Screen Currency 2026

Understanding the value of
Australian screen and games

A study in 5 reports with
supporting case studies

Report 3 of 5

# Industry Insights

Australian Government | Screen Australia | McAtamney & Advisors

Screen Currency 2026

Understanding the value of
Australian screen and games

# Industry Insights

This report maps contemporary Australian screen and games industry value chains. It reveals the dynamics, tensions and areas of opportunity in a landscape undergoing significant change.

New survey data and sector perspectives have generated insights around the strengths and challenges of local content production and how it can continue to reach audiences in a global digital media environment.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are advised that this document may contain images and names of people who have passed.

This Screen Currency report was developed by the McAtamney & Advisors team of James McAtamney, Samuel Bewick and Kate Murray with input from the University of Canberra and prepared for publication by Mandy Whitford, Impact Words Consulting, with Georgie McClean at The Gist and Screen Australia's Strategic Policy & Insights team.



Attribution: Screen Australia 2026, *Screen Currency 2026: Industry Insights*, developed by James McAtamney and Samuel Bewick, McAtamney & Advisors.

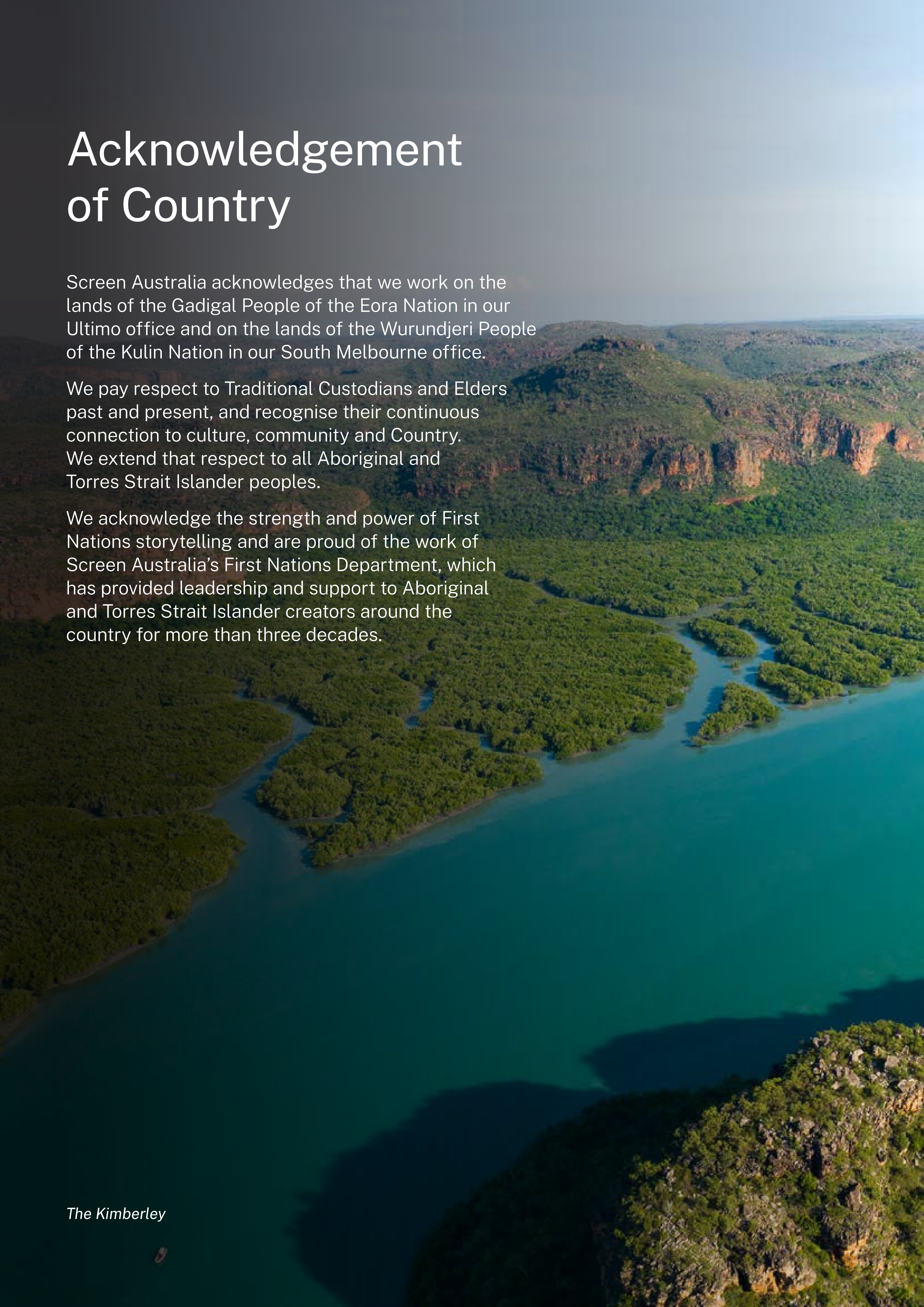
Wolfram

# Acknowledgement of Country

Screen Australia acknowledges that we work on the lands of the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation in our Ultimo office and on the lands of the Wurundjeri People of the Kulin Nation in our South Melbourne office.

We pay respect to Traditional Custodians and Elders past and present, and recognise their continuous connection to culture, community and Country. We extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We acknowledge the strength and power of First Nations storytelling and are proud of the work of Screen Australia's First Nations Department, which has provided leadership and support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander creators around the country for more than three decades.



*The Kimberley*

*Eat the Invaders*

# About Screen Currency 2026 and this report

**The *Industry Insights* report forms part of the Screen Currency 2026 suite of research**, exploring the social, cultural and economic value of Australian screen and games.

**Screen Currency's purpose is to provide a shared evidence base for government and industry, and to inform decision-making and policy – including development of the next National Cultural Policy.** The research updates and builds on the inaugural Screen Currency report published in 2016, acknowledging significant changes in the past decade. In doing so, it establishes critical benchmarks for future tracking.

**Screen Currency 2026 is a multifaceted research study that comprises 5 reports with supporting case studies.**

1. Insights Overview

2. Audience Insights | 3. Industry Insights | 4. Economic Insights | 5. Global Insights

Supporting Case Studies

**This Screen Currency *Industry Insights* report is also referred to as "the industry study".** This report maps contemporary industry value chains and reveals the dynamics, tensions and areas of opportunity in Australian screen and games from an industry perspective.

**The scope of the Screen Currency research spans the broad range of screen and games offerings in Australia**, beyond that which Screen Australia supports directly, including:

- **Screen:** feature films, TV drama and comedy, documentary and factual, children's programming, animation, light entertainment and online videos, viewed across all platforms. It does not include news, sport or user-generated social media content.
- **Games:** video games played on PC, console and mobile devices, ranging from simple puzzle and word games to immersive storyworlds and large-scale online environments that support social interaction and ongoing engagement.

**Screen Currency provides evidence for the value of these critical creative industries** to individuals, communities, the economy and the nation.

Click to read the other reports in the series

Insights Overview | Audience Insights | Case Studies
Economic Insights | Global Insights

# Contents

This is an Interactive PDF.
Click a title below to navigate.

*The Correspondent*

# Executive summary

**Australian screen and digital games are central to the nation's cultural life and a significant contributor to economic activity.** Screen and games collectively form a large part of the wider cultural and creative economy. They span feature films, TV drama and comedy, documentary and factual, children's programming, animation, light entertainment and online content, alongside PC, console and mobile games. This content tells Australian stories, reflects lived experience and shapes how Australians see themselves, each other and the world.

**This industry study forms part of Screen Currency 2026**, a multidisciplinary program of research examining the social, cultural and economic value of Australian screen and games.

**The industry study draws on new primary research**, including a national industry and workforce survey (n=765) and 32 in-depth interviews with experienced screen and games practitioners, **as well as analysis of existing industry data**, including surveys, administrative data, academic research and other published industry reports. Further details of the methods used are set out in Appendix 1: Approach, and key terms are in Glossary and acronyms.

**The study is descriptive:** documenting current industry conditions, identifying emerging pressures and opportunities, and situating these findings within longer-term patterns of change. In doing so, the study **provides a shared evidence base** to inform policy development, industry decision-making and public understanding. The study has been undertaken during the implementation period of *Revive*, the Australian Government's National Cultural Policy 2023–2027, and it will inform development of the subsequent National Cultural Policy.

**Understanding industry dynamics alongside social and cultural contribution is critical** to supporting sustainable creative careers, viable businesses and Australia's ongoing participation in global screen and games markets.

**The industry study should be considered alongside the other studies that comprise Screen Currency 2026**, which include an audience study, economic study, global study, a summary report and supporting case studies. Screen Currency is a multifaceted project that presents a holistic view of value, including how that value is created and captured, and who benefits from it.

*Acts of Forgetting*

# Key findings

**Australia's screen and games industry is a complex and layered ecosystem.** A system of individuals, businesses and organisations that create, develop, produce, distribute, publish and exhibit content, **it is both nationally significant and globally connected**, making a substantial contribution to Australia's economy and culture, and supporting tens of thousands of jobs.

The industry is characterised by **high levels of creative and technical skill, and significant capital investment**. High levels of activity across both domestic and international markets are common, and Australian screen and games capability is widely regarded as internationally competitive, underpinning strong demand for Australian skills, services and content. The industry is shaped by an interplay of commercial, cultural and policy settings and supports skilled employment, drives technology development and adoption, and attracts both local and international investment.

The evidence explored through this study points to **growing structural and commercial pressures** across both screen and games. High levels of activity and production coexist with increasing uncertainty around business sustainability, value capture, workforce stability and the impacts of generative AI. Many of these pressures reflect global industry dynamics, including platform consolidation, shifting deal structures and the concentration of distribution power, rather than conditions unique to Australia. However, they interact with Australia's specific policy settings, market scale and funding structures in ways that shape local outcomes and warrant attention in their own right.

**The findings reported here outline the key system-level dynamics shaping screen and games.** They are intended to highlight overarching common themes across both sectors, as well as important points of difference. The full study provides analysis for each industry and its component stages of the value chain.

## Finding 1

Australia is creating world-class content, but retaining its long-term value domestically is becoming harder.

Evidence from stakeholder interviews and the survey consistently points to **Australia producing high-quality screen content and games, with Australian skills in demand**. However, stakeholders emphasised that long-term value realisation is shaped by who owns rights and IP, who controls distribution and market access, who can reach audiences directly, and who holds the audience data that informs future revenue. **As global platforms and large intermediaries play a bigger role in discovery and monetisation**, it can be harder for Australian creators and businesses to convert strong activity and critical success into steady, repeatable income – and to retain a larger share of the long-term value generated in Australia.

This matters not only financially but also because **Australian stories and Australian-made games have cultural value that is not always rewarded by the market**. Creating and distributing local work is costly, audience attention is fragmented, and competition is global. Where audiences are not actively seeking Australian content, stakeholders noted that discoverability can depend heavily on platform algorithms, storefront placement and distribution terms – levers that local businesses have limited influence over. Over time, **this dynamic may leave culturally valuable work more reliant on ongoing public support**, without consistently strengthening business models, stable careers, or capacity to reinvest.

**This dynamic carries particular weight for First Nations content**. There is growing international and domestic appetite for First Nations stories but discoverability challenges, platform commissioning structures and the tension between cultural value and commercial returns can limit long-term value for First Nations creators and communities.

Stakeholders also distinguished between segments most likely to thrive commercially – export-oriented games, international service work, and businesses able to operate at scale in global markets – and segments focused primarily on Australian content. **High-performing, globally driven segments support jobs and capability, but they do not sustain Australian content by default**. Australia is likely to keep producing excellent work across screen and games; the risk raised in consultations is that **a greater share of long-term upside accrues elsewhere, public support carries more of the burden, and the conditions that sustain Australian content and careers weaken over time**.

## Finding 2

Screen and games industry activity is high but growing more slowly than the wider economy.

Estimated screen and games economic activity is sizeable: in 2023/24, the **gross value added (GVA) by screen and games activity in Australia was $11.1 billion.**[1] Within that overall figure, digital games development contributed $317 million in GVA (up from $299 million in 2022/23), with continued growth expected in subsequent years.[2]

These are large headline numbers, but in recent years the screen and games industry[3] has grown more slowly than the Australian economy overall, so its **share of total economic activity has declined**. Games alone is an exception: **from a smaller base, the digital games sector has expanded faster, largely driven by export-oriented digital production.** Even where top-line growth is evident (for example, record drama expenditure), this does not mean that all businesses operating at a unit level experience higher margins, stronger productivity, or greater value retained in Australia.

At the same time, **sustainability and value retention differ markedly across the value chain**, and these dynamics are not readily visible in national datasets alone.

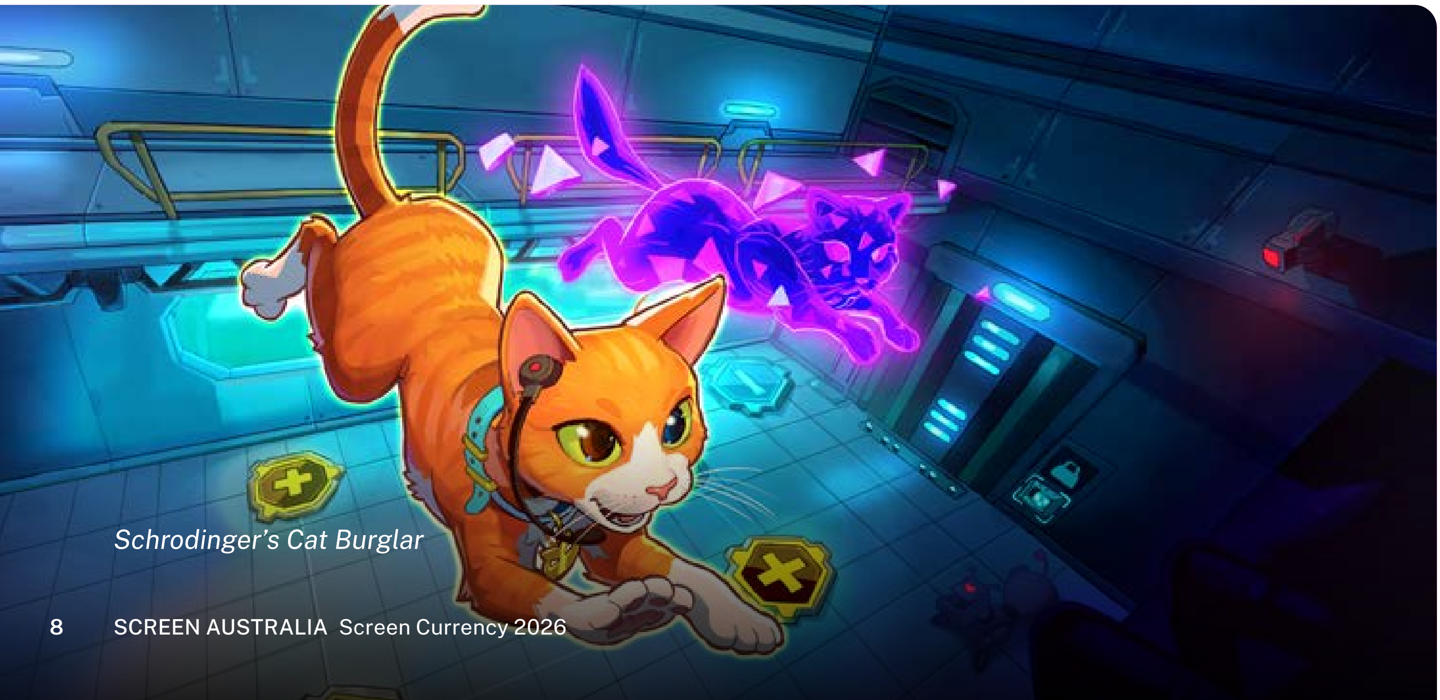
## Finding 3

Two-speed outcomes are widening within screen and games.

Across both screen and games, evidence points to **increasingly uneven outcomes for businesses and individuals**. Some businesses are growing and capturing repeatable commercial returns, often through global markets. A long tail of businesses faces tighter commercial pressures, creative and financial uncertainty and weaker pathways to sustained value.

In screen, **internationally connected activity is strengthening segments of the system** (including foreign production[4] and demand for animation and PDV services), while **traditional pipelines for Australian content are under pressure.** In games, a small number of breakout titles and well-positioned studios reach significant global markets, but many teams continue to operate with thin margins and high levels of volatility.

1 Screen Australia 2026, *Screen Currency 2026: Economic Insights*, based on analysis of National Accounts by the University of Canberra.
2 Screen Australia 2026, *Screen Currency 2026: Economic Insights*, developed by Marion McCutcheon, Yogi Yidyattama and Stuart Cunningham, University of Canberra.
3 The scope of the screen industry in this study is defined in Appendix 2.
4 Foreign production refers to film, TV, or other screen content projects that are initiated, developed, and primarily controlled by non-Australian entities which undertake some or all production or post-production activity in Australia.



*Schrodinger's Cat Burglar*

## Finding 4

Upstream creation and production is characterised by a dynamic yet fragmented base of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), while downstream is more concentrated, shaping risk and audience access.

The screen and games industry in Australia includes many small businesses. **In screen creation and production (upstream)** in 2023/24, ABS BLADE data reports 8,393 active businesses with an average of 6.7 employees and a predominance of small businesses.[5] While it is not possible to isolate games activity in ABS BLADE, industry survey responses were typically from small independent games studios, with a median of 2 full-time staff and 4.5 contractors. Consultation feedback suggests smaller business structures support adaptability and flexibility but can also limit ability to scale, bargaining power and financial security.

**Commercial broadcasters are commissioning less balanced slates**, with ACMA data showing 84% of production expenditure ($1.5 billion) directed to news, sport and light entertainment in 2023/24.[6] Australian adult drama, children's, documentaries and other programming represented $72 million (4%) of total commercial broadcaster commissioning in 2023/24 – down from $141 million (7%) in 2017/18.[7]

**Read more about Australian production activity in:**

Economic Insights

**Downstream distribution markets are more concentrated**, with 5 subscription video-on-demand (SVOD) services (Netflix with 6.4 million subscriptions, Amazon Prime Video with 5.1 million, Disney+ with 3.3 million, Stan with 2.6 million and Paramount+ with 2.1 million) dominating the Australian market.[8]

In this landscape, many creation and production businesses are **competing for audience access via limited distribution pathways and gatekeepers** – shifting creative, financial and commercial risk upstream.

At the same time, **platforms such as YouTube have lowered barriers to content creation and audience access**, with a growing number of Australian creators building significant followings outside traditional commissioning structures and revenue streams. However, these platforms operate on fundamentally different economics (i.e. advertising revenue share and brand partnerships rather than commissioning or licence fees) and the pathway from direct-to-audience models to broader screen formats and channels remains challenging.

5 ABS 2025, Businesses in Australia (BLADE), 2001/02 to 2023/24, accessed 12 December 2025. Note that this includes special-purpose vehicles (SPVs) and many non-employing businesses. An SPV is a separate legal entity created for a specific project.
6 ACMA 2025, *TV in Australia: Spending on commercial TV programs 2023/24*.
7 ACMA 2025, *TV in Australia: Spending on commercial TV programs 2023/24*.
8 Telsyte 2025, *Australian Subscription Entertainment Study 2025*.

*Optics*

## Finding 5

Deal terms often trade long-term upside for near-term certainty, limiting IP ownership and long-term value realisation.

Across screen and games, long-term value is determined less by where content is made and more by who controls IP, audience access, data and distribution scale. Survey results suggest **screen and games businesses may have limited ongoing income from titles they own**: on average, respondents attributed 28% of IP earnings to existing IP owned by their organisation, compared with 43% from new IP first monetised in 2024/25 and 29% from activity involving IP owned by others.[9]

This earnings profile aligns with deal terms reported for typical projects: 39% of respondents reported service-fee-only arrangements (no backend), 48% reported revenue share/royalties after recoupment, and 45% reported an upfront minimum guarantee/advance. Only 12% reported receiving marketing/data support from a partner or platform.[10]

Many stakeholders reported that these deal structures sustain activity and capability but can **leave some Australian businesses with limited ability to retain IP, negotiate downstream value, or access audience data and broader market intelligence**, even where domestic creative and technical contribution is high. The shift toward cost-plus[11] premium commissioning, platform-led distribution and consolidated IP ownership reflects global industry trends. However, the scale of public investment in Australian screen production means the consequences of these deal structures for local value retention are of particular note. Screenrights' collection account management service, which administers long-tail royalties for a subset of rights holders, offers one publicly observable indicator of backend performance: amounts managed through this service fell from $6.5 million in 2022/23 to $3.7 million in 2024/25.[12] Spanning two years and sensitive to deal timing, this is indicative, though it is directionally consistent with a shift towards upfront buyout structures.

## Finding 6

The screen and games workforce is highly skilled but fragmented, with implications for career development, skills continuity and employment certainty.

Across screen and games, **specialised capabilities are often dispersed rather than embedded within firms** because the workforce is highly mobile: formal qualifications are common, multiple job-holding is widespread, and work is typically project-based rather than ongoing.

**In games, small developer teams typically rely on contractors to scale delivery**, which supports flexibility but limits stable team growth and continuity. **In screen, short-term project engagements remain the norm**, creating repeated cycles of ramp-up and wind-down that make it difficult for businesses to retain staff between productions.

Stakeholders consulted described how this **fragmentation weakens career pathways and skills transfer**: firms struggle to hold capability long enough to build systems, mentor and train juniors, and maintain institutional memory. Over time, experienced workers move between projects, businesses and sometimes out of the sector, contributing to burnout risk, skills leakage, and lower confidence in stable, long-term employment.

9 Based on the Screen Currency Industry and Workforce Survey, n=51 screen and games business responses to the question: "Thinking about your earnings from IP in 2024/25 (fees, sales, royalties) what percentage share best describes where it came from?"

10 Based on the Screen Currency Industry and Workforce survey, n=62 screen and games business responses to the question: "Thinking of a typical project, what deal terms applied to your business?", respondents could select multiple options.

11 Cost-plus is a production financing model where the commissioner covers the costs of the production plus a fixed fee. The model offers guaranteed upfront returns for producers regardless of the commercial outcome of a work, usually in return for relinquishment of backend rights and long-term profit participation. It differs from more traditional deficit financing models.

12 Screenrights 2023, *Annual Report for the Year Ended 30 June 2023*; Screenrights 2025, *Annual Report for the Year Ended 30 June 2025*.

## Finding 7

Public investment is a significant component of Australian screen production financing and is playing an important role in early-stage game development and expansion of current projects.

**Public funding is concentrated in the parts of the industry where commercial finance does not reach.** Total government sources — the Producer Offset, the Location and PDV (Post, Digital and Visual Effects) Offsets, federal and state government investment, and other government sources — provided $179 million or 44% of overall Australian theatrical feature film finance, and $251 million or 34% of TV/video on demand (VOD) finance in 2024/25.[13] Incentives supported more than $1.0 billion of investment across 20 international feature films in 2024/25, sustaining production capacity and employment.[14] Total screen drama expenditure alone reached $2.7 billion in 2024/25.[15]

**Public financing and incentives account for an increasing share of investment in drama, documentary and children's content.** This changes the risk profile of individual productions, allowing projects to proceed that commercial finance alone would not, and sustaining production activity and employment in these parts of the sector..

In games, a quarter of respondents to the Australian Game Development Survey reported using the Digital Games Tax Offset in 2023/24 – studios reported using the offset both to launch new projects and expand existing ones.[16] Screen Australia's games funding programs are consistently oversubscribed, with funding rates of eligible submissions in the low to high teens. Stakeholder interviews suggest this support can be meaningful at the start of a studio or project, **bridging early viability where other capital options can be more limited.**

## Finding 8

Policy and funding settings were designed around production activity, not the platform-led audience and revenue models now growing in influence.

**Screen and games industry dynamics are increasingly shaped by global digital platforms.** These platforms influence what people discover, what gets promoted, how audiences are reached and how revenue is earned.

**Read more about audience dynamics in:**

Audience Insights

Australians continue to watch, play and engage in large volumes, but stakeholders emphasised that the **results for Australian businesses are increasingly shaped by platform terms**, reduced bargaining power and limited control over audience access. These pressures extend beyond producers and studios to actors, crew, developers, and PDV businesses whose sustainability is tied to project-based employment, variable pipelines, and increasingly concentrated commissioning and funding.

As a result, **policy and funding approaches that were built around earlier production-and-release models can struggle to target what now drives long-term sustainability**: rights and IP outcomes, distribution leverage, access to audience data, and how value is shared through platforms and intermediaries. This can leave a gap between the areas government can most readily support via grants and production incentives (production volume and, by extension, jobs) and the factors that most affect whether businesses can build repeatable income and retain value in Australia.

13 Screen Australia 2025, *Drama Report 2024/25*.
14 Screen Australia 2025, *Drama Report 2024/25*.
15 Screen Australia 2025, *Drama Report 2024/25*.
16 IGEA 2026, *Australian Game Development Survey FY25 Final Report*.

Like others globally, many Australian screen and games companies have responded by combining original content development with service work, which can help diversify revenue streams, build international relationships and strengthen business resilience. This can, however, have implications for long-term business sustainability and capacity to increase and prioritise investment into new content.

## Finding 9

AI is reshaping creative and production workflows, with structural implications for IP, the workforce and value realisation that are moving faster than industry dialogue and policy.

**Generative AI is increasingly embedded in screen and games workflows**, from early development and prototyping through to post-production and distribution. While adoption is uneven and often undisclosed, the technology has the potential to compress development timelines, merge stages of the value chain and create new forms of content at scale. The growing use of AI raises significant unresolved questions around IP ownership, copyright protection, workforce displacement and the use of creative works to train AI models. The rapid collapse of OpenAI's Sora video platform and its associated Disney licensing deal in early 2026 illustrates both the pace of change and the fragility of early commercial models in this space.[17]

**Notably, specific commentary or perspectives on the impact of AI were limited in stakeholder consultations or survey responses conducted for this study**, despite the clear scale and pace of disruption already underway. This limited visibility may reflect the recency and uneven adoption of these technologies, and should not be read as a measure of the sector's engagement with their longer-term implications for creation, production, workforce and IP.

**At the time of writing, the Australian Government has ruled out a text and data mining exception in copyright legislation for AI**. In October 2025, Attorney-General Michelle Rowland confirmed that the government "will not be entertaining a text and data mining exception," and reconvened the Copyright and AI Reference Group (CAIRG) to explore alternative approaches, including paid collective licensing frameworks for AI training, greater clarity on how copyright law applies to AI-generated material, and potential enforcement mechanisms such as a small claims forum for lower-value infringement matters.[18] The underlying tensions between creative opportunity, IP protection, workforce sustainability and commercial exploitation are structural and will require ongoing policy attention as AI technology and its applications continue to evolve.

17 Spangler T 2026, "OpenAI Will Shut Down Sora Video App; Disney Drops Plans for $1 Billion Investment", *Variety*.
18 Attorney-General's Department 2025, *Copyright and Artificial Intelligence consultation; Copyright and AI Reference Group*.


# Limitations

**This study draws on the best available data, industry surveys and extensive in-depth interviews** to explore the dynamics of Australia's screen and games industries. While this provides a strong system-level view, there are limits to what can currently be measured and attributed.

**Several drivers of long-term value, such as IP ownership, rights outcomes, platform economics, and marketing outcomes, are not consistently measured in national datasets.** This is particularly pronounced downstream, where commercial arrangements are often confidential and activity may be recorded offshore or through intermediaries, limiting transparency over value flows and retention.

**Existing statistical frameworks and contemporary industry structures.** Digital games development is not captured within a dedicated industry classification, constraining the ability to isolate and track games activity consistently across datasets. While newer occupational classifications[19] may improve visibility over time, important gaps remain in how screen and games work is recorded and compared.

**As project-based industries, income, employment and costs are frequently realised through multiple corporate entities and contracting arrangements.** This can distort conventional indicators of business performance and productivity, making it difficult to draw firm conclusions about sustainability using aggregated business statistics alone.

**Finally, interviews and survey evidence provide rich insight into industry dynamics that are not measured or identifiable in available data.** The interviews and survey undertaken for this study were completed at a point in time and reflect a sample within the broader industry. In some instances, findings should be considered directional due to sample sizes. These insights have been combined with other data sources to help illustrate and better understand wider trends, however, it is acknowledged that they may not be representative of all the dynamics experienced across the industry. It is also acknowledged that **industry conditions are evolving rapidly**, and point-in-time research methods are not able to fully capture these effects. Insights should be interpreted in this context.

19 Such as the Occupation Standard Classification for Australia (OSCA).

# Introduction

## Project brief

In September 2025, Screen Australia commissioned **Screen Currency 2026, a landmark study on the economic, social and cultural value of Australian screen and games.** Screen Currency provides a crucial evidence base on the contemporary dynamics and health of screen and games production. The findings will inform future policy, including development of the next National Cultural Policy; empower the screen industry through insights and research to help understand their collective impact; and contribute to the Creative Australia *State of Culture* report.

As part of Screen Currency 2026, **Screen Australia commissioned McAtamney & Advisors to deliver an industry study** seeking to value the benefits and dynamics of a viable screen and games industry, map the screen and games business value chains and reference the state of the industry.

**The industry study maps how individuals, businesses and organisations operate across the industry value chain, from creation through to production, distribution and engagement with audiences, and it provides insights on the state of the industry in 2024/25.** The approach to undertaking the study is intended to be replicable in future years. This study was undertaken during the implementation period of *Revive: a place for every story, a story for every place*, the Australian Government's National Cultural Policy 2023–2027. *Revive* is structured around 5 pillars: First Nations First, A Place for Every Story, Centrality of the Artist, Strong Cultural Infrastructure, and Reaching the Audience. Many of the dynamics documented in this study intersect with *Revive's* policy objectives.

This study is not intended to provide a single, definitive valuation of Australia's screen and games industries, nor to advocate for policy outcomes. Instead, **it brings together the best available evidence to describe how the industry is functioning, where value is being created and constrained and how current conditions compare with historical patterns**. Anchored in 2024/25 (with reference to other financial year data where 2024/25 data is not available) and informed by longer-term trends, the study is designed to support informed discussion and decision-making by government, industry and the public, while also identifying areas where further research and improved data are required.

*Long Head*

# Approach

**The industry study was completed using a mixed-method approach.** See Appendix 1: Approach. McAtamney & Advisors' research included:

- Review of existing literature and research into cultural and creative value chains to underpin the development of the **value chain framework** to examine how value is generated, distributed and retained across the lifecycle of screen and games content.
- The design and delivery of an **industry and workforce survey**, targeted at screen and games practitioners, to capture specific information from the perspective of business owners, operators and workers – of the total 1,101 responses to the survey, 765 were assessed as suitable to be included in the sample, based on completion of core demographic questions and a sufficient proportion of substantive survey items. The survey included a mix of compulsory and optional questions. The survey opened on 13 November 2025 and closed on 7 December 2025.
- A targeted program of **32 in-depth interviews with experienced screen and games practitioners** including creators, producers, studio leads, distributors, publishers, commissioners, platform representatives, workforce representatives and public agency representatives. Some sessions included more than one participant, meaning the program covered more organisations than interview sessions.
- An extensive **review of other existing data sources** including Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data, Screen Australia administrative data, industry reports and surveys and published research.

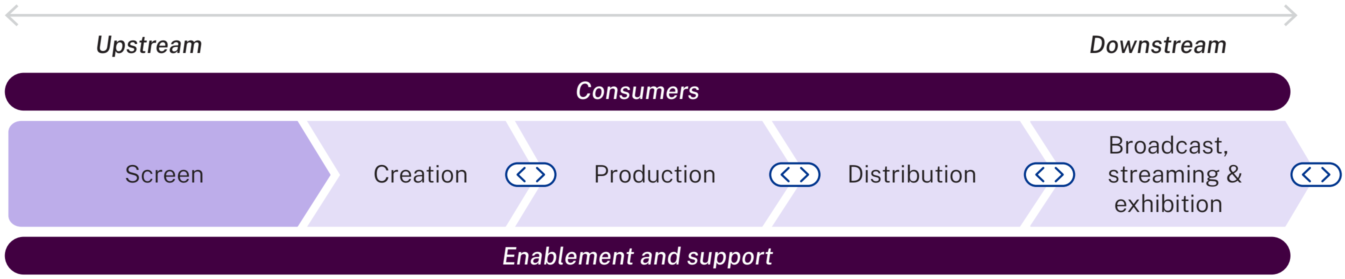
**Unless otherwise noted, quantitative data reflects the 2024/25 financial year**, while qualitative insights incorporate stakeholder feedback gathered during the in-field research period between September 2025 and February 2026. Direct quotes from stakeholders have been lightly edited for brevity, clarity and to protect the anonymity of individuals and organisations.

CEEBS

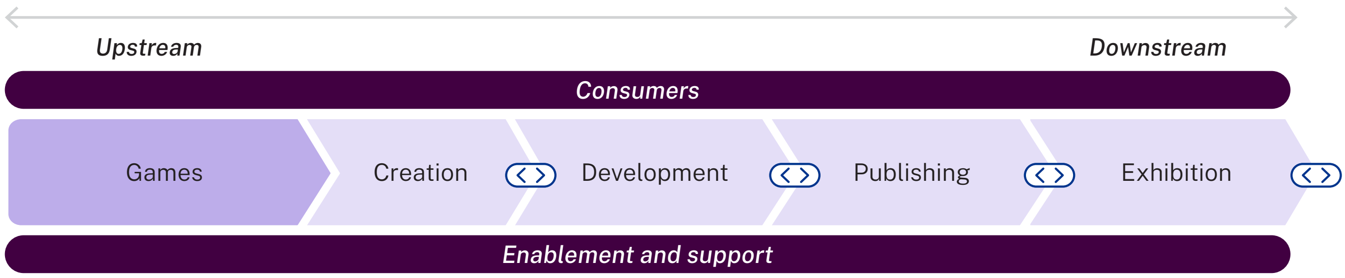
# Defining screen and games in this study: the value chain

Drawing on established concepts and frameworks used in value-chain analysis and cultural economics, including Porter's value chain, UNESCO's cultural cycle and other international studies mapping creative and cultural industries, **the industry study developed a value chain tailored to the specific dynamics of Australia's screen and digital games industries**. This framework was used to clarify what is meant by the screen and games industries in this study – to map and understand the relevant industry classifications, activities and occupations; and to structure analysis of how value is created, financed, produced, distributed and retained across various stages of activity.

### Screen value chain overview




### Digital games value chain overview




For the scope of activities and participants discussed at each stage of the value chain, go to:
Figure 1: Screen value chain
Figure 4: Digital games value chain

### Relationship to the industry sectors discussed in the Screen Currency economic study

Screen Currency's economic study discusses discrete industry sectors within the value chain based on industry categories defined in the Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZSIC).

While in this report, **"Production"** is referred to as a stage in the screen value chain that includes post-production activity, **the economic report considers "Production" and "Post-production" separately** (based on the ANZSIC categories).

The value chain stages used in this report were developed to reflect how screen and games industries operate in practice. They relate to, but do not align one-to-one with the ANZSIC categories. See Scope of measurement in Appendix 2 for further information.

**To find out more about the industry sectors discussed in the economic study go to:**

Economic Insights

**The value chain used in this study was iteratively developed and tested** through survey design, data analysis and extensive stakeholder consultation. Feedback from creators, producers, developers, studios, distributors, publishers, commissioners and platforms informed refinements to the framework, ensuring it reflects how the industries operate in practice.

**The value chain provides the organising structure for the main body of report.** Findings are presented by stage of the value chain, separately for screen and games, drawing on quantitative analysis, the industry survey and stakeholder interviews. This approach is used to highlight where value, risk, capability and pressure sit across each industry and how these differ between screen and games.

While the value chain is presented as a sequence of stages for analytical clarity, **the study recognises that screen and games activity is inherently iterative and networked, with ideas, finance, production, distribution and audiences interacting over time.** Activities grouped in one stage may in practice extend across multiple stages, and many businesses operate across several parts of the value chain. Pathways to audiences and players also vary materially by format, scale and business model.

**The framework is therefore used as a flexible organising lens**, supporting consistent analysis across the report while accommodating the diversity of contemporary screen and games production. **Activities and industry participants are positioned where they are most relevant, not necessarily where they begin or end.**

**A visual summary of the value chain is included at the start of each of the screen and games chapters** of the study, with a detailed description of the value chain framework and its development provided in Appendix 2: Screen and games value chains.

# Australia's screen industry



## The following chapter shows Australia's screen industry is **large, globally active and growing in absolute terms** since the pandemic, with total industry GVA of $10.8 billion in 2023/24.[20] Drama production expenditure reached $2.7 billion in 2024/25.[21]

Despite absolute growth, **the screen industry's share of total economic output has decreased over recent years**. Headline indicators reflect high production volumes, however, there are increased pressures on cost, productivity, margins and long-term retained rights value at the business level.

**The screen business landscape is fragmented**. ABS business data reports almost 8,400 businesses in the **creation and production stages of the value chain (upstream)**[22] – these businesses are typically small and young, an average 3.7 years old in 2023/24.[23] Stakeholder interviews suggested they operate with high levels of creative and financial risk. An estimated 29,104 people were employed in screen creation and production in 2024/25.[24]

**The screen workforce is highly skilled** – per the workforce survey, 73% of respondents hold a bachelor's degree or higher. Analysis of ABS data shows 26% of screen employees hold multiple jobs each year,[25] operating in a labour market that frequently utilises short-term contracts and is driven by cyclical production patterns.

Public investment sets the terms on which parts of the production sector are financed. In 2024/25, federal sources accounted for 44% of Australian theatrical feature drama finance and 34% of TV/VOD drama finance.[26] The incentives available do different jobs: the Producer Offset helps determine what producers can negotiate and retain, while the Location and PDV Offsets help attract production and post-production activity from foreign film and TV projects ($1.6 billion in 2024/25). Other parts of the sector, including some light entertainment, unscripted content, and advertising production, access neither direct funding nor the offsets, and direct-to-audience content largely sits outside the offset architecture, where the greatest scale of support operates.[27]

**Interviews with stakeholders operating upstream in creation and production** highlighted the importance (and challenge) of developing high quality IP, that business viability is increasingly challenged when demand/commissioning/investment is increasingly infrequent and the need to adapt business models and focus (including increasing coverage across format and genre).

20 Screen Australia 2026, *Screen Currency 2026: Economic Insights*, developed by Marion McCutcheon, Yogi Yidyattama and Stuart Cunningham, University of Canberra.
21 Screen Australia 2025, *Drama Report 2024/25*.
22 Including animation and PDV houses. See Figure 1: Screen value chain. This also includes SPVs and many non-employing businesses.
23 ABS 2025, Businesses in Australia (BLADE), 2001/02 to 2023/24, accessed 12 December 2025.
24 Screen Australia 2026, *Screen Currency 2026: Economic Insights*, based on derived estimates utilising ABS 2026, Labour Account 2020/21–2024/25 and other ABS datasets and foreign expenditure data analysed by the University of Canberra. This includes those working in the production and post-production sectors discussed in the economic study. See Scope of measurement in Appendix 2 for further information.
25 Screen Australia 2026, *Screen Currency 2026: Economic Insights*, based on derived estimates utilising 2024/25 ABS Labour Account and other ABS datasets analysed by the University of Canberra.
26 Screen Australia 2025, *Drama Report 2024/25*.
27 Screen Australia 2025, *Drama Report 2024/25*.

