education, including manager of the SAE Sydney campus and Associate Dean (Design Vertical) for Torrens University. Combining his experience in games, business, academia, management and leadership, Jens is responsible for representing and growing the IGEA's development members by providing them with a voice to government and industry, acting as the interface between the Australian video game development industry and IGEA and working closely with state, territory and commonwealth departments and agencies to the benefit of the industry. In this capacity, he, among other things, organised Australia's first unified presence at Gamescom, instigated the IGEA mentorship program and was the driving force behind IGEA's producer course

Jess Rowlings, CEO/Cofounder, Next Level Collaboration

Jess Rowlings is a qualified speech pathologist and Associate Research Fellow at the University of Melbourne who specialises in inclusive video game design. Jess is also the co-founder and CEO of Next Level Collaboration, a social enterprise that uses cooperative video games to build collaborative skills and social connections for neurodivergent children. Jess' work is informed by her lived experiences of autism and ADHD, along with her personal lifelong love of gaming. She is also a PhD candidate investigating the experiences of neurodivergent women in gaming communities.

Erin Salmon, Next Level Collaboration

Erin Salmon is a registered Provisional Psychologist currently completing her Master of Professional Psychology at La Trobe University. As an AuDHD gamer herself, Erin brings both personal and professional perspectives to her interest in how gaming can create opportunities for connection, engagement, and skill development. She was Next Level Collaboration's first employee and has worked with Next Level Collaboration for five years, primarily as a Program Facilitator using cooperative gaming to support neurodivergent young people in developing social and communication skills, before moving into her current role as a data collector. Erin has also integrated gaming into her work as a Therapy Assistant and Support Worker, using clients' gaming interests to build rapport, promote engagement, and support therapeutic goals.

Beth Ware, Next Level Collaboration

Beth Ware is a qualified Occupational Therapist and Program Facilitator at Next Level Collaboration. She has a particular interest in exploring gaming as a contemporary form of play and how it can be utilised as a meaningful occupation to support participation, connection and skill development. Beth's approach is informed by her lived experience as an AuDHDer and her belief that therapy should be enjoyable, relevant and strengths-based.

Dr Chris Barker, Senior Lecturer, Master of Animation, Games and Interactive Media, RMIT University

Chris Barker is a designer, artist and educator at RMIT University, where he teaches into the Master of Animation, Games and Interactivity (MAGI). His practice spans visual effects, projection media, fine art, anamorphic image-making, augmented reality and interactive experiences. Across these forms, his work explores a persistent question: how does digital

media change the ways we encounter, inhabit and participate in the world? Chris has worked extensively with public-space projection and AR, including *Yalinguth*, an augmented-reality experience that brings Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories into dialogue with place. At MAGI, he has fostered a strongly experimental, practice-led community in which games and interactive media become tools for inquiry as much as entertainment. Underlying his creative and teaching practice is a deep engagement with phenomenology, embodiment and relationality.

Phoebe Watson, Game Designer

Phoebe is a proud Gunditjmara woman of the Maar Nation, growing up in Warrnabool she moved to Melbourne to study a bachelors in Games at RMIT. Since graduating Phoebe has worked with local indie teams, as well as larger international companies like Ubisoft and Star Stable Entertainment. Currently she's with the incredible team at GUCK, working on a First Nations mobile game titled Blaktasia: Invasion of the Murk.

Mark Mitchell, Sound Composer

Mark Mitchell is a Melbourne-based composer, producer, and sound designer whose work encompasses music releases, screen media, and art projects.

He is the co-founder of Fuligin Sound, a company specialising in composition and audio design for video games and installations. Fuligin created the sound for *Mars First Logistics* by Shape Shop, as well as *Heavenly Bodies* by 2pt Interactive, which received the Excellence in Sound award at the 2022 Australian Game Developer Awards.

Mark co-runs the Game Audio Intensive for the Melbourne Electronic Sound Studio (MESS), a national course designed for established sound practitioners looking to work in video games.

Adrian Webb, Assistant Director. Strategic Gaming & Exercises | Strategic Policy Division | Department of Defence Australia

Adrian studied at AIE before becoming a public servant. He spent time within simulation, and serious games, promoting how videogames technologies and practices can be better utilised within various industries. Adrian helps government departments understand the latest developments and trends, becoming an advocate for innovation via games and associated technologies. Now the Assistant Director for Strategic Games and Exercises, Adrian continues promoting games usage in any format, as platforms for exploration, engagement, learning and realisation. He is keen to talk to students about how they can utilise their talents in different industries to deliver better and more engaging outcomes.

Vlad Micu is a free agent and business development professional in the game industry with a strong reputation for creating long-term relationships and generating new sources of revenue that lead to significant returns for his clients.

Currently he serves as a non-native representative for the Polish game development community, supporting their game developers association Indie Games Polska (<https://igp.org.pl/>), their GIC.gdconference in Poznan, Poland on Oct 24-27 (www.gic.gd), and several of their government initiatives.

Vlad is credited in over 30 videogame products on mobile, VR, console and PC. With his own company VGVisionary, Vlad travels the world to speak at events, meet with game developers and offer advice, introductions and support to those proactively seeking help.

Ioni Maghidman immigrated from Brazil to Australia in 2017, where he graduated RMIT's Bachelor of Game Design. He then began his current role working for Champion Data as a Technical Artist in sports television, using Unreal and Unity to deliver motion graphics in live sports. His work is viewed by millions of spectators across the globe through collaborations with Fox Footy, Channel 7, AFL, Liv Golf, Tennis Australia and many others. He also has direct experience in game development through hobbyist projects and freelancing, having shipped a commercial title on Steam.

In Conversation (moderated by Kate Edwards)

Rachel Kowert, Ph.D is a research psychologist, award-winning author, and globally recognized leader in games and game-adjacent spaces on issues relating to mental health and trust and safety. Dr. Kowert is the founder of Psychgeist, a multimedia content production studio for the intersection of science and games, and the founder of the DLC Leadership Program, which develops the next generation of leaders in games. She currently serves as Research Director for Games for Change and is a Visiting Researcher at the University of Cambridge (UK). To learn more about Rachel and her work, visit www.rkowert.com.