PROGRAM SESSION DETAIL

9.25 - 9.50am Opening Keynote - Associate Professor Brendan Keogh
Practice makes games: The skillsets and mindsets needed (and not needed) for a game development career

In this opening keynote, game researcher and critic Brendan Keogh will draw from a decade of teaching and researching game development to dispel some of the common misconceptions about working in the games industry. Behind the blockbuster releases and profit margins of AAA studios, the reality for many game developers is vastly different as they work hard to produce a lot with a little, while the goalposts continue to move. Game developers like all artists are known for their creative resilience and Keogh will provide concrete tips on how to navigate the ever-changing and complex world of game development.

9.50 - 10.35am PANEL: Finding Your Game Career in a Changing Industry
Moderator - Professor Dan Golding, Speakers: Brendan Keogh, Marie Foulston, Goldie Bartlett

The games industry today looks very different than it did even five years ago—both globally and here in Australia. While traditional pathways are shrinking, this changing landscape is also opening new avenues for work and innovation. So where are the jobs for graduates now? What roles are emerging, and how can students prepare to spot—and seize—opportunities as they arise?

11:05 -11.40am SNAPSHOT PRESENTATIONS
A series of quick 15min insights to videogame tech, audiences and jobs beyond coding. Presentations from:

Australia Plays Report 2025 Raelene Knowles and Ron Curry, IGEA

Prepared in collaboration with Bond University, Australia Plays explores the latest demographics and behaviours of video game players in Australia and their attitudes towards games. If you want a career in games it is vital to understand the potential audience – who will be playing your game?

Other Industries play games too Speaker: Adrian Webb, Department of Defence.

While many game developers want to study games to work on the next AAA title, the skillsets you learn within games can be used across a range of industries. Sectors such as Health, Education, Defence, Film, Government, Transport, Sports (and more) are all looking for "digital talent" and looking to games to find the latest "dual use" emerging technologies and practices. This talk will showcase some examples of this and help take off the "games industry goggles" to show you other opportunities that could be available to you if interested in future games studies.

11.45am - 12.30pm PANEL: First Play: Audience Testing and Beyond
Moderator: Rad Yeo,
Speakers: Thomas Holloway, ACMI + RMIT Young Creator 2024, Lucienne Impala, 2024 MIGW hackathon winner, Christy Dena, VicScreen's Originate participant.

From school projects to mentor and funding opportunities, audience testing can transform a project in early stages into a polished, playable game. In this panel, game developers from VicScreen Originate, ACMI + RMIT Young Creators' Lab and the 2024 *Careers and Frontiers* Hackathon share their journeys and lessons learned. Discover the value of testing prototypes with real players, how feedback can shape design, and the pathways from student concepts to industry opportunities. Moderated by Rad Yeo (*ABC's Good Game: Spawn Point*).

1.20 – 2:05pm   Breakout session – students choose one of four options:

PANEL: Play for Change: Diverse Voices in Indie Games
Moderator: Marie Foulston
Speakers: Meredith Hall, Summerfall Studios, Jessica Shipard, Studio Folly, Michelle Chen, Mental Jam.

In a rapidly evolving industry, indie games continue to lead the charge in pushing boundaries—both creatively and ethically. A dynamic panel of developers and creators who are reimagining what games can be. From centering mental health and accessibility in game design to championing authentic representation and sustainable work practices, these voices are reshaping games with purpose and passion. Join us for an honest and inspiring conversation about keeping values at the heart of development, and how small studios can drive big change.

OR Mentor Session "Meet and Greet" – face to face with Industry and Tertiary representatives from Collarts, CDW studios, Monash University, Torrens University, Department of Defence, Quantum and more. This is an opportunity for students to meet one on one with leading industry and tertiary educators to ask their questions about training options, entry requirements and career pathways and more.

OR Play the games in the *AGDA ACMI Audience Award Showcase*

ACMI is partnering with the AGDAs to present a playable showcase of the best games Australia has to offer. Try out a selection of outstanding games, and vote for the highly coveted *ACMI Audience Award*!

OR Visit the Games for Change Asia-Pacific showcase 2025

Hear from some of the developers showcasing their serious games during the Games for Change Asia-Pacific conference. A chance to discover how play can empower purpose and how Games for Change are helping to build a better, more empathetic world.

2.10 - 2.50pm In conversation: From QA to AAA: Donald Barrett's game design journey.
Moderator: Rad Yeo

From QA tester for Disney Infinity to senior designer on Marvel's Spider-Man, Donald Barrett shares how self-teaching, persistence, and creativity shaped his career. Hear his insights on collaboration, industry pathways, and what it takes to succeed in AAA game development.

2.55 - 3.35pm PANEL: Breaking In: Tips from Melbourne studios - big and small.
Moderator: Al Gibb
Speakers: Jay Armstrong and Julian Wilton, Massive Monster, Ross Symons, Big Ant Studios, Katie Roots, Hipster Whale.