By contrast, the **distribution, broadcast, streaming and exhibition stage of the value chain (downstream) is more concentrated**, with BLADE reporting approximately 2,300 active businesses in 2023/24. An estimated 35,333 people were employed in screen distribution, broadcast, streaming and exhibition in 2024/25.

**Interviews with stakeholders primarily operating downstream** highlighted the increasing fragmentation of audience viewing and behaviour, the high cost of distributing, releasing and publicising features in Australia and the need to focus more on tailored marketing and publicity to specific audiences over broad-based efforts at scale.

**Long-term economic value is increasingly accruing downstream**, shaped by control over IP, data, scale, audience access and monetisation, and away from where production activity occurs.

These conditions are unfolding amid **rapid technological and market change.** Stakeholder insights highlighted how emerging technologies (including AI) are **evolving faster than policy and funding settings can adapt.** Stakeholder interviews suggested many industry norms and standard practices built gradually over decades are being stress-tested en masse – including pathways to audience, commissioning arrangements and financing.

**Pressures persist despite high levels of activity.** 71% of Screen Australia Industry Participant Survey respondents expected production cost increases of at least 10% over the next 3 to 5 years, with over a third of those expecting increases of 20% or more.[28] Rising costs compress margins and can reinforce reliance on service-based models in which producers trade rights ownership for near-term financial certainty.

Consultation revealed a wide and nuanced spread of sentiment. **Confidence was strongest among those actively adapting their business models and operating assumptions**, while more cautious views focused on the **impacts of the erosion of experience, production continuity, IP and institutional memory.**

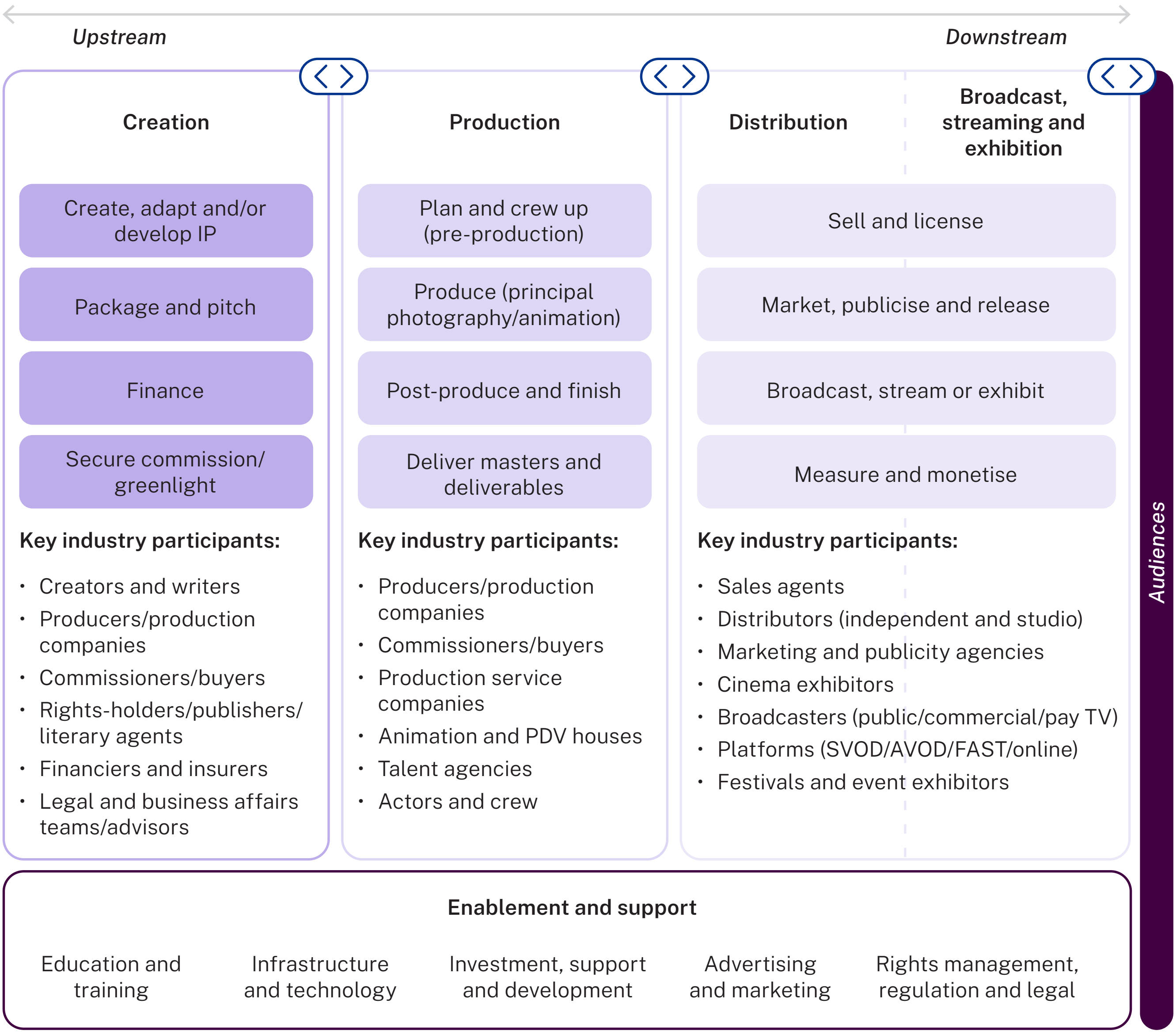
*Red Dog*

28 Screen Australia 2025, Australian Screen Industry Participant Survey (n=965).

# Screen value chain

**The screen value chain (Figure 1) summarises the key activities and industry participants** across screen creation, production, distribution, broadcast, streaming and exhibition, and the enabling systems that support the industry. Even though this value chain is described using film and TV terms, the same basic steps also apply to online and digital-first content, like short-form content on YouTube or TikTok (excluding user-generated content). What changes is the language people use, how formal the deals are, and how big or complex each stage is. **The sections that follow use this framework to describe industry structure and profile, and to analyse how value is created, financed, produced and brought to audiences.**

**Figure 1: Screen value chain**



# Industry profile

Screen production began early in Australia's history, but **the contemporary screen industry began to take shape in the 1970s. Government investment and new institutions**, including the Australian Film Television and Radio School (AFTRS), Australian Film Commission (AFC), Film Australia, Film Finance Corporation Australia and the National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA), helped build capability, training and production volume, laying foundations which still underpin the sector today.[29]

**Broadcasters played an equally significant role.** The ABC established a commitment to Australian drama, documentary and children's content from its earliest years, while the introduction of commercial TV and later SBS expanded the commissioning base. Australian content quotas on commercial broadcasters helped sustain a steady pipeline of drama, documentary and children's content over decades, supporting workforce continuity, business development and audience engagement with local stories.[30]

**Over time, the industry professionalised around a specialised workforce and project-based business landscape**, where production activity is often undertaken through special purpose vehicles (SPVs) – single-purpose companies established to produce a specific film or series and typically wound up once delivery is complete.

**Since the late 2000s, the public incentive system has been a central feature of the financing landscape.** A combination of federal and state offsets and incentives are intended to support Australian production while helping to attract international projects and build strength in production services, animation and PDV.[31] More recently, streaming and digital-first distribution have reshaped commissioning, release strategies and audience behaviour.

**Read about selected Australian screen case studies in:**

Case Studies ›

## Structure, firm demography, business dynamism and viability

**Australia's screen industry is comprised of many businesses operating upstream in screen creation and production** (8,393), with a smaller number of businesses operating across screen distribution, broadcast, streaming and exhibition (2,297) (Table 1).[32]

**Employment is characterised by a long tail of small and often non-employing businesses** across both creation and production. While the average headcount per business is 6.7, the median headcount is zero.[33] This long tail likely includes a mix of very small production entities (including single-person Proprietary Limited companies often used by freelancers), micro-businesses that scale up only when projects are financed and firms that rely primarily on contractors rather than maintaining ongoing payroll employment.

**Collectively, these measures highlight a structurally fragmented upstream screen industry.** Screen creation and production is characterised by a large and growing population of young businesses, low average employment and strong revenue turnover, but **limited capacity to retain surplus**.

29 NFSA 2026, *Australian film and television chronology*, accessed 17 Feb 2026.
30 House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts 2017, *Report on the Inquiry into the Australian Film and Television Industry: Chapter 3*.
31 Screen Australia 2012, *Getting down to business; the Producer Offset five years on*.
32 The scope of the screen industry in this study is defined in Appendix 2. Creation and production business numbers include SPVs.
33 ABS 2025, Businesses in Australia (BLADE), 2001/02 to 2023/24, accessed 12 December 2025.

**Table 1: Screen industry structure and demography, 2023/24**

| Measure | Creation and production businesses | Distribution, broadcast, streaming and exhibition businesses |
|---|---|---|
| Gross value added ($b) in 2023/24 | $2.2 billion | $8.7 billion |
| Active businesses in 2023/24 | 8,393 | 2,297 |
| *10yr CAGR* | +7% p.a. | -1% p.a. |
| *5yr CAGR* | +3% p.a. | +1% p.a. |
| *3yr CAGR* | +2% p.a. | -3% p.a. |
| Average business age | 3.7 years | 5.9 years |
| Average number of employees (headcount) per business | 6.7 | 15.2 |
| Total revenue | $4.9 billion | $14.8 billion |
| *10yr CAGR* | +12% | -10% |
| *5yr CAGR* | +9% | +1% |
| *3yr CAGR* | +10% | +1% |
| Operating margin as % of business revenue | 48% | 20% |
| Economic output as % of business revenue | 81% | 44% |

Notes: GVA calculation based on analysis of National Accounts. All other calculations based on ABS BLADE. "Creation and production" includes post-production. CAGR = compound annual growth rate. Figures are rounded independently, so components may not sum to totals.

Source: *Screen Currency 2026: Economic Insights* based on ABS BLADE data.

**By contrast, distribution, broadcast, streaming and exhibition comprises, on average, fewer and older firms.** However, this cohort contains a diverse mix of businesses, from historic cinema exhibitors and commercial broadcasters to streaming platforms. On average, these businesses have higher levels of employment, lower growth and a declining revenue base, reflecting greater concentration and exposure to structural change in broadcasting and exhibition markets. This asymmetry means that employment and economic activity in screen can be seen to rise and fall with production cycles and public investment settings, while financial risk and sustainability pressures sit primarily with upstream production businesses.

**Read about breakdowns in compensation of employees (COE) and gross operating surplus (GOS) in:**

Economic Insights

Within this fragmented industry structure, **ownership patterns in the Australian screen industry have become increasingly internationalised over the past decades, particularly in scripted TV.** Research has identified the acquisition of Australian production companies by multinational media groups as a key mechanism through which global capital and distribution networks are integrated into domestic production ecosystems.[34] These arrangements also give local companies access to the capital, scale and international reach to compete and grow. These shifts occur in the context of a large population of small-to-medium sized screen businesses, many of which operate on a project-to-project basis.

34 Lotz A D & Sanson K 2021, "Foreign Ownership of Production Companies as a New Mechanism of Internationalizing Television: The Case of Australian Scripted Television", *Television & New Media*, 23(7), 683-702 (Original work published 2022).

### Table 2: Distribution of screen business ages

| Business age | % of screen businesses |
|---|---|
| Longer than 20 years | 30% |
| Between 10-20 years | 33% |
| Between 5-10 years | 12% |
| Between 2-5 years | 14% |
| Between 1-2 years | 10% |
| Less than 1 year | 1% |

Notes: Summary figures quoted above reflect rounding.

Source: Responses to the industry and workforce survey question: "How long has your business been operating in its current form?" n=223 screen businesses/organisations.

For these reasons, **assessing ownership at an industry-wide level is complicated** by the prevalence of small firms, SPVs, complex financing and co-production arrangements and foreign ownership of some Australian businesses. The staged acquisition of Matchbox Pictures by NBCUniversal from 2011 to 2014,[35] alongside the integration of producers such as Endemol Shine Australia into the Banijay Group in 2020,[36] and Eureka Productions into Fremantle in 2021,[37] reflects a broader pattern in which **leading Australian screen companies increasingly operate within multinational ownership structures.**

Global integration is not unique to the screen industry. However, **government investment is a substantial component of Australian screen production financing**, accounting for an estimated 39% of Australian drama production finance in 2024/25, and there are specific cultural and economic policy objectives that funding and regulatory arrangements are designed to support. In this context, **both global and domestic market dynamics are important industry and public interest considerations**.

Survey results through this study reinforce the insights from national data sources. **85% of screen business/organisation respondents (n=223) reported operating as private companies** (Pty Ltd), with the remainder structured as incorporated associations, trusts, public companies and other arrangements. While a material share of businesses reported long operating histories (**30% have been operating for more than 20 years**), over a quarter were young, with **26% operating for 5 years or less** (Table 2), reflecting ongoing entry and turnover within the sector.

**The relatively small number of new entrants compared to established businesses/organisations** in the survey results aligns with the sustained industry growth observed during the commercial broadcasting boom in the 2000s.

**Read more about historical screen industry trends:**

Economic Insights

35 Screen Australia 2018, *The Screen Guide – Matchbox Pictures Pty Ltd*. Note: Matchbox Pictures was closed by NBCUniversal in February 2026 during the preparation of this report.

36 Banijay Entertainment 2020, *Banijay Completes Landmark Deal to Acquire Endemol Shine Group*.

37 Frater P 2022, "Fremantle Restructures Australia Formats Business Under Eureka Leadership", *Variety*.

**Screen production activity is commonly organised through SPVs**[38] **and other project-specific entities aligned to individual productions** (for example, single-project companies established for a film or series), alongside longer-lived production and service businesses (such as post-production and visual effects studios, animation houses and production services providers). 31% of screen business/organisation respondents (n=160) reported using SPVs or other project entities to finance or deliver projects.

**This structure supports risk isolation and financing flexibility due to the tax-based nature of government supports, but can complicate the measurement of firm performance, profitability and longevity at an industry-wide level**, as income and costs are often realised at the project entity rather than the parent business level. Where an SPV incurs expenses, in many cases the income from these productions is received in a different financial year or by a different legal entity which may be overseas and can therefore be excluded in national accounts.[39]

**Screen activity in Australia is geographically concentrated and cyclical.** In 2024/25, total drama production expenditure (not including documentary and other formats) reached $2.7 billion. Drama production activity is typically concentrated in three states – over the five years to 2024/25, NSW accounted for around 44% of expenditure, Queensland 27% and Victoria 20%, with the remaining activity shared across South Australia, Western Australia, the ACT, the Northern Territory and Tasmania.[40]

**These patterns should be interpreted in the context of the industry's project-based structure**, noting that production location expenditure is cyclical and shaped by the interaction of studio infrastructure, labour availability, incentive settings and the production start dates of major projects. Consequently, substantial year-to-year shifts in state shares – such as Queensland overtaking New South Wales as the largest production location in 2024/25 – may reflect the timing and location of a small number of large projects rather than durable changes in the underlying distribution of industry capacity. These business structures shape how work is organised in practice, including the prevalence of short-term contracting, portfolio careers and uneven employment stability.

## The screen workforce – talent pipeline, skills, retention and mobility

**Australia's screen industry employed an estimated 66,080** persons in 2024/25 (Table 3), a **1.8% decline** from 2023/24, and a **1.8% overall decline** from 2020/21 to 2024/25 (despite the mid-period rebound coinciding with increased large-scale drama production during the COVID-19 pandemic).

**The screen industry is characterised by high levels of multiple job-holding.** In the 2022/23 financial year, 26% of people working in the screen industry held more than one job (Table 4), broadly equivalent to retail trade workers (25.7%). This figure captures all job roles and is not specific to creative occupations. The overall multiple job-holding rate has not substantively shifted over the period.[41] The rate for production is higher than the overall (at an average of 34%). By contrast, **broadcasting and post-production show lower levels of multiple job-holding**, suggesting comparatively more stable employment arrangements.

**Read more about employment in the screen and games industry in:**

Economic Insights ›

38 A special-purpose vehicle (SPV) is a separate legal entity created for a specific project. In the screen industry, SPVs and other project-specific entities are commonly used to deliver individual films or series, manage financing and risk and may be wound up once the project is completed.

39 ABS 2023, *Film, Television and Digital Games, Australia*.

40 Screen Australia 2025, *Drama Report 2024/25*.

41 BCARR 2025, *Measuring Australia's Cultural and Creative Workforce, 2008-09 to 2023-24*, Interim report, December.

### Table 3: Employed persons in screen industry, grouped by value chain stage, 2020/21 to 2024/25

| Year | Creation and production | Distribution, broadcast, streaming and exhibition | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| **2020/21** | 29,439 | 37,545 | 66,984 |
| **2021/22** | 32,988 | 36,329 | 69,317 |
| **2022/23** | 29,052 | 31,627 | 60,679 |
| **2023/24** | 32,283 | 34,986 | 67,269 |
| **2024/25** | 30,747 | 35,333 | 66,080 |

Notes: Employment estimates derived using method documented in *Screen Currency 2026: Economic Insights*.[42] "Creation and production" includes post-production.

Source: *Screen Currency 2026: Economic Insights* based primarily on ABS labour market data.

### Table 4: Proportion of employed people working multiple jobs in screen each year, average 2020/21 to 2022/23

| | Creation and production | | Distribution, broadcast, streaming and exhibition | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Year | Production | Post-production | Distribution | Exhibition | Free-to-air TV | Subscription TV | Overall |
| **2020/21** | 30% | 12% | 24% | 29% | 14% | 14% | 26% |
| **2021/22** | 37% | 14% | 22% | 28% | 17% | 15% | 27% |
| **2022/23** | 34% | 11% | 19% | 29% | 17% | 12% | 26% |

Notes: Multiple job-holding presented by ANZSIC4 industry classification groups. Multiple job estimates derived using the method documented in *Screen Currency 2026: Economic Insights*. Data not available for Internet broadcasting which includes streaming services.

Source: *Screen Currency 2026: Economic Insights* based on ABS labour market data.

Findings from the **Screen Australia Production Infrastructure Capacity Analysis (PICA) 2025** workforce survey provide important context beyond headline figures – 72% of the screen production workforce worked across more than one format (film, broadcast TV, SVOD, online/direct to audience) in the last 3 years and 82% of respondents undertook supplementary work outside of their primary place of work/residence (as well as outside Australia).[43] The PICA findings help interpret the **multiple job-holding results as a broader pattern of portfolio work and mobility**; the survey undertaken for this study adds detail on the extent to which workers' income remains concentrated within screen and the employment arrangements underpinning that work.

Survey respondents working in the screen industry (n=239) reported earning an average of **84**% **of their income from the screen industry.** This suggests that while screen work is frequently organised across multiple employers or projects, most income is generated within the screen industry.

**The most common sectors for respondents to earn supplementary income** included higher education, performing arts operation, advertising services, management advice and related consulting services and arts and recreation services. Respondents also identified a range of **other sectors where they earn income** including professional photographic services, publishing, internet publishing (unrelated to screen), performing arts venue operation, legal services, accounting services, retail trade, transport, hospitality, financial and insurance services, rental/hiring/real estate services, administrative and support services, education and training, health care and social assistance, public administration, mining and other services.

42 Employment estimates are derived using a method which benchmarks ABS Labour Account totals and applies proportional weights from ABS Labour Force Survey, Jobs in Australia and the Census (with tailored approaches for internet broadcasting and games) to derive ANZSIC4 specific estimates, with full methodological detail in the *Screen Currency 2026: Economic Insights* report.

43 Olsberg SPI 2026, *A Production, Infrastructure and Capacity Analysis for Australia's Screen Production Sector*, commissioned by Screen Australia.

As at 30 June 2025, among survey respondents with an employer in the screen industries (n=296), **employment arrangements were diverse:** 52% were employed full time in one position, 21% were engaged casually in one or multiple positions, 16% worked part time in one or multiple positions and 11% were not employed. This distribution reflects both **the prevalence of short-term contracts and the exposure of screen workers to periods between projects**.

These patterns point to **a workforce that is structurally fragmented and highly skilled** – 73% of survey respondents hold a bachelor's degree or higher qualification (Table 5) – shaped by project cycles, intermittent demand and cross-sector skills transfer.

Census data supports this conclusion by showing that material proportions of people employed in occupations primarily associated with screen industries, including producers, directors, editors, camera operators, directors of photography and animators and visual effects artists, **had their main job outside of the screen industry at Census time** (Table 6).

### Table 5: Highest level of qualification for the screen industry workforce

| Level of qualification | % of respondents |
|---|---|
| Less than high school | 1% |
| High school certificate or equivalent | 11% |
| Vocational/technical training | 15% |
| Bachelor's degree | 40% |
| Postgraduate or professional degree | 33% |

Source: Responses to the industry and workforce survey question: "What is the highest level of qualification you hold?" n=340 people working in the screen industry.

### Table 6: Selected screen-related occupations, number of people whose main job is in screen industry vs. other industries at Census time, 2021

| Occupation | Creation and production | Distribution, broadcast, streaming and exhibition | *Total screen* | Other industries |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Media Producer (excluding Video)** | 2,288 | 1,651 | *3,939* | 3,862 |
| **Film and Video Editor** | 1,511 | 780 | *2,291* | 1,017 |
| **Camera Operator (Film, TV or Video)** | 1,078 | 661 | *1,739* | 1,162 |
| **Director (Film, TV, Radio or Stage)** | 1,180 | 340 | *1,520* | 862 |
| **Cinema or Theatre Manager** | 3 | 1107 | *1,110* | 392 |
| **Production Assistant (Film, TV, Radio or Stage)** | 762 | 298 | *1,060* | 360 |
| **Video Producer** | 901 | 106 | *1,007* | 921 |
| **Journalists and Other Writers** | 37 | 919 | *956* | 2,006 |
| **Illustrator** | 831 | 60 | *891* | 2,480 |

Notes: Occupations are reported at the ANZSCO6 level as published by the ABS. Other industries in this table refers to people in the listed occupation whose main job industry at Census 2021 was outside the screen industry as defined in this report.

Source: ABS *Census of Population and Housing 2021*.

# Value chain analysis

**The following sections describe the dynamics of Australia's screen industry, from the early stages of creation through to production, distribution, broadcast, streaming and exhibition.** At each stage, it sets out the key industry participants, outlines the typical activities, and describes the ways in which the Australian industry is shaped by local market conditions, public policy and global platforms.

**In practice, screen activity does not move cleanly through a linear pipeline:** what progresses from development to production is highly competitive, and contingent on commissioning and financing decisions that are often uncertain, time-bound and shaped by shifting audience demand and platform strategies. **The pathway also varies materially by format and genre** – features, TV drama, children's, factual, short-form content and more each operate under different economics, timelines, regulatory settings and routes to audience. **In parallel, the growth of online video and creator-led ecosystems has expanded direct-to-audience pathways** (including platform-native production, self-distribution and community-driven monetisation), further blurring traditional boundaries between creation, production, distribution and exhibition. Nevertheless, **a staged value chain remains a useful organising lens** for describing the recurring activities, decision points and participants that shape how screen content is created, financed, produced, distributed and experienced in Australia.

**Evidence from the industry and workforce survey, stakeholder interviews and other available data is integrated throughout** to describe how the industry is structured, how and where value is being created, where pressures are emerging and how these dynamics influence, challenge and affect business models, content types and stakeholder behaviour.

*Shayda*

# Creation



Creation is the stage where screen ideas are shaped into projects that can attract partners, finance and get made. It includes writing and concept development, writers' rooms, assembling creative teams, development and refinement, pitching partners, securing funding and closing the finance plan.

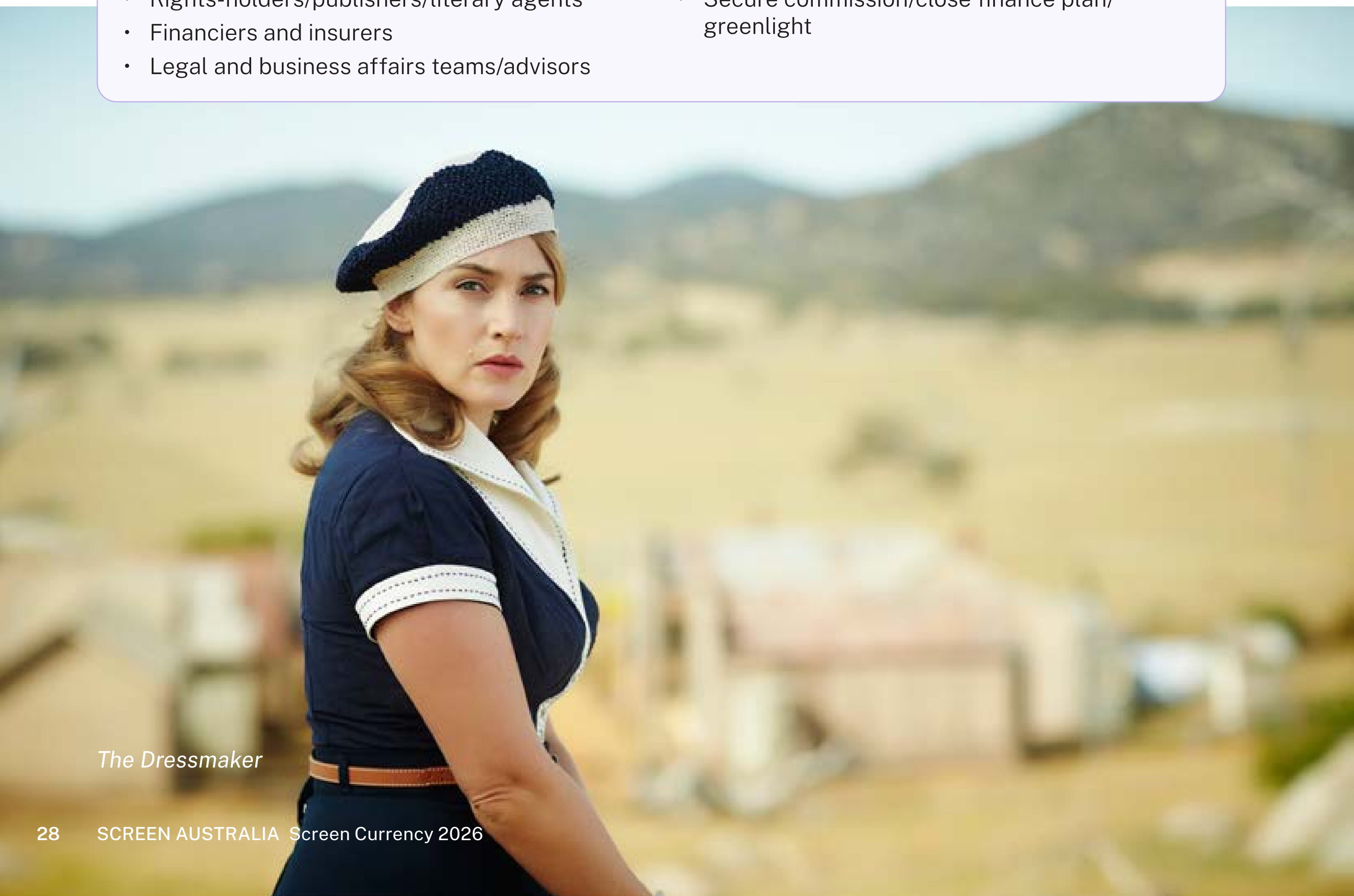
**In Australia, creation work is typically led by writers and producers, often supported by public development funding alongside private investment or early interest from broadcasters and platforms. Decisions made at this stage shape creative direction, audience reception and long-term creative, cultural and commercial outcomes, despite creation being one of the most financially constrained and uncertain parts of the production process.**

## Key industry participants

- Creators and writers
- Producers/production companies
- Commissioners/buyers
- Rights-holders/publishers/literary agents
- Financiers and insurers
- Legal and business affairs teams/advisors

## Key activities

- Create, secure, and/or develop IP
- Package and pitch
- Financing
- Secure commission/close finance plan/ greenlight



*The Dressmaker*

**In practice, creation is an iterative, non-linear process**, where projects move between idea generation, development, packaging and pitching, with no guarantee of progression to production. **Activity at this stage is shaped by a small group of "above-the-line" roles**[44] – screenwriters, producers, script editors, development executives and directors – alongside a wider network of freelance practitioners.

Of workforce survey respondents (n=294), 26% indicated they work in creation in the screen industry, whereas 48% of business/organisation survey respondents (n=228) indicated their company operated at the creation stage[45] – suggesting that **creation functions as a high-leverage but labour-light stage of the value chain**. Many businesses participate, but fewer workers are engaged at any one time, which may lead to pressure on a smaller pool of specialist creative practitioners. Consistent with this dynamic, 44% of creation workers reported being employed by multiple employers, compared with 35% across the screen workforce overall (n=294).

Reflecting the labour-light and project-based nature of creation, **work at this stage is characterised by elevated levels of freelance engagement and the presence of portfolio career professionals**, with many practitioners working across multiple projects and roles and often across other stages of the value chain. This is reflective of a long-term industry trend. As early as a decade ago, in 2015, producer John Edwards identified the concentration of opportunities for these roles and the trend towards shorter format, higher-budget drama creating a new block for talent.[46]

Creation is where long-term creative and cultural value is first generated, but it is also **where economic value is most at risk of being diluted or lost**. Early decisions influence not only whether projects move into production, but who benefits when they do. **Ownership arrangements at first commercial release have significant implications** for control, exploitation, and long-term value capture on screen production rights. The survey asked respondents to identify who typically held the rights (primary IP) at this point (Table 7). The results illustrate **how ownership is distributed across different production and commissioning arrangements, with implications for business sustainability and risk-taking** at the creation stage.

**Earnings from IP vary, including newly created works, a back catalogue of owned IP, and exploitation of IP owned by others** (for example, where a business produces, distributes or licenses-in rights to an external title). To understand the balance of these income streams, the survey asked screen businesses to estimate the share of their IP-related earnings in 2024/25 attributable to each of these sources (Table 8).

Respondents reported that nearly half (**45%**) of IP-related earnings came from new IP first monetised in 2024/25, and a substantial share of IP earnings was attributed to IP owned by others (**29%**). This profile may indicate **businesses have limited "long-tail" insulation: IP earnings are weighted toward new releases and work connected to IP owned by others**, rather than a self-owned catalogue generating stable ongoing returns.

**Generative AI is reshaping screen content creation** by enabling entire films and characters to be produced with AI-driven workflows, compressing traditional development timelines while also raising **significant ethical, legal, creative and industrial questions**. Emerging works such as the *Echo Hunter* sci-fi short film, produced using Arcana Labs' AI toolkit and featuring AI-generated visuals built around human performances, demonstrates the creative potential of these technologies alongside union collaboration to secure consent for likeness use.[47] At the same time, the introduction of **fully AI-generated characters** like "AI actor" Tilly Norwood, created by Xicoia (within the Particle6 Group) and featured in the sketch *AI Commissioner*, sparked intense backlash from performers, unions and high-profile actors who argue that synthetic performers threaten human artistry and exploit unconsented training data.[48]

44 "Above-the-line" refers to creative leadership roles that shape the content and direction of a screen project.

45 Based on the Industry and Workforce Survey by McAtamney & Advisors.

46 Author unknown 2015, "The 2015 Hector Crawford Memorial Lecture: John Edwards", *Mediaweek*.

47 Schwartz E H 2025, "This movie is fully AI-generated and has a fully SAG-AFTRA cast – here's 3 things you need to know about Echo Hunter", *TechRadar*.

48 Pulver A 2025, "Emily Blunt and SAG-AFTRA join film industry condemnation of 'AI actor' Tilly Norwood", *The Guardian*.

### Table 7: Rights ownership of screen projects at the time of first commercial release

| Rights ownership at first commercial release | % of respondents |
|---|---|
| Me/my organisation held all equity/rights | 39% |
| Me/my organisation held some of the equity/rights | 16% |
| Me/my organisation did not hold any equity/rights | 45% |

Notes: Responses presented based on whether respondents identified only their own organisation, multiple parties, or only another party as primary rights-holder at first commercial release.

Source: Responses to the industry and workforce survey question: "Thinking of a typical project, who held the primary IP (copyright) at first commercial release?" n=49 screen businesses/organisations.

### Table 8: Average of earnings from IP (fees, sales, royalties) in 2024/25

| Type of IP earnings | Average % of earnings |
|---|---|
| New IP first monetised in 2024/25 (created by my organisation) | 45% |
| Existing IP owned by my organisation | 26% |
| IP owned by others that my organisation produced, published, distributed, or licensed-in (incl. foreign IP exploited in Australia) | 29% |

Source: Responses to the industry and workforce survey question: "Thinking about your earnings from IP in 2024/25 (fees, sales, royalties) what percentage share best describes where it came from (to the nearest 5%)?" n=45 screen businesses/organisations.

*Shut Your Big Fat Mouth John Safran*

# Generative AI and screen content creation

**AI is increasingly being used across global screen production**, including early development (such as idea generation and prototyping) and post-production (such as subtitling, metadata generation and visual effects).[49] As AI capabilities become increasingly embedded as standard features in production software, many screen workers may be using AI tools without recognising them as such. AI has the potential to compress traditional development timelines and merge stages of the value chain, for example by enabling real-time editing during production.

**However, ethical, legal, creative and industrial concerns remain significant**. A recent global study found that concerns around final creative outputs make individuals and organisations cautious both in adopting the technology and in disclosing how they use it.[50] This is consistent with findings from this study, where stakeholders described uneven adoption and ambivalence, with some examples of AI use in prototyping but resistance to its application in final creative products. Notably, specific commentary from stakeholders was limited despite the scale and pace of disruption underway. **Real-world impacts are already being felt by Australian creatives**, including reports of voice actors having contracts cancelled and their voices sampled and reused without permission.[51]

**IP and copyright protections in the training and deployment of large language and multimodal models remain a central concern.** As part of the federal government's copyright framework review, the Attorney-General has ruled out a text and data mining exemption, and a Copyright and AI Reference Group has been established to explore licensing frameworks and clarify how copyright law applies to AI-generated material.[52] In Australia, the use of globally produced AI models without local adaptation may lead to poor representation of Australian life and cultural diversity, particularly First Nations culture, as has been found globally.[53]

The recently updated voluntary AI Ethics Principles seek to ensure that AI models are safe, fair, pluralistic and human-centred.[54]

**The commercial landscape is evolving rapidly and unpredictably.** As one example, in December 2025, The Walt Disney Company announced a 3-year licensing agreement with OpenAI allowing its generative video platform Sora to draw on more than 200 Disney, Marvel, Pixar and *Star Wars* characters, alongside a reported US$1 billion investment.[55] In March 2026, OpenAI had discontinued Sora and the Disney deal collapsed, with no money having changed hands.[56]

At the same time, **studios including Disney, Warner Bros. Discovery and NBCUniversal have pursued copyright lawsuits against AI firms such as Midjourney and China's MiniMax**, alleging unauthorised use of their content in generative outputs.[57] The speed at which these dynamics are moving means that any assessment of AI's impact on screen production will date quickly, but the underlying tensions between creative opportunity, IP protection, workforce displacement and commercial exploitation are structural rather than transient.

49 Olsberg SPI 2026, *AI Policy and its Impacts on the Screen Sector Across the Globe*.
50 Finney, Angus, Brian Tarran and Rishi Coupland 2025, *AI in the Screen Sector: Perspectives and Paths Forward (CoSTAR Foresight Lab)*.
51 Mulroi M and Swan D 2026, "This voiceover actor was dumped from his contract. His voice was cloned", *The Sydney Morning Herald*.
52 Attorney-General's Department 2025, *Copyright and Artificial Intelligence consultation; Copyright and AI Reference Group*.
53 Olsberg SPI 2026, *AI Policy and its Impacts on the Screen Sector Across the Globe*.
54 Department of Industry, Science and Resources 2025, *Australia's AI Ethics Principles (updated)*.
55 The Walt Disney Company 2025, *The Walt Disney Company and OpenAI reach landmark agreement to bring beloved characters from across Disney's brands to Sora*.
56 Variety 2026, *OpenAI will shut down Sora video app; Disney drops plans for $1 billion investment*.
57 Spangler T 2025, "Disney, Warner Bros. Discovery, NBCU Sue Chinese AI Company MiniMax, Alleging It 'Pirates and Plunders' Studios' Copyrighted Works on 'Massive Scale'", *Variety*; Meliana P 2025, "Warner Bros. sues Midjourney over AI-generated superheroes and cartoon icons", *ContentGrip*.

# Stakeholder insights

A range of opportunities, dynamics, challenges and other topics relating to creation were explored with stakeholders through in-depth interviews.

- **Challenged for funding, support and growth:** Stakeholders observed challenges in support, funding and growth of creation activities. Some stakeholders highlighted a lack of available funding for writing and development, others emphasised the financial burden carried by a sole producer before a production was greenlit and others the lengthy and often uncertain timeline from creation through to production. Stakeholders also reported increased under-development of scripts, and cost pressures within already constrained development budgets.

> **"Writers primarily have to team up with somebody who owns their IP before they can really, fully develop it… there's something missing in the nurturing portion of the industry."**
> – producer

> **"The only way that we make money as a production company is when we go into production… There is no money in development."**
> – producer

**Read about audience desire for quality, culturally resonant screen content in:**

Audience Insights ›

- **Entry pathways:** Stakeholders reported that entry into screen creation is usually via informal and fragmented pathways, shaped by freelance, project-based work and reliance on personal networks rather than clearly articulated or supported entry routes. Research has long indicated a contraction of traditional development pathways such as short film schemes, cadetships and employer-supported traineeships, alongside the loss of incentives and wage subsidies that previously supported early-career workforce entry.[58] While access to higher education and vocational training is widespread, employers report persistent gaps between formal education and job readiness, driving demand for on-the-job training, short-term targeted courses and work-based learning models. At the same time, digital platforms and online content (e.g. web series and creator-led distribution) have emerged as lower-barrier pathways for talent discovery and audience building, though these routes often sit outside formal funding and employment systems and may not translate into sustainable careers without additional structural support.
- **High quality writing talent, but difficult to secure:** Demand for experienced writers often exceeds supply, with the most capable writers consistently booked and frequently developing their own original IP. This is compounded by a reliance on short-term, freelance engagements in development, which creates friction in contracting and limits the ability to scale teams quickly, even as production companies actively invest in training and attachment pathways to build the next generation of writers.

> **"Our creatives – our writers, directors and producers are excellent."**
> – commissioner

58 Creative Australia and Service and Creative Skills Australia (SaCSA) 2025, *Creative Workforce Scoping Study: Summary Report*; AFTRS 2016, *Inclusive Pathways Framework for screen storytelling talent*.

- **Accessible entry, challenged sustainability:** While entry into screen creation activities has become more accessible, sustaining a viable career or business within creation has become increasingly difficult – the rising popularity of vertical screen formats[59] and platforms such as YouTube and TikTok have lowered barriers to entry by enabling individuals to develop, produce and distribute content independently, but with limited certainty of long-term commercial viability.
- **IP ownership at the creation stage:** Stakeholders consistently emphasised that the creation and retention of high-value IP is a fundamental strategic priority. A combination of strong IP, strong talent and a clear pathway to audience was widely described as the minimum conditions for commercial and creative success in the current market.

> **"We're always on the lookout for writers who can deliver at that higher level... if it's original IP, whoever is originating it, has to be the driver as well... and it's very hard to get any original IP up unless it's got a built-in audience."**
>
> – producer

- **AI is heightening the strategic value of human creativity and IP ownership:** While stakeholders widely expected AI to continue reshaping production workflows, particularly in animation and PDV, they emphasised that original IP creation, creative leadership and ethical decision-making remain human-led and strategically central. Several stakeholders argued that as execution becomes more automated, long-term industry sustainability will depend even more heavily on investment in IP development and ownership rather than production efficiency alone.

> **"There will be more and more automation and execution, but that IP creation is going to be the thing that you cannot just write a cheque for. That is where humans excel."**
>
> – producer

- **Access to capital as a barrier to IP retention:** Several stakeholders identified access to capital - particularly affordable working capital - as a significant constraint, disproportionately affecting smaller and emerging producers and described selling or relinquishing IP ownership at preliminary stages. Several examples were provided confidentially by stakeholders consulted of trading their long-term IP and rights ownership in order to secure project financing.
- **Balance of available incentives and funding:** Many stakeholders suggested that the focus of government support in screen production (which, in the case of the Producer Offset, was established with the objective of supporting producers to retain equity in their productions and build sustainable production companies[60]) is at the expense of support for creation and development. While government development funding is available, stakeholders noted that it is capped, competitive and project-specific. Production incentives, particularly tax offsets, operate at a much more meaningful scale and are triggered once finance and commissioning are secured. Stakeholders suggested this can incentivise producers to reach production rather than take risks on new concepts, potentially limiting the capacity of Australian screen creators to originate, retain and scale valuable IP over time.
- **Development financing and up-front deal structures:** Stakeholders, both commissioners and creators/producers, discussed at length that development financing and early deal conversations vary significantly by project and partner, with no single pathway or standard set of terms. Some commissioners and well-capitalised partners reported financing development upfront and proceeding without direct Screen Australia investment, to, in their view, simplify deal structures. Where Screen Australia provides support, it may take different forms (including equity investment and grant support), each with different implications for recoupment. Stakeholders also noted that when a project proceeds without Screen Australia attached, commissioners may negotiate licence fees below Screen Australia's minimum settings. Lower licence fees can reduce producer returns, leaving less capacity to reinvest in development, retain value in IP, and build a more sustainable business over time.

59 Vertical screen formats refer to video content designed to be viewed vertically on smartphones and similar devices.
60 Explanatory Memorandum, Tax Laws Amendment (2007 Measures No. 5) Bill 2007 (Cth), Schedule 10.

- **Unpaid and under-remunerated creation labour:** Stakeholders highlighted that a large amount of work at the creation stage, particularly writing, development and packaging, is often undertaken with limited or no remuneration. This increases financial precarity and contributes to attrition, among both early career and experienced practitioners.
- **Constrained commercial risk appetite at the creation and financing stage:** Stakeholders reported that current market conditions and commercial settings limit willingness to take the financial risk on early-stage development. Expectations that producers reinvest fees, combined with high and uncertain audience acquisition costs and comparatively stronger risk-adjusted returns in other sectors, reduce incentives to invest in development. Stakeholders noted that these constraints can flow through to creative decision-making by narrowing the range of projects that can be pursued and sustained through development.

> **“Skills development, talent development and retention are critical for industry continuity, whether in animation, visual effects, television, or whatever form it takes these days. But on the IP development side, I think that’s where we struggle a lot in Australia – because we are a small country, we are a small industry, we are particularly risk averse – there is not a lot [of capital].”**
> – producer

- **Commissioning influence at creation:** Stakeholders noted that commissioning requirements and preferences are increasingly shaping creative decisions and influencing which ideas are progressed, how they are developed and the degree of creative and commercial risk that producers can take.
- **Market orientation at creation:** Stakeholders described challenges with securing finance and pressure to orient development toward international platforms and audiences at the creation stage, shaping creative choices and IP structures and sometimes running counter to local cultural objectives.

> **“It used to be showbiz and now it’s biz-show.”**
> – producer

**Read about audience perspectives on Australian screen content in:**

Audience Insights

# Production



Production is the stage where a project moves from development into active making of screen works. It includes pre-production, casting, principal photography and/or animation, post-production, including editing and sound and visual effects.

**This stage brings together large teams of creative and technical workers and represents the largest concentration of industry employment and expenditure.**

**In Australia, production is typically financed through a mix of public incentives, agency investment, private finance and commissioning arrangements and is shaped by tight schedules, rising costs, capacity constraints and the allocation of financial risk.**

## Key industry participants

- Producers/production companies
- Commissioners/buyers
- Production service companies
- Animation & PDV houses
- Talent agencies
- Cast and crew

## Key activities

- Plan and crew up (pre-production)
- Produce (principal photography/animation)
- Post-produce and finish
- Deliver masters and deliverables

*Ningaloo Nyinggulu*

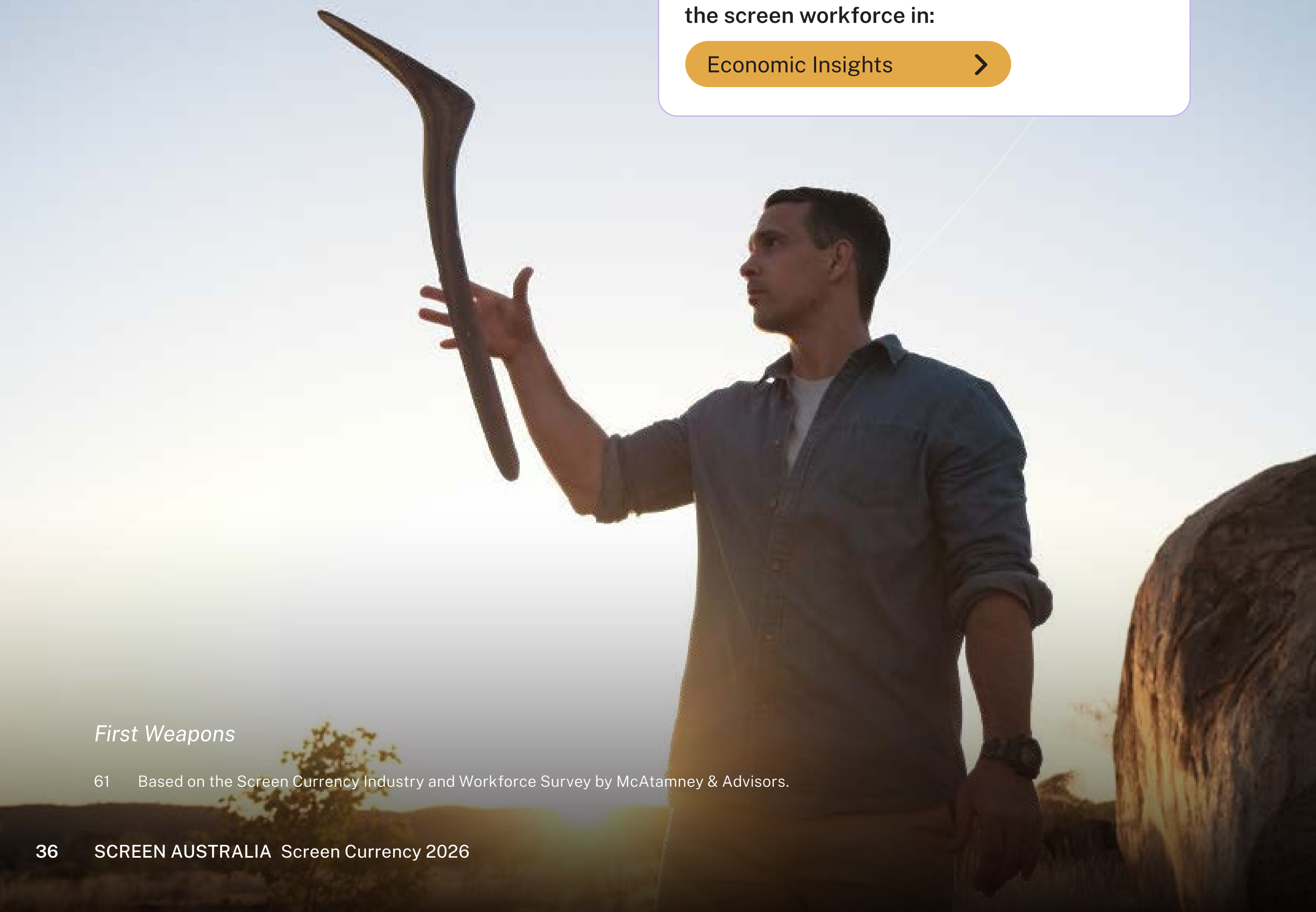
**Production brings together finance, labour and screen infrastructure to deliver completed screen works**, marking the transition from development into greenlit production. Once a project enters production, key parameters – including budgets, schedules, locations and deliverables – are locked in and the work activity proceeds through an often tightly sequenced process spanning pre-production, principal photography or animation and post-production. **This stage is characterised by high coordination complexity**, requiring close alignment across creative teams, technical departments, suppliers and locations and increasingly involves overlapping workflows across live-action production, animation and PDV.

**Production is the most labour-intensive stage of the screen value chain** and the primary focus of industry activity per the survey. Of workforce survey respondents (n=294), 65% indicated that they worked in production, while 70% of business survey respondents (n=225) reported that their business operated at the production stage.[61] This concentration underscores **production's leading role in mobilising employment, capital and infrastructure** to deliver screen works at scale.

**Australia's screen production infrastructure is geographically concentrated, and employment clusters in these areas** (see Table 9), with most major studios, production companies and specialist equipment located in Sydney, Melbourne and Queensland. Sydney hosts Disney Studios, the largest integrated screen production facility in the southern hemisphere; Melbourne is home to the 108,000 sq ft Docklands Studios; and Queensland supports production through 4 dedicated studio facilities across Brisbane, the Gold Coast, and Cairns. Perth is home to the recently completed 90,000 sq ft Perth Film Studios, the first large-scale soundstage complex of its kind on the west coast. This concentration underpins the geographic clustering of production activity (more so for drama production, documentary production is more likely to be filmed on location due to cost constraints) and workforce capacity, which shapes the ability to attract and service large-scale domestic and foreign productions, which typically generate high short-term labour demand and intensive utilisation of local facilities and crews.

**Read more about geographic concentration of production and state and territory breakdowns of the screen workforce in:**

Economic Insights



*First Weapons*

61 Based on the Screen Currency Industry and Workforce Survey by McAtamney & Advisors.

**Table 9: Total employment by state/territory in 2024/25 – production businesses**

| State | % of employment |
|---|---|
| New South Wales | 44% |
| Victoria | 28% |
| Queensland | 16% |
| South Australia | 5% |
| Western Australia | 4% |
| Northern Territory | 1% |
| Australian Capital Territory | 1% |
| Tasmania | 1% |

Notes: Employment estimates derived using method documented in *Screen Currency 2026: Economic Insights*.[62] Includes post-production.

Source: *Screen Currency 2026: Economic Insights* based on ABS labour market data compiled by University of Canberra.

## The growing creator economy

Alongside traditional screen production, a growing volume of Australian screen content is created outside conventional commissioning/production structures. **Platforms such as YouTube, TikTok and Instagram have lowered barriers to content creation and distribution**, enabling individual creators to produce, publish and monetise content without broadcaster or distributor involvement.

**The total addressable market of the global creator economy could reach US$480 billion by 2027,[63] and activity on TikTok alone contributed an estimated $1.1 billion to GDP and supported an estimated 13,000 jobs in Australia in 2022/23.**[64] This activity sits largely outside traditional screen policy and funding frameworks – creators typically do not access tax offsets, or regulated distribution. The creator economy also operates with different economics: ad revenue share and brand partnerships are primary revenue drivers as opposed to commissioning, licence fees or box office. However, barriers to funded professional screen practice remain high, and the pathway from online audience-building to sustainable screen careers is neither easy nor linear.

**Screen Australia's Skip Ahead initiative, a partnership with YouTube Australia** in its 11th round that has provided over $5.8 million to 47 teams since 2014, is one of the few structured bridging mechanisms.[65] Its alumni include RackaRacka (Danny and Michael Philippou) who built a YouTube following of over 6 million subscribers before directing *Talk to Me* and *Bring Her Back* with support from Screen Australia and the South Australian Film Corporation; *Superwog* (Theodore and Nathan Saidden) moved from YouTube sketches to an ABC-commissioned series and later a Netflix original *Son of a Donkey*; and Aunty Donna extended their work across YouTube and live comedy to Netflix (*Aunty Donna's Big Ol' House of Fun*) and ABC (*Aunty Donna's Coffee Cafe*) commissions, founding their own production company in the process. These remain exceptional cases rather than a systematic pathway, and the broader creator economy continues to operate largely in parallel to the funded screen industry.

Screen Australia takes a platform-agnostic approach, offering direct-to-audience funding for both narrative and documentary content alongside television and feature film. It also offers the Kids IP Incubator in partnership with the Australian Children's Television Foundation (ACTF).

62 Employment estimates are derived using a method which benchmarks ABS Labour Account totals and applies proportional weights from ABS Labour Force Survey, Jobs in Australia and the Census (with tailored approaches for internet broadcasting and games) to derive ANZSIC4 specific estimates, with full methodological detail in the *Screen Currency 2026: Economic Insights* report.

63 Goldman Sachs Research 2023, *The creator economy could approach half-a-trillion dollars by 2027*.

64 Oxford Economics Australia 2024, *The socio-economic impact of TikTok in Australia*.

65 Screen Australia 2026, *Applications open for Skip Ahead 11*.

# Production and commissioning dynamics in Australia by genre and format[66]

**Screen Currency's economic study** highlights that different formats and genres of screen productions are operating in distinct business and market dynamics.

**Australian feature film** titles have grown significantly since the establishment of Screen Australia in 2008 while average budgets have declined. Total production expenditure has remained broadly flat in real terms but there has been sustained falls in box office revenues over the past decade.

**TV drama** has been recognised as a high-cost form of production in Australia. TV drama has historically been supported through policy interventions including local content requirements and sub-quotas. Over the past decade, the sector has experienced a marked structural shift, with commercial broadcasters reducing their commissioning of drama as advertising revenues declined and regulatory settings changed, while subscription video on demand (SVOD) services have emerged as the largest source of demand and expenditure. This shift has been associated with robust growth in total spend and per-hour budgets, but often under "cost-plus" commissioning arrangements in which global streaming platforms typically buy out all rights to ensure exclusivity. The increasing popularity of this type of deal changes the shape of producer revenue profiles – more up-front certainty and margin at the cost of long-term profit participation and limited upside.

**Documentary and specialist factual** (including science, natural history, history and a myriad of sub-genres) have contracted and become harder to sustain as a distinct commissioning lane, with fewer TV hours/titles and a shift away from dedicated genres following policy and commissioning changes (including the removal of documentary sub-quotas) – though overall documentary volume has held up as production volume has shifted towards theatrical release. ABC, SBS and the commercial broadcasters remain the largest commissioners, but commissioning is increasingly concentrated in fewer, larger projects and/or a smaller pool of producers, and projects often need international partners to reach viable budgets and meaningful audience reach. Documentary Australia plays an enabling role by supporting impact-producing and philanthropic models for documentary, helping some projects bridge development and outreach gaps, build audiences and partnerships, and extend value beyond broadcast commissioning. Stakeholder interviews highlighted how "specialist" subjects are often reframed into contemporary social-issue documentaries or hybrid approaches to be commissioned.

**Factual entertainment and formatted unscripted** programming has remained comparatively stable, with commissioning concentrated in returning series and established formats. Relative to scripted genres, these formats are generally lower-cost to produce and can be scheduled at scale, supporting the commercial broadcasters' advertising-funded model through higher volumes of local hours and audience delivery. Commercial broadcasters continue to direct a substantial share of unscripted expenditure to factual entertainment and formatted series, responding in large part to clear audience demand and the increasing popularity of the format.

**Children's TV drama** represents the clearest case of dependence on regulation and public finance. Historically, commercial free-to-air broadcasters played a significant role in the sector, but due to a range of factors reduced their financing and commissioning over time, with a near complete halt after the removal of specific quotas in 2021. SVOD platforms have also not commissioned consistent levels of children's content, leaving the ABC as the only significant commissioner of children's content in recent years, with public funding via tax incentives, Screen Australia, the Australian Children's Television Foundation (ACTF) and state agencies also playing very significant roles. The sector has seen a contraction in active production companies and a shift towards animation. Of note, the ABC received a $50 million funding boost over 3 years from 2026/27 to support the production of new Australian children's and drama content.[67]

66 These observations draw on the University of Canberra's comprehensive analysis of screen production activity in Australia, undertaken using Screen Australia administrative datasets and related expenditure and title records, which provides the empirical foundation for understanding how production volumes, expenditure and commissioning patterns have evolved across formats over time.

67 Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts 2025, *New Australian content laws for streaming services*.

**Online screen content** represents the fastest-growing but least-measured segment of the industry. Digital-first and creator-led projects are typically self-financed or supported through platform ad-share, sponsorships, crowdfunding, or brand partnerships, with creators retaining creative control while operating within platform algorithms and terms of service. Value is created through audience engagement, brand equity and ancillary revenues such as merchandise and live events, but financial returns and data from content are mediated by global platforms. As a result, a significant share of revenue, audience insight and monetisation capacity remains offshore. The sector provides accessible entry pathways for new talent, but offers limited rights protection, somewhat restricted access to public incentives and fragmented measurement.

Overlaying these domestic production dynamics is the increasing significance of **foreign production** in Australia, where production and post-production services have grown as an important source of export income. Australia competes with other nations to attract inward investment via incentive settings, and the level of foreign production year-to-year is also affected by exchange rate movements and available production capacity. Periods such as 2020/21 illustrate how a high level of foreign production can materially contribute to overall production volume, workforce utilisation, and overall industry revenues.

**Read more about screen production activity across genres/formats in:**

Economic Insights


*The Formal*

**Production activity in Australia is supported by substantial public investment, particularly through the Producer, Location and PDV Offsets** (collectively the Australian Screen Production Incentive or ASPI). The Location Offset and PDV Offset are tax rebates for 30% of eligible expenditure (which may both be stacked with state and territory incentives), subject to eligibility rules and minimum qualifying expenditure thresholds. Following eligibility and certification, the offset is claimed through the tax system and is paid to the applicant via the Australian Taxation Office (typically within around 4 weeks of lodgement).[68]

**The Producer Offset differs from Location and PDV Offsets because it applies a Significant Australian Content (SAC) test** (or Official Co-production pathway) and has different rates (40% theatrical feature or 30% non-theatrical formats). Although these offsets are ultimately claimed through the tax system, productions, especially Australian productions, commonly cashflow them during production by obtaining loans secured against the expected offset payment, an approach reflected in state-based lending facilities (e.g. Screen Queensland's Revolving Film Finance Fund) and specialist screen finance providers that offer Producer, Location and PDV Offset loans. These 3 federal offsets are mutually exclusive and cannot be combined with one another.[69]

In 2021/22, a report commissioned by the Australian and New Zealand Screen Association (ANZSA) found that offset-supported productions between 2018/19 and 2021/22 **generated a positive return on investment** (i.e. for every $1 of net investment, the direct and indirect return, excluding induced) of **$3.87** for the Location Offset, **$3.22** for the PDV Offset, and **$2.89** for the Producer Offset.[70] The same report also found that in 2021/22 alone, **$2.1 billion of production expenditure** was associated with offset-supported productions, and that **20,600 full-time equivalent jobs** have been supported across the 3 offsets.[71] Since 2021/22 production activity and expenditure have continued to increase, with Screen Australia's Drama Report 2024/25 indicating drama production alone reached a record **$2.7 billion expenditure**, driven by an increase in expenditure from foreign feature and TV production, which represented $1.3 billion in expenditure. This figure increases to $1.6 billion when including foreign projects that only undertook PDV in Australia.[72]

In 2024/25, 44% of Australian theatrical feature (drama) finance and 34% of Australian TV drama finance was taxpayer funded (Producer Offset, PDV/Location Offset, and other Australian Government funding) highlighting **the ongoing importance of government investment in sustaining production volume.**[73] Screen Australia's Industry Participant Survey (conducted in January 2025) found that **the Producer Offset is seen as the most valuable form of support for producers**, particularly in the context of rising costs, with around 75% of respondents to Screen Australia's Australian Screen Industry Participant Survey expecting **production costs to increase by more than 10%** over the next 3 to 5 years.[74]

**Read more about government support of local screen production in:**

Economic Insights >

**Production in Australia typically relies on stacked financing**, with most projects drawing on multiple funding sources rather than a single primary financier. Survey responses show that public funding (23%), commissioned work (16%), licence fees/minimum guarantees (12%), internal finance (11%) and private capital (8%) are commonly combined within individual projects (Table 10), highlighting both the capital intensity of production and the extent to which financial risk is distributed across multiple sources.

A line-by-line review of write-in survey responses found few explicit references to specialist factual/documentary, suggesting limited participation from these producers; as a result, the reported **1% philanthropy share is likely conservative** and may be captured under other categories (e.g. in-kind/contra, sponsorship, or "Other").

68 Ausfilm 2026, *Tax Incentives*, accessed 18 Dec 2025.
69 Screen Australia 2026, *Producer, Location and PDV Offsets*, accessed 18 Dec 2025.
70 Olsberg SPI 2023, *Study on the Impact of Film and Television Production Incentives in Australia*, commissioned by the Australian and New Zealand Screen Association.
71 Olsberg SPI 2023, *Study on the Impact of Film and Television Production Incentives in Australia*, commissioned by the Australian and New Zealand Screen Association.
72 Screen Australia 2025, *Drama Report 2024/25*.
73 Screen Australia 2025, *Drama Report 2024/25*.
74 Screen Australia 2025, Australian Screen Industry Participant Survey (n=965).

### Table 10: Breakdown of financing and resourcing for current projects

| Source of finance | Average % of financing |
|---|---|
| Public grants or funding (e.g. Screen Australia, state/territory-based screen agencies, other government funding) | 23% |
| Client fees/commissioned work (cost-plus/service contracts) | 16% |
| Broadcaster or platform licence fees/minimum guarantee/advance | 12% |
| Self-funded or internal finance (e.g. from retained earnings, directors' loans) | 11% |
| Private equity or venture capital investments (e.g. gap financing) | 8% |
| Secured debt financing | 5% |
| Sales agent or distributor minimum guarantee/advance | 5% |
| In-kind/contra (donated services, facilities, equipment, volunteer time) | 4% |
| Crowdfunding | 2% |
| Sponsorships/brand partnerships | 2% |
| Impact investment (e.g. social impact capital) | 2% |
| Unsecured debt financing | 1% |
| Philanthropy (e.g. donations) | 1% |
| Other | 9% |

Source: Responses to the industry and workforce survey question: "What is the approximate breakdown of financing and resourcing for your current projects from each of the following sources?" n=75 screen businesses/organisations.

### Table 11: Main source of finance for a typical project

| Source of finance | % of respondents |
|---|---|
| Client fees/commissioned work (cost-plus/service contracts) | 22% |
| Broadcaster or platform licence fees/minimum guarantee/advance | 17% |
| Public grants or funding (e.g. Screen Australia, state/territory-based screen agencies, other government funding) | 17% |
| Tax offsets or rebates | 13% |
| Self-funded or internal finance (e.g. from retained earnings from sales, directors' loans) | 9% |
| Private equity or venture capital investments (e.g. gap financing) | 6% |
| Sales agent or distributor minimum guarantee/advance | 4% |
| Crowdfunding | 3% |
| In-kind/contra (donated services, facilities, equipment, volunteer time) | 1% |
| Philanthropy (e.g. donations) | 1% |
| Other | 8% |

Source: Responses to the industry and workforce survey question: "Thinking of a typical project, what is your main source of finance?" Notes: n=41 screen businesses/organisations.

**Table 12: Relevant deal terms for a typical project**

| Deal terms | % of respondents |
|---|---|
| Upfront minimum guarantee/advance | 51% |
| Revenue share/royalties after recoupment | 47% |
| Service fee only (no backend) | 39% |
| Marketing/data support provided by partner/platform | 12% |
| Other | 8% |

Source: Responses to the industry and workforce survey question: "Thinking of a typical project, which deal terms applied to your business?" n=49 screen businesses/organisations.

When respondents were asked to identify **the main source of finance for a typical project**, client fees/commissioned work, licence fees/advances and public funding emerged as the most common, followed by tax offsets and self-funded (Table 11). This indicates that while public investment remains critical to sustaining production volume, a large share of production activity is anchored in service-based and cost-plus models, particularly in projects commissioned by broadcasters and platforms.

The survey results suggest that **international investment appears to form a material component of production financing for some businesses.** Screen business respondents (n=66) reported an average 21% of financing for current projects came from outside Australia. At the same time, production activity remains variably distributed across organisations: while 69% of business respondents (n=74) completed at least 1 project in 2024/25, only 46% completed multiple projects. There is no single consolidated source of production financing data in Australia, including within Screen Australia's own datasets, which means survey evidence of this kind, while limited in sample, offers one of the few available windows into how projects are actually financed.

**Read more about export flows in the screen industry in:**

Economic Insights

Survey results also show that **screen deals typically include upfront financing**, with 51% of respondents reporting an upfront minimum guarantee/advance on a typical project (Table 12). This may reflect Screen Australia guidelines/terms of trade, which have required distribution guarantees for feature film production.

Nearly half also reported **revenue share/royalties after recoupment (47%)** and a substantial share operate on **service-fee only terms with no backend (39%)**, indicating many businesses are trading potential long-term upside for certainty. Only 12% reported receiving marketing/data support from partners or platforms, suggesting that even where production is financed, the work of reaching audiences and capturing value beyond production can be constrained.

Against the backdrop of high volumes of production activity and prominent public support, businesses operating at the production stage face **a complex risk environment driven by both macroeconomic conditions and sector-specific pressures**. The industry and workforce survey investigated business outlook through the lens of risk and opportunity.

Survey responses show **there are a broad range of risks that influence the business outlook of those operating in production**. Results show that a majority of screen production businesses consider funding continuity (62%) and economic conditions (60%) as influencing their business outlook, and that regulatory and policy shifts (37%), competition (37%), limited pathways to audiences (33%) also figure prominently (Table 13). Write-in responses under "Other" identified a broad variety of specific risks, with a perceived lack of support from government, failed implementation of content sub quotas, and increased costs/production highlighted.

### Table 13: Top risks identified by screen production businesses

| Risks | % of respondents who identified the risk |
|---|---|
| Loss of funding sources | 62% |
| Economic downturn or recession | 60% |
| Regulatory changes or policy shifts | 37% |
| Limited pathways to audiences | 37% |
| Increased competition or market saturation | 33% |
| Technological disruptions (e.g. AI, automation) | 23% |
| Workforce or skills shortages | 19% |
| Reputational damage or public perception challenges | 4% |
| Cybersecurity threats or data breaches | 2% |
| Other | 25% |

Notes: Percentages do not sum to 100% as respondents could select more than one option.

Source: Responses to the industry and workforce survey question: “What are the top three risks influencing your business outlook?” n=52 screen businesses/organisations, only those operating in production.

### Table 14: Top opportunities identified by screen production businesses

| Opportunities | % of respondents who identified the opportunity |
|---|---|
| Partnerships and co-productions that unlock scale/finance | 62% |
| Access to new markets or platforms | 50% |
| Major commission/slate deal | 42% |
| Technology adoption & workflow automation | 35% |
| Access to skilled talent/capacity expansion | 27% |
| Improved deal terms & rights positions | 21% |
| Stronger monetisation models | 17% |
| Access to capital on better terms | 15% |
| Infrastructure availability | 12% |
| Catalogue/long-tail performance uplift | 6% |
| Better discoverability & data access | 4% |
| Other | 10% |

Notes: Percentages do not sum to 100% as respondents could select more than one option.

Source: Responses to the industry and workforce survey question: “what are the top three opportunities influencing your business outlook?” n=52 screen businesses/organisations, only those who operate in production.

**Despite cost pressures and funding uncertainty, business confidence at the individual firm level is strong.** On a 5-point scale, 48% of production businesses (n=52) expressed high (4) or very high (5) confidence in the growth and sustainability of their own organisation, broadly in line with confidence levels across the screen industry. In contrast, **confidence in the growth and sustainability of the sector more broadly was lower** – on the same 5-point scale, 25% of production businesses (n=52) expressed very high (5) or high (4) confidence in the sector outlook, and 44% expressed very low (1) or low (2) confidence – indicating a divergence between firm-level outlook and perceptions of systemic conditions.

**Regarding business opportunities, respondents commonly pointed to pathways that improve scale and market access** – particularly partnerships and co-productions (62%), access to new markets or platforms (50%), and major commission or slate deals (42%) (Table 14). These priorities align with themes raised in stakeholder interviews, including the view that some genres and formats, such as specialist factual and children's content, are finding it harder to secure commissions under current market conditions.

**Many of the risks and opportunities identified by production businesses intersect with workforce availability, skills development and capacity constraints.** Production draws on a wide range of above- and below-the-line roles,[75] with the latter playing a critical role in managing the complexity, compliance and risk inherent in large-scale screen production. **National capacity constraints have been identified through the Production Infrastructure Capacity Analysis (PICA) in several high-responsibility, high-skill below-the-line roles**, including Line Producer, Production Accountant, Production Manager and Location Manager.[76] These roles are essential to budgeting, scheduling and delivery and shortages of these roles and others can constrain production capacity during periods of high activity. Qualitative evidence obtained through PICA interviews highlighted **overarching challenges across the screen workforce** including the aging senior workforce, senior role shortages, interpersonal skills, work/life balance and burnout and the loss of long-running TV as a training ground.[77]

Workforce dynamics at the production stage are shaped by structural and pipeline factors. Findings in the Australian Children's Television Futures summary report highlight that **children's TV has historically played an important role in developing industry talent in Australia**, and that the sector has experienced significant disruption coinciding with policy changes, including the removal of content sub-quotas in 2020.[78] Consistent with this, production activity analysis suggests the commercial case for children's content has weakened for commercial broadcasting, contributing to reduced commissioning and a shift away from the format, narrowing entry points and progression opportunities for emerging talent.[79]

**Read more about production activity trends in:**

Economic Insights

**In addition, the industry is grappling with retention challenges related to mental health, burnout, and leadership capability.** The *Leadership Matters* report commissioned by ScreenWell highlights a leadership capability gap (58% of leaders reporting no formal leadership/people-management training; only 7% screen-specific), alongside evidence that unacceptable behaviour remains common (74% witnessed/experienced in the past year) and often unresolved (63% saying concerns were not adequately addressed). The report found that the transient nature of screen projects can allow these issues to persist, contributing to burnout, loss of emerging talent and, ultimately, skills shortages.[80]

Findings from the Australian Screen Industry Mental Health and Wellbeing Survey 2025, summarised in the *Pressure Point* report, frame **retention and mobility risk in screen as being driven by burnout, unsustainable working conditions and workplace culture.** In its summary statistics, it reports that 36% of participants have considered quitting their job "often or all the time"

75 Above-the-line roles refer to the creative leadership positions that shape the overall direction of a screen project, such as writers, directors, producers and principal cast. Below-the-line roles refer to the technical and production roles involved in delivering the project, including crew, crafts and specialist production staff.

76 Olsberg SPI 2026, *A Production, Infrastructure and Capacity Analysis for Australia's Screen Production Sector*, commissioned by Screen Australia.

77 Olsberg SPI 2026, *A Production, Infrastructure and Capacity Analysis for Australia's Screen Production Sector*, commissioned by Screen Australia.

78 Baker D, Balanzategui J, Burke L, McIntyre J and Sykes L 2025, *Australian Children's Television Cultures Summary Report 2021-2024*, ACTC Report 8, Swinburne University of Technology.

79 Screen Australia 2026, *Screen Currency 2026: Economic Insights*, developed by Marion McCutcheon, Yogi Yidyattama and Stuart Cunningham, University of Canberra.

80 ScreenWell 2024, *Leadership Matters Report*.

in the past 6 months and that a quarter of the screen industry workforce are planning their exit within 6 months, signalling elevated near-term churn risk.[81] The same report highlights workplace conditions that can contribute to mobility out of the sector, reporting that 62% face pressure not to claim basic entitlements (e.g. sick leave, holiday pay, travel expenses), 48% are assigned tasks with unreasonable deadlines frequently, and 48% experienced bullying in the past year.[82]

Retention and capacity pressures are not confined to physical production roles; they also shape the availability of specialist talent in adjacent, high-leverage segments – particularly **animation and PDV, where skills are scarce and increasingly embedded across the production pipeline**. Animation and PDV have become increasingly high-leverage components of the production process. Historically, many PDV activities were treated as post-production tasks undertaken after filming, however, advances in digital technology mean that processes such as digital image compositing are now commonly integrated before and during production.[83]

**The animation and PDV workforce is highly specialised but comparatively small, comprising 3,405 workers** per the latest ABS Film, Television and Digital Games study.[84] Of these workers, the PICA found that **42% of the animation and PDV workforce reported being employed full-time by companies** and 21% full time as a freelancer/contractor, in contrast to the more predominantly freelance physical production workforce (38%) – this reflects both the technical intensity of PDV work and its integration into global production pipelines servicing a more consistent pipeline of domestic and international projects.[85]

**Read about salary cost breakdowns by sector in:**

Economic Insights

81 Griffith University 2025, *The Pressure Point Report: Australian Screen Industry Mental Health and Wellbeing Survey Preliminary Findings 2025*, in collaboration with ScreenWell.

82 Griffith University 2025, *The Pressure Point Report: Australian Screen Industry Mental Health and Wellbeing Survey Preliminary Findings 2025*, in collaboration with ScreenWell.

83 Screen Australia, *Historical Data Focus on PDV*.

84 ABS 2023, *Film, Television and Digital Games, Australia*, 2021/22.

85 Olsberg SPI 2026, *A Production, Infrastructure and Capacity Analysis for Australia's Screen Production Sector*, commissioned by Screen Australia.

# Stakeholder insights

A range of opportunities, dynamics, challenges and other topics relating to production were explored with stakeholders through in-depth interviews.

- **First Nations content faces distinct production challenges:** Stakeholders noted that First Nations-led screen content operates within a unique set of production dynamics. Balancing culturally specific storytelling with broad audience appeal requires careful navigation of language, cultural protocols and community engagement, often adding time and complexity to development and production processes. While specific strategies and initiatives exist to support First Nations creatives and crew, including dedicated entry pathways and Screen Australia programs, the volume of fully First Nations-led content remains limited, particularly in children's programming. Several state screen agencies have developed dedicated First Nations screen strategies (including the South Australian Film Corporation, Screen Queensland and Screenwest), and Screen Australia has identified First Nations content as a strategic priority alongside documentary and children's. However, stakeholders observed that demand for First Nations practitioners and stories is growing faster than the pipeline of experienced First Nations key creatives, highlighting a need for sustained investment in development and career pathways rather than project-level support alone.
- **Production feeling the pressure of rising costs:** Stakeholders consistently reported that increasing production costs, driven by higher travel expenses, crew rates (including rate differences between foreign production vs. local production), general cost inflation and rising audience expectations, are compressing margins and narrowing the range of projects that can be viably financed. While reliance on large-scale commissioners and international finance has been a feature of Australian production for well over a decade, a variety of stakeholders noted these cost pressures further reduce the scope for smaller-scale or domestically financed projects, concentrating commissioning power and potentially limiting the diversity of content which reaches production and, therefore, audiences.

**Read about how audiences value local cultural relevance (local talent, accents and locations) in:**

Audience Insights ›

- **Expectations of star talent:** Tension was identified between increasing commercial and market pressure to cast one or multiple globally recognised stars (including Australians who work internationally) into productions and the significant budget constraints productions typically face in doing so. Stakeholders identified this as a key driver of project failure.
- **Increasing strain in finance plans:** Interestingly, stakeholders also stated that the reduced availability of international advances and distribution commitments, combined with heightened competition for public funding, is placing greater pressure on producers to close finance gaps through budget reductions, additional partners, or higher-risk financing arrangements, often with limited or no upside retained.

> **"I think it's been tough with international commissions becoming scarce. I think particularly drama producers have felt the effects of the US market not buying as much content and not putting up distribution for finance plans for their content."**
>
> – broadcaster

- **Incentive settings and travel costs shape workforce flows:** Stakeholders reported that variations in state-based incentive settings, combined with rising travel costs and crew rates, are influencing where productions locate and where crew choose to base themselves. In some regions, this is creating unintended workforce leakage, as practitioners relocate to areas offering more consistent work and better cost–benefit outcomes for producers.
- **Diminishing motivation among experienced practitioners:** Across a range of interviews, several established producers, directors and senior production staff expressed declining motivation and confidence in the industry. This sentiment was often framed as a perception that sustaining careers and businesses has become progressively harder, driven by a combination of rising costs, financing pressure, uncertainty of commissioning and limited long-term upside, rather than any single factor.

- **Production continuity drives workforce retention, training and mobility:** Stakeholders consistently emphasised that sustained, year-round production pipelines are critical to retaining skilled crew locally, as well as supporting effective training, skills transfer and leadership development. Where production activity is intermittent, practitioners, particularly at the mid-career level, are more likely to relocate interstate or overseas to access continuity of work, contributing to workforce drain from smaller or less consistently active areas.

> **"If you really want to make a go of [a screen career] you need that consistency of employment, otherwise you're back making lattes at the local cafe."**
>
> – screen agency representative

- **Strong international reputation alongside emerging pipeline risks:** Stakeholders consistently highlighted the high quality and international reputation of Australia's above- and below-the-line production workforce, particularly its problem-solving capability and cross-functional skill sets. At the same time, concerns were raised about succession, leadership capability and the ageing of senior creative and technical talent, underscoring the need to strengthen training, progression and leadership development to sustain this reputation over time.
- **Training is embedded within production rather than delivered through formal pathways:** Stakeholders described training as occurring primarily on the job, through long production cycles, internal mentoring and knowledge transfer, particularly in company-based environments such as animation. This model supports deep skill development but is time-intensive, project-dependent and difficult to sustain without continuity of work.
- **Production companies play a vital role in training and entry pathways:** Stakeholders consistently reported that production companies actively provide attachments, mentoring and entry-level opportunities, sometimes linked to obligations associated with state or federal funding. These initiatives were seen as both an industry responsibility and a practical response to persistent skills shortages, particularly in writing, production management and accounting roles.

> **"Our [staff] turnover is extremely low, a lot of people have been here a long time, so training wise it's a lot of information passed down. There's a lot of very specific information that must be communicated in order for our team to work."**
>
> – producer

- **Broader technology enabling flexible production models:** Stakeholders highlighted the role of digital technology, such as remote working, virtual production and portable capture tools, in enabling more flexible and efficient production, particularly in animation and PDV. These technologies allow teams to work across locations, manage budgets more tightly and sustain high production values, especially for smaller and mid-sized production companies.
- **AI as a productivity tool in production:** Stakeholders reported that AI is being used in practical, assistive ways to save time and reduce costs across production and post-production, particularly for research, visual effects, post workflows and administrative tasks such as pitching and documentation. Use to date was described as incremental and strictly efficiency-focused, with AI supporting rather than replacing creative roles.
- **Finite capacity in high-end animation and PDV:** Stakeholders noted that while Australia has strong international capability in animation and PDV, capacity is concentrated in a relatively small number of studios and senior practitioners, which can limit scalability during periods of high global demand – and that the balance can be tough to get right. Compounding this challenge is the growth of spend on PDV and increased competition for talent.
- **Producers forced to adapt business models to work across genres and formats:** Stakeholders noted that changes in commissioning and funding conditions have made single genre/format production models less viable, particularly in children's TV, prompting producers to diversify across genres and audiences to sustain production activity over time.

> “Animation production timelines are very long. We could spend a year and a half producing something [animated] which allows us to develop live action on the side.”
> – producer

> “It takes a whole lot of different skills coming together and a lot of commitment, technology and talent commitment, to actually be able to execute high end animated features or series.”
> – producer

- **Long-cycle risk and post-production resourcing in animation:** Stakeholders noted that animation projects involve longer production cycles and higher upfront investment in people and technology, increasing exposure to funding interruptions and budget compression later in the process. Adequate planning and resourcing for animation and post-production were identified as critical to maintaining quality outcomes, particularly where there is an expectation that creative or technical challenges can be resolved “in post.”

> “People always say ‘fix it in post’, but if you don’t have the money, you’re not fixing anything.”
> – commissioner

- **Consolidation as a response to competitive pressure:** Stakeholders, including producers, distributors and commissioners, described consolidation among independent producers as a strategy to achieve scale, manage risk and compete in an increasingly concentrated market, noting that acquisition by global studios can reshape competitive dynamics for remaining local producers.

*Do Not Watch This Show*

# Distribution, broadcast, streaming and exhibition

Screen | Creation | Production | **Distribution, broadcast, streaming and exhibition** | Enablement and support

## Distribution, broadcast, streaming and exhibition are the stages where completed screen works are released to audiences and revenue outcomes are realised.

**This includes sales and licensing, marketing and promotion, theatrical release, broadcast, transmission and digital platform distribution. Decisions about release strategies, platforms and timing play a key role in shaping audience reach and financial returns to rights-holders.**

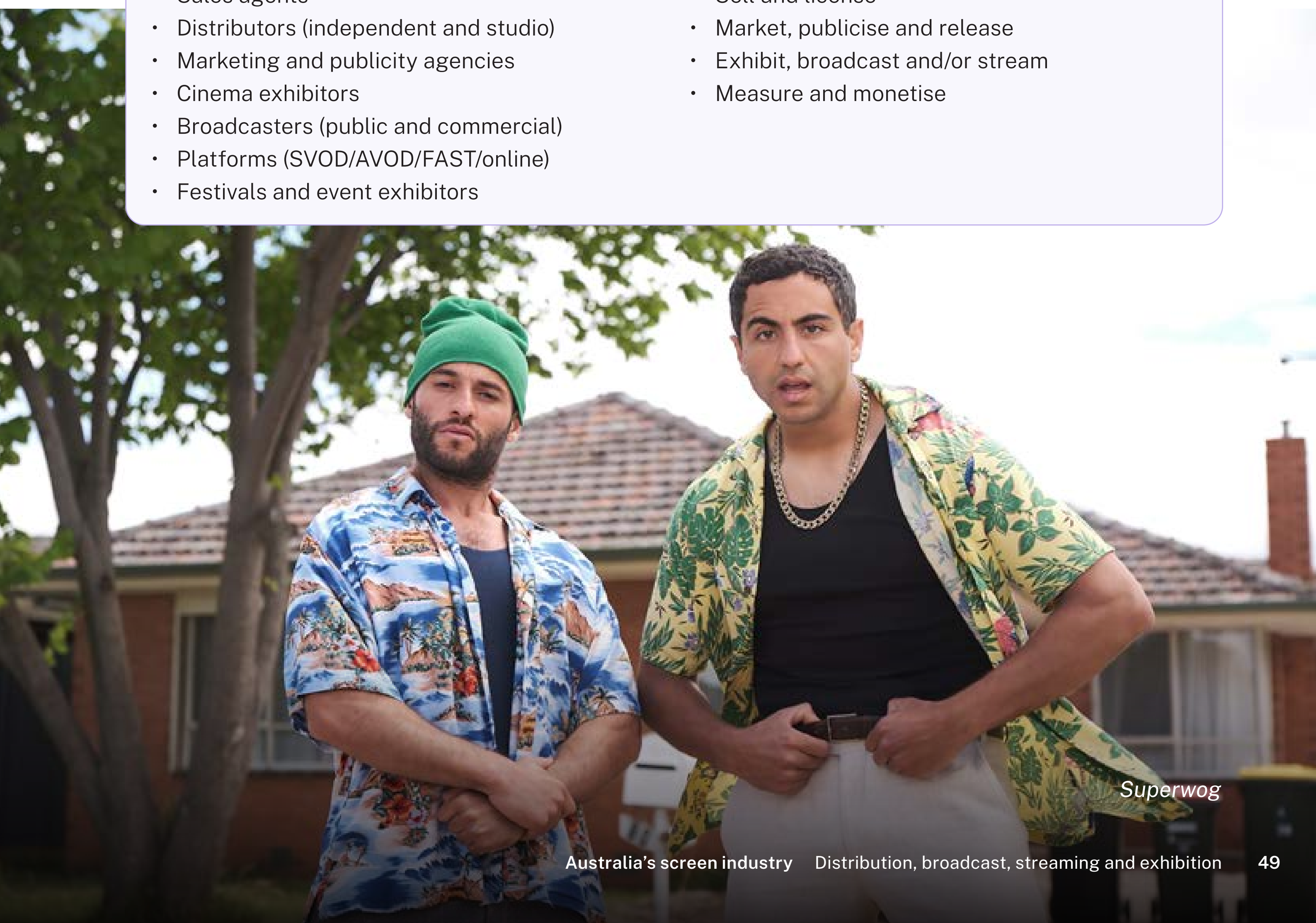
**For Australian content, these stages increasingly operate within globally competitive markets and platform-based distribution environments, which influence discoverability, pricing and the pathways through which revenue flows to rights-holders.**

### Key industry participants

- Sales agents
- Distributors (independent and studio)
- Marketing and publicity agencies
- Cinema exhibitors
- Broadcasters (public and commercial)
- Platforms (SVOD/AVOD/FAST/online)
- Festivals and event exhibitors

### Key activities

- Sell and license
- Market, publicise and release
- Exhibit, broadcast and/or stream
- Measure and monetise



*Superwog*

**Distribution, broadcast, streaming and exhibition involve a series of creative, commercial and strategic decisions about how, where, when and to whom screen works are released** once functionally complete. This includes securing distribution and sales arrangements, content classification and localisation, and coordinating marketing campaigns – often working alongside sales agents who facilitate access to international markets. For feature films, distributors manage theatrical release and subsequent windows; for TV and streaming content, distribution is frequently integrated with the broadcaster or commissioning platform's release and promotional schedule. For online and digital-first content, distribution must consider platform-specific (e.g. YouTube and TikTok) release and discovery settings, including how content is packaged and promoted (such as titles, thumbnails and creator-led marketing) and how audiences are targeted and grown over time. **Activity at this stage influences audience reach, discoverability and revenue potential across both domestic and export markets**.

**At the point of exhibition**, cinema exhibitors, networks and platforms manage scheduling and playout while collecting societies, distributors and agencies administer settlements, royalties and performance reporting. **Audience response, analytics and market performance inform future commissioning, renewals and catalogue management**.

**In digital environments, the boundary between distribution and exhibition is increasingly integrated**, with release, audience measurement and monetisation occurring within the same systems. This increasing integration is why this report **discusses these activities together**, reflecting how downstream release, discovery, performance measurement and revenue collection increasingly operate as an integrated set of activities rather than discrete stages.

**Distribution, broadcast, streaming and exhibition businesses, on average, operate at far greater revenue scale but face weaker growth and lower value conversion** compared to creation and production. ABS BLADE data shows that in 2023/24, 2,297 Australian distribution, broadcast, streaming and exhibition businesses generated $14.77 billion in revenue, compared with $4.95 billion across 8,393 creation and production businesses.[86]

However, these businesses recorded lower average operating margins relative to revenue than creation and production businesses (20% versus 48%) and lower economic output relative to revenue (44% versus 81%), alongside negative revenue growth over the long term (-10% over 10 years) and a sharp contraction in the most recent year (-17%).[87]

Together, these patterns suggest a value chain in which **downstream segments** generate significant revenue but face ongoing structural decline, while **upstream activity** has grown in the number of businesses and participants without a commensurate increase in average profitability or financial strength. Government support is concentrated upstream, through direct and indirect subsidies to mainly production businesses. Downstream, content regulation has historically been the most material policy lever – but as audiences and revenues have fragmented, much of the regulation has been progressively removed or reduced.

**Distribution, broadcast, streaming and exhibition are critical to revenue generation and audience access, and the workforce in these stages appears more role-stable** than elsewhere in the screen value chain. In the workforce survey (n=294), 5% of respondents reported working in distribution and 10% in exhibition, while business/organisation respondents (n=225) included 13% who reported operating in distribution and 6% in exhibition. Employment also appears more role-stable in these stages: 71% of distribution workers and 68% of exhibition workers reported working in a single role, compared with 65% across the screen workforce overall (n=294).[88]

**Read more about the workforce, income and employment characteristics in:**

Economic Insights

86 ABS 2025, Businesses in Australia (BLADE), 2001-02 to 2023-24, accessed 12 December 2025.
87 ABS 2025, Businesses in Australia (BLADE), 2001-02 to 2023-24, accessed 12 December 2025.
88 Based on the Screen Currency Industry and Workforce Survey by McAtamney & Advisors.

Distribution, broadcast, streaming and exhibition in Australia operate through a range of approaches that vary by format, genre and the business model of the distributor, commissioner, or broadcaster. **The following table summarises common pathways, associated activities, typical rights and control arrangements and indicative patterns of value capture.** In practice, individual projects often combine elements from multiple approaches. These primarily reflect domestic commissioning, distribution and exhibition models, including broadcaster, cinema and platform pathways.

**Table 15: Commercial models for distribution, broadcast, streaming and exhibition**

| Format/genre | Approaches | What's involved | Typical rights/control structure | Where value is captured |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Theatrical feature film** | Traditional windowed | • Festival positioning<br>• Distributor acquisition<br>• P&A spend<br>• Cinema booking/ screen access<br>• PR and reviews<br>• Platform placement. | Producer often assigns/licenses territory rights to distributor/sales agent. Minimum guarantees possible, producer may retain some territories. | Box office share (often modest), minimum guarantee/ advances. Later-window licence fees, long-tail library value (if rights retained). |
| | Day-and-date/ limited theatrical | • Smaller P&A<br>• Targeted cinemas with faster shift to TVOD/SVOD<br>• Social-driven marketing<br>• PR and reviews. | Similar rights splits, often shorter or narrower exclusivity. Sometimes aggregator-led digital rights. | Earlier digital revenues, platform placement – lower theatrical upside (less time on screen) but lower release risk (lower cost). |
| | Alternative content programming | • Small number of pre-agreed sessions (often one weekend or specific dates)<br>• Minimal P&A, relying on niche audience targeting and exhibitor curation<br>• If strong audience response ("fires"), additional sessions may be added<br>• PR and reviews are often secondary or selective. | Producer or distributor retains rights. Cinema access is session-based and non-exclusive, with no guaranteed run or window commitment. | Limited box office revenue. Audience validation and market signalling. Optional expansion of sessions and downstream digital or platform value. |
| **TV drama (broadcast)** | Free-to-air broadcast commissioning | • Broadcaster scheduling<br>• Promo campaigns<br>• Catch-up window<br>• International sales agent where applicable<br>• PR and reviews. | Broadcaster typically holds primary domestic rights for window/s. Producers may retain some secondary/ international rights depending on deal. | Commission/licence fee, limited backend revenues, secondary sales if IP retained. |

| Format/genre | Approaches | What's involved | Typical rights/control structure | Where value is captured |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **SVOD original (features and series)** | SVOD original commissioning | • Platform-led release<br>• Platform marketing<br>• Performance analytics internal<br>• Renewals/continuations depend on platform metrics<br>• PR and reviews. | Platform typically retains broad rights (often global, multi-window) under cost-plus/commission structures. Producer may retain limited territories or formats in some cases. | Production fees, limited backend, value captured heavily through platform subscriber retention/ engagement and global exploitation rights. |
| **Documentary** | Broadcaster-led documentary release | • Editorial positioning<br>• Festival strategy outreach/publicity<br>• Community screenings<br>• Educational licensing<br>• Some TVOD/SVOD placement<br>• PR and reviews. | Rights often split across broadcaster window + producer retained rights for festivals/educational/ international, depending on deal | Licence fees and public funding, educational/non-theatrical licensing, modest long-tail revenues, public/ cultural value. |
| | Impact-led theatrical | • Limited theatrical<br>• Impact campaign philanthropic/partner support<br>• Targeted marketing<br>• PR and reviews. | Rights often remain with producer/ distributor. Partners may fund outreach rather than acquire rights. | Box office often secondary, funding may be tied to impact/ reach. Downstream digital and licensing, where retained. |
| | Alternative content programming | • Limited, curated cinema sessions (often one-off or weekend-based)<br>• No formal impact campaign, but may involve filmmaker Q&As or contextual framing<br>• Low-cost marketing, often relying on community, subject-matter or exhibitor promotion<br>• Flexible pathway to additional sessions if demand is demonstrated. | Producer or distributor retains rights. Exhibition is licensed on a per-session basis, outside traditional theatrical windowing. | Modest box office returns. Audience reach and profile building. Pathway value for later digital, educational or broadcaster licensing. |

| Format/genre | Approaches | What's involved | Typical rights/control structure | Where value is captured |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Factual (non-scripted) & entertainment** | Broadcaster-commissioned factual/ entertainment | • Scheduling and promo<br>• Format packaging<br>• Series delivery cycles<br>• Ad-supported monetisation or public broadcaster supported<br>• PR and reviews. | Broadcaster commission often includes significant rights. For formats, underlying format rights may sit with format owner or producer depending on origin. | Production fees, format fees/royalties where producer owns format. Limited secondary markets for some subgenres |
| | Format licensing and adaptation | • Local versioning<br>• Brand compliance<br>• Ongoing production<br>• Occasional international rollouts<br>• PR and reviews. | If imported: format rights/licence fees paid to overseas owner.<br>If exported: producer/ rights-holder licenses format internationally. | Value captured via format licensing and repeat commissions. Value can leak via format royalties when imported. |
| **Children's content** | Commissioned animation and live action | • Marketing scheduling/ curation<br>• Repeat exposure<br>• Educational use<br>• PR and reviews. | Often relies on broadcaster windows. International distribution varies – rights (incl. merch and other) may be retained or traded depending on financing. | Licence fees + public funding. Repeat viewing drives catalogue value. Highest upside when IP/merch rights retained for all markets. |
| | SVOD children's acquisition/ original | • Platform curation<br>• Global release potential<br>• Algorithmic recommendation<br>• Limited data visibility<br>• PR and reviews. | Platform often seeks broad rights. Producer may retain some ancillary rights depending on leverage. | Production fees, potential scale via global reach. Long-tail value depends on retained rights (esp. merch/franchise) |
| **Animation (series/feature)** | Commissioned animation | • Pipeline delivery<br>• Long-cycle production<br>• Platform/broadcaster promo<br>• International dubbing/ localisation<br>• PR and reviews. | Commissioned: rights often platform/ broadcaster-heavy, co-pros split territories. Some studios retain underlying IP in specific structures. | Production/service fees. Library value and franchise upside if IP retained. Global reach can amplify downstream opportunities. |
| **Short-form/ digital-first (creator-led)** | Platform release (e.g. YouTube/ TikTok/Instagram) | • Algorithm-driven discoverability<br>• Creator-led marketing<br>• Community management<br>• Cross-posting<br>• Brand deals. | IP typically held by the creator, but monetisation/data governed by platform terms, limited formal 'windowing'.<br>Predominantly non-exclusive. | Ad-share, sponsorships, affiliate revenue, merchandise, live events. Platform captures a significant share via ad markets and data. |

Survey responses from screen businesses/organisations indicate that **income is derived from a wide mix of platforms and channels, with no single pathway dominating** (Table 16). In addition to defined channel options, respondents could allocate a share of income to "Other" and write-in a description. Upon reviewing the number and diversity of write-in responses, a majority of "Other" entries were recoded into additional revenue categories using the percentages provided by respondents under "Other". This approach retains respondents' original allocations while improving comparability and interpretability; however, results should be interpreted as directional given the potential for respondents to classify revenue differently across categories.

### Table 16: Breakdown of screen business income by platforms/channel

| Platform/channel | Average % of income |
|---|---|
| Business-to-business (other) | 28% |
| Commercial or public broadcast | 10% |
| SVOD | 10% |
| Theatrical/cinema | 8% |
| Production services and commissioned work (fees for service) (recode) | 7% |
| Grants, philanthropy and member-based support (non-market) (recode) | 7% |
| Non-theatrical/event-based exhibition (recode) | 2% |
| Merchandise and ancillary (recode) | Less than 1% |
| Other (N/A) | 7% |

Notes: Self-reported allocations, treat as indicative. Some revenue reported as "business-to-business (other)" may ultimately relate to consumer-facing channels (e.g. broadcast, theatrical, SVOD) where income is received via a business counterparty. Respondents reporting against this category include businesses operating in advertising, production services, animation/PDV and production. Categories marked "(recode)" were consolidated from write-in responses.

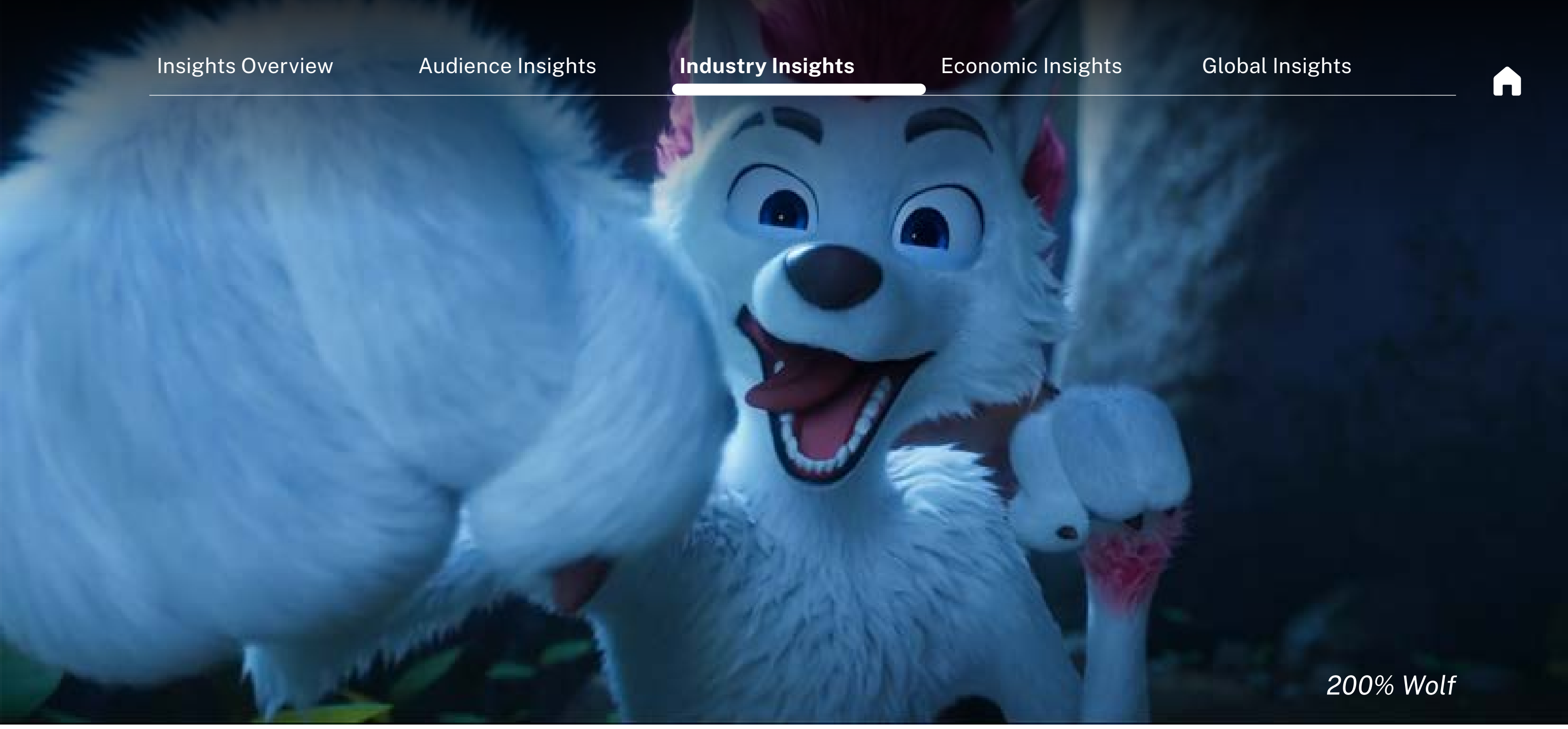
Source: Responses to the industry and workforce survey question: "What is the percentage of your income from the following platforms and channels?" n=87 screen businesses/organisations.

### Table 17: Typical project primary distribution arrangements

| Distribution arrangement | % of respondents |
|---|---|
| International distributor/sales agent | 45% |
| Australian distributor/sales agent | 39% |
| Direct deal with platform/publisher (SVOD/app store) | 25% |
| Self-distributed/self-published | 23% |
| Client-delivered (no public distribution) | 14% |
| Other | 7% |

Notes: Percentages sum over 100% as multiple selections were allowed.

Source: Responses to the industry and workforce survey question: "Thinking of a typical project for your business, what are the primary distribution arrangements?" n=44 screen businesses/organisations.



*200% Wolf*

The resulting distribution directionally highlights **the importance of diversified revenue sources**, alongside relatively smaller average contributions from consumer-facing channels such as cinema, SVOD and BVOD. Overall, the findings underscore **a fragmented, multi-channel revenue model in the screen sector**, in which traditional distributor-, sales agent- or commissioner-led pathways remain important but are not the only route to market.

**The spread across self-distribution, direct platform deals and client delivery** (Table 17) suggests screen businesses that responded to the survey are increasingly looking beyond traditional intermediaries to monetise content and access audiences (and customers).

**In 2025, independent distributors handled most new theatrical feature film releases in Australia, accounting for 721 titles (85%)**, compared with **124 releases (15%)** from major (studio) distributors.[89] Total box office revenue in Australia in 2025 was **$970.0m**, with feature films under Australian or shared creative control earning **$25.1m (2.6%)**. Films released by the major studios took **$748.4m** with a combined market share of 77%, films released by Roadshow took **$34.1m (4%** market share) and films released by more than 60 other smaller distributors took **$187.5m (19%** market share).[90] The theatrical market has long followed this pattern of many releases and concentrated returns. In 2016, when total Australian box office takings peaked at **$1.25b**, independent distributors released **506 titles** and generated **$190m (15%)**, compared with **103 releases** from major studios which generated **$1.06b (85%)** of revenue.[91] In the same year, Australian films accounted for **$24.1m (1.9%)** of the Australian box office – at the time, an 11-year low.

**A long-term shift in feature film distribution financing has been a decline in the value and prevalence of minimum guarantees (MGs)[92]** paid by distributors for Australian content. Screen Australia data from 2004–2024 tracks MGs recorded against Screen Australia-supported productions only,[93] representing the sale value guaranteed by distributors after financing is secured. This data indicates a reduction in both the number and total value of MG-backed deals for Australian feature films. On a 10-year compound annual growth rate (CAGR) basis (i.e. from 2014 to 2024), the total value of MGs **decreased by 8.7% per year** and the number of MG-backed contracts **decreased by 10.4% per year** (Table 18). In the same period, average feature film budgets increased (**+5.3% p.a.**), while the average MG per contract increased more modestly (+2.0% p.a.), suggesting that sale amounts have not kept pace with rising budgets.

89 Numero, 2025.

90 Numero, 2025. Figures are in current dollars per calendar year.

91 MPDAA, 2017. Note: until 2021, Warner Bros. films in Australia were distributed by Roadshow.

92 A minimum guarantee (MG) is a contractual provision in film distribution in which a distributor commits to paying a fixed upfront amount to a producer or rights holder for the rights to distribute a title, regardless of its commercial performance. The distributor recoups this amount from the title's earnings before any further revenue share applies.

93 This dataset includes only those films and TV titles where Screen Australia invested and therefore excludes a range of other Australian content commissioned by commercial broadcasters and streamers.

**Table 18: Minimum guarantee (distributor) trends for Australian feature films, adult's TV and children's TV, 2004–2024**

| Format x Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) | Total value of distribution advances ($AUD) | Advance-backed contracts (#) | Avg. film/TV budget ($AUD) | Avg. distribution advance per contract ($AUD) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Feature films** | | | | |
| ***20 yr*** *(2004–2024)* | 2.8% | -0.6% | 3.5% | 3.4% |
| ***10 yr*** *(2014–2024)* | -8.7% | -10.4% | 5.3% | 2.0% |
| ***5 yr*** *(2019–2024)* | -20.2% | -18.2% | 2.3% | -2.4% |
| ***3 yr*** *(2021–2024)* | -16.3% | -14.4% | 16.3% | -2.2% |
| **2024 total** | 5,970,900 | 67 | 11,507,463 | 89,118 |
| **Adult's TV** | | | | |
| ***20 yr*** *(2004–2024)* | 3.7% | -3.7% | 4.5% | 7.7% |
| ***10 yr*** *(2014–2024)* | -13.8% | -13.5% | 6.8% | -0.3% |
| ***5 yr*** *(2019–2024)* | -40.1% | -28.7% | 11.9% | -16.0% |
| ***3 yr*** *(2021–2024)* | -68.6% | -45.4% | 11.6% | -42.4% |
| **2024 total** | 315,712 | 7 | 16,000,000 | 45,102 |
| **Children's TV** | | | | |
| ***20 yr*** *(2004–2024)* | 3.7% | -0.8% | -0.5% | 4.5% |
| ***10 yr*** *(2014–2024)* | -13.3% | -8.8% | -4.2% | -5.0% |
| ***5 yr*** *(2019–2024)* | 11.5% | 14.9% | -5.0% | -3.0% |
| ***3 yr*** *(2021–2024)* | -48.6% | -36.1% | -11.7% | -19.6% |
| **2024 total** | 217,200 | 6 | 5,666,667 | 36,200 |

Notes: 2024 is the latest complete year used for analysis. MG reporting may be updated in later releases, but 2024 is treated as final for this time series. Figures relate to MGs recorded in Screen Australia administrative data for Screen Australia supported productions via equity investment; they do not represent the full Australian market. The table captures MGs and MG-backed contracts. For adult's TV and children's TV, financing is more commonly structured through broadcast licence fees rather than distribution advances; MG data alone may therefore understate downstream sales for these formats. Feature films may also involve a distributor attachment and territory-by-territory sales, which can be transacted in ways not fully reflected as "MGs" in this dataset. CAGR are calculated over the stated horizons for each metric, using nominal values.

Source: Screen Australia administrative data (distribution advances), compiled and analysed by McAtamney & Advisors.

**The decline is sharper over the most recent 5-year period**, though trends in this window should be interpreted with caution given COVID-19 disruptions and resulting year-to-year volatility in deal volumes and timing. Even allowing for that volatility, the data suggests **distribution MGs have become a less routine and less valuable component of the feature film revenue picture in Australia**. This has implications for producer recoupment and the ability of Australian businesses to capture downstream value from completed works.

**The decline in MG values reflects two converging trends**: growing uncertainty in theatrical box office returns, which has made territory-by-territory presales a less reliable financing mechanism, and a broader shift toward consolidated global rights deals such as the multi-year Netflix-Sony Pay-1 agreement,[94] in which large-scale platform licensing increasingly replaces territory sales as the primary route to downstream revenue. Stakeholder interviews suggest that where Australian distributors are involved, their role and expertise is increasingly focussed on navigating release execution, including marketing, windowing and distribution strategy, rather than downstream finance. Separately, stakeholders reported that production financing itself has become more reliant on a mix of incentives, commissioning arrangements and platform deals, with territory-by-territory presales playing a diminishing role in closing budgets.

**Broadcast licence fees represent committed sales value** that typically forms part of a project's financing, differing from the distributor MGs captured in Table 18. They are a central financing mechanism for Australian TV formats and are more material to the finance plan than MGs for adult and children's TV.[95] Over the long term, adult TV licence fee totals show moderate growth (20-year CAGR +3.6%) with broadly stable contract volumes (+3.3%), though recent years show a softening, with a sharper decline over the past 3 years (total licence fees -13.5%, contracts -11.9%) (Table 19).

**For children's TV, the longer-run picture is more mixed:** total licence fee value declines over 20 years (-2.9%) even as contract volumes increase (+2.4%), implying **lower average licence value per project** (consistent with the declining average licence fee per contract over the long term, -5.2%). While the series is inherently volatile year to year, the **recent 3-year declines in children's total TV licence fees** (-18.7%) coincide with widespread reports from stakeholders and in the media of heightened pressure on the sustainability of children's commissioning under current market and policy settings.

94 Sony Pictures 2026, *Netflix And Sony Pictures Entertainment Enter New Pay-1 Deal With First-Of-Its-Kind Global Reach*.

95 Screen Australia administrative data on broadcast licence sales (Table 19) indicates that in 2024, total recorded broadcast licence fees were $55.1 million across 232 adult TV contracts and $10.5 million across 134 children's TV contracts, compared with $4.5 million across 46 feature film licence-backed contracts

Table 19: Broadcast licence trends for Australian feature films, adult's TV and children's TV, 2004–2024

| Format x Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) | Total value of broadcast licence fees ($AUD) | Licence-backed contracts (#) | Avg. film/TV budget ($AUD) | Avg. broadcast licence fee per contract ($AUD) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Feature films** | | | | |
| ***20 yr*** *(2004–2024)* | -3.3% | -6.7% | 2.9% | 3.7% |
| ***10 yr*** *(2014–2024)* | 1.1% | -3.2% | 0.8% | 4.4% |
| ***5 yr*** *(2019–2024)* | -12.7% | -6.4% | -0.5% | -6.7% |
| ***3 yr*** *(2021–2024)* | -16.5% | -28.3% | 2.0% | 16.5% |
| **2024 total** | 4,464,429 | 46 | 8,826,087 | 97,053 |
| **Adult's TV** | | | | |
| ***20 yr*** *(2004–2024)* | 3.6% | 3.3% | 4.3% | 0.3% |
| ***10 yr*** *(2014–2024)* | 2.0% | 0.8% | 3.7% | 1.3% |
| ***5 yr*** *(2019–2024)* | -0.5% | -0.5% | 4.7% | 0.0% |
| ***3 yr*** *(2021–2024)* | -13.5% | -11.9% | 5.7% | -1.8% |
| **2024 total** | 55,087,248 | 232 | 11,422,414 | 237,445 |
| **Children's TV** | | | | |
| ***20 yr*** *(2004–2024)* | -2.9% | 2.4% | -0.7% | -5.2% |
| ***10 yr*** *(2014–2024)* | 2.8% | 7.0% | -2.4% | -4.0% |
| ***5 yr*** *(2019–2024)* | 1.7% | 17.8% | -1.1% | -13.7% |
| ***3 yr*** *(2021–2024)* | -18.7% | -4.3% | -7.9% | -15.0% |
| **2024 total** | 10,498,919 | 134 | 6,253,731 | 78,350 |

Notes: 2024 is the latest complete year used for analysis. Broadcast licence reporting may be updated in later releases, but 2024 is treated as final for this time series. Figures relate to broadcast licence fee sales recorded in Screen Australia administrative data for Screen Australia supported productions via equity investment; they do not represent the full Australian market. "Licence-backed contracts" counts projects with a recorded broadcaster licence fee sale for the relevant format and year. Average licence fee per contract is calculated as total broadcast licence fee sales divided by the number of licence-backed contracts for that year/format. CAGR are calculated over the stated horizons for each metric, using nominal values.

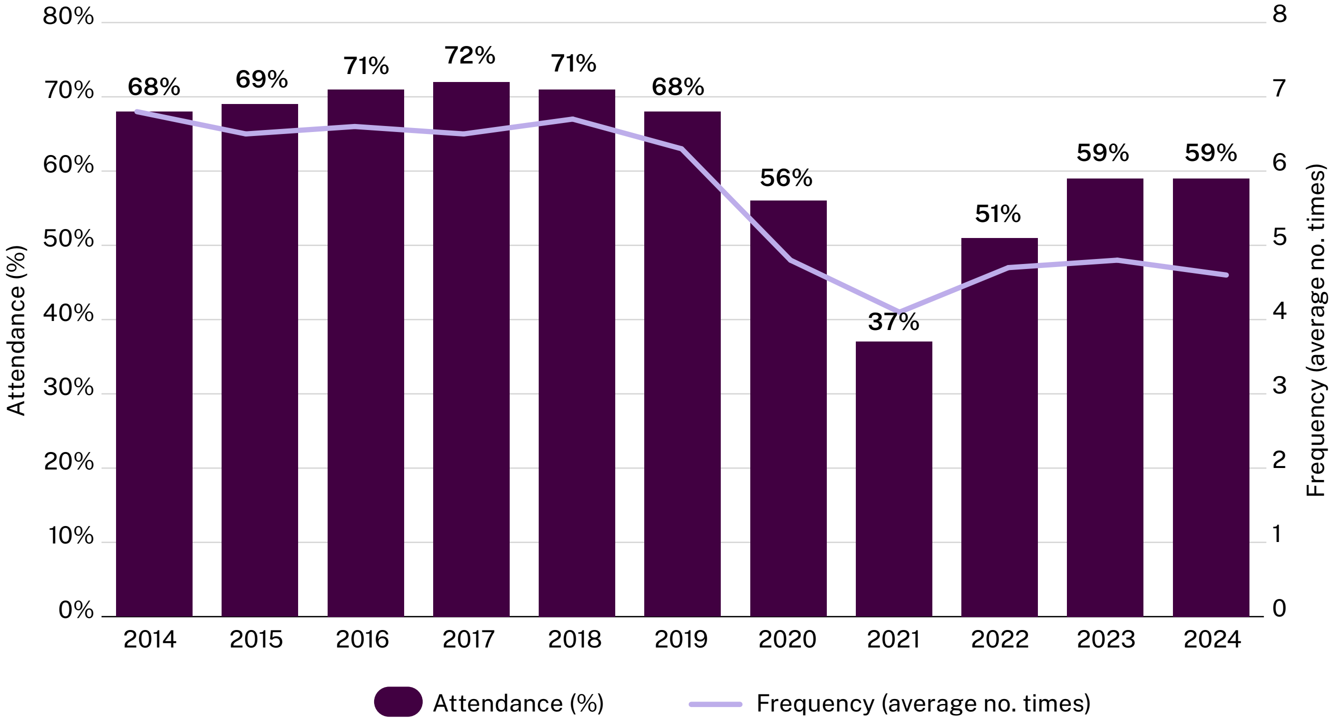
Source: Screen Australia administrative data (broadcast licence sales), compiled and analysed by McAtamney & Advisors.

Stakeholder interviews consistently highlighted how **the most significant shifts in feature film distribution over the past decade have been in release strategy.** Trends already underway prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, such as shorter and varied theatrical windows, hybrid release models and digital-first pathways, were accelerated by pandemic disruption and are now established parts of the distribution playbook. Once unthinkable, the idea that "different films deserve different windows" has become common parlance amongst Hollywood studio executives.[96] A recent decision by Universal to extend the exclusive theatrical window for their 2027 releases to 45 days (seven weekends) goes against the grain of recent contractions,[97] but reinforces that **decisions about whether, how, and for how long a film receives a theatrical release** are increasingly influenced by scale, audience fit, marketing cost and platform economics rather than adherence to a single, standardised release model.

96 Donnely M 2025, "Streaming Movies 'Not a Priority' at Paramount-Skydance; David Ellison Says 'Debate Is Over' About Theatrical Releases Driving Value for Film", *Variety*.

97 D'Alessandro A 2026, "Universal To Extend Exclusive Theatrical Window For Pics To 45 Days In 2027", *Deadline*.

**Figure 2: Australians' attendance and frequency of attendance at the cinema in the last 12 months, 2014–2024**




Notes: Figures are based on National Metro. Average annual frequency figures are estimates, based on data for frequency of attendance over a 3-month period. The method for calculating annual estimates was adjusted between 1996 and 1998.

Source: Val Morgan & Co (Aust) Pty Ltd/Roy Morgan Research Centre 2025, © Val Morgan & Co (Aust) Pty Ltd.

**By contrast to distribution, the broad business structure of film exhibition in Australia has remained largely unchanged.** Despite significant volatility in attendance and revenues before, during and after the pandemic (Figure 2), the ownership and configuration of major cinema chains have not shifted materially. Both major and independent cinema operator business models have been tested – first by prolonged pandemic-era closures and restrictions and subsequently by the challenge of sustaining attendance in an environment of structurally lower cinema-going frequency.

**Australian cinemas operate within a high fixed-cost model**, driven by substantial investment in physical infrastructure, long-term leases and ongoing venues maintenance. While many operators have pursued cost efficiencies through automation, including projection, scheduling and streamlined front-of-house systems, the underlying cost base remains significant.

**For Australians, the appeal of cinema continues to evolve, with audiences increasingly valuing the experience of attendance**, including premium formats, event screenings and social or cultural engagement. Attendance data from the ABS *Cultural and creative activities* survey showed that cinemas were the most popular cultural venue or event for Australians in 2021/22.[98] Ongoing audience research indicates that **Australians continue to value cinemagoing as a distinctive cultural and communal experience** associated with immersion, shared presence and emotional impact, not just as a means of content access.[99] This suggests that, even as overall attendance and frequency fluctuate, cinemas that successfully frame exhibition as an event, a social ritual or a cultural moment may retain relevance and resilience in a fragmented viewing landscape, while generic or undifferentiated theatrical releases face growing pressure.

98 ABS 2023, *Cultural and creative activities*.

99 Elkington R 2024, "'To truly forget life for a while – a reprieve and a reward': why Australians love going to the cinema", *The Conversation*.

**Recent film festival attendance and impact** across Australia's 3 largest cities signal renewed momentum in exhibition, particularly for curated and event-led cinema. Melbourne International Film Festival has recorded 3 consecutive years of audience growth, increasing from 143,000 attendees in 2022 to 145,500 in 2023, 167,048 in 2024 and 183,445 in 2025 – with 19% new audiences and 45% of sessions sold out in 2025.[100] Sydney Film Festival also reported a record year in 2025, attracting over 150,000 attendees across 242 films and 448 screenings and events, up 11% on 2024 attendance.[101] In Brisbane, the rebooted Brisbane International Film Festival, positioned as contributing to the Cultural Olympiad leading into the 2032 Olympic Games, was delivered as a 4-day pilot on a $350,000 budget and achieved record single-day ticket sales, with 74% of attendees new to the festival.[102] While the festival will not run in 2026, Screen Queensland has signalled that it will return in 2027 under a redesigned operating model. Film festivals across Australia, including Adelaide, Perth, Sydney and regional Australia, have all **experienced year-on-year growth.**

While festivals (domestic and international) remain the clearest avenue for independent filmmakers to exhibit their work, recent media reporting has also pointed to **the emergence of boutique exhibition models and micro-cinema** as a meaningful countertrend within Australia's film exhibition landscape. Small, single-screen and pop-up venues – often operating in repurposed spaces and supported by local audiences – are attracting attendance by emphasising curation, community and event-based experiences rather than scale.

> **"Thornbury Picture House (57 seats), Eclipse Cinema in Collingwood (64 seats), The Pivotonian in Geelong (71 seats) and the Golden Age Cinema in Sydney's Surry Hills (52 seats) are all single-screen offerings that have won loyal followings by taking a different approach to the business: small, hands-on, personalised."**[103]

**Film collectives, micro-cinemas, festivals and film society events have been growing in locations across the country.** Small creative collectives such as Static Vision (based in Melbourne), Movie Juice (based in Adelaide) and Pink Flamingo (based in Sydney) are demonstrating that audiences will turn up to alternative cinema, art house, non-standard cinema and underground tours and festivals for film enthusiasts and new viewers alike[104] **Growing and loyal patronage of boutique operators and micro-cinema** is an emerging trend of Australia's exhibition landscape. In this context, audience engagement, social and cultural value is increasingly being generated through smaller-scale, community-oriented venues operating outside traditional multiplex models. At present, the growth of these venues is largely self-sustaining, supported in some cases by local government grants and community funding rather than federal screen policy settings, which are primarily oriented toward production and content investment.

**SVOD providers have become major, vertically integrated[105] distributors and exhibitors of Australian screen content**, combining commissioning, release, marketing and audience measurement within a single platform. Voluntary SVOD self-reporting to ACMA shows that SVOD investment in Australian content has grown significantly since reporting began in 2019/20, rising to around $414m in 2024/25 in expenditure on Australian programs (including adult drama, children's drama, children's non-drama, documentary, light entertainment and sport) commissioned, co-commissioned, or acquired across the 5 major services (Netflix, Prime Video, Disney+, Stan and Paramount+) (Table 20).

100 Melbourne International Film Festival 2025, *2025 Year in Review: Performance & Impact Summary*.
101 Ward S 2025, "Sydney Film Festival 2025 Broke the Record for the Highest-Selling Event in the Harbour City Fest's History", *Concrete Playground*.
102 Maddox G 2025, "New organisers wanted to make Brisbane's film festival Olympic class. So how did they do?", *The Sydney Morning Herald*.
103 Quinn K 2025, "Small but perfectly formed: How micro-cinemas are swimming against the tide", *The Sydney Morning Herald*.
104 Sutton M 2025, "Rise in micro-cinema subculture as streaming reduces traditional audience", *ABC News*.
105 A structural feature of commercial activity whereby a number of parts of the value chain of a product or service is owned or controlled by the same enterprise.

**Table 20: Changes in SVOD combined expenditure – Australian programs by genre, 2023/24 and 2024/25**

| Genre | 2023/24 | 2024/25 | % change |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Adult drama** | $201.6m | $309.7m | +53.6% |
| **Children's drama** | $3.3m | $3.3m | 0.0% |
| **Children's non-drama** | $0.05m | $0.4m | +645.5% |
| **Documentary** | $11.9m | $3.7m | -68.5% |
| **Light entertainment** | $21.3m | $22.0m | +3.2% |
| **Sport** | $103.3m | $74.8m | -27.6% |
| **Total** | $241.5m | $414m | +71.4% |

Source: ACMA 2025, *Spending by subscription video on demand providers*.

**While total spending has increased, SVOD commissioning has become more selective – the number of distinct commissioned titles declined** between 2023/24 and 2024/25 (from 55 to 41) even as spend increased by about $91m, driven largely by an increase in premium adult drama programming.[106] Commencing 1 January 2026, streaming services with more than one million Australian subscribers will be required to **invest at least 10% of total program expenditure for Australia**, or 7.5% of their revenue, on new local drama, children's documentary, arts and education programs.[107] ACMA data shows that SVOD platforms are focused on fewer, higher-profile series rather than a broad slate of mid-range projects. This reflects both platform commissioning strategy and shifting audience preferences, with viewers increasingly gravitating towards premium content over long-running episodic drama.[108] These are global dynamics, but they carry particular weight in Australia where domestic production has historically relied on volume-based commissioning to sustain workforce continuity and industry infrastructure.

**SVOD platforms function as closed distribution ecosystems.** Rights ownership, audience data, performance analytics and renewal decisions are internal to the platform, limiting producers' visibility into the performance of their work and limiting downstream value capture. **While the volume of Australian content available on SVOD has continued to grow** (almost 11,900 hours across 3,919 titles in 2024/25) the **distribution and monetisation of that content is governed by platform-specific commercial logic** rather than open market mechanisms. The growing role of advertising within SVOD platforms, with ad-supported tiers now accounting for a large share of new subscriptions globally (for example, 55% of new Netflix subscriptions in 2024 were in the ad-supported tier),[109] may also begin to shift these dynamics, as advertiser demand for audience transparency and performance data could create pressure toward more open measurement and reporting frameworks.

**Commercial TV networks remain major broadcasters of Australian screen content.** Commercial free-to-air networks are required by law to comply with transmission quotas:

- 55% Australian content between 6am and midnight on primary channels and
- 1,460 hours of Australian content between 6am and midnight on non-primary channels per year.

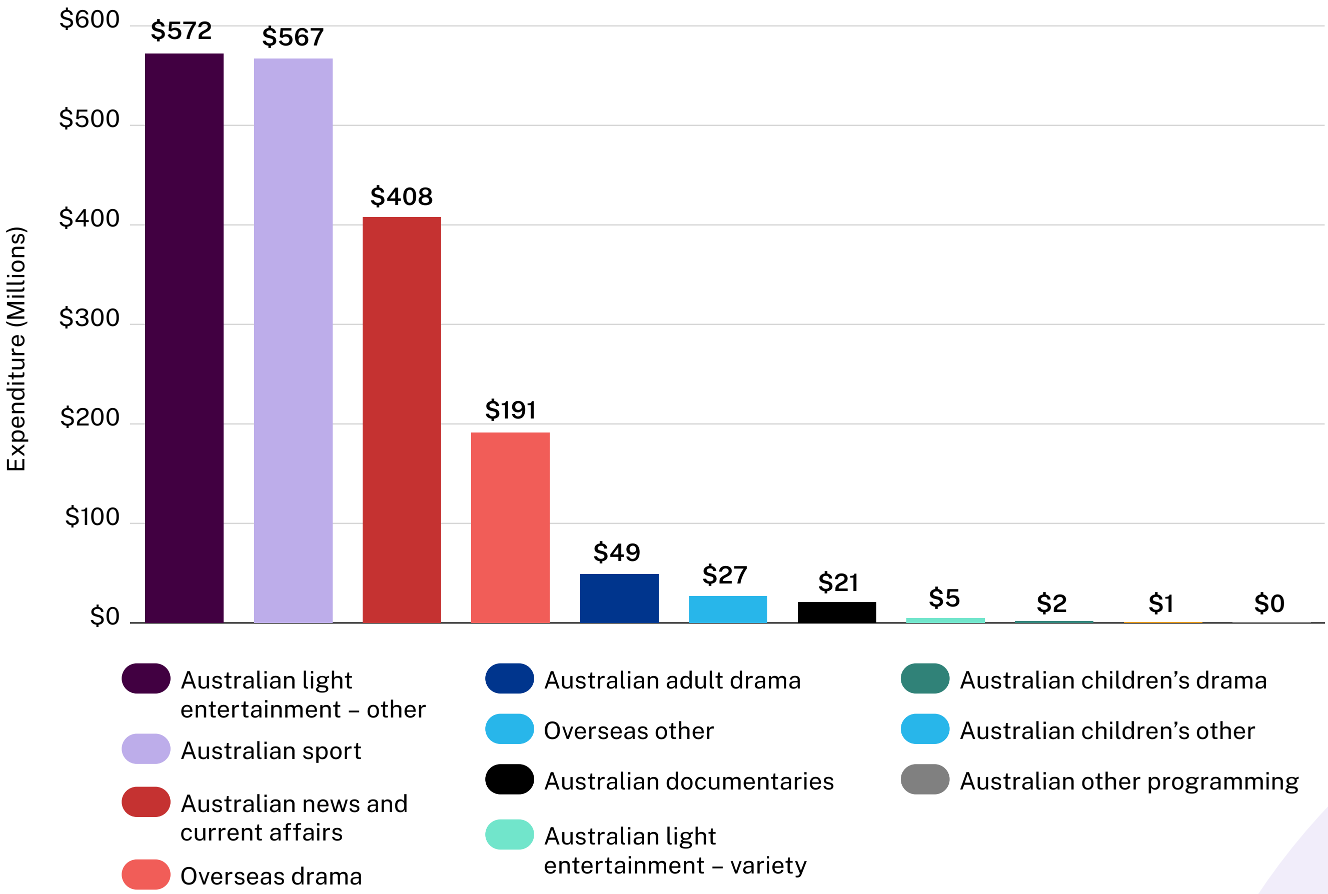
All metropolitan commercial TV licensees in 2024 (the latest published results) reported **high levels of Australian content** – Seven providing an average of 77% Australian programs, Nine an average of 82% and Ten an average of 64%. All commercial networks reported broadcasting more than the non-primary channel quota: Seven averaged 5,079 hours, Nine averaged 3,403 hours and Ten averaged 2,235 hours.[110]

106 ACMA 2025, *Spending by subscription video on demand providers*.
107 The Hon Tony Burke MP Minister for the Arts (27 November 2025), *Media Release: Backing local stories for Australian audiences*.
108 Potter A and McCutcheon M 2025, *Australian Cultural Policy Unravelled: The Digital Demise of National Television Drama* (1st ed).
109 Campaign Live 2025, *Netflix doubles ad revenue in 2024, targets another doubling in 2025*.
110 ACMA 2025, *Commercial television compliance with Australian content requirements: 2024 compliance report – metropolitan networks and regional licensees*.

**Commercial TV networks must also meet a points quota for first-release Australian programming** with points allocated for Australian drama (including children's), children's non-drama, documentary (capped) and acquired Australian films. No points are allocated for light entertainment, news, and sport. Points per hour broadcast vary depending on factors including genre/ format and budget. The 250-point first release quota replaced **genre-specific sub-quotas in 2020, removing the obligation to commission less commercially viable genres, such as children's content and documentary.** All commercial networks met the 250-point first release quota in 2024 (latest published results at the time of writing) with carry-over provisions included. Seven reached 266 points, Nine reached 275 points and Ten reached 445 points.[111] Ten's higher points score reflects its concentration of high-budget commissioned drama, including international co-productions, which attract a higher points-per-hour rate under the weighting system.

The ways the commercial TV networks are meeting their transmission obligations have become **increasingly concentrated in a narrower range of genres and formats.** Figure 3 shows a breakdown of ACMA commissioning data. It shows that in 2023/24 commercial networks spent $1.62b commissioning Australian programs (down from $1.67b in 2022/23) within $1.84b total spending on Australian and overseas programs.[112] **Spend is heavily weighted towards light entertainment-other ($571.9m) and sport ($567.4m)**, while documentary **($20.85m)** and especially children's drama **($1.75m)** sit at much smaller scales.[113]

**Figure 3: Australian commercial TV network commissioning breakdown by genre, 2023/24**




Source: ACMA 2025, *TV in Australia: Spending on commercial TV programs 2023/24.*

111 ACMA 2025, *Commercial television compliance with Australian content requirements: 2024 compliance report – metropolitan networks and regional licensees*.
112 ACMA 2025, *TV in Australia: Spending on commercial TV programs 2023/24*.
113 ACMA 2025, *TV in Australia: Spending on commercial TV programs 2023/24*.

The concentration of spend in specific genres and formats has **broader implications for how Australian content is surfaced to audiences.** While overall transmission volumes of Australian programming remain high, a narrower set of genres account for a growing share of scheduling prominence, promotion and repeat exposure. Over time, this shapes **patterns of discoverability and audience familiarity**, influencing which formats achieve sustained broadcast presence and which rely more heavily on public broadcasters or alternative distribution pathways to reach audiences.

**Australia's two national broadcasters, the ABC and SBS**, occupy a distinct position in the distribution ecosystem. Their role is less defined by volume or advertising-driven scheduling and more by guaranteeing access, prominence and continuity for genres less consistently supported by commercial or SVOD commissioning/distribution/broadcast models, as set out in their respective charters.[114] National Indigenous Television (NITV) is a channel made by, for and about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. NITV first launched in 2007, and from 2012 launched as part of the SBS.[115]

**Read more about broadcaster expenditure on Australian content in:**

Economic Insights

# Stakeholder insights

A range of opportunities, dynamics, challenges and other topics relating to distribution and exhibition were explored with stakeholders through in-depth interviews.

- **Commercial misalignment between production and distribution:** Stakeholders who operate in film distribution and production described a disconnect between how projects are financed and made and how they are positioned, marketed and released. While production is comparatively well supported, distribution planning and audience strategy were seen as emerging late in the process, leading to weaker commercial outcomes once projects are completed. At the same time, producers reported limited visibility into performance and restricted influence over release, positioning and audience engagement decisions once control shifts to distributors or platforms.

> "There can be a lack of understanding about how financing a film actually works and in particular the way that Australian financing is done with Screen Australia – this lack of clarity of cultural or commercial remit – and no one ever points to what successful audience engagement and film distribution actually looks like."
>
> – distributor

- **Marketing is both more critical and more constrained:** Stakeholders involved in distribution, unit publicity and exhibition emphasised that marketing and promotion (P&A) has become a distinct, capital-intensive component of distribution, yet is often under-resourced relative to the level of competition and fragmentation in the market. At the same time, effective campaigns are less about scale and more about precision, needing early clarity on target audiences, tailored social and digital content, promotional partnerships and concentrated activity close to release. For Australian and independent titles, limited P&A budgets heighten importance of targeted execution and magnify the consequences if it falls short.

114 ABC 2024, *Legislative Framework*; SBS 2020, *SBS Charter*.
115 SBS 2015, *About NITV*.

- **Marketing effectiveness increasingly depends on targeted, audience-led strategies rather than scale:** Stakeholders highlighted a shift away from broad, traditional media buys toward highly targeted social, digital and partnership-driven marketing. Success was seen to hinge on early clarity about the core audience, tailored social content and concentrated promotional effort in the final weeks before release, particularly for Australian and independent films.
- **Discoverability as a distribution outcome:** Stakeholders reported that discoverability on digital platforms is driven less by the volume of local content and more by platform curation, algorithmic design and marketing spend, limiting producers' ability to influence audience outcomes once titles enter distribution.
- **Discoverability and commercial viability remain challenges for First Nations content:** Stakeholders reported that while there is growing international and domestic appetite for Australian stories including First Nations content, discoverability on major platforms remains a significant barrier. First Nations screen works carry high cultural value but often face tension between cultural importance and commercial returns, particularly in an environment where algorithmic recommendation and platform commissioning decisions favour content with demonstrated broad-audience appeal. Stakeholders noted that this creates a risk of First Nations content being undervalued in downstream distribution, even where audience interest exists, and that dedicated distribution and marketing support may be needed to ensure these works reach their audiences.
- **Data asymmetry is a major constraint for effective marketing and audience development:** Stakeholders highlighted the lack of access to performance and audience data from exhibitors and platforms as a critical limitation. Without usable data, distributors and producers felt hindered in efforts to target marketing, build audiences over time, or learn from past releases.

> “We should be able to direct-mail the people who bought tickets… but exhibition rightly protects that data. It's huge IP for them. We can't access it, they don't sell it, they don't even sell access to it.”
>
> – distributor

- **Publicity, star power and integrated social media strategies are all key inputs to the release strategy:** Stakeholders cited the willingness of actors to continue to “play roles” in publicity and social media campaigns as increasingly important to attract younger audiences to the cinema. Stakeholders noted a recent trend of successful Australian films trending towards family content and genre (*Kangaroo* and *Bring Her Back* were mentioned specifically) which both used social media to great effect. A theatrical release strategy that starts with a small number of specific sessions is being increasingly utilised, considering the high cost of releasing a film in Australia, to see whether a film will “fire” and justify a higher level of expenditure.

> “When there's a buzzy film in places like London, you can't get a seat. We don't necessarily have that here [In Australia], it's usually more of a slow build.”
>
> – distributor

- **Theatrical release as a financing signal, not a market strategy:** Stakeholders observed that the higher Producer Offset rate for theatrical release (40% compared with 30% for non-theatrical) creates incentives to pursue cinema releases that are driven more by finance plan requirements than by audience or market fit. Distributors reported being pitched projects for theatrical release that were unlikely to perform in cinemas, suggesting that more flexible qualifying pathways, particularly for documentary and niche titles, could better align incentives with contemporary distribution realities.
- **Theatrical release is now more about “eventisation” and flexibility rather than a standard pathway:** Stakeholders noted that cinemas and distributors are experimenting with more flexible screening models for smaller films, including event-style screenings, talent engagement (in-person or virtual) and niche outreach. In an environment shaped by streaming habits, theatrical experiences were seen as needing to offer distinct value and anticipation, rather than functioning as a default release pathway.

- **Better distribution support available in New Zealand:** Stakeholders frequently contrasted Australian distribution support with approaches in New Zealand, where public agencies provide targeted marketing and release grants alongside production incentives. For example, the New Zealand Film Commission offers dedicated P&A grants, audience development grants and regional release support to assist distributors in mounting effective theatrical campaigns, including audience outreach and promotional activity beyond basic release logistics. Subsequent to the interviews, Screen Australia announced a refreshed Market & Audience approach to increase the impact of local content.[116]
- **Limited incentives for private investment in film finance and distribution:** Stakeholders consistently argued that Australian film financing settings offer limited incentives for private capital, particularly in independent features, with high risk and constrained upside deterring equity-style investment. Where private money does participate, it is increasingly structured through distribution-side or waterfall positions rather than upfront equity, reflecting low confidence in recoupment and the absence of complementary support for marketing, P&A and release.

> **"As a private investor, if I knew there was already support for P&A and marketing, I'd feel my dollar was going further. That kind of backing makes a return more likely. Without it, it's a hard proposition."**
>
> – investor

- **Audience reach as cultural impact in commercial broadcasting:** Stakeholders observed that commercial TV continues to exert significant cultural influence through its distribution reach, even as schedules concentrate around proven formats. From this perspective, audience scale and shared consumption – rather than originality alone – remain central measures of cultural impact in broadcast distribution.
- **Advertising market disruption, regulatory burden and digital adaptation:** Stakeholders noted that the economics of TV advertising have been reshaped by a combination of declining linear audiences, fragmented viewing and reallocation of advertising spends away from TV. In this context, licensed commercial broadcasters continue to operate under transmission standards, local content obligations and spectrum-related regulation. While regulations passed in late 2025 introduced content expenditure obligations for large SVOD platforms, these platforms remain outside the broader regulatory frameworks that apply to licensed broadcasters. Stakeholders from a range of businesses and organisations expressed differing views on this – while some stakeholders emphasised regulatory asymmetry, others cautioned that broadcasters have also had opportunities to adapt their business model and distribution strategies over time, particularly during the shift to digital transmission and with expanded spectrum capacity.

> **"We're not saying broadcasters shouldn't be subject to these rules. We're just pointing out that others aren't."**
>
> – broadcaster

> **"There was an opportunity to exploit another seven megahertz of spectrum and not much was done with it."**
>
> – producer

- **Finite screen capacity intensifies competition at release:** Stakeholders noted that theatrical exhibition is increasingly capacity-constrained, with shorter release windows and intensified competition for screens and marketing attention. Independent distributors highlighted that Australian features compete not only with major studio releases, but also with a growing volume of international titles, including films from markets such as India, which often arrive with established audiences and strong performance expectations.

116 Screen Australia 2026, *Screen Australia refreshes market and audience approach to increase the impact of local content*.

# Enablement and support

Screen | **Creation** | Production | Distribution, broadcast, streaming and exhibition | **Enablement and support**

Enablement and support refer to the systems and settings that underpin screen production across all stages. This includes workforce training and skills development, access to finance and incentives, industry infrastructure and technology, regulatory settings and the networks that connect businesses and practitioners.

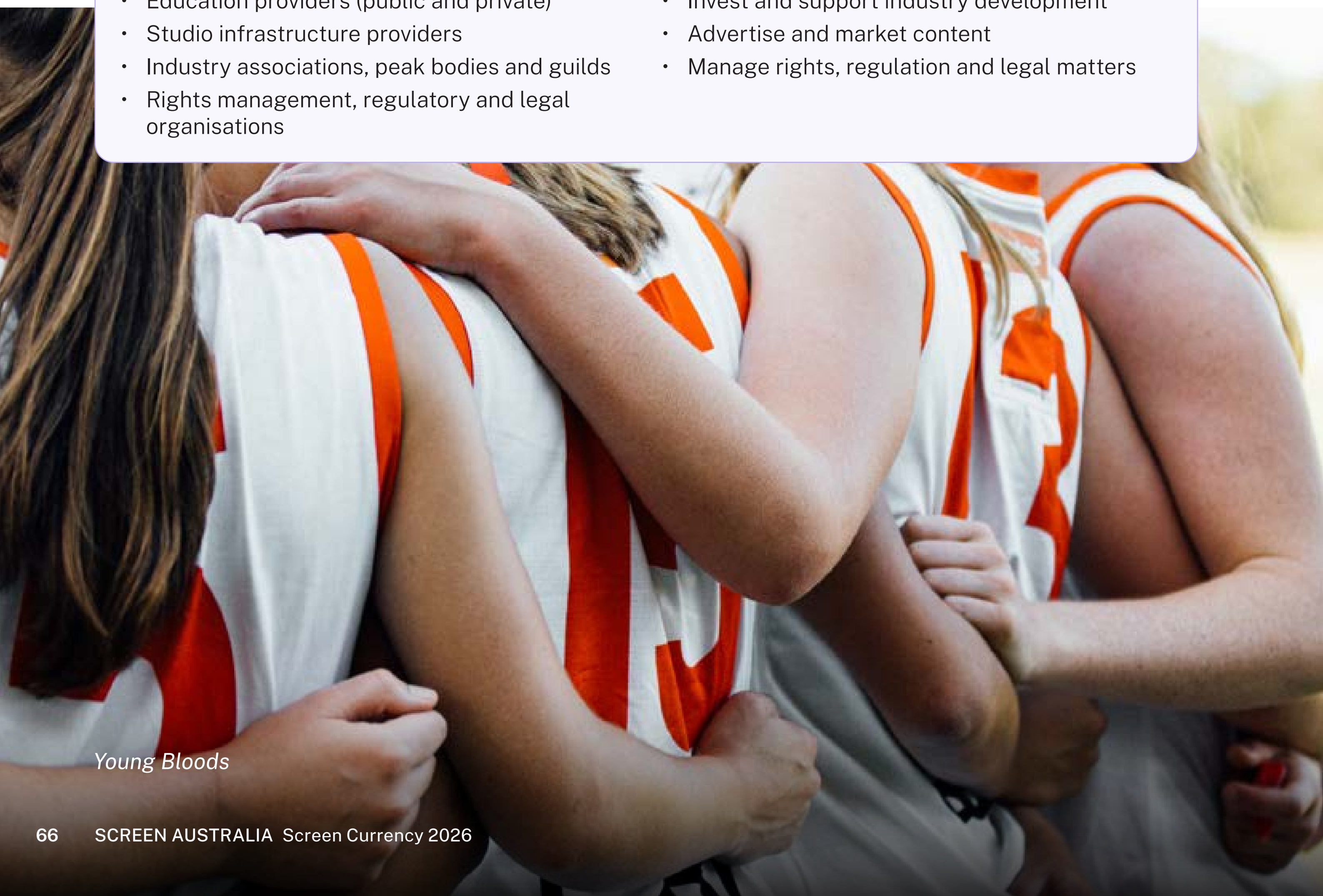
**In Australia, public policy and investment are integral to sustaining these systems, alongside industry bodies, education providers and service organisations. The strength and coordination of this supporting environment have a direct impact on the industry's capacity to develop talent, produce work at scale and sustain viable careers over time.**

## Key industry participants

- Screen Australia
- State/territory screen agencies
- Education providers (public and private)
- Studio infrastructure providers
- Industry associations, peak bodies and guilds
- Rights management, regulatory and legal organisations

## Key activities

- Educate and train
- Provide infrastructure and technology
- Invest and support industry development
- Advertise and market content
- Manage rights, regulation and legal matters



*Young Bloods*

Beyond the businesses and workers directly involved in creating, producing, distributing and exhibiting screen content, a wider set of individuals, organisations and networks enable the screen industry to function. **These actors sit alongside, underneath and embedded within the screen value chain, shaping capacity, skills, infrastructure, financing conditions, market access and regulation**.

16% of business/organisation respondents (n=225) reported operating in enablement and support in the screen industry. 17% of workforce respondents (n=294) reported working in enablement and support across the screen industry.

**The following sections include observations and insights additional to the evidence explored in the value chain analysis above**, illustrating challenges, opportunities and dynamics in key enabling areas of the screen industry.

# Education and training

**Education and training providers underpin workforce supply, skills development and career progression across the screen industry.** The ecosystem includes national specialist institutions such as the Australian Film Television and Radio School (AFTRS), the National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA), Victorian College of Art (VCA), and Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA), alongside further university and VET pathways (including TAFEs) and a wide range of specialised private providers such as acting schools and technical colleges. The ecosystem also includes screen agency-supported programs, training delivered under the Location Offset's training and capacity building requirement, guild and peak-body initiatives and industry partnerships that deliver targeted training and attachments outside formal qualification settings.

**In practice, "education and training" extends well beyond formal qualifications.** For many screen roles, skills are built and contemporised over time through short courses, on-set onboarding, work placements and mentorship. There are many examples of training and continuing professional development being delivered in partnership among industry, education and training institutions and screen agencies. Recent performance reporting indicates AFTRS' industry training participation rose to 5,045 participants (up from 3,961 the prior year), attributed to expanded industry-partnered training and the Digital Futures Summit, illustrating the growing weight of short-form and professional training alongside award programs.[117]

**Key issues and themes** emerging from the research and consultation in relation to education and training include:

- **The training ecosystem is broad, and training pathways vary significantly across roles**: Formal education pathways (higher education and VET) are complemented by extensive work-integrated learning, employer-led training and informal learning through networks. Sector-level research suggests these pathways can be fragmented and difficult to navigate, particularly outside major hubs and for those without existing connections.[118] Interview feedback suggests geographic concentration of education and training providers in Sydney and Melbourne can compound workforce issues, with regional practitioners highlighting limited local expertise and fewer informal networks to access placements and mentorship. NIDA and AFTRS have recently expanded hybrid/remote and interstate engagement models (e.g. AFTRS reporting increased enrolments from outside NSW to 37%) to expand access.
- **The breadth of skills and roles required by the screen industry is much greater than commonly perceived:** Ausfilm's research has identified over 240 screen industry roles within its published skills matrix, underscoring the breadth of pathways beyond the most visible above-the-line careers.[119] These include creative, technical, production office, post-production, VFX/animation, games development and corporate/support functions. Despite this breadth, stakeholders consulted consistently reported that prospective entrants (and sometimes educators) disproportionately gravitate towards

117 Australian Film Television and Radio School (AFTRS) 2025, *Annual Report 2024/25*.

118 Ausfilm 2023, *Australian Screen Workforce Development Framework* (March 2023), Ausfilm; Services and Creative Skills Australia (SaCSA) and Creative Australia 2025, *Creative Workforce Scoping Study – Summary Report*.

119 Ausfilm 2023, *Ausfilm's Research Report to the Workforce Working Group*.

above-the-line roles such as directing, writing and producing. This "everyone wants to direct" dynamic shapes demand patterns for courses and careers advice, and contributes towards persistent low awareness of the range of below-the-line and production office careers that make up the bulk of the workforce. Stakeholders noted graduates are technically capable, but gaps in understanding practical production processes and pathways highlight opportunities for better alignment between training and practical industry requirements.

- **Skills gaps are most acute in below-the-line, mid-career and business-critical functions:** Stakeholders consistently emphasised shortages in specific below-the-line and production office roles (including production accounting and HR/people functions), alongside leadership and management capability gaps. This aligns with various training and workforce initiatives explicitly targeting production accountants and other senior crew roles identified as being in shortage.[120] Stakeholders consistently highlighted strong and growing demand for below-the-line roles across the screen and games sectors, noting that many prospective students and workers are not aware of the breadth of these career pathways. Education providers confirmed ongoing shortages in several critical areas, particularly human resources and production accounting. Feedback also pointed to skills gaps in management and leadership, with shortages contributing to accelerated progression into senior roles without sufficient depth of experience.

> **"[Our students] can't leave fast enough because they're getting jobs before they finish [their studies]."**
>
> – tertiary education provider.

- **The treatment of AI tooling and capability is embedding throughout education, training and continuing professional development frameworks but attitudes and practices vary substantially:** There are several examples of education, training and continuing professional development resources accounting for the use of AI in industry practice.
- These include, but are not limited to:
  - AFTRS offering short course training explicitly focussed on practical applications of AI such as prompt design for screen practitioners in areas such as pre-visualisation and pitch materials.[121]
  - NIDA's Future Centre, which seeks to bridge industry and education with emerging technologies and future thinking, recently partnered with the School of Cybernetics at the Australian National University (ANU) and the National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA) to explore the role of generative AI in creative practice.[122]
- **Stakeholders described the importance of approaching AI in screen education as an industry-informed tool rather than something abstract or intimidating**: Consultation emphasised that the value of AI training is highest when aligned to real production workflows rather than abstract capability not linked to on-set practice. Feedback emphasised the need for education providers to be future-focused, using research and close observation of industry practice to understand how AI is being applied in real production contexts. This approach was seen as strengthening alignment between education and industry, allowing training to respond to practical pressures, workflows and skill requirements and ensuring graduates develop relevant capabilities that reflect how AI is used in the sector.
- **Education settings are a meaningful usage pathway for Australian screen content, with implications for discoverability and back-end revenues**: Screenrights reports a record $42.6m distributed to members in FY2024/25 and a 32% increase in usage of the Australian Educational Licence year-on-year, indicating growing classroom and institutional use.[123] That said, anecdotal feedback from stakeholders suggested a greater tendency for classrooms defaulting to easily surfaced online video (notably YouTube) and the risks this may pose to exposing students to Australian screen content and stories without further curriculum and pedagogy alignment.

120 Screen Australia 2026, *BTL Next Step Program – Stage 1 (Production Companies & Screen Businesses)*; Netflix 2021, "New Partnership With Screenworks and Netflix Provides Career Pathways in Booming Screen Industry", *About Netflix*.

121 Australian Film Television and Radio School (AFTRS) 2026, *AI Prompt Design for Screen Practitioners*.

122 National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA) 2024, *NIDA Annual Report 2024*.

123 Screenrights 2025, *Record $42.6m distribution to Screenrights members in 2024/25 and 32% increase in usage of the Australian Educational Licence*.

# Infrastructure and technology

**Infrastructure and technology providers support the physical, operational and technical requirements of screen production.** This includes major film studios, sound stages and production facilities (such as Docklands Studios Melbourne, Village Roadshow Studios, Disney Studios Australia), along with associated site-based services such as set construction, equipment hire, location services, transport and production logistics. These assets enable large-scale and complex productions to be undertaken in Australia, influence the volume and type of projects that can be accommodated at any one time and shape regional production capacity. **Investment in studio infrastructure and supporting services is closely linked to production attraction and Australia's competitiveness as a destination for domestic and international screen production**.

**New investment continues to expand national capacity.** In Western Australia, the new Perth Film Studios reached practical completion in January 2026.[124] The NSW Government has an expression of interest process to select a development partner to deliver on its commitment for a second major Sydney film studio, for which it announced a $100 million capital funding allocation in its 2025/26 State Budget.[125]

**Key issues and themes** emerging from the research and consultation in relation to infrastructure and technology include the following:

- **Clustering and service ecosystems impact the level of production capacity that Australia has at any one point in time**: The availability of stages, workshops, production offices, equipment and experienced service providers in established hubs supports throughput and scale and enables rapid assembly of crews and suppliers. Clustering can be an advantage for servicing large productions but also concentrates demand pressures (including access to stages, specialist equipment and experienced crew) in the same locations.
- **Australia's dedicated soundstage capacity is modest by international standards**: As of 2025, Australia had approximately 650,000 sq ft of dedicated production stage space, compared to 7 million sq ft in the United Kingdom, 4.4 million sq ft in New York and 3.7 million sq ft in Ontario.[126] On a per-capita basis, the gap is more pronounced: Australia had just under 24,000 sq ft of sound stages per million inhabitants, compared to over 800,000 sq ft per million in Los Angeles County, and above 200,000 sq ft per million in Georgia, New York and Ontario. While recent investments are expanding capacity, including new facilities in Western Australia and the NSW Government's search for a second major studio site in Sydney, soundstage availability remains a constraint on the volume and scale of productions that can be serviced simultaneously, particularly during periods of high international activity.

124 Government of Western Australia 2026, *Practical completion raises the curtain for Perth Film Studios*.
125 NSW Government 2025, *New Sydney Film Studio - Expression of Interest coming soon*.
126 Olsberg SPI 2026, *A Production, Infrastructure and Capacity Analysis for Australia's Screen Production Sector*, commissioned by Screen Australia.

# Investment, support and industry development

**Public investment and industry development settings play a central role in enabling screen activity in Australia.** The system encompasses federal tax offsets, state and territory attraction and investment mechanisms and direct funding and industry development programs administered by screen agencies.

**Read more about government support of local screen production in:**

Economic Insights

**This investment framework operates alongside a diverse network of industry bodies and professional organisations** – including Screen Producers Australia (SPA), Ausfilm, the Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance (MEAA), the Australian Children's Television Foundation (ACTF), Motion Picture Distributors Association of Australia (MPDAA) and creative guilds such as the Australian Writers' Guild (AWG) and Australian Directors' Guild (ADG) – along with a wider ecosystem of regional, state-based and specialist organisations.

Together, these organisations contribute to market access, coordination, industry intelligence and enterprise development, shaping production volume and location decisions, influencing financing structures and business confidence and affecting longer-term industry capability through the consistency and predictability of work, skills development and investment across cycles.

**Key issues and themes** emerging from the research and consultation in relation to investment, support and industry development include the following:

- **Production incentives are foundational to production economics and location competitiveness:** Australia's federal screen incentive architecture includes the Producer Offset, Location Offset and PDV Offset, which establish baseline conditions for screen activity. State and territory incentives then operate as the competitive margin that often determines where projects ultimately locate.
- **Screen Australia direct funding supports development, production and distribution across the sector:** Screen Australia provides direct investment across the screen production lifecycle — including development, production, marketing and distribution support — for feature film, drama, documentary and children's content, across theatrical, television, and online/direct-to-audience platforms. This funding operates alongside the federal tax offsets and is frequently a key component of financing for Australian projects. Screen Australia programs are consistently oversubscribed, with demand materially exceeding available funding in each round.
- **State and territory incentive settings vary materially in structure and strategic intent:** Stakeholders utilise a mix of discretionary attraction funds and more rules-based rebate models across states and territories. While variation in incentives enables competition and regional differentiation, it also increases system complexity and uncertainty for businesses navigating multiple funding environments, particularly smaller producers and studios.
- **Awards and conferences were identified as important components of the investment ecosystem:** Stakeholders noted that awards and formal recognition act as quality signals that can influence future funding decisions, distribution opportunities and market confidence. Conferences and markets were described as critical venues for deal-making, capability exchange and cross-sector learning, as screen industries increasingly operate across domestic and international markets.

# Advertising and marketing

**Advertising and marketing sit partly embedded within the screen value chain**, particularly at the distribution and exhibition stages, but also operate as **a significant external market for screen products and services.** Commercial advertising, brand partnerships and promotional content both support the financing and distribution of screen works and represent a parallel demand driver for screen production capability.

- **Joined-up public sector approaches can amplify impact:** Stakeholders highlighted the value of coordinated public sector approaches where screen funding agencies, tourism bodies and investment attraction functions work in concert, often within the same portfolio or through established cross-agency arrangements. In these cases, support extends beyond production into marketing, audience reach and place-based outcomes, recognising the long tail of screen exposure and its spillover benefits for tourism and trade. The *Kangaroo* campaign delivered in partnership between Tourism and Events NT, STUDIOCANAL and Screen Territory was noted as a recent stand-out example.[127] Stakeholders contrasted this with jurisdictions where responsibilities are more siloed, noting that weaker coordination can dilute impact even where overall levels of screen investment are comparable.

> **“I think tourism agencies have really realised and come to appreciate the salience factor of screen production.”**
>
> – screen agency representative

**Read about the decline in advertising revenues in free-to-air broadcasting in:**

Economic Insights >

# Rights management, regulation and legal

**Rights management and regulatory bodies provide important legal and institutional frameworks within which the screen industry operates.** These frameworks influence how value is created and captured across the screen value chain, including who controls IP and rights, how screen content is classified and made available to audiences, how commercial conduct is regulated and how labour conditions and tax incentives shape production and distribution decisions. A range of occupations are involved in this segment of the industry including lawyers, accountants, and managers.

**Read about the distribution of the value of industry output and individual earnings across the value chain in:**

Economic Insights >

**The key regulatory, oversight and rights management bodies** relevant to the screen sector include the following:

- **Federal regulators**, which include:
  - **Australian Classification Board:** Responsible for the classification of films (and other content captured by the National Classification Scheme) for exhibition, sale or hire in Australia.
  - **Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA):** Australia’s communications and media regulator, including broadcast regulation and administration of Australian content obligations, reporting frameworks and related regulatory schemes across relevant services.
  - **Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC):** Competition and consumer regulator, including scrutiny of market conduct and digital platform issues affecting content distribution and advertising markets.
  - **eSafety Commissioner:** The national online safety regulator, administering schemes under the *Online Safety Act 2021* and associated codes and standards that shape platform responsibilities and content safeguards.

127 Tourism and Events NT, *Kangaroo Campaign – Follow the Roo to the Red Centre*.

- **Workplace relations institutions**, which include:
  - **Fair Work Commission:** Australia's workplace tribunal that sets awards, approves enterprise agreements and helps resolve workplace disputes relevant to screen employment conditions.
  - **Fair Work Ombudsman:** Responsible for workplace compliance and enforcement, including investigation and enforcement tools under the *Fair Work Act 2009*.
  - **Creative Workplaces:** Provides sector-specific advice, resources and dispute support for cultural and creative workers.
- **Rights management and licensing organisations**, which include:
  - **Screenrights:** Responsible for screen royalty collection and licensing, including educational and retransmission uses.
  - **APRA AMCOS:** Responsible for music licensing and royalty distribution.
  - **Phonographic Performance Company of Australia Ltd (PPCA):** Responsible for sound recording and music video licensing, including for broadcast, digital and SVOD uses.
- **Government departments and screen agencies** responsible for policy, investment, incentives and market development, which include:
  - **Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts (DITRDCA):** The Australian Government policy owner of the Australian Screen Production Incentive (ASPI) framework and wider Commonwealth screen policy settings.
  - **Screen Australia:** The Australian Government's principal screen funding, development and market development agency, responsible for direct investment in Australian screen content and talent, sector research and data, and international market support. Screen Australia manages the Official Co-Production Program, which supports co-productions with screen content creators from overseas markets. Australia holds official co-production treaties with 12 countries and MOUs with France and New Zealand.

    Screen Australia administers the Producer Offset, including certification of eligible projects.
  - **State and territory based screen agencies:** Responsible primarily for state-based investment, incentives, production attraction and local industry development.
  - **Attorney-General's Department:** Policy stewardship for Australia's copyright framework (including ongoing reform priorities that intersect with digital distribution and emerging technologies).
- **Screen production tax incentives administration**, which comprises:
  - **Policy settings**, which are administered through the Australian Government (including the ASPI framework and offsets)
  - **Certification and payment functions**, which are shared across:
    - DITRDCA (Location and PDV Offset certification)
    - Screen Australia (Producer Offset certification) and
    - Australian Taxation Office (offset administration and refunds).
- **National broadcaster governance**, which includes the **ABC Board** and **SBS Board**, each of which is responsible for oversight of organisational performance and integrity under their respective governing legislation.

In addition to formal regulatory and oversight bodies, **the screen and games sectors are supported by a range of specialist legal and advisory professionals and organisations.** These include legal practitioners in entertainment, media, technology and intellectual property law; accountants and auditors advising on production finance and tax incentives; and business affairs consultants who structure rights, finance and distribution arrangements. Advisers play a critical role in shaping how projects are financed, how IP is protected and exploited, and how compliance obligations are met across domestic and international markets. The sector is also supported by the Australian Children's Television Foundation and Ausfilm, organisations with specific remits to support children's content and attract international projects to Australia.

**Key issues and themes** emerging from the research and consultation in relation to rights management and regulation include the following:

- **Financing settings shape rights retention and reinforce distribution gatekeeping:** Interviews highlighted that rights settings cannot be separated from financing structure as the parties who are required to close finance plans (i.e. distributors, broadcasters, platforms and agencies) often have significant leverage over rights packaging and long-tail participation. Stakeholders pointed to feature film Producer Offset settings, where the higher offset rate for feature films is tied to eligibility as a film "produced for commercial exhibition to the public in cinemas". Some stakeholders argued this can reinforce reliance on traditional distributors and theatrical pathways as "gateways" to finance, even where commercial audience pathways may be increasingly hybrid (e.g. limited theatrical plus subsequent digital release). Stakeholders also noted that, under difficult market conditions, producers may trade away meaningful rights (territories, windows or IP control) to secure distribution commitments, advances, or platform deals, reducing the ability to build IP assets over time and increasing reliance on project-by-project funding.
- **Evolving rights, residuals and revenue flows:** Stakeholders noted that traditional residuals and rights frameworks for performers and creatives have struggled to keep pace with fully digital and platform-based distribution models. While agreements have been progressively adapted, including fixed licence periods, partial buyouts and some limited backend participation, stakeholders described an ongoing tension between higher upfront payments and concern over the potential loss of long-term participation as content may be exploited globally and in perpetuity. Profit-based residual models are complicated by the challenge in obtaining transparent revenue data from digital platforms, which may force agreements to rely on negotiated buyouts rather than shared upside. While most backend revenue data is commercial in confidence, Screenrights' collection account management service, which administers long-tail royalties and disbursements on behalf of a subset of Australian rights holders, offers a publicly observable proxy. Amounts managed through this service have fallen from $6.5 million in 2022/23 to $3.7 million in 2024/25.[128] While this data does not capture all Australian backend revenue activity and year-to-year figures may be influenced by the timing of individual deals, the direction of travel is consistent with the broader shift toward upfront buyout structures and a declining volume of backend revenue flowing through to Australian rights holders.

128 Screenrights 2023, *Annual Report for the Year Ended 30 June 2023*; Screenrights 2025, *Annual Report for the Year Ended 30 June 2025*.

# Australia's games industry



The following chapter shows that in 2023/24, digital game development in Australia contributed **$320 million to GDP, including $317 million in gross value added (GVA).**[129] Trend-based estimates suggest industry contribution continued to grow in 2024/25, though growth has become increasingly uneven across studios.

Australia's games industry is **small, export-oriented and globally exposed**, with industry participants suggesting most studios target international markets and customers. Domestic demand plays a limited role in commercial outcomes compared to platform access, publisher relationships and global discoverability.

**Entry into games development has become highly accessible**, supported by a convergence of widely available engines, tools and digital distribution. However, interviews and survey evidence indicate that **commercial sustainability has become harder**, with success increasingly concentrated among a small number of titles and studios.

Most games businesses in Australia are small, young and founder-led, operating with very small core teams (median of 2 full-time staff) and scaling activity through contractors (median of 4.5 contractors).[130] **This structure supports flexibility and creative control but concentrates risk within businesses to a small number of individuals.**

Publishing and distribution pathways are diverse within games. Survey results indicate **self-publishing (67%) and client service work (58%) are the most common primary pathways to market**, reflecting both the opportunity to operate independently and the difficulty of sustaining studios through original IP alone.[131]

A small number of independent Australian game studios have achieved **outsized international success**, demonstrating the hitmaking potential of Australian games development. However, these outcomes are rare and not easily replicable across the broader sector.

Commercial outcomes are heavily shaped by **publisher terms, platform algorithms, storefront placement and marketing spend**, which sit largely outside the control of Australian game developers.

**Monetisation is highly concentrated at the platform level**, with a small number of global platforms (i.e. Steam, Epic Store, PlayStation Store, Xbox Store) acting as pathways and gatekeepers to audiences, pricing, promotion and performance data. Discoverability was consistently identified in interviews as the most significant and unpredictable constraint on success.

129 Screen Australia 2026, *Screen Currency 2026: Economic Insights*, developed by Marion McCutcheon, Yogi Yidyattama and Stuart Cunningham, University of Canberra.

130 Based on the Screen Currency Industry and Workforce Survey by McAtamney & Advisors.

131 Based on the Screen Currency Industry and Workforce Survey by McAtamney & Advisors. Responses should be interpreted as directional due to sample size (n=12). Multiple selections were allowed so results sum to more than 100%.

Games development increasingly extends beyond initial release. **Post-launch updates, live operations and community management** are now integral to many business models, shifting risk into longer development cycles and ongoing cost exposure.

Survey results suggest **client fees/ commissioned work** (35%) and **self-funding** (29%) are the largest sources of finance for games. **Public funding** can play a targeted role in early-stage games development but represents a small share (4%) of total finance. 29% of overall financing for current projects came from outside of Australia.[132]

**Interviews surfaced a distinct range of sentiments compared to screen.** Optimism was strongest among studios that had achieved commercial success or built durable publishing relationships, while common areas of concern included discoverability, access to capital and the sustainability of founder-led studios.

Stakeholders consistently raised the concern that a **key risk for the games industry is that value, transactional data, and audience relationships may increasingly concentrate offshore** with global storefronts and publishers, even as creative, technical and entrepreneurial activity remain local.

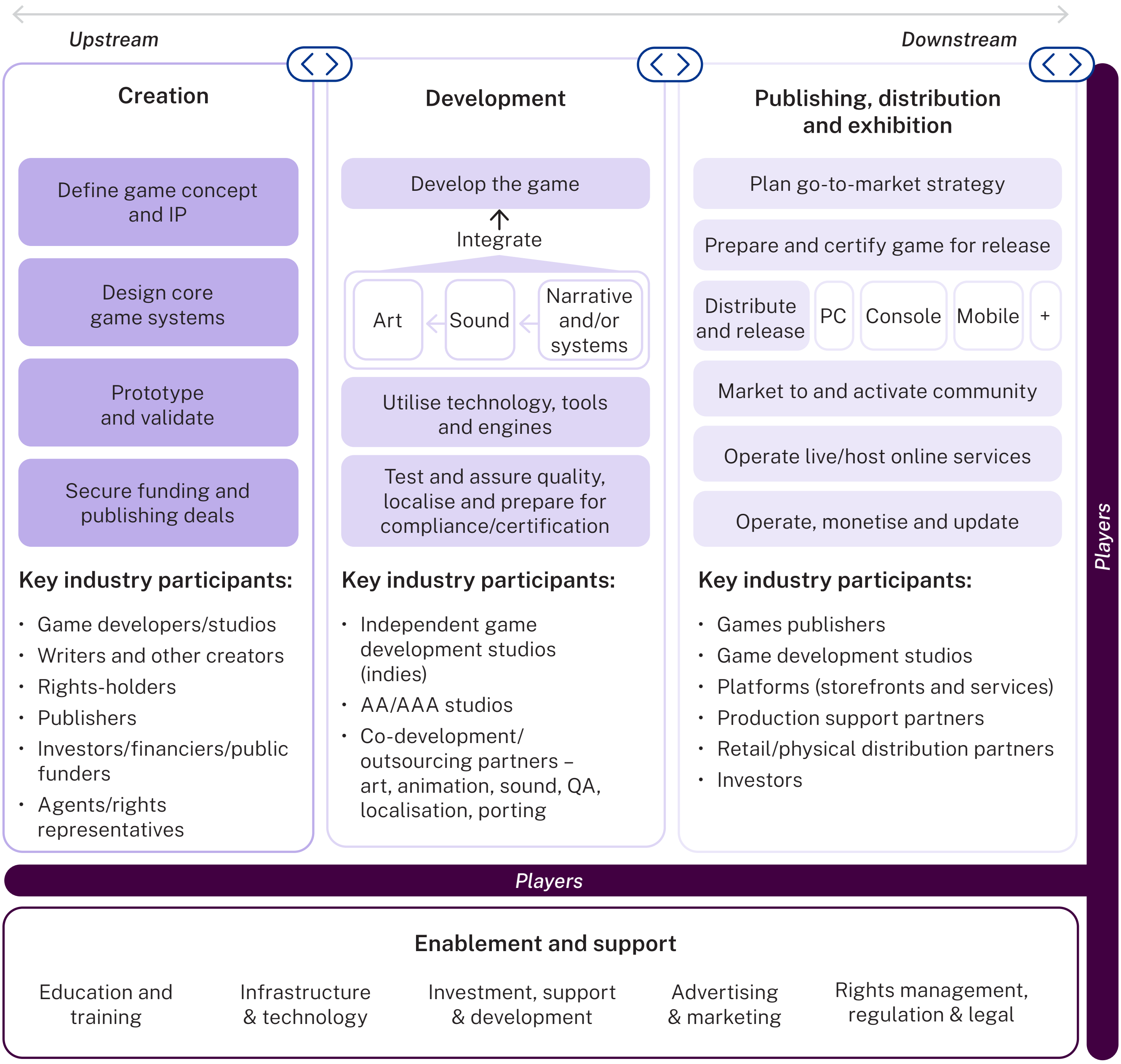
132 Based on the Screen Currency Industry and Workforce Survey by McAtamney & Advisors. These findings should be interpreted as directional due to sample size (n=23).

*Ailuri*

# Games value chain

**The digital games value chain (Figure 4) summarises the core activities and industry participants across creation**, development, publishing, distribution and exhibition alongside the enabling systems that support the sector. Players are a through line across the value chain, influencing development, commercial outcomes through testing, community engagement and ongoing play. **The following sections use this framework to describe industry structure and profile, and to analyse how value is created, financed, developed, published and sustained at each stage.**

**Figure 4: Digital games value chain**



# Industry profile

**The story of Australia's games industry is closely intertwined with that of the international industry.** From its earliest days, Australian game development has been global, shaped by international markets, technologies and audiences rather than an exclusively domestic system. As games shifted from arcades to home computers and consoles in the early 1980s, Australian developers such as Beam Software (*The Hobbit*, 1982, *The Way of the Exploding Fist*, 1985) and SSG (*Reach for the Stars*, 1983) were already producing and distributing games for global audiences on platforms like the ZX Spectrum and Commodore 64.

**Unlike film and TV, where Australian production has long been associated with telling distinctly local stories for local audiences, games in Australia have never operated under content quotas or comparable cultural mandates.** From the outset, Australian studios have designed for international players, competing in global genres, marketplaces and technology ecosystems. Through interviews, many studios and practitioners have shared how they see themselves as part of a global development scene, rather than part of a national industry.

**Reinforcing the global connection is the increasing global convergence in how games are practically made** – utilising a concentrated selection of game engines, platforms and publishing networks, with development coalescing around a small number of dominant engines such as Unity and Unreal – a trend identified in academic literature as part of the "platformisation" of games development.[133]

**The Australian games industry continued to evolve throughout the 1990s and into the 2000s**, marked by the emergence of larger studios alongside a growing number of smaller independent developers. This period produced internationally recognised titles such as *Dark Reign: The Future of War* (Auran, 1997) and later *L.A. Noire* (Team Bondi/Rockstar Games, 2011). While these successes demonstrated Australia's capacity to deliver complex, high-profile projects, they also highlighted the volatility of large-scale development within global publishing and financing structures.

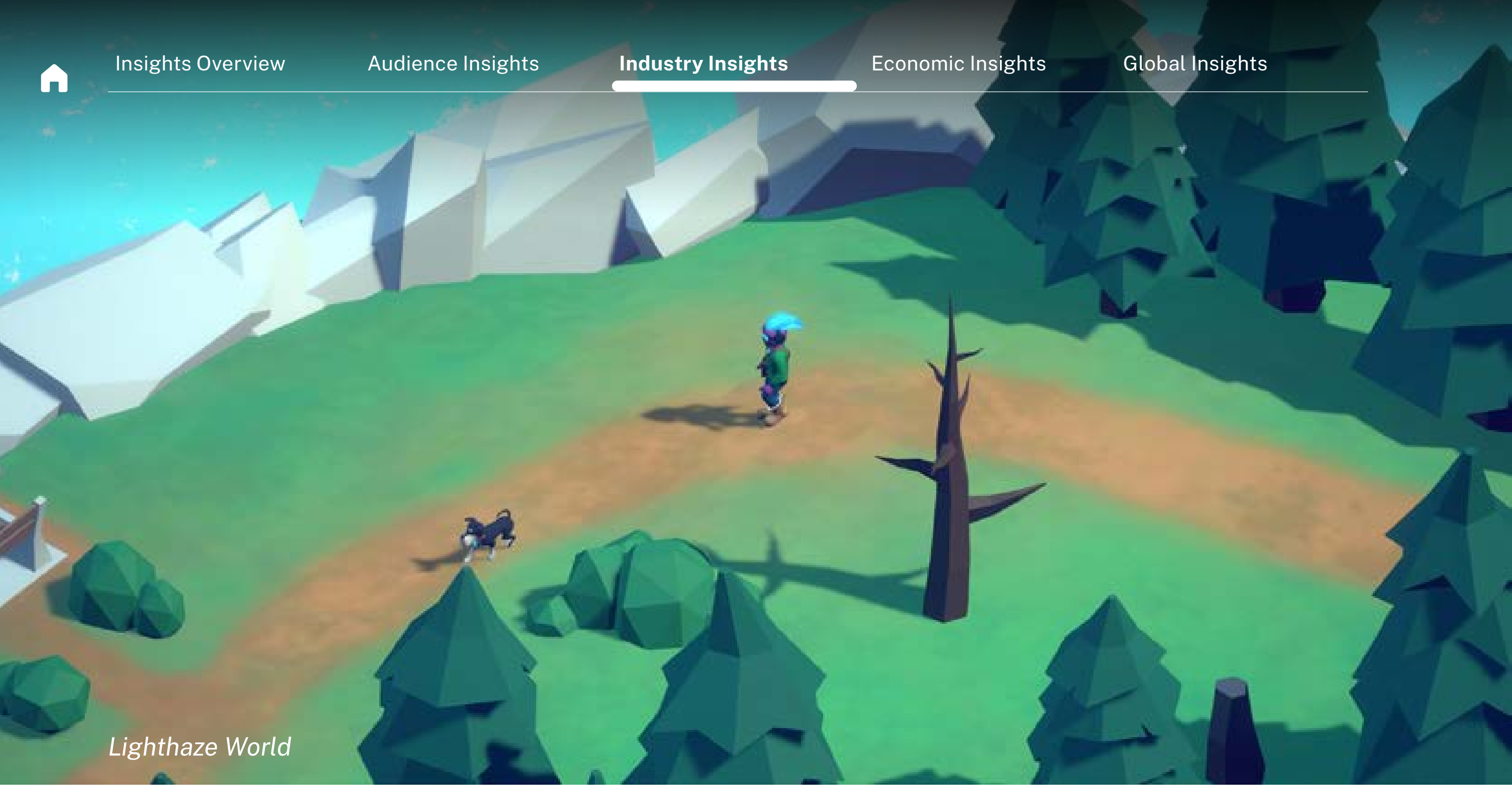
**The 2008 global financial crisis (GFC) was a shock to the games industry in Australia**, setting off a chain of events leading to the closure of most major Australian studios – including Pandemic, Krome, Visceral Games, SEGA Studios Australia and later 2K Australia. Australian studios had previously been attractive, cost-effective investments for global publishers, but between early 2007 and mid-2008 the US dollar sharply appreciated against the Australian dollar, undermining Australia's cost-competitive advantage and contributing to the withdrawal of big international games publishers.[134] The impacts of the GFC constrained the flow of private capital that large-scale games development in Australia depended on, with research showing the GFC and appreciating Australian dollar "gutting the industry of its price advantage", scaling back higher-end development.[135]

**Since the GFC and alongside the rise of digital distribution and mobile gaming, a new generation of Australian independent game developers emerged.** A strategic pivot by studios such as Halfbrick and Hipster Whale led to Australian games like *Fruit Ninja* (2010) and *Crossy Road* (2014) reaching millions of global players. With games-related grants and incentives available again at federal and state levels, the picture of overall industry health began to shift – with a sharp increase in business numbers, employment and total income between the mid-2010s and early 2020s showing up in economic statistics (Table 21).

133 Chia A 2022, "The metaverse, but not the way you think: game engines and automation beyond game development", *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 39(3), 191–200; Foxman M 2019, "United We Stand: Platforms, Tools and Innovation With the Unity Game Engine", *Social Media + Society*, 5(4) (Original work published 2019).

134 Sheil D 2023, "How indie developers helped Australia's video game industry explode onto the world stage", *ABC News*; Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications 2016, *Parliamentary Inquiry into the Future of Australia's Videogame Industry Chapter 5*.

135 Banks J and Cunningham S 2016, "Games Production in Australia: Adapting to Precariousness", in *Precarious Creativity: Global Media, Local Labor*, edited by Michael Curtin and Kevin Sanson, 186–99, University of California Press.



*Lighthaze World*

### Table 21: ABS Film, Television and Digital Games – digital games summary, 2011/12, 2015/16 and 2021/22

| Measure | 2011/12 | 2015/16 | 2021/22 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Businesses at end June** | 84 | 80 | 188 |
| **Employment at end June** | 581 | 734 | 2,225 |
| **Total income** | $89.4m | $111.1m | $459.3m |
| **Total expenses** | $80.1m | $86.6m | $375.4m |
| **Operating profit before tax** | $9.3m | $24.5m | $84.4m |
| **Operating profit margin** | 10.5% | 22.0% | 18.7% |

Source: ABS 2023, *Film, Television and Digital Games, Australia*, 2021/22.

**The legacy of this pivot is visible today in the success of Australian independent studios operating at the highest levels of the global industry.** A small indie Australian studio, Team Cherry, released *Silksong: Hollow Knight* on 4 September 2025, subsequently "breaking the internet" with digital storefronts unable to handle demand.[136]

**The Australian games industry today operates as a globally oriented, digitally native sector,** characterised by small, highly skilled studios designing and producing games primarily for international markets. Industry outcomes are shaped by global market dynamics, alongside local policy and support settings. Success within this context takes multiple forms: from titles that achieve high levels of commercial and critical success, such as *Silksong*, to smaller-scale titles like *Unpacking* (Witch Beam, 2021), which had a more modest commercial impact but resonated culturally with Australian audiences through settings and design details legible to local players without constraining global appeal.[137] These examples and many more, illustrate the breadth of creative, commercial and cultural outcomes produced by Australia's games industry.

**Read about selected games case studies in:**

Case Studies

136 McMahon L 2025, "Gamers frustrated as *Hollow Knight: Silksong* crashes stores on launch", BBC News.
137 Screen Australia 2026, *Screen Currency: Unpacking Case Study.*

## Structure, firm demography, business dynamism and viability

In 2023/24, the Australian digital games development industry contributed an estimated **$336m to Australia's GDP** (Table 22).[138] Of all the cultural and creative domains tracked by the Bureau of Communications, Arts and Regional Research (BCARR), digital games development experienced the strongest growth in GDP contribution from 2014/15 to 2023/24 with a **16% compound annual growth rate (CAGR)**.[139]

**Australia's games industry architecture is primarily structured around game development studios.** These businesses tend to operate upstream in the value chain, originating or adapting IP and leading the creative and technical development of digital games. **A smaller number of Australian firms operate downstream in publishing, distribution or exhibition.** Responses received to the industry and workforce survey provide an understanding of the proportion of businesses and persons working across different stages of the value chain (Table 23).

### Table 22: Digital games development summary statistics, 2023/24 and estimated for 2024/25

| Measure | Digital games development, 2023/24 (observed) | Digital games development, 2024/25 (estimated) |
|---|---:|---:|
| **Output** | $899m | *$1,037m* |
| **Gross value added** | $317m | *$360m* |
| **Net taxes on products** | $20m | *$22m* |
| **GDP** | $336m | *$381m* |
| **Share of overall economy** | 0.013% | *0.014%* |

Notes: 2024/25 estimate derived by applying average annual growth rate observed over the last 5 years to the latest observed value.

Source: BCARR 2025, *Cultural and creative activity in Australia: 2014/15 to 2023/24*.

### Table 23: Digital games industry participation across the value chain

| Value chain stage | % of employee respondents | % of business respondents |
|---|---:|---:|
| **Creation** | 39% | 46% |
| **Development** | 42% | 60% |
| **Publishing/distribution** | 7% | 11% |
| **Exhibition** | 2% | 5% |
| **Enablement and support** | 24% | 17% |
| **Other** | 17% | 19% |

Notes: Results sum to greater than 100% as respondents can select multiple stages of the value chain.

Source: Responses to the industry and workforce survey questions "What parts of Australia's games industry does your employer usually operate?" and "What parts of Australia games industry does your company usually operate?" n=89 games employees/freelancers, n=63 games business/organisations.

138 BCARR 2025, *Cultural and creative activity in Australia 2014/15 to 2023/24*.

139 Data limitation: there is no specific product code or industry classification for digital games development as an economic activity in Australia. This means that it is not possible to use datasets like BLADE to analyse measures such as business counts, economically active status, business demographics, employee characteristics and financial information.

Reflected in survey responses, as well as anecdotally through interviews, **employers and businesses upstream are diverse**, including micro-to larger independent studios, co-development studios, exclusively work-for-hire focussed studios and Australian operations of global developers and publishers. **Downstream, a smaller selection of responses were received**, including domestic and international publishers, marketing and digital distribution businesses and digital platforms. Many respondents reported working in the education and training space within enablement and support. The balance of “other” responses were received from public agencies and human resources providers.

In 2024/25, the average games business/organisation survey respondent (n=62) reported around 15.9 full-time staff, with a median of just 2, indicating a long tail of small businesses operating in the games industry (Table 24). By contrast, **contractor engagement is both widespread and significant, with an average of 21 contractors and a median of 4.5**, underscoring the sector’s reliance on flexible, short-term labour to scale teams up and down around development cycles.

Of games business/organisation respondents (n=61), **89% reported operating as private companies.** Survey results indicate a relatively young games business population: **51%** of respondents (n=61) reported operating for **5 years or less** and **37%** reported operating for **10 years or more** (including 16% operating for more than 20 years) (Table 25).

### Table 24: Digital games employment status

| Employment status | Average number employed | Median number employed |
|---|---|---|
| **Full time** | 15.9 | 2 |
| **Part time** | 2.2 | 1 |
| **Casual** | 3.4 | 1 |
| **Contractors** | 21.0 | 4.5 |

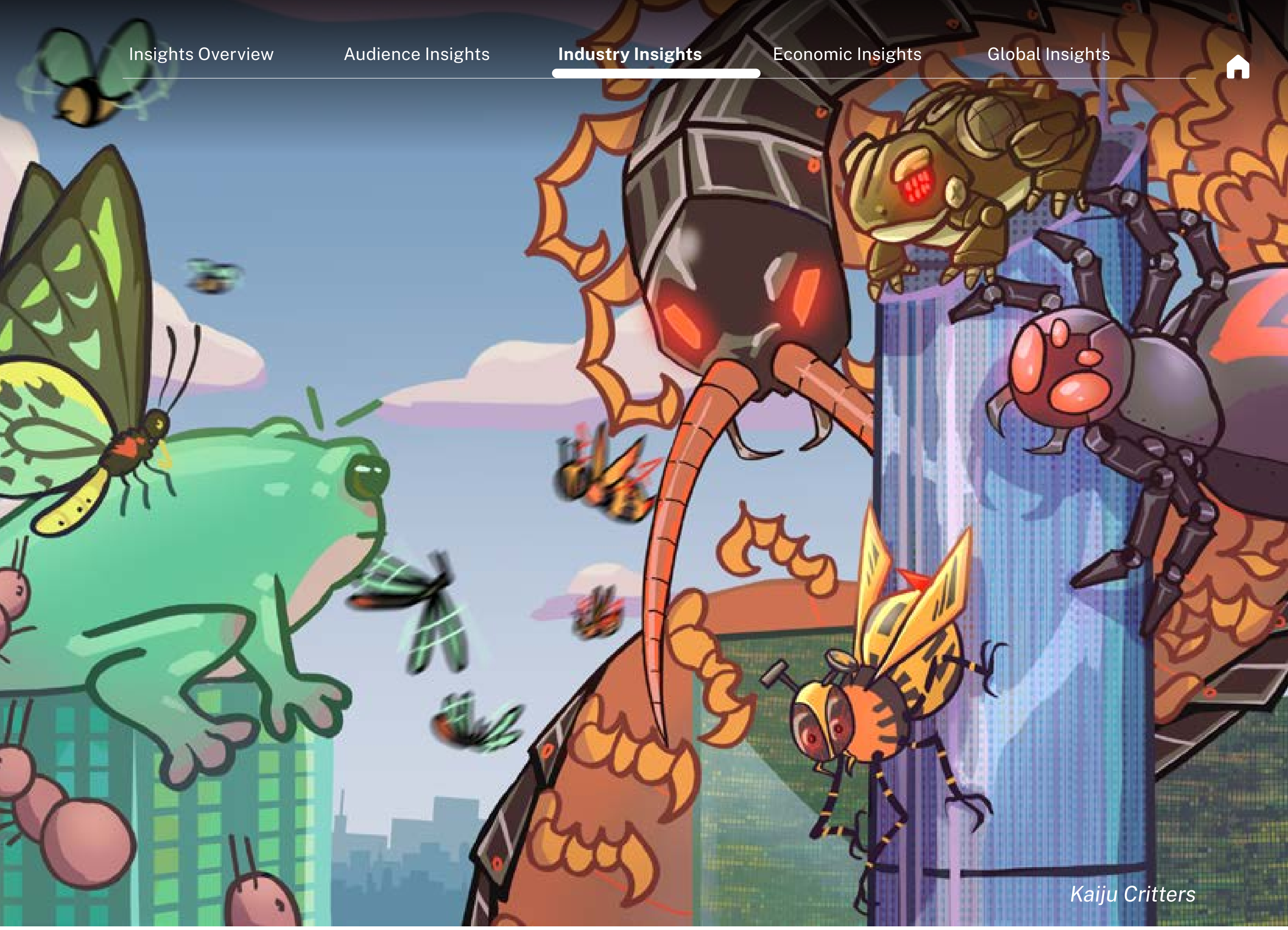
Notes: Full time and part time results as at 30 June 2025. Contractor result between 1 July 2024 and 30 June 2025.

Source: Responses to the industry and workforce survey questions “How many people in Australia did you employ as at 30 June 2025?” and “How many contractors did you engage between 1 July 2024 and 30 June 2025?” n=63 games business/organisations.

### Table 25: Digital games business age

| Business age | % of businesses |
|---|---|
| Longer than 20 years | 16% |
| Between 10-20 years | 21% |
| Between 5-10 years | 11% |
| Between 2-5 years | 25% |
| Between 1-2 years | 21% |
| Less than 1 year | 5% |

Source: Responses to the industry and workforce survey question “How long has your business been operating in its current form?” n=61 games business/organisations.



*Kaiju Critters*

The profile is broadly consistent with results from the **Australian Game Development Survey (AGDS)** run by the Interactive Games & Entertainment Association (IGEA), which similarly reported between 45–56% of studios aged 5 years or less and between 25–32% aged 10 years or more over the previous 2 collection periods (2022/23 and 2023/24).[140] The surveys differ in sample design, coverage and methodology – albeit, together, they point to **a sector characterised by substantial recent entry alongside a smaller cohort of long-established businesses and organisations, implying both dynamism and ongoing churn**.

Games businesses reported (n=35) completing an average of **1.1 creative projects** in the 2024/25 financial year, with an average of **1.48 projects** being actively made per organisation as at 30 June 2025.[141] In contrast with screen, **zero** games business/organisation survey respondents (n=51) reported using SPVs in the 2024/25 financial year for project delivery.

The AGDS 2023/24 reports 28% of overall game studios physically located in Victoria (with 52% headquartered there), followed by 25% in Queensland, 15% in New South Wales, 15% in Western Australia, 6% in South Australia, a combined 7% in the Australian Capital Territory, Northern Territory and Tasmania and 4% of studios working entirely remotely.[142]

140 IGEA 2024, *Australian Game Development Survey FY24 Final Report*; IGEA 2023 *Australian Game Development Survey FY23 Final Report*.

141 Based on the Screen Currency Industry and Workforce Survey by McAtamney & Advisors. Note that all business/organisations were asked how many creative projects were in “development” (as at 30 June 2025), how many were in “production” (as at 30 June 2025) and how many were completed (in 2024/25). Development as a term has a different meaning in screen compared to games. For the purposes of the study, we have assumed that “in production” responses in games mean a creative project (game) being actively made and will not present development separately.

142 IGEA 2024, *Australian Game Development Survey FY24 Final Report*.

# The games workforce – talent pipeline, skills, retention and mobility

**Australia's games industry employs a relatively small, specialised workforce that is strongly concentrated in metropolitan locations.** In 2024/25, digital games development employed an estimated 2,764 people (Table 26). Per the industry and workforce survey undertaken through this study, games workforce survey respondents (n=32) indicated they, on average, earned 73% of their income from the games industry in 2024/25 (compared to screen survey respondents who earned 84% of their income in the screen industry). The lower income average earned within games may indicate that games skills are in higher demand across other areas of the economy, or that games work is less consistently available.

**Interviews highlighted the applicability of games skills (particularly experience with games engines and visualisation) across other areas of the economy.** More than half (53%) of survey respondents indicated they earned income from a sector other than the games industry in 2024/25, including computer system design (unrelated to game development), performing arts venue operation, administrative and support services, mining, public administration and safety, financial and insurance services, retail trade, higher education, technical and vocational education and training, performing arts operation, software publishing (unrelated to games development), professional photographic services and advertising services. **Responses were spread across this wide range of other sectors**, with no single sector standing out as a dominant secondary source of income.

**The games workforce is concentrated in capital cities:** 80% of workforce survey responses (n=109) reported a usual place of work in a capital city, while 20% nominated other locations, including New Zealand and overseas. **Geographic distribution by state further reflects this concentration:** in 2024/25, an estimated 36% of the workforce is based in Victoria, followed by Queensland (27%), New South Wales (18%), South Australia (11%), and Western Australia (6%), with Tasmania, the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory each accounting for around 1% of full-time employment.[143] According to the AGDS, in 2022/23 and 2023/24 **the share of studios who reported planning to hire new staff was high** at 63% and 61% respectively.[144]

**Read more about the digital games workforce in:**

Economic Insights

**The Production Infrastructure Capacity Analysis (PICA)** commissioned by Screen Australia surveyed the games industry to identify roles with capacity concerns at a national and state/territory level. Of those respondents with hiring responsibilities: **artists, programmers, designers, producers and engineers were the roles with the greatest capacity concerns identified in digital games.** On a state-by-state basis, the roles with greatest capacity concern varied significantly: for example, narrative designers and narrative direction were identified as capacity concerns in Victoria, art directors and network engineers in Queensland and technical designers and executive producers in New South Wales.[145]

**The workforce survey conducted through this study investigated employment status in the games industry.** As at 30 June 2025, among survey respondents working in the game industry (n=86), 50% were employed full time in one position, 14% were employed part time in one or multiple positions, 17% were employed casually in one or multiple positions and 19% were not employed.

**Time in role was also investigated through the survey** (Table 27). 48% of games workforce respondents (n=76) reported being in their current main role for 2 years or less. When asked what might **motivate them to leave their current role,** 44% of games respondents (n=73) reported seeking a promotion or salary increase as the primary motivation, 12% cited wanting a different role, 11% wanting a different company, 10% citing dissatisfaction with the current role and 8% retiring.

**The rate of formal qualifications in the games workforce is higher than in screen.** Among games workforce respondents (n=109), 83% hold a bachelor's or postgraduate degree, compared with 73% in screen, indicating an even stronger concentration of tertiary-qualified workers in games, alongside a smaller but still material vocational and technical training pathway (11%) (Table 28).

143 University of Canberra estimates derived based on ABS 2026, Labour Account; ABS 2023, Film, Television and Digital Games, IGEA 2024, *Australian Game Development Survey FY24 Final Report*.

144 IGEA 2024, *Australian Game Development Survey FY24 Final Report*; IGEA 2023, *Australian Game Development Survey FY23 Final Report*.

145 Olsberg SPI 2026, *A Production, Infrastructure and Capacity Analysis for Australia's Screen Production Sector*, commissioned by Screen Australia.

**Available evidence indicates that the games workforce in Australia is highly skilled but organised around intermittent scale rather than known and stable expansion.** Small median studio size, high contractor use and relatively short tenure in current roles suggest that workforce capacity is assembled and disassembled around development milestones, with limited buffering against gaps between projects. These dynamics can help explain why capability in the games sector often accumulates at the individual level rather than within firms, shaping how studios grow, how risk is borne across the value chain and where pressures around retention and continuity are most likely to arise.

### Table 26: Employed persons in digital games industry, 2020/21 to 2024/25

| Year | Digital games development employed persons |
|---|---|
| **2020/21** | 1,767 |
| **2021/22** | 2,104 |
| **2022/23** | 2,458 |
| **2023/24** | 2,465 |
| **2024/25** | 2,764 |

Notes: Employment estimates derived using method documented in *Screen Currency 2026: Economic Insights*.[146]

Source: *Screen Currency 2026: Economic Insights* based primarily on ABS labour market data.

### Table 27: Digital games – time in role

| Time in role | % of respondents |
|---|---|
| Less than 1 year | 20% |
| 1–2 years | 28% |
| 2–5 years | 34% |
| 5–10 years | 13% |
| 10–20 years | 4% |
| More than 20 years | 1% |

Source: Responses to the industry and workforce survey question “How long have you been employed in your current main role?” n=76 games respondents.

### Table 28: Qualifications in the Australian digital games industry

| Level of qualification | % of respondents |
|---|---|
| Less than high school | 0% |
| High school certificate or equivalent | 6% |
| Vocational/technical training | 11% |
| Bachelor’s degree | 49% |
| Postgraduate or professional degree | 34% |

Source: Responses to the industry and workforce survey question “What is the highest level of qualification you hold?” n=109 games respondents.

146 Employment estimates are derived using a method which benchmarks ABS Labour Account totals and applies proportional weights from ABS Labour Force Survey, Jobs in Australia and the Census (with tailored approaches for internet broadcasting and games) to derive ANZSIC4 specific estimates, with full methodological detail in the *Screen Currency 2026: Economic Insights*.

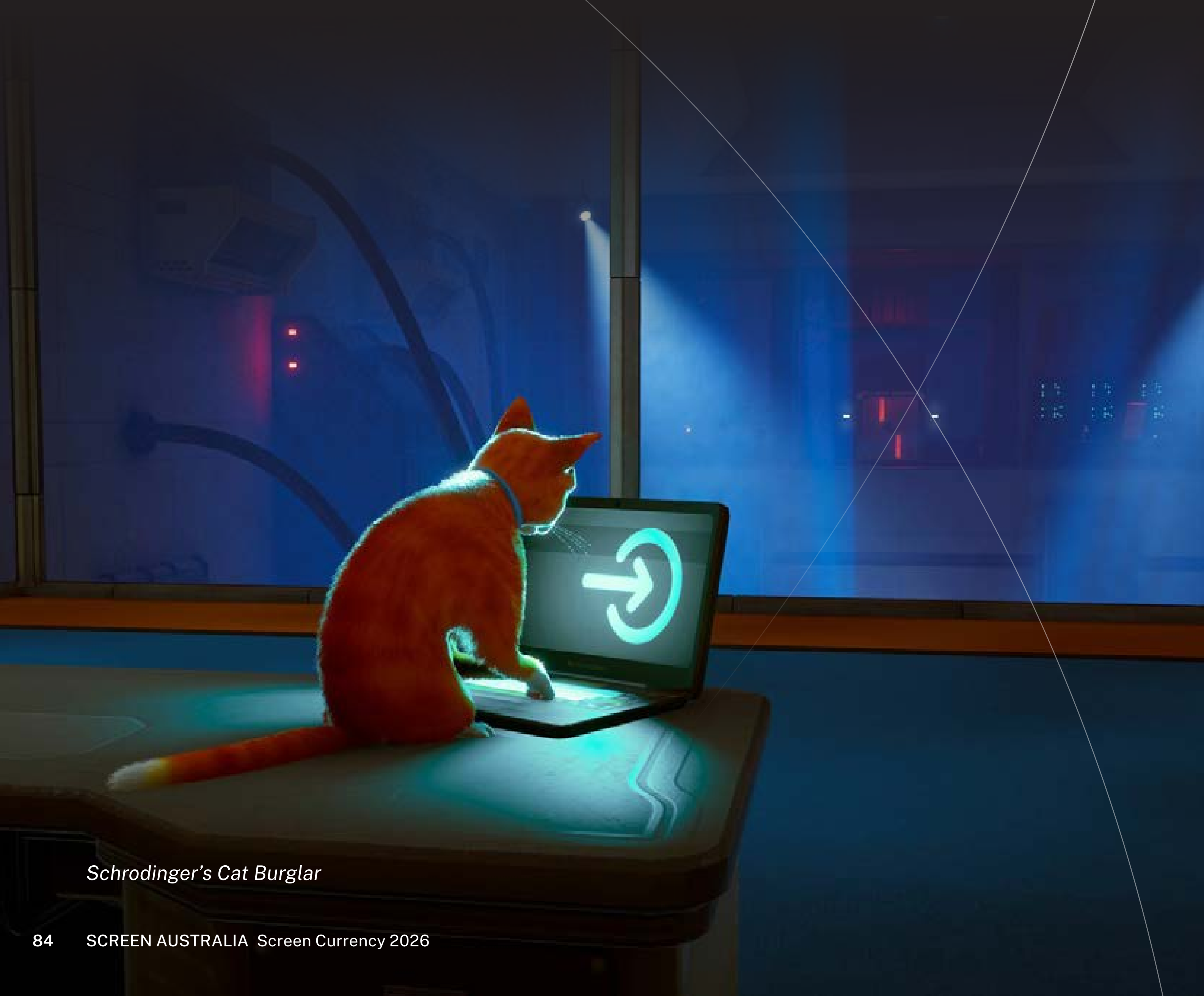
# Value chain analysis

**The following sections describe the dynamics of Australia's digital games industry**, from the early stages of creation through to development, publishing, distribution, exhibition and engagement with players. For each stage, it outlines the typical activities involved, the key industry participants and the ways in which the Australian industry is shaped by local and global market conditions and public policy.

**In practice, digital games development rarely follows a neat, linear pathway** – projects move through repeated cycles of prototyping, playtesting and iteration, with scope, format and even commercial approach often changing in response to creative discovery, technical constraints, player feedback and funding realities.

**The boundary between "formal" production and experimentation is also frequently blurred** – studios may progress ideas through unpaid or partially funded R&D, community builds, early access or live updates – so a staged value chain is an imperfect representation. Nevertheless, the framework provides a useful organising lens for describing the recurring activities, decision points and participants that shape how games are made, released and sustained in Australia.

**Evidence from the industry and workforce survey, interviews and other available data is integrated throughout** to describe how the industry is structured, how and where value is being created, where pressures are emerging and how these dynamics influence, challenge and affect business models, content types and stakeholder behaviour.



*Schrodinger's Cat Burglar*

# Creation



## In games, creation focuses on defining what players will do and how a game will work. This stage involves shaping core gameplay ideas, player experience and core loops, mechanics, worlds and technical approaches, often through early prototyping and iteration.

**Creative and technical decisions are linked from the outset, as design ambition must align with available tools, engines, team capabilities and available funding.**

**Across the Australian games industry, creation takes place in many settings, from studios developing original IP like *Silksong* and *Unpacking*, to teams contributing concepts within established franchises like *The Sims* and *Call of Duty*. Creation sets the scope of development and the commercial parameters under which a game will be made.**

### Key industry participants

- Game developers/studios
- Writers and other creators
- Rights-holders
- Publishers
- Investors/financiers/public funders
- Agents/rights representatives

### Key activities

- Define game concept and IP
- Design core game systems
- Prototype and validate
- Secure funding and publishing deals

*Which Way Up: Galaxy Games*

**In games, the boundary between creative exploration and formal development is often unclear**, as early ideas are tested, reshaped and discarded through an iterative prototyping process. Research on game development practices has shown that games projects typically cannot be planned in detail from the outset because “soft requirements”, including aspects of gameplay, mechanics and player interaction, emerge through testing and continuous ideation, making the design process both technically and creatively fluid.[147]

**Survey results show a higher concentration of businesses than individuals operating at the creation stage.** Games creation is second behind development (the next stage of the value chain) in terms of workforce and business participation – 45% of games business/organisation respondents (n=65) indicated they operated at the creation stage of the value chain, with the types of organisations including independent studios, game designers, work-for-hire studios and investors. 39% of the workforce survey respondents (n=89) reported being employed in games creation, with roles including game developer, game designer, writer/author, art director and quality assurance. As of 30 June 2025, 49% of those individuals were employed full time in one position, 26% part time in one or multiple positions, 11% casual and 14% were unemployed.

Like many art forms, much of the **creative work necessary for compelling games, including early ideation, prototyping and exploratory design, occurs outside of formal development frameworks.** As industry commentators have noted, “there is no *Mars First Logistics*, no *Untitled Goose Game*, no *Unpacking*, without a whole heap of unpaid, unpredictable and seemingly ‘unproductive’ creative work that must come first.”[148] This dynamic is reflected in the cultural recognition of creative practice: for example, the *Honk! Untitled Goose Exhibition* at ACMI showcases prototypes, early versions and development materials alongside the finished title, underscoring how games’ creative origins can be positioned as objects of cultural interest.[149]

**Read about Australians’ perceptions of games’ cultural value in:**

Audience Insights

**For games, the distribution of IP ownership at first commercial release reflects the mix of independent creation and commissioned/partnered development that is common across the sector.** A plurality (45%) of survey respondents reported that IP was held in full by their own studio or organisation at first release, and an additional 15% reported holding some of the equity/rights, consistent with the prominence of original IP development among Australian studios.

**A substantial share of projects (40%) involved IP where the respondent did not hold any equity or rights at first release. In these cases, equity/rights are held by clients or publishing partners,** both domestic and overseas, **or the work may be delivered under work-for-hire arrangements.**

Many studios trade complete ownership for support including funding, production support and marketing (Table 29). These results are from a small sample size and should be treated directionally, however, were supported by stakeholder interview findings, which suggested **IP retention is achievable but uneven and dictated by project finance structures, deal terms and a game developer’s ability to secure publishing relationships.**

**Table 29: Rights ownership of games projects at the time of first commercial release**

| Rights ownership at time of first commercial release | % of respondents |
|---|---|
| Me/my organisation held all equity/rights | 45% |
| Me/my organisation held some of the equity/rights | 15% |
| Me/my organisation did not hold equity/rights | 40% |

Notes: Responses presented based on whether respondents identified only their own organisation, multiple parties, or only another party as primary rights-holder at first commercial release.

Source: Responses to the industry and workforce survey question “Thinking of a typical project, who held the primary IP (copyright) at first commercial release?” n=20 games business respondents

147 Marklund B, Engström H, Hellkvist M et al. 2019, “What Empirically Based Research Tells Us About Game Development”, *The Computer Games Journal V8*, 179–198.

148 Keogh B 2023, “Finally, Australia sees video games are important – but it can’t be only because they make money”, *The Guardian*.

149 Creative Victoria 2024, *Honk! In Celebration Of Legendary Local Game*.

# Stakeholder insights

A range of opportunities, dynamics, challenges and other topics relating to creation were explored with stakeholders through in-depth interviews.

- **Telling Australian stories is not the primary creative driver in games development:** Games stakeholders noted that, unlike some screen formats, game development is rarely motivated by a desire to tell explicitly Australian stories. This does not preclude Australian developers from producing games with strong local cultural expression but reflects a creative process and the origins of the industry, oriented more towards global player engagement.

> "In games, it's not always about Australian stories – we talk about 'Australians telling stories.'"
> – games executive

- **Creative ambition versus commercial sustainability in game design:** Stakeholders observed a persistent tension between focus on narrative-driven games, which are often easier to engage with and appealing to funders including screen agencies and systems-led or mechanics-first games (such as simulators, strategy titles, or multiplayer online games), which can be a more attractive commercial proposition due to the inherent complexity of the narrative-driven format.

> "For smaller studios, games concepts that are systems first like simulations or multiplayer online games are a much smarter business proposition than a narrative heavy game."
> – developer

- **Product discovery mindset and iteration as a force for good as well as uncertainty:** Several stakeholders described how successful studios have worked to develop a minimum playable product and iterate quickly based on early player response, with a willingness to pivot rather than "commit and hope". Iteration was broadly seen as necessary to get to a high-quality title, but that it also drives cost uncertainty and that because gameplay is subjective and emergent, teams often can't specify effort precisely upfront, which can create a challenge when seeking funding which may require a more formal plan or structure.

- **Practical use of generative AI as a prototyping accelerator, not a final product:** All stakeholders, when asked about their use of generative AI, expressed strong aversion to its use in any final deliverable. Some stakeholders described its utility when undertaking early prototyping of assets (like voice, artwork and icons), which would be replaced with professional work later before being shared externally.
- **Breakout Australian hit games matter, but stakeholders cautioned against treating them as a repeatable policy target:** Developers, publishers, investors and screen agency representatives (federal and state) emphasised that high-profile commercial successes can lift visibility and confidence in the sector, but also noted that the conditions behind breakout performance are highly project-specific and not easily engineered, making "more hits" an uncertain benchmark for any policy or program design.

> "*Untitled Goose Game*, *Unpacking*, *Cult of the Lamb*, or *Hollow Knight*, these are relatively small teams that are able to identify a place or a niche in the market that they're able to really take advantage of and have a large impact, obviously, that method is not necessarily repeatable... success depends on a multitude of factors that are often just not in the control of game makers."
> – games executive

Read about selected Australian game case studies in:

Case Studies

# Development



Development is the primary production phase of games, where concepts are transformed into a playable product. It includes programming, asset creation, systems integration, vertical slice[150] development, production planning, milestone delivery, testing, optimisation and platform compliance, typically over extended and highly iterative cycles.

**Development rarely proceeds in a straight line: features evolve or are reworked in response to technical challenges, production constraints, internal review, player feedback, or publisher direction.**

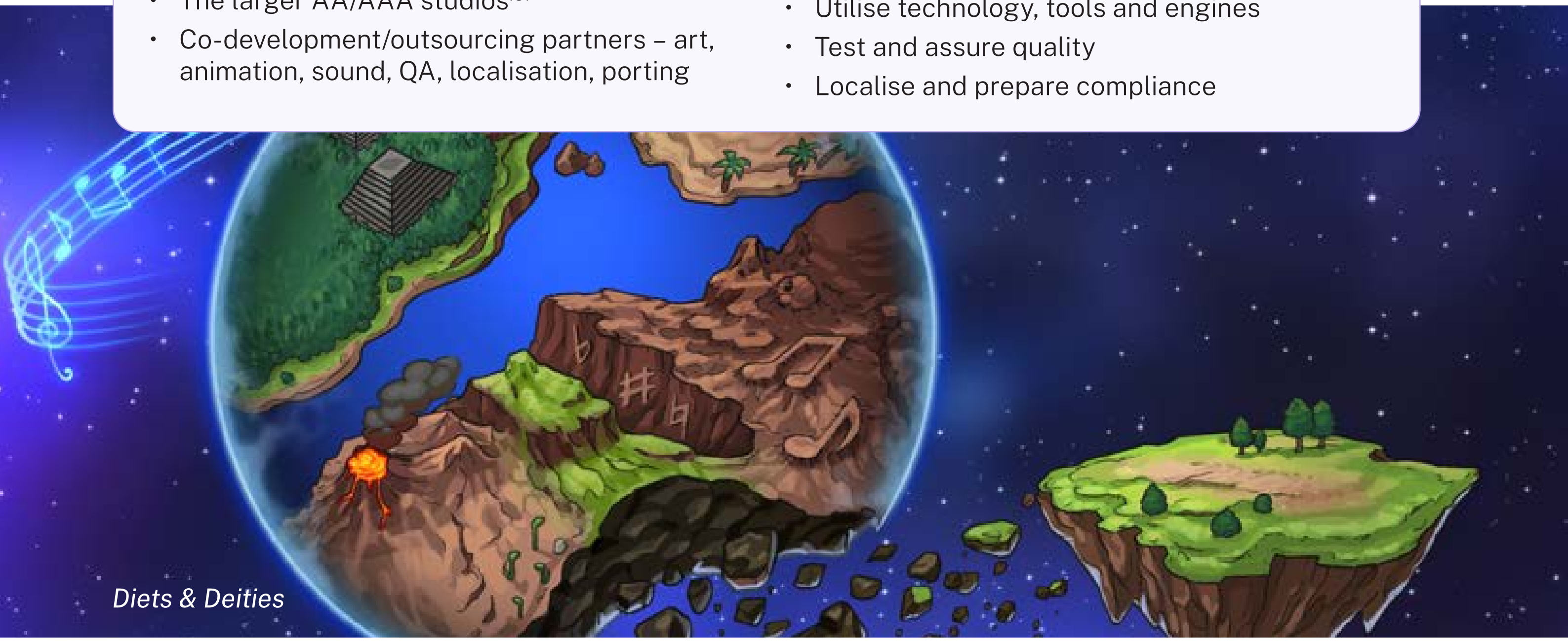
**In Australia, this stage supports the most significant amount of games employment and spans independent studios, co-development studios and local subsidiaries of global publishers, often working across distributed and outsourced production models.**

### Key industry participants

- Independent game development studios (indies)
- The larger AA/AAA studios[151]
- Co-development/outsourcing partners – art, animation, sound, QA, localisation, porting

### Key activities

- Develop the game
- Integrate art/audio/narrative
- Utilise technology, tools and engines
- Test and assure quality
- Localise and prepare compliance



*Diets & Deities*

150 A vertical slice is a polished, playable segment of a game that represents a cross-section of its core systems – gameplay, art, audio, user interface (UI) and performance – used to demonstrate how the final games is intended to look and feel. It is often used for pitching to development partners or publishers.

151 The games industry often uses an informal A–AA–AAA classification to indicate production scale and market reach. "AAA" (triple A) games are the highest tier, referring to large budget titles developed by major studios with extensive teams, established IP, and coordinated global marketing and distribution. This framework has been used in this report as practical shorthand to distinguish between different levels of studio scale and capability.

**The development stage is where games become most exposed to external constraints**: work is typically organised around deliverables and review gates and the ability to sustain a project can depend on securing early-stage funding, often through involvement of a local or international publisher. For 2023/24, game developers surveyed in the **Australian Game Development Survey (AGDS)** identified securing international publisher deals, securing local publisher deals and attracting early-stage development funding as the top challenges.[152]

**Development is where most games businesses/organisations operate and where employment is most concentrated.** 60% of games business/organisation respondents (n=63) indicated they operated in development, the majority as independent developers, but also publisher-affiliated developers, AA and AAA developers, co-development and outsourcing partners and other specialist technology and middleware providers. 42% of workforce respondents (n=89) indicated they worked in development.

**Dedicated federal funding support for games development has evolved over time**. Screen Australia's Australian Interactive Games Fund provided targeted project investment in the early 2010s but was discontinued and remaining funding redirected in the 2014/15 Budget.[153] In 2022 Screen Australia restarted direct games funding and in 2023, the Digital Games Tax Offset was introduced, a 30% refundable offset to eligible game developers who spend a minimum of $500,000 on qualifying Australian development expenditure.[154] Also in 2023, federal direct investment was also expanded through Revive, establishing and updating several Screen Australia games programs. This $12 million, 4-year allocation underpins the Games Production Fund (providing grants of up to $100,000 for original Australian independent games) as well as the Emerging Gamemaker's Fund (grants of up to $30,000 to support new original projects at prototype or micro scale) and Future Leaders Delegation.[155]

## Games development across platforms

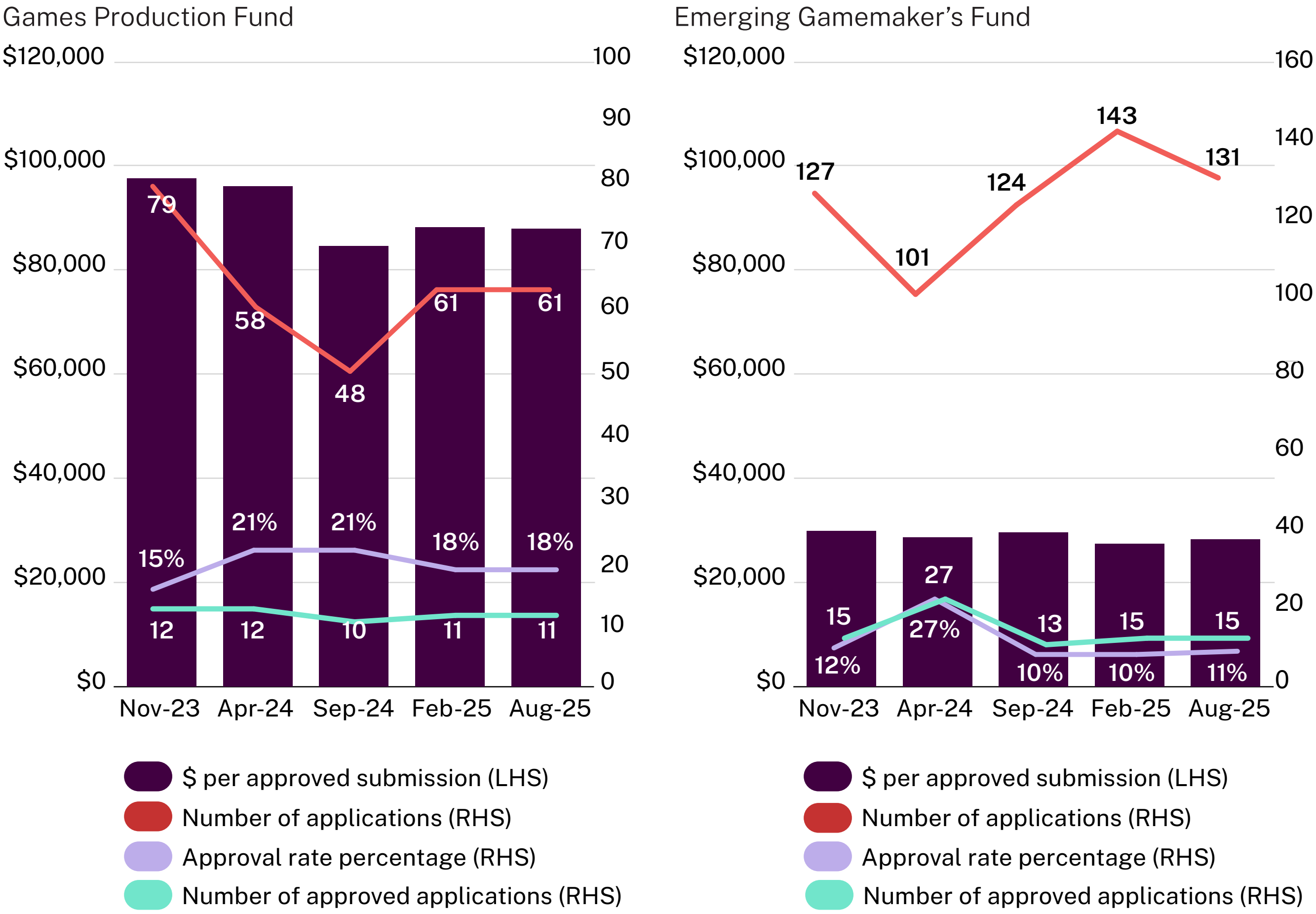
Australian digital games makers are developing across a diverse set of platforms and many work on more than one. **Screen Australia's Production Infrastructure Capacity Analysis (PICA) survey** results show 9 in 10 digital games professionals work on PC games, making it by far the most common target platform, while 68% work on console titles and 46% on mobile games. Smaller proportions develop for VR (24%), web (15%), cloud (5%) or other platforms (3%).[156] **This multi-platform engagement reflects the realities of contemporary game development, where titles are often built to be ported to multiple ecosystems to maximise reach and revenue.**

The PICA found only 15% of developers work exclusively on PC, with most Australian studios that develop for PC also do so for consoles, mobile, or emerging formats – a dynamic that **demands flexible technical skills and cross-platform design capabilities**. Porting games across platforms involves not just technical adaptation but also optimisation of control schemes, performance profiles and user experience for very different hardware contexts. Interviews with small Australian independent studios surfaced how they will often engage service providers to deliver this work, as it can be a highly specialised skillset.

**The size and breadth of the global market underscores why full platform coverage matters for commercial viability.** The global games market was projected to generate **US$189 billion** in 2025, with mobile the largest revenue segment (US$103 billion, +2.9%), console exhibiting the fastest growth (US$45.9 billion, +5.5%) and PC (US$39.9 billion, +2.5%) a core pillar of premium content and player engagement.[157]

152 IGEA 2024, *Australian Game Development Survey FY24 Final Report*.
153 Walker A 2014, "Aussie developers respond to 'short sighted' Budget slashing of Australian Interactive Games Fund", *ABC News*.
154 The Hon Tony Burke MP Minister for the Arts 2023, *Media Release: Digital Games Tax Offset to level up Australian industry*. The offset was introduced in June 2023, backdated from July 2022.
155 Screen Australia 2023, *Media Release: Screen Australia launches new games funding for 2023 and beyond*.
156 Olsberg SPI 2026, *A Production, Infrastructure and Capacity Analysis for Australia's Screen Production Sector*, commissioned by Screen Australia.
157 Buijsman M 2025, "Global games market to hit $189 billion in 2025 as growth shifts to console", *NewZoo*.

**Figure 5: Federal games project funding – amount, approval rate and number of applications**




Source: Screen Australia program data.

**Federal support delivered through Screen Australia has contributed to the development of Australian digital games over time**, but there has not been a consistent, longitudinal evidence base developed on the full range downstream outcomes across supported projects. Program activity (applications, approvals and funding) and select examples of funded titles examples can help illustrate the types of outcomes that can follow from early support.

For example, Screen Australia supported Witch Beam's first title *Assault Android Cactus* (2015), which received strong critical attention – the studio later released *Unpacking* (2021), which went on to achieve major international recognition including at the BAFTA Games Awards.[158] Screen Australia also supported Loveshack Entertainment's *FRAMED* (2014), an awarded title that achieved strong critical reception. **These examples illustrate potential pathways from early project support to subsequent critical success and continued studio output.**

The side-by-side charts above in Figure 5 show a time series of the 5 most recent federal games project funding (Games Production Fund and Emerging Gamemaker Fund) rounds (November 2023 to August 2025), summarising demand (submissions), program selectivity (approvals and approval rates) and total funding committed.

Across the period shown (November 2023 to August 2025), **federal games project funding has attracted sustained interest and remains highly competitive.** In each round, submissions materially exceed the number of projects funded, indicating that **the programs are consistently oversubscribed**. Approval rates sit in a relatively narrow range in most rounds, typically around the high teens for the Games Production Fund and around the low teens for the Emerging Gamemaker's Fund. The average of funding per approved submission is close to the top of the band for both programs ($100,000 and $30,000 respectively).

158 BAFTA 2022, *Unpacking wins the EE Game of the Year Award at the 2022 BAFTA Games Awards*.

*Catto's Post Office*

**State government support for games development typically falls into 3 broad categories: rebates or incentives, direct grants and other capability-building programs** (such as talent placements or business support). In January 2026, Victoria, Queensland, New South Wales and South Australia all offer a form of digital games incentive or rebate, each requiring an amount of qualifying state-based expenditure to be eligible.[159] The scale and availability of state-based direct grants vary, with grants of $5,000 up to $500,000 available depending on the stage of game development and status of the relevant project. The average share of public funding of project financing for games businesses responding to the survey was 4% (n=28), however, this should be interpreted with caution given the low sample size may not fully represent studios eligible for and utilising the Digital Games Tax Offset (DGTO). The ATO's 2023/24 Annual Report disclosed $6.9 million in DGTO claims for that year but did not publish a breakdown of certificates issued or total Qualifying Australian Development Expenditure (QADE) certified.[160] From 2024/25, the ATO has combined DGTO reporting with other screen offsets, limiting visibility of game-specific claims data going forward. A quarter (25%) of respondents to the IGEA AGDS had made their first offset claim by the end of the 2023/24 financial year.[161]

Survey responses show that **client fees/commissioned work (35%) together with self-funding/internal finance (29%) make up the highest proportion of games project financing and resourcing**. "Other" sources represent 9% of financing, followed by crowdfunding (7%), public grants/funding (4%), private equity or venture capital (4%) (Table 30). Games business survey respondents (n=23) also indicated that an average of 29% of financing for current projects came from outside Australia.

When asked about the **main source of finance for a typical project**, games business respondents also typically identified client fees/commissioned work (35%) and self-funded or internal finance (29%). Public grants, private equity/venture capital and crowdfunding were less frequently identified and zero respondents identified tax offsets and rebates, as the main source of project finance (Table 31). As mentioned above, the sample size and likely skew towards studios below Digital Games Tax Offset thresholds may mean these results understate the role of public funding in games development finance.

159 Screen NSW, *Digital Games Rebate*; VicScreen, *Victorian Screen Incentive*; Screen QLD, *Digital Games Incentive*; SAFC, *Games*.
160 Australian Taxation Office 2024, *Administered programs 1.5 to 1.18*.
161 IGEA 2024, *Australian Game Development Survey FY24*.

### Table 30: Approximate breakdown of financing for current games projects

| Source of finance | Average % of financing |
|---|---|
| Client fees/commissioned work (cost-plus/service contracts) | 35% |
| Self-funded or internal finance (e.g. from retained earnings, directors' loans) | 29% |
| Crowdfunding | 7% |
| Public grants or funding (e.g. Screen Australia, state/territory-based screen agencies, other government funding) | 4% |
| In-kind/contra (donated services, facilities, equipment, volunteer time) | 4% |
| Private equity or venture capital investments (e.g. gap financing) | 4% |
| Broadcaster or platform licence fees/minimum guarantee/advance | 3% |
| Sales agent or distributor minimum guarantee/advance | 3% |
| Unsecured debt financing | 1% |
| Philanthropy (e.g. donations) | 1% |
| Sponsorships/brand partnerships | 0% |
| Impact investment (e.g. social impact capital) | 0% |
| Secured debt financing | 0% |
| Other | 9% |

Source: Responses to the industry and workforce survey question “What is the approximate breakdown of financing and resourcing for your current projects from each of the following sources?” n=28 games business respondents.

### Table 31: Main source of finance for games projects

| Source of finance | % of respondents |
|---|---|
| Client fees/commissioned work (cost-plus/service contracts) | 35% |
| Self-funded or internal finance (e.g. from retained earnings from sales, directors’ loans) | 29% |
| Crowdfunding | 7% |
| Public grants or funding (e.g. Screen Australia, state/territory-based screen agencies, other government funding) | 4% |
| Private equity or venture capital investments (e.g. gap financing) | 4% |
| In-kind/contra (donated services, facilities, equipment, volunteer time) | 4% |
| Broadcaster or platform licence fees/minimum guarantee/advance | 3% |
| Sales agent or distributor minimum guarantee/advance | 3% |
| Philanthropy (e.g. donations) | 1% |
| Tax offsets and rebates | 0% |
| Other | 9% |

Source: Responses to the industry and workforce survey question “Thinking of a typical project, what is your main source of finance?” n=28 games business respondents.

Free text survey responses highlighted **resourcing challenges** in applying for grants and resources as an indie studio; broader macroeconomic trends leading to **lower games investment compared to previous years**; and **a lack of publisher and venture capital deals** as key barriers to accessing finance. These sentiments were similarly expressed during interviews.

Survey results suggest that **typical games deals often involve limited upfront finance**, in contrast to many screen finance plans. The most commonly reported deal terms were revenue share/royalties after recoupment (45%) and service-fee only with no backend (45%), indicating that **studios frequently operate across two prevailing commercial models: fee-for-service work with limited long-term upside, and royalty-based arrangements** where upside is contingent on recoupment and studios may carry greater risk. Only 20% reported an upfront minimum guarantee/advance, suggesting that upfront capital is not a routine feature of many game deals. The low incidence of marketing/data support (10%) from partners/platforms also suggest that studios may often manage discoverability and commercialisation largely in-house (Table 32).

The industry and workforce survey asked about **business outlook, opportunities and risks**. Games business respondents (n=23) saw the most opportunity in collaboration, talent and access pathways. 61% of respondents identified partnerships and co-productions that unlock scale and finance as a top opportunity, 43% identified access to skilled talent and capacity expansion and 35% identified access to new markets or platforms (Table 33).

Compared to screen respondents, **games respondents reported much higher levels of opportunity in "better discoverability and data access"** (30% vs 6%), much less opportunity in "improved deal terms and rights positions" (0% vs 19%) and less opportunity in terms of a major commission or slate deal (22% vs 40%).

**The broad profile of business risks identified by games businesses aligns with those identified by screen businesses.** 70% of games survey respondents (n=23) identified economic downturn or recession as one of the top 3 risks influencing their business outlook. Loss of funding sources (61%) and increased competition or market saturation (48%) also featured prominently as business risks (Table 34).

Compared to screen, **games respondents reported higher concern about an economic downturn** (70% vs 62%), lower concern about regulatory change (17% vs 37%) and higher concern about technological disruption (35% vs 27%).

**Business confidence at the individual firm level is relatively high**, despite the structural risks at play identified by many businesses. On a 5-point scale, 61% of business/organisation respondents (n=23) expressed very high (5) or high (4) confidence in the growth and sustainability of their own business. When asked about the growth and sustainability of the industry overall, 30% expressed very high (5) or high (4) confidence, 40% were neutral (3) and 30% expressed low (2) or very low (1) confidence. Like in screen, games business respondents appear much more likely to be confident in growth and sustainability of their own business and less confident in the growth and sustainability of the games industry overall.

### Table 32: Typical deal terms in games

| Deal terms | % of respondents |
|---|---|
| Upfront minimum guarantee/advance | 20% |
| Revenue share/royalties after recoupment | 45% |
| Service fee only (no backend) | 45% |
| Marketing/data support provided by partner/platform | 10% |
| Other | 10% |

Notes: Results may not sum to 100% as respondents could select multiple options. Note small sample size, findings should be treated as directional.

Source: Responses to the industry and workforce survey question "Thinking of a typical project, which deal terms applied to your business?" n=20 games business respondents.

### Table 33: Opportunities influencing business outlook in games

| Opportunities | % of respondents |
|---|---|
| Partnerships and co-productions that unlock scale/finance | 61% |
| Access to skilled talent/capacity expansion | 43% |
| Access to new markets or platforms | 35% |
| Technology adoption & workflow automation | 35% |
| Better discoverability & data access | 30% |
| Major commission/slate deal | 22% |
| Stronger monetisation models | 22% |
| Access to capital on better terms | 17% |
| Catalogue/long-tail performance uplift | 17% |
| Infrastructure availability | 13% |
| Improved deal terms & rights positions | 0% |
| Other | 4% |

Notes: Note results may not sum to 100% as respondents could select multiple options.

Source: Responses to the industry and workforce survey question “What are the top three opportunities influencing your business outlook?” n=23 games business respondents.

### Table 34: Risks influencing business outlook in games

| Risks | % of respondents |
|---|---|
| Economic downturn or recession | 70% |
| Loss of funding sources | 61% |
| Increased competition or market saturation | 48% |
| Limited pathways to audiences | 35% |
| Technological disruptions (e.g. AI, automation) | 35% |
| Regulatory changes or policy shifts | 17% |
| Workforce or skills shortages | 17% |
| Reputational damage or public perception challenges | 4% |
| Cybersecurity threats or data breaches | 4% |
| Other | 9% |

Notes: Results may not sum to 100% as respondents could select multiple options.

Source: Responses to the industry and workforce survey question “What are the top three risks influencing your business outlook?” n=23 games business respondents.

# Stakeholder insights

- **Studio development pathways vary and evolve with experience, stability and learning capacity:** Stakeholders emphasised that there is no single or standard pathway for studio growth. Developers described how creative direction, technical ambition and business maturity tend to evolve unevenly, shaped by access to financial security, time to learn and external support. Many studios adopted deliberately conservative approaches in their early projects to build foundational skills and limit complexity. Stakeholders noted that when a degree of stability or success is achieved studios can gain the freedom to experiment, challenge assumptions and pursue more distinctive creative directions. This shift is often supported through mentorship, peer networks and accumulated experience rather than formal industry structures. By contrast, studios operating without this security are more likely to remain in delivery-focused or survival modes, limiting opportunities for organic growth and innovation.

> **"A big part of our approach [with a current project] has been to learn the fundamentals of proper video game rendering, so we're using a more realistic art style to learn that, with the hope that in our next game, we can start to actually question those assumptions more and do something that really pushes our boundaries."**
>
> – developer

- **Commercial and technological pressures have collapsed demand for junior roles:** Stakeholders reported that current market conditions have materially reduced studios' capacity and willingness to hire junior developers. Constrained funding, heightened delivery risk and an oversupply of experienced talent have made senior and mid-level hires the commercially rational choice. At the same time, AI tools are increasingly substituting for junior-level production tasks, allowing senior staff to maintain output without expanding teams. Together, these pressures have sharply reduced demand for entry-level roles, regardless of long-term workforce needs.

- **Lack of structured training pathways makes junior hiring higher risk:** Separately, stakeholders identified the shortage of formalised development pathways as a major barrier to junior recruitment. Games studios lack shared training frameworks, progression standards or supported transition models from junior to senior roles. Past experiences of hiring juniors without sufficient mentoring capacity have reinforced leadership perceptions that early-career recruitment introduces operational risk and management complexity. In the absence of external support or incentives, studios are disinclined to absorb these costs, further entrenching reliance on experienced hires.

> **"A lot of the bigger studios are holding on to their most senior talent and not investing... If we need to do some hiring, there are a lot of senior people out there that got laid off from larger studios who are looking for work, so we could hire a junior and invest all this money in scaling them up, or we could just skip straight to mid- or senior-level and get somebody really good."**
>
> – developer

- **Where support and community clusters, talent follows:** Stakeholders described Australia's games workforce as highly mobile, with developers moving to where funding, momentum and community are strongest. Melbourne was repeatedly cited as a gravitational centre for its creative culture as well as sustained state support which interviewees reported has created real pathways to start projects, scale studios and stay. Several stakeholders highlighted developers who had relocated to Victoria because of better support and, after a successful title, went on to invest back into the local ecosystem. At the same time, stakeholders noted a sense of fragmentation across the national scene, where high-quality work is being produced in multiple cities but often without strong visibility or connection between regions. In this context, personal relationships, peer support and shared spaces play an outsized role in holding the ecosystem together, influencing where talent circulates and, ultimately, where it puts down roots.

- **Productivity and support are the major areas of AI adoption so far:** Stakeholders described AI as already embedded in day-to-day studio workflows, primarily as a tool to improve efficiency rather than replace creative labour. Common uses included playtest analysis, community management, social media drafting, note-taking, captioning and coding assistance, where AI functions as an editor, accelerator or support layer for existing work. Agentic coding tools were noted for increasing the speed and sophistication of senior developers' output. Stakeholders emphasised that, within their studios, AI adoption has not been a primary driver of job losses, instead reflecting pragmatic responses to tight budgets and delivery pressures.
- **AI is widely seen as the only major platform shift on the near-term horizon:** Stakeholders consistently framed AI as the most significant technological change facing the games sector in recent years. While past decades were marked by frequent platform and hardware shifts, many described the current moment as one of relative stagnation beyond AI, with limited expectation of near-term breakthroughs in interfaces or devices outside of cloud-based technologies. This uncertainty was viewed as both a challenge and a prompt for adaptability, reinforcing the need for studios to remain flexible and responsive as AI capabilities continue to evolve and reshape development.
- **Timing mismatch between games development and the Digital Games Tax Offsets (DGTO) completion-based settings:** Stakeholders described a gap between an offset realised on a game's completion and a development model that often runs over 3 to 4 years, with releases that evolve over time. The completion offset is realised only once a game is completed and certified, with the 30% claimed in the income year of first release. Studios therefore must fund the build from other sources and recover the offset at the end. Screen faces the same completion-gated structure but is able to cashflow it through lending secured against the expected rebate; comparable finance is less accessible in games, so the timing is harder for studios with limited working capital. The $500,000 minimum qualifying expenditure, which is assessed per game, not across a studio's slate, compounds this for smaller independents. Some of these perceptions may partly reflect uneven understanding of the offset, consistent with feedback that screen-inherited processes and terminology are hard to navigate.[162] Further, IGEA has separately advocated for changes to the DGTO to improve access for mid-sized studios.[163]

> "The incentive [DGTO] is built on this concept of publishing and delivering to market like a theatrical release. [Developers] will always highlight it's difficult to get the 30% federal because they don't deliver a project in the same way, release can take up to four years..."
>
> – games executive

162 For further detail, see the Games *Enablement and support* chapter in this report.
163 ScreenHub 2026, *Digital Games Tax Offset a lifeline for Australian game studios*.

*Diets & Deities*

- **Strong demand highlights growing scale and maturity of the games industry:** Stakeholders across studios and agencies described a significant increase in the volume and quality of games funding applications. While this has made funding allocation more competitive, it was widely viewed as a positive signal of growth, creative ambition and professional maturity. Agency stakeholders emphasised that constrained budgets, rather than a lack of strong projects, are the primary limiting factor, pointing to the scale of unmet demand as evidence of a vibrant and expanding development ecosystem.
- **Games development builds highly transferable cross-industry skills:** Stakeholders highlighted that games development cultivates advanced, future-facing skills in real-time engines, interactive systems, simulation and visualisation that are increasingly in demand across a wide range of industries. These capabilities are applied beyond games in defence, architecture, mining, manufacturing and more, positioning games as a source of "weightless exports" and a broader digital skills engine rather than a standalone creative industry.
- **Games skills generate significant spillovers across the broader economy:** At the same time, stakeholders noted that the transferability of games skills can create competitive pressures for studios, particularly in regions where adjacent industries offer higher wages. Developers with specific skills and experience were described as highly attractive to other sectors, reinforcing the idea that games studios often act as training grounds for talent that is later absorbed elsewhere in the economy.

> **"When I registered for Unreal Fest, they asked what industry I worked in, and games was just one of so many options. If you've got skills with the right engines and in visualisation, you're attractive to a lot of other industries."**
> – developer

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Economic Insights

*Dryft City Kyngs*

# Publishing, distribution and exhibition

Games > Creation > Development > **Publishing, distribution and exhibition** > Enablement and support

## Publishing and distribution in games extend beyond initial release and are closely tied to ongoing operation.

**This stage includes publishing arrangements, marketing, community engagement, storefront placement, monetisation and ongoing live services, often continuing for years after release. Commercial outcomes depend on sustained visibility, platform dynamics and player engagement, not just launch performance.**

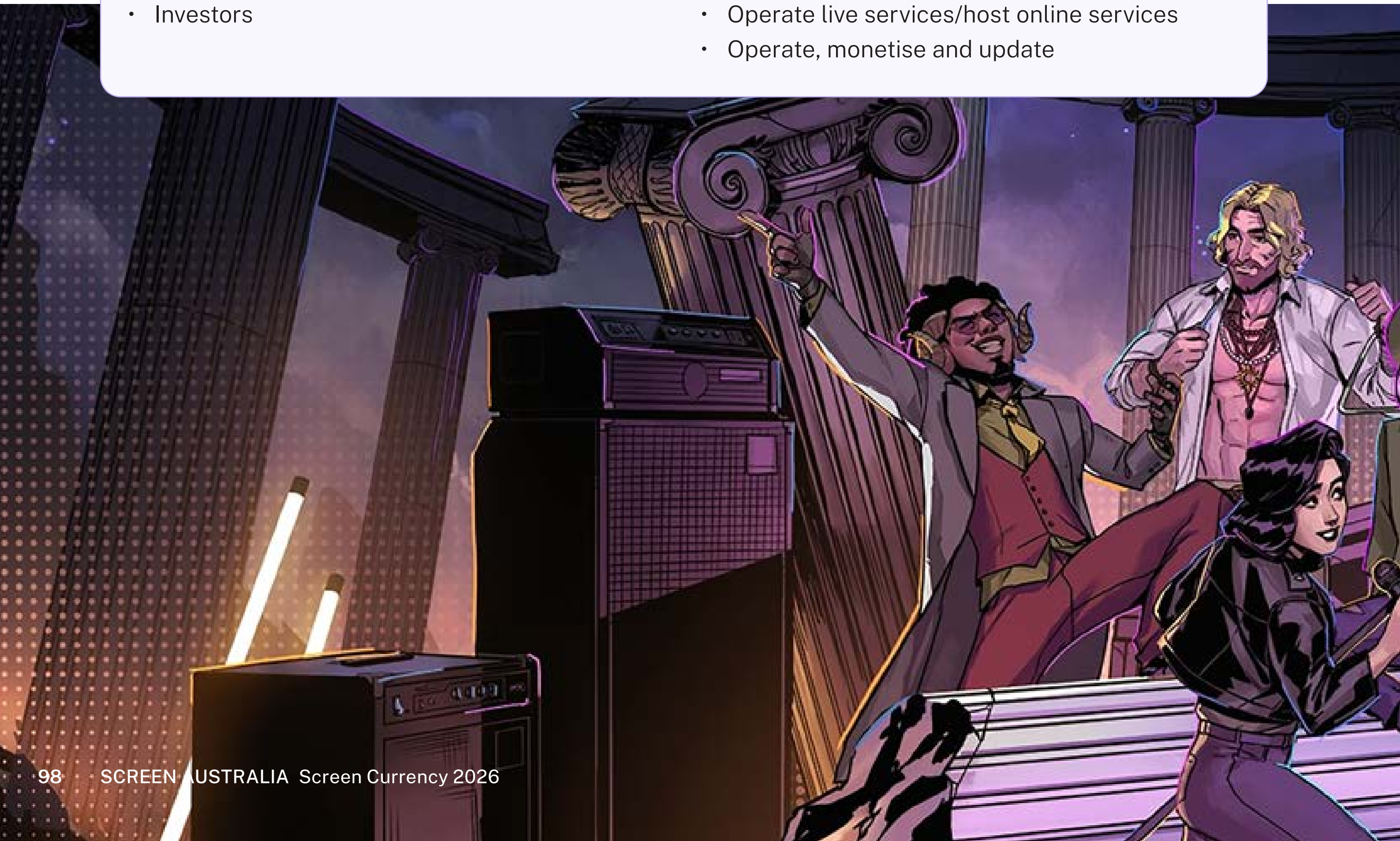
**For Australian studios, access to markets is shaped by a combination of self-publishing, publisher partnerships and platform governance, with control over data, monetisation and update cycles playing a decisive role in long-term performance.**

### Key industry participants

- Publishers
- Developers
- Platforms (storefronts and services)
- Production support partners
- Retail/physical distribution partners
- Investors

### Key activities

- Plan go-to-market
- Prepare and certify release
- Distribute and release
- Market and activate community
- Deliver content and updates
- Operate live services/host online services
- Operate, monetise and update



**Games publishing, distribution and exhibition are market-facing stages of the games value chain:** they cover how games are marketed, how they reach players through storefronts and platforms and how they are showcased to audiences and the industry. In Australia, this includes game developers and studios (many of whom self-publish), specialist publishing labels and production service providers (e.g. marketing, PR, community management, quality assurance and localisation) and major global platform holders and storefront operators that largely control access to end users (including console marketplaces, PC storefronts and mobile app stores).

**Games exhibition spans physical and digital channels.** In Australia, this includes notable industry and public events (such as Melbourne International Games Week and PAX Aus), playable showcases and awards programs (including the Australian Game Developer Awards). Digital exhibition within platforms and games marketplaces includes storefront features, demos and virtual platform festivals, as well as through creator-driven media such as livestreaming and social platforms.

Survey results suggest **capability and business activity are concentrated upstream (creation and development), with comparatively less dedicated capacity in publishing, distribution and exhibition in Australia.** Of business survey respondents (n=63), 11% reported operating in games distribution and 5% in exhibition. Of games workforce respondents (n=89), 7% reported working in distribution and 2% in exhibition. Interview evidence suggests that **in smaller independent studios that make up most of the Australian games industry, responsibility for publishing and distribution is handled internally and is often founder-led**.

**Survey responses suggest that games businesses derive income from a mix of sources**, with the largest average shares reported against games marketplaces/platforms (38%) and business-to-business income (39%) (Table 35). Smaller shares were reported against production services and commissioned work (10%) and grants, philanthropy and member-based support (7%) (recoded from write-in responses). Minor shares were also attributed to traditional screen channels (broadcast, BVOD and SVOD) – these small shares may reflect responses from businesses who operate across both screen and games or ancillary screen-related income for a games-led business (through promotional/video production or other screen services).

*Stray Gods*

### Table 35: Breakdown of games business income by platforms/channel

| Platform/channel | Average % of income |
|---|---|
| Business-to-business (other) | 39% |
| Games marketplace/platform | 38% |
| Production services & commissioned work (fees for service) (recode) | 10% |
| Grants, philanthropy and member-based support (non-market) (recode) | 7% |
| BVOD | 4% |
| Commercial or public broadcast | 4% |
| SVOD | 1% |
| Pay TV | 0% |
| Cinema | 0% |
| Short-form online video | 0% |
| Rights & secondary exploitation (recode) | 0% |
| Non-theatrical/event-based exhibition (recode) | 0% |
| Merchandise and ancillary (recode) | 0% |
| Other (N/A) | 0% |

Notes: Percentages are based on self-reported allocations and should be treated as indicative. Respondents may interpret categories differently, and some revenues received via business counterparties may ultimately relate to consumer-facing channels (e.g. cinema, SVOD).

Source: Responses to the industry and workforce survey question: “What is the percentage of your income from the following platforms and channels?” n=29 games businesses/organisations.

**Games are distributed and monetised via a range of pathways with differing commercial considerations.** The following table summarises main pathways by which games reach players, based on how access is provided and how the game is delivered, key commercial considerations and relevance to the Australian games industry.

Spotlight

# Australian games distribution, revenue models and commercial considerations

| Distribution approach | What's involved | Revenue model(s) | Key commercial considerations | Australian dynamics |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Physical retail (boxed)** | Player acquires a physical copy (disc/cartridge/box) via a physical or online retailer/wholesaler. | One-off purchase. Collector editions<br>Paid add-ons (via downloadable content (DLC)) | Stock, returns and discounting risk<br>Retail placement drives sales<br>Slower to iterate than digital-only releases | Generally limited. More common for large publishers or special editions. Relevant as a niche collector channel. |
| **Digital storefront (transactional download)** | Player acquires a game per title via a storefront, purchased or free; delivery is via download. | One-off purchase<br>DLC/expansion<br>In-game purchases<br>Ads (usually mobile) | Discoverability/featuring is critical<br>Platform rules and fees shape outcomes<br>Pricing and discount strategy | Core channel for most Australian studios, given PC focus, export orientation and the need to reach global markets digitally. |
| **Subscription library (e.g. Xbox Game Pass or PlayStation Plus)** | Player gains access to a catalogue of games through a subscription, typically downloaded/claimed within the service (even if streaming is also offered). | Platform licence fee for inclusion<br>Sometimes engagement bonuses/promotional support | Must be selected by the platform<br>Renewal is uncertain<br>Outcomes will depend on platform promotion and audience fit<br>Limited direct audience relationship | Platform-driven choice to feature games, limited ability for Australian developers to influence selection. |
| **Cloud streaming (play from cloud)** | Player primarily plays via streaming (no local install required for core experience). Distinct because delivery is streaming-first. | Usually bundled with a subscription<br>Sometimes linked to purchases elsewhere (varies by service) | High reliance on cloud platform infrastructure and terms<br>Can lower hardware barriers for players | Growing relevance as platform ecosystems expand streaming features and devices. |
| **Direct-to-consumer digital distribution** | Player acquires game via developer/publisher-controlled delivery (download) rather than a major storefront being the primary point of sale and delivery. | Direct sales<br>Bundles/supporter editions<br>Donations/memberships | Higher margin and direct customer relationship<br>No guarantee of traffic (marketing/audience-building essential)<br>Responsibility for payments and support | Relevant for niche/community-driven titles or early prototypes. Typically supplements storefront distribution at scale. |
| **Location or event-based access** | Player experiences the game in a venue or event context (arcades, exhibitions, festivals, touring installs). | Ticketing<br>Venue revenue share<br>Sponsorship<br>Grants | Strong for awareness/community-building<br>Usually limited scale | Often valuable for cultural visibility/community reach (especially for locally made work), typically nil/small revenue driver. |

A small sample of games businesses (n=12) responded to the survey question investigating primary distribution arrangements. As such, responses should be interpreted directionally. Survey results indicate **studios self-publishing** (67%) is the most common arrangement for respondents, followed by **client delivered work (no public distribution)** (58%) (Table 36). The reduced percentages of publisher-led pathways may indicate studios are actively taking on greater responsibility for marketing, production management and delivery risk in exchange for flexibility and, potentially, a greater share of upside. It may also simply reflect the difficulty developers reported in securing international and local publishing deals and a contraction in that market.

**Platform dynamics, monetisation and access to audiences vary depending on the hardware a game is released for.** On **PC**, an online survey of PC game developers from the USA and UK suggests Valve's Steam remains the central storefront for most premium games and is widely perceived by developers as the default route to market, and 72% of developers saw Steam as a monopoly.[164] Steam competes with alternatives including Epic Games Store, GOG, itch.io and publisher-run launchers. Valve's standard platform fee is commonly described as 30%, with reduced tiers for top-earning titles (25% after US$10m and 20% after US$50m in revenue). Competing PC storefronts differentiate through economics and promotional strategy. Epic Games Store positions itself on more developer-friendly terms (88%/12% split) model. Epic's own reporting shows growing activity and spend, but its strategy relies heavily on marketing incentives, promotions and ecosystem leverage.[165]

On **console**, distribution is primarily channelled through the closed ecosystems of PlayStation (Sony), Xbox (Microsoft) and Nintendo. Platform holders set the technical, content and release requirements and games typically need to pass platform review/certification processes prior to release – Xbox and Nintendo have publicly available step-by-step guides online for developers.[166] Console development resources are often confidential and shared with developers under non-disclosure agreements. These requirements make compliance, QA and working relationships with platform representatives' material factors in development and launch planning for console releases.

On **mobile**, distribution is dominated by Apple's App Store and Google Play. Commercial settings (including service fees), discoverability and live-ops performance are critical, particularly because user acquisition and conversion are tightly linked to how a game is surfaced and monetised within those ecosystems. Both Apple and Google offer reduced fee programs for smaller developers (e.g. 15% tiers up to specified thresholds).[167]

**Table 36: Typical games project primary distribution arrangements**

| Distribution arrangement | % of respondents |
|---|---|
| Self-distributed/self-published | 67% |
| Client-delivered (no public distribution) | 58% |
| International publisher/distributor/sales agent | 33% |
| Direct deal with platform/publisher (SVOD/app store) | 25% |
| Australian publisher/distributor/sales agent | 17% |
| Other | 8% |

Notes: Percentages do not sum to 100% as multiple selections was allowed. The small sample size of responses to this question may not be representative of the entire games industry.

Source: Responses to the industry and workforce survey question: "Thinking of a typical project for your business, what are the primary publishing/distribution arrangements?" n=12 games businesses/organisations.

164 Rokky 2025, *The State of PC Game Distribution*.
165 Epic Games 2025, *Epic Games Store Updates Revenue Share: Keep 100% of the First $1M Per Product, Per Year*; Epic Games 2026, *Epic Games Store 2025 Year in Review*.
166 See: Nintendo, The Process; Microsoft Learn, Certification (Xbox) step-by-step guide.
167 Apple Developer, App Store Small Business Program; Google Support, Service fees.

# Stakeholder insights

- **Go-to-market capability is uneven and increasingly decisive:** Stakeholders described two common pathways: some studios actively seek external support for marketing, production support and distribution, while others treat these as capabilities they progressively build in-house as the studio matures (often after learning via smaller scale, earlier releases).
- **Cross-industry experience can be a meaningful springboard to bolster discoverability:** One stakeholder described how experience in the advertising industry translated into a practical method to engage with the target player base and test mechanics, track behaviour and iterate quickly.

> “[They] had worked in advertising for 10 years and it was a superpower. They knew how to reach an audience and adjust the message if it didn't work, with website plugins to see where people browsed, stopped and what they watched.”
>
> – developer

- **Publisher partnerships are valued for funding, as well as learning and distribution:** Studios framed publishers in a variety of ways, as an avenue for finance to complete projects, as critical supports for release of finished projects, and as a way to learn marketing discipline.

> “Having a publisher is important for us mainly for funding... We had a great experience with [international publisher]... and we want to work with one or two more to see how others approach the process and learn from them.”
>
> – developer

- **Business acumen is a differentiator when it comes to publishing, distribution and exhibition:** Many developers feel they acquire the necessary skills to support publishing activities by necessity, not through formal training. Stakeholders described “being pushed” into budgets, management and sustainability thinking as studios scale and noted that these skills can create an advantage even without formal business education.
- **Perceived knowledge gap in local capital markets:** Some stakeholders involved in publishing pointed to the need for more shared understanding of games business models among investors in Australia and New Zealand, with client work used to keep studios afloat while they attempt to build toward publishing capability.
- **Data and AI are shifting power in publishing support and partner matching:** Stakeholders described a growing ecosystem of specialist services using large datasets (including storefront and publisher data) to strengthen pitching, market positioning and partner selection, potentially advantaging organisations that can aggregate and operationalise data at scale.

> “There are agencies now injecting all the data from Steam and publishers... surfacing games and developers and pairing them with great partners, helping to develop pitches using AI, much more efficiently than we could manually.”
>
> – publisher

- **Marketing “busy work” is being automated and generative AI utilised:** Notwithstanding general aversion to creative use, stakeholders emphasised AI's practical role in streamlining coordination and documentation (notes, captions, agendas), speeding up marketing tasks and supporting developers who may have limited formal business experience.

> “We use AI notetaking, recording, automatic captioning... At this point, Gemini or similar is doing most of the busy admin work [related to marketing] my job used to involve.”
>
> – developer

# Enablement and support



## Games development relies on a set of enabling systems that support production over extended periods.

**These include access to skilled technical and creative labour, education and training pathways, finance, digital infrastructure, middleware and engines, regulatory settings and industry networks, including the engine and platform ecosystems within which studios operate.**

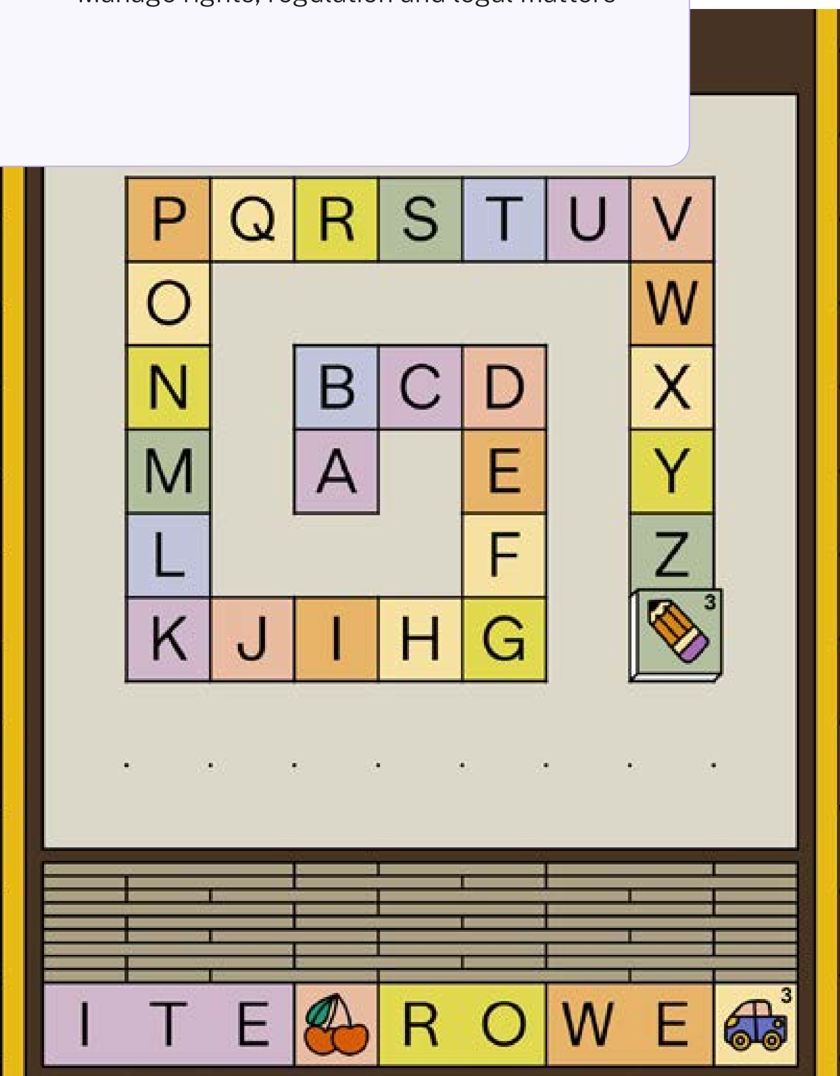
**In Australia, these systems underpin a diverse range of studio models and development pathways and influence the sector's ability to manage risk, retain talent and compete internationally. Their effectiveness shapes whether games businesses can sustain long development cycles and build durable, scalable operations.**

### Key industry participants

- Screen Australia
- State/territory screen and games agencies
- Education providers
- Service infrastructure providers
- Marketing and publicity agencies
- IGEA
- Rights management, regulatory and legal organisations

### Key activities

- Educate and train
- Provide infrastructure and technology
- Invest and support industry development
- Advertise and market content
- Manage rights, regulation and legal matters



*Gubbins*

# Education and training

**Education and training provide the entry points and foundational skills that studios build on through practice-based learning, mentorship and project work.** In games, the mix tends to span university pathways, vocational providers and industry-led programs, with training needs shaped by both technical roles (programming, pipelines, production) and creative practice (design, art, narrative, UX).

**Specific university degrees** include Queensland University of Technology's (QUT) Bachelor of Games and Interactive Environments,[168] **VET/TAFE pathways** such as TAFE NSW's qualification in animation and visual effects (also relevant to screen),[169] and **specialist private providers** like the Academy of Interactive Entertainment (AIE),[170] offering a mix of graduate, vocational and industry-led qualifications.

**Key issues and themes** emerging from the research and consultation in relation to education and training include the following:

- **Strong interest, limited entry pathways:** Studio stakeholders reported no shortage of aspiring developers but limited genuine entry-level roles – especially at indie studios. Individuals described having to build skills themselves through experimentation and self-directed learning, often supplemented by informal guidance from more experienced practitioners in the industry. Some indie studio stakeholders noted that to offer structured graduate programs would likely require government co-investment and support to be viable.
- **Weaker informal mentoring networks:** Some developers felt the community infrastructure that previously provided "free advice" and mentoring has thinned. They linked this to disruption associated with COVID-19 and the loss of physical collaboration spaces, as well as simple scale effects as the sector has grown and become less tightly networked.

# Infrastructure and technology

**Games production is increasingly enabled by a standardised technology stack**. Contemporary development commonly depends on widely used engines (notably Unity and Unreal), established middleware and platform ecosystems (console, mobile and PC storefronts) that provide tooling, distribution infrastructure and monetisation rails. This standardisation lowers barriers for smaller studios to build and ship, but it also concentrates technical dependency and introduces exposure to upstream platform/engine policy changes.

**Key issues and themes** emerging from the research and interviews in relation to infrastructure and technology include the following:

- **Stakeholders acknowledged both sides of the technology convergence dynamic:** They noted the practical benefits of stable tools for small-to-medium studios, alongside perceived platform risk when commercial terms shift. This was illustrated through references to the Unity runtime fee controversy[171] as a moment that "spooked a lot of people". Stakeholders reported continuing to use existing tools because they remained the best fit for their studio and requirements.
- **Stakeholders highlighted the criticality of specialist technical services as an enabling layer:** Particularly when it came to porting and platform compliance, small indie studios mentioned how they were able to access grant support to fund another local studio to port a title to console, reflecting how technical services can operate as a practical "capacity multiplier" for small teams.
- **A related theme is the technology convergence across both screen and games:** Stakeholders noted that real-time tools (particularly Unreal Engine) increasingly sit across both interactive development and screen production, creating opportunities for cross-sector capability but also potential competition for talent, particularly where employers in other sectors may have more capacity and scale.

168 QUT, Games and design courses.
169 TAFE NSW, Certificate IV in Screen and Media (Animation and Visual Effects).
170 AIE, Game art & animation.
171 In September 2023, Unity announced a proposed "Runtime Fee" that would charge developers per game install once certain revenue and install thresholds were reached. The policy drew widespread backlash because it was seen as difficult to budget for, potentially vulnerable to abuse (e.g. malicious repeat installs), and a major shift from Unity's prior predictable, seat-based licensing model. Unity later revised the proposal and ultimately cancelled the Runtime Fee, reverting to a subscription (per-seat) approach.

# Investment, support and industry development

**Public investment, support and industry development play an important role in enabling and supporting games industry activity in Australia.** The system encompasses a federal tax offset, direct grants and business support programs administered by Screen Australia; state and territory-based incentives, grants and capacity building programs administered by state-based screen agencies.

**Residency programs** are another form of government support, notably Screen Queensland's Games Residency – a 52-week program for games developers, focused on developing skills and knowledge required to develop new games, studios, and businesses in the sector.[172]

**IGEA is the peak industry association representing Australian and New Zealand companies** in the computer and video games industry. IGEA supports business and public policy interests of the games industry through advocacy, research and education programs, and offers information and support for businesses and individuals.

In addition to what has been explored in the value chain analysis, **key issues and themes** emerging from the research and interviews in relation to investment, support and industry development include:

- **Uncertainty or unawareness amongst developers about public support that is available:** Some stakeholders noted that parts of the developer community have limited visibility of the public programs available and that others are discouraged from applying by processes and terminology that feel inherited from screen funding models and do not translate cleanly to games development.

# Advertising and marketing

**Marketing and audience-building are increasingly embedded throughout games development rather than a "release-only" activity.** For most studios, discoverability is influenced by storefront dynamics, their ability to engage with a player community, influencer/creator ecosystems and ongoing live-service or update cycles. Stakeholders described a practical shift toward validation-led approaches (early proof of audience/market fit) and the need to integrate marketing thinking earlier, particularly for smaller teams working within constrained budgets and crowded global storefronts.

Given the export-oriented nature of Australian games revenue, effective marketing and publishing pathways are closely linked to international networks and platforms rather than domestic distribution channels alone.

# Rights management, regulation and legal

**Rights management in games, like screen, is tightly connected to commercial outcomes** as IP ownership shapes downstream control over sequels, ports, platform expansions and long-tail exploitation.

**Many of the same regulatory bodies that apply to screen content also intersect with games.** Under the National Classification Scheme administered by the Australian Classification Board, computer games must be classified before they can be legally sold or distributed in Australia, with reforms now reflecting issues such as in-game purchases and simulated gambling content. Other regulators, including the Australian Communications and Media Authority, the eSafety Commissioner and competition and consumer protection agencies, shape digital distribution, online safety and consumer rights in the games sector.

Similarly, a broad range of **specialist legal and professional services** provide important support across the games industry, including in relation to intellectual property and media law, accounting and tax advice, financial structuring, and general business advice.

172 Screen Queensland 2025, Games Residency.

*Misc. A Tiny Tale*

**Key issues and themes** emerging from the research and consultation in relation to infrastructure and technology include the following:

- **Copyright is a central concern in an uncertain operating environment:** Stakeholder feedback highlighted that copyright remains a central concern, but that the operating environment is shifting quickly, particularly with the growth of AI tools in creative and production workflows. One stakeholder described the current moment as both “hyper aware” and “polarised”, indicating that there is strong interest in protecting copyright and creative rights as a studio, alongside uncertainty about how to safely and productively take advantage of new tools.
- **Difference in regulatory settings between screen and games:** Games, by contrast to screen, is a relatively unregulated industry. Regulatory settings that affect games are typically not industry-specific and include broader frameworks that shape consumer access and monetisation (for example, platform rules, digital marketplace norms and evolving expectations around data and user protections). In practice, studios often experience these settings indirectly, through platform requirements, store policies and contractual terms, rather than through sector-specific regulation alone. Discussion of regulation in games focused more on issues that extended beyond the industry, such as the impacts of AI.

# Strengthening the evidence base

## This study draws on the best available data sources and reasonable inference to provide a comprehensive picture of screen and games industry structure and dynamics.

Despite efforts to integrate multiple data sources, material data gaps remain that constrain the level of direct measurement achievable in some areas. The most significant evidence gap remains the absence of robust national accounts-level data for the games industry, limiting the ability to assess its full economic contribution.

**Limitations of the national evidence base and opportunities to strengthen it are outlined below.** See Appendix 1: Approach for further information on the methods used to develop this report and their limitations.

- **Industry data limitations:** Core statistical frameworks – including ANZSIC, OSCA and occupation-based approaches such as BCARR – provide useful foundations but have recognised gaps. A key example is digital games development, which is not captured within a dedicated ANZSIC 4-digit classification. This structural limitation restricts the ability to isolate games activity consistently across ABS datasets. In addition, national datasets covering film, TV and digital games were last updated in 2021/22. Notwithstanding the above, the recently released OSCA includes a new code for Digital Game Developer (273131), and this will provide a further reference point as time series develop on this occupation. OSCA also includes a new occupation for Animator or Visual Effects Artist (242331) and other reforms related to the screen sector.
- **Role of industry-led surveys:** Given these limitations, industry-led surveys – particularly the IGEA Australian Game Development Survey – remain essential for developing a more contemporary picture of the screen and games sector. These sources provide coverage and contextual detail not available in national datasets.
- **Capturing innovation:** Reporting innovation in the screen and games industries presents ongoing challenges, as innovation is often diffuse, rapidly evolving and embedded in creative, technological and commercial practices that are not consistently visible in existing statistical or administrative datasets.
- **Structural complexity:** Certain parts of the value chain are less visible in existing administrative and survey data. These include development finance, marketing and promotion expenditure and the flow of rights and revenues across production, distribution and exhibition. Measurement challenges are compounded by structural differences across formats and genres, where value chains differ markedly between feature film, TV, SVOD and games.
- **Ensuring qualitative depth:** In some areas, qualitative insights were strong but quantitative evidence was comparatively thin. Stakeholder consultations provided detailed perspectives on commissioning dynamics, deal structures and the growing influence of global platforms in shaping creative and commercial outcomes. While these insights informed interpretation, they are not yet consistently reflected in quantitative datasets.
- **Refinement and linkage:** Some findings should be interpreted as indicative rather than definitive. Productivity and performance measures derived from BLADE provide valuable directional insights but remain constrained by industry classification boundaries and reporting practices. Further refinement of classifications and linkage approaches would strengthen confidence in these measures over time.
- **Balancing industry engagement fatigue and research cycles:** Stakeholder feedback highlighted the rapid pace of change across the sector, with some suggesting more frequent research cycles, potentially as often as

6-monthly. While this reflects strong demand for timely insights, it must be balanced against engagement fatigue, resource constraints and sector goodwill.

- **Survey design and coordination:** Stakeholder feedback highlighted concerns about survey fatigue and duplication. Screen and games practitioners are often asked to provide similar information to multiple organisations such as government and industry associations. Defining a core set of indicators and aligning the timing, sampling and comparability of surveys could reduce duplication, serve multiple analytical needs and improve data quality. Any move toward greater coordination would need to carefully manage governance, privacy and data-sharing requirements, while preserving research independence and analytical integrity.

# Use of administrative and linked data

As outlined above, the current utility of a number of key existing datasets is constrained by classification, coverage and reporting limitations. With targeted methodological effort and structural improvements, deeper engagement with datasets such as BLADE could progressively unlock more meaningful and policy-relevant insights over time.

- **National data sets:** While national datasets offer scale and consistency, their ability to represent screen and games activity, particularly at a granular level, is currently limited by broad industry classifications, partial coverage of creative activity and challenges in isolating games-related businesses and employment within existing frameworks.
- **Analytical potential of BLADE:** Recent developments, including the availability of BLADE through ABS TableBuilder, improves analytical access and creates new opportunities for interrogation of firm-level and longitudinal data (subject to appropriate methodological safeguards). BLADE has the potential to yield richer insights into firm dynamics, productivity, business survival and growth pathways, particularly when linked with targeted industry surveys that provide sector-specific context not captured in administrative data alone.
- **Classification reform:** Longer-term, refinement of ANZSIC 4-digit classifications to better reflect contemporary and emerging industry structures – including dedicated recognition of games development – would materially enhance the analytical power of administrative datasets. Similarly, future adoption of updated occupational classifications, such as OSCA, could significantly improve visibility of specialist creative, technical and hybrid roles, strengthening analysis of workforce composition, skills and labour dynamics across the sector.
- **Data quality and discontinuities:** Realising the potential of these data sets requires careful investigation of anomalies, discontinuities and structural breaks in the data. These may arise from changes in reporting behaviour, classification boundaries, business structures, or the hybrid nature of screen and games activity and must be addressed to support robust interpretation.

# Methodological evolution of the value chain framework

The value chain framework used in this study is intended as a flexible analytical tool rather than a fixed model. Ongoing refinement will help ensure it remains responsive to industry feedback and capable of capturing emerging forms of activity.

- **Stakeholder feedback:** The value chain framework was well received by stakeholders during testing. Feedback highlighted that creative production is not linear and that a simplified matrix representations have inherent limitations. The framework supported the analysis well by providing a consistent structure for organising qualitative and quantitative information across the sector.
- **Data alignment and granularity:** The application of the framework was somewhat constrained by data availability, particularly where the broadness of ANZSIC classifications required the bundling of stages such as creation and production, or distribution and exhibition. **Sample sizes across some value chain segments were adequate but limited**, reinforcing the need for cautious interpretation and continued data development.
- **Improved data availability and capturing emerging activity:** The value chain provides a strong qualitative foundation for organising evidence and analysis and can continue to evolve alongside improvements in data availability and methodology. Future research could explore further disaggregation of the value chain where data allows and adapting the framework to better capture emerging activity, including for example creator-led production, immersive formats and new screen and games artforms.

# Glossary and acronyms

### Above-the-line roles
Creative leadership roles that shape the content and direction of a screen project, such as writers, directors, producers and principal cast. These roles are typically engaged early and influence creative and commercial outcomes.

### ACMA
Australian Communications and Media Authority. Australia's national regulator for broadcasting, telecommunications, radiocommunications, unsolicited communications and certain types of online content.

### AGDS
Australian Game Development Survey. Annual survey of Australian game developers, run by the Interactive Games and Entertainment Association (IGEA).

### Audience access
The ability for content to reach, be found and be used by audiences, shaped by platforms and distributors, marketing and algorithms, and availability across services, devices and screens. It also reflects practical barriers to access, including affordability (subscriptions, tickets and other costs), required technology or connectivity, and accessibility for people with disability (e.g. captions, audio description and interface design).

### ABC
Australian Broadcasting Corporation. Australia's largest public service broadcaster.

### ABS
Australian Bureau of Statistics.

### Australian National Accounts: Input-Output Tables
A set of national accounts tables produced by the ABS that describe inter-industry relationships within the economy. They are commonly used to estimate indirect and flow-on economic effects.

### Backend
Revenue participation earned after a production has recouped its initial costs and contractual distribution fees. Backend typically refers to a share of profits or net receipts paid to rights holders, producers, talent or investors based on the commercial performance of a project.

### BCARR
Bureau of Communications, Arts and Regional Research.

### Below-the-line roles
Technical, craft and production roles involved in delivering a screen project, such as crew, editors, designers, camera, sound and production staff. These roles are typically engaged during production and post-production.

### BLADE
Business Longitudinal Analysis Data Environment. BLADE is an economic data tool combining tax, trade and intellectual property data with information from ABS surveys to provide a better understanding of the Australian economy and businesses performance over time.

### Catalogue
The body of completed screen or games works a company owns or controls. A catalogue can generate ongoing revenue, audience engagement and strategic value over time. *See also: Slate.*

### Commissioning
The process by which a broadcaster, platform, or publisher agrees to finance, acquire, or pre-purchase a project that is yet to be made, usually in exchange for specific rights, exclusivity, or control over distribution.

### Cost-plus/service-based model
A business model where a company is paid a fee or margin to deliver work for a client, rather than sharing in long-term ownership or profits from the content.

### Cultural and Creative Satellite Accounts
A satellite account produced by the ABS (and updated by BCARR) that measures the economic contribution of cultural and creative activity, including output, employment and gross value added, using a framework aligned with the National Accounts.

### Discoverability
The extent to which content can be found by audiences, particularly on digital platforms or storefronts. Discoverability is often influenced by algorithms, promotion, timing and competition for attention.

### Distribution
The process of making content available to audiences, including release strategy, platform placement, marketing, delivery and rights management.

### Exhibition
The presentation of screen content to audiences, including cinemas, festivals, broadcast TV and other viewing environments.

### Foreign production
Foreign production refers to film, television, or other screen content projects that are initiated, developed, and primarily controlled by non-Australian entities which undertake some or all production or post-production activity in Australia.

### GDP
Gross domestic product. A measure of the total economic activity of a country, representing the value of goods and services produced within a given period.

### GVA
Gross value added. A measure of an industry's contribution to the economy, showing the value it adds after subtracting the cost of inputs.

### IP
Intellectual property. Legal rights over creative works such as films, TV programs, screenplays, music, games and characters, including the ability to license, sell, or commercially exploit them.

### Jobs in Australia (dataset)
A longitudinal administrative dataset produced by the ABS using linked employer-employee tax data. It provides detailed information on jobs and earnings by industry, occupation, geography and demographic characteristics, and enables analysis of job creation, destruction and worker mobility over time.

### Labour Account (dataset)
An integrated dataset produced by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) that reconciles data from multiple sources to provide a coherent picture of the Australian labour market. It aligns measures of jobs, employed persons, hours worked and labour income, and resolves differences between business-based and household-based data sources to produce internally consistent labour statistics.

### Live services/live operations (games)
Ongoing updates, content releases and community engagement activities that continue after a game's initial launch, sometimes for many years.

### Marketing and promotion
Activities and expenditure used to promote content to audiences, including advertising, publicity and audience engagement campaigns. See also P&A below.

### Minimum guarantee
A contractual provision in film distribution in which a distributor commits to paying a fixed upfront amount to a producer or rights holder for the rights to distribute a title, regardless of its commercial performance. The distributor recoups this amount from the title's earnings before any further revenue share applies.

### Monetisation
The methods used to generate revenue from content, such as sales, subscriptions, advertising, in-game purchases, or licensing.

### NITV
National Indigenous Television.

### P&A
Prints & Advertising. Expenditure associated with releasing and marketing a film, including the costs of distribution materials (historically physical prints, now digital delivery) and promotional activity such as advertising, publicity and campaign spend. P&A is typically incurred at the point of release and recouped from box office or other distribution revenues before profit participation.

## PICA

Production Infrastructure Capacity Analysis (2025). A national sector analysis recently commissioned by Screen Australia to understand the current capacity and provision of Australia's screen production infrastructure and workforce. The study maps the Australian screen production sector (including film, TV, documentary, animation, digital games and online), assesses current and future workforce capacity needs and trends, evaluates education and training provision, incorporates state-by-state breakdowns, and provides evidence-based recommendations to inform policy, strategic planning and initiatives to support sustained sector growth.

## PDV

Post, digital and visual effects. The creative and technical work completed after filming, including editing, visual effects, sound, music and colour grading, as well as animation.

## Platform

A digital service or marketplace that distributes content to audiences, such as streaming services or games storefronts, often controlling access, data and commercial terms.

## Presales/advances

Up-front finance provided by distributors, broadcasters, or publishers in exchange for future rights to a project.

## Rights

The legal permissions that determine who can use, distribute, adapt, or monetise content and in which territories or formats.

## Self-publishing (games)

A model where a developer releases and markets a game directly, without a third-party publisher, taking on greater risk but retaining more control.

## Service businesses

Ongoing businesses that provide specialist services across multiple projects, such as post-production studios, visual effects houses, animation studios, production services, or technical support providers.

## Slate

The collection of projects a company is developing or producing at a given time, including works in development and in production. Managing a slate can help spread risk across multiple projects. See also: Catalogue.

## SPVs

Special purpose vehicles. SPVs and other project vehicles are separate legal entities created to deliver individual projects, often used to manage financing, risk and contractual arrangements. In screen production, these entities are commonly wound up once a project is completed.

## Value chain

The stages through which creative work moves, from idea and development through production, distribution and audience engagement. In practice, activity is often overlapping and cyclical rather than strictly linear.

## Vertical screen formats

Video content designed to be viewed vertically on smartphones and mobile devices, commonly distributed through platforms such as YouTube, TikTok and Instagram. These formats lower barriers to entry but often offer less predictable long-term income.

## VOD

Video on demand. Screen content that audiences can access at a time of their choosing, rather than through scheduled broadcast. Related definitions include:

Advertising-based Video on Demand (**AVOD**) is a form of VOD in which content is made available free to viewers and supported by advertising inserted before, during or after the streamed video, similar to traditional commercial TV.

Free Ad-Supported Streaming Television (**FAST**) is a form of ad-supported streaming that delivers curated, linear-style channels over the internet (e.g. Pluto TV, Tubi, Samsung TV Plus). It is often grouped with AVOD but distinct in offering scheduled channels rather than purely on-demand libraries.

Transactional Video on Demand (**TVOD**) is a form of VOD where users pay on a per-title basis, typically to rent (for a limited viewing window) or purchase digital access to a film or program.

Subscription Video on Demand (**SVOD**) is a form of VOD where users pay a recurring subscription fee for access to a library of content. SVOD providers in Australia include Netflix, Disney+, Prime Video, Paramount+ and Stan. Some SVOD providers offer AVOD tiers for lower recurring fees.

Broadcast Video on Demand (**BVOD**) are digital distribution platforms operated by free-to-air broadcasters that provide access to broadcast content either live or on demand. BVOD providers in Australia include 9Now, 10 Play, 7plus, ABC iView and SBS On Demand.

## Windows

The structured sequence of release periods during which a film is made available across different platforms and markets (e.g. cinema, TVOD, SVOD, FTA TV). The *theatrical window* refers specifically to the period of exclusive cinema exhibition before a film becomes available on other platforms.

# Appendix 1: Approach

A mixed methods research approach was used to undertake the analysis in this report. This appendix discusses the research approaches used and the associated context and limitations. This report was developed with some assistance from Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools. AI tools were used to support tasks such as data analysis, summarising information and editing. All AI-generated outputs were subject to human review and verification to ensure accuracy and alignment with the research objectives. Screen Australia uses AI in accordance with its AI Guiding Principles.

## Defining Australia's screen and games industry

The first step was to establish a comprehensive definition of the Australian screen and games industry suitable for the purposes of undertaking the research. This included defining an industry value chain, including the activities and key occupations across the value chain. The purpose was not to exhaustively define the screen and games sectors, but rather to ensure consistent structure and coverage to collect and map data and identify insights. It was also important to ensure that the definition reflected the practical ways in which the industry works and is interconnected, including the many and varied roles of people working in different areas of the industry.

Appendix 2: Screen and games value chains documents the full research and context underpinning the definition of the screen and games industry value chains applied in this research. The industry value chain definition was tested with Screen Australia and a range of stakeholders interviewed throughout the research.

## Overview of research methods

The research draws on a comprehensive range of primary and secondary data and information to maximise coverage across the different parts of the screen and games industry value chains as defined above. The following methods were used to gather evidence and data.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Industry and workforce survey** | Primary | Gain direct insights from businesses and workers into their work in the screen and games sectors to complement and triangulate with other data. |
| **Industry stakeholder interviews** | Primary | Consultations and interviews with businesses, industry peak bodies, and government agencies to gather deeper insights, case study input, and contextualise trends and dynamics evident in industry data. |
| **Document and literature review** | Secondary | Identify and consider publicly available reports, enquiries, academic and other publications to inform the analysis and primary research. |
| **Collection of existing industry and administrative datasets** | Secondary | Engagement with data custodians to identify relevant datasets available to support the research. |

Primary research design and prioritisation of requirements were informed by mapping available data and information sources and gaps, identifying sector stakeholders, and input from Screen Australia and other Screen Currency research teams.

These are outlined in the following sub-sections.

# Industry and workforce survey

A targeted survey of screen and games businesses and workers was undertaken to better understand industry dynamics and address priority information gaps identified through early background research, data collection, and consultations.

The survey was designed to:

- gather information directly from screen and games businesses and workers on:
  - the size and structure of screen and games businesses
  - sources of finance and revenue
  - ownership and control of intellectual property
  - engagement with Australian and global markets
  - occupations, roles and skills
  - employment arrangements, including freelance and contract work