Hear from developers at both indie and larger studios as they share tips on getting started in the games industry. Learn how to stand out when applying, what studios look for in new talent, and get your questions answered by those who've been on both sides of the hiring process.

3.40- 4.20pm In conversation*: Lis Moberly, Creative Lead at 20th Century Games with the Walt Disney Company
Moderator: Deb Polson

A chance to hear direct from Lis Moberly, game writer, designer, and scholar who has researched and written extensively about why studios should foster wellbeing and sustainable practice for their developers. Her credits include Senior Game Writer, Narrative Designer, Scriptwriter and Designer on titles such as Last Sentinel, Avowed, Hogwarts Legacy, Cursed to Golf, Singularity and We Went Back.

4.30pm PAX Pass door prize draw! Why not stay for the Big Games Night Out!

SPEAKER BIOS

Jay Armstrong, Massive Monster
Named a 'Breakthrough Brit' by BAFTA, Jay originally started a career in International Geopolitics before 'accidentally' realising his dream of becoming a game developer. Since then, he has created and shipped over 20 games for web, mobile, desktop and console.

Donald Barrett, Insomniac Games
Donald began his career in the games industry as a Quality Assurance tester for Disney Interactive working on Disney Infinity 3.0. Through various networking opportunities, he had the privilege of joining Disney Publishing to develop promotional content for their children's books. Soon after finishing at Disney, he joined Insomniac Games to develop Marvel's Spider-Man for PS4 and has since continued climbing the ranks of design into a senior position working mostly on the Marvel's Spider-Man franchise. Donald works from home and enjoys spending time with his wife and two children.

Goldie Bartlett, Games Investment Manager at Screen Australia
Marigold Bartlett, known as Goldie, has extensive experience in digital art, marketing, community development and business development. With a strong background in videogames, Goldie has worked as an artist and narrative consultant with games such as Florence and Untitled Goose Game and was visual art lead of the Freeplay Independent Games Festival 2013 - 2020. Her most recent role was as art director, marketing lead and business developer for acclaimed game Wayward Strand. She is passionate about supporting emerging developers to find their voice and develop their skills.

Michelle Chen, Mental Jam
Dr. Michelle Chen is a game developer with 15 years of experience in programming, design and production. She is a GameIndustry.biz 100 Future Talent, Xbox Women in Gaming Game Changer, IGDA Scholar and Museums Victoria Culture Maker. She completed a PhD in Design, developing video games about mental health at RMIT University in Australia. Since graduating, she has pivoted her research into Mental Jam, a games studio dedicated to co-creating impactful experiences that explore mental health.

Ron Curry, CEO IGEA is a seasoned leader and advocate, having dedicated over three decades to the video games and entertainment sector. Since becoming CEO of IGEA in 2008, he has been instrumental in shaping public policy, fostering industry unity, and elevating the role of videogames in education, health, and culture across Australia and New Zealand. A passionate evangelist for the industry's economic and employment value, Ron regularly champions the significant contribution games make to innovation, trade, and job creation. His leadership has ensured the sector is recognised not just as a source of entertainment, but as a vital and thriving part of the creative and technology economy.

Christy Dena, Writer-designer-producer-director
Christy Dena is a writer-designer-producer-director of cross-media and interactive narratives. She's worked in digital, tabletop, VR, AR, installation, film, and TV, taken on roles such as national chair of games at SAE, and won AWG and WA Premier's Prizes. She's worked on tiny games and global brands, and uses all these experiences to build prosocial and transformative games and development processes. Her latest game, an asymmetrical couch co-op about bugs building a revolution, has been funded by VicScreen's Originate program.

Marie Foulston, Studio Lead, hybrid curator, creative director, executive producer at Good Afternoon, UK
An award-winning videogame curator and creative director of radical exhibitions, games and immersive experiences. She is studio lead at Good Afternoon, a creative studio for games, exhibitions and immersive experiences. Previously she was curator of videogames at the V&A where she lead the curation of the headline exhibition 'Videogames', was guest director of experimental games festival 'Now Play This' at Somerset House and co-founded the UK alternative videogame collective the Wild Rumpus. Across her career she has worked alongside a host of leading organisations and brands including the Smithsonian, ACMI, PlayStation, the Design Museum, Netflix, Channel 4 and Nintendo.

Al Gibb, Director – Digital Games Partnerships, Edvantage Institute Australia
Al is the founder of Mighty Serious and former Head of Games for the Victorian Government, where he created Melbourne International Games Week and brought PAX Australia to Melbourne. Obsessed with using game psychologies, methodologies, and technologies to tackle social problems, Al recently built a climate change game for young people.

Professor Dan Golding is Chair of the Department of Media and Communication at Swinburne University of Technology, the host of Screen Sounds on ABC Classic, and a composer for videogames, including Untitled Goose Game, Frog Detective, and Mars First Logistics. Dan has been a researcher of the Australian games sector for fifteen years.

Meredith Hall, Biz dev & Marketing Director, Summerfall Studios
Meredith is a multi-award-winning games developer, consulting across production, business development, marketing and accessibility for platforms, publishers, and independent devs alike. With over eight years of experience in indie dev, she's currently the Business Development & Marketing Director at Summerfall Studios, creators of the BAFTA/Grammy nominated Stray Gods: The Roleplaying Musical. Previously, she led production at Aconite and Strange Scaffold, as well as Games & Digital Content at VicScreen, where she administered grant funding to indie games across the state. She's the cofounder of Accessibility Unlocked, an organisation focused on better support for disabled developers in the industry, and runs a newsletter called the Indie Dev Digest, an ANZ focused regional community noticeboard.

Thomas Holloway is an aspiring game developer and high-school student with experience creating and designing small games and his flagship game, Slugger. His first exposure to coding was at six while learning how to use Scratch Junior. Thomas has strong technical programming skills, and he was selected as a participant in the *ACMI + RMIT Young Creators' Lab 2024*. He enjoys thinking about creative solutions for new problems either in game development or in general. He also enjoys running, playing music with friends and playing videogames.

Lucienne Impala, Game designer
Lucie (she/he/they) is a multi-award-winning game designer known for their narrative-rich, ethically engaged, and fantastically styled games. A passionate advocate for disability and accessibility in the industry, Lucie brings a deeply considered and craft-driven approach to design. Lucie also works for Chaosium in their digital content team, and is currently based at Collarts, where they continue to explore the sophisticated interplay of story and mechanics, shaping games that challenge, invite, and inspire.

Brendan Keogh, Author, associate professor, Chief Investigator, Digital Media Research Centre, QUT)
Brendan is an Associate Professor in the School of Communication at Queensland University of Technology. He researches videogame play and production cultures and is the author of *A Play of Bodies* and *The Video Game Industry Does Not Exist*. He is also a game developer, whose games include *Brendan Keogh's Putting Challenge*.

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Raelene Knowles, Chief Operating Officer of IGEA
Raelene is the Chief Operating Officer of IGEA, the peak industry body representing Australia and New Zealand's videogames sector. With extensive experience in industry advocacy, stakeholder engagement, and organisational leadership, Raelene plays a pivotal role in supporting the growth and recognition of the games industry across the region. She works closely with government, media, and members to champion policies that foster creativity, innovation, and sustainability. Passionate about community building and collaboration, Raelene is dedicated to ensuring that local developers, publishers, and creators are empowered to thrive in a globally competitive interactive entertainment marketplace.

Lis Moberly, Creative Lead at 20th Century Games, Walt Disney Company
Lis Moberly a game writer, designer, and scholar. Her credits include Senior Game Writer, Narrative Designer, Scriptwriter and Designer on titles such as Last Sentinel, Avowed, Hogwarts Legacy, Cursed to Golf, Singularity and We Went Back.

Katie Roots, Marketing Manager, Hipster Whale
Katie Roots, Marketing Manager at Hipster Whale, known for the viral smash hit Crossy Road, has been working on global entertainment brands for the better part of a decade. A creative force with an enterprising spirit, Katie is the former founder of Lumi Consulting and Lumi Interactive, Head of Product Marketing at the world #1 horse game, Star Stable Online, and self-appointed NIC (Nerd in Charge). People have described her as an energiser bunny, part time dragon lore expert and marketing mama.

Deb Polson is a Professor of Digital Design at RMIT University and Director of the Centre of Digital Ecosystems (CODE). Over the past 25 years, she has created data visualisations and games for policymakers, immersive theatre experiences, playful distractions for young patients, energy modelling tools, and interactive installations for museums. She specialises in design strategies for complex systems and has collaborated with partners ranging from Marvel Studios LA to Plastics NZ. Deb has led design schools in Australia, China, the UK, and New Zealand, where she established a new School of Design at the University of Auckland in 2020. She joined RMIT in 2021 as Associate Dean and became Director of CODE in 2024, where she recently founded the Games of Consequence Lab.

Jessica Shipard, Co–founder & director of Studio Folly
Jessica Shipard is the co-founder and Creative Director of Studio Folly, where she has created the games *Gubbins* and *Real Bird Fake Bird*, with more in development. An award-winning art director and communication designer, she brings over 12 years of expertise in branding, digital design, and typography to the world of games.

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)*

Adrian Webb, Assistant Director. Strategic Gaming & Exercises | Strategic Policy Division | Department of Defence
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 different industry pathways they can utilise their talents to deliver better outcomes everywhere.

Julian Wilton, Massive Monster
Australian Game Developer Award winner, Julian is literally bursting with creativity. Doctors say it's nothing to worry about. He shipped his first console game before leaving university and is based in Melbourne, Australia. He focuses on Creative direction and business development. His goal in life is to draw faces on anything he can find.

Angharad 'Rad' Yeo, Media presenter and critic
Rad 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.

Careers + Frontiers: MIGW25 Games Education Symposium is produced by ACMI and Creative Victoria as part of Melbourne International Games Week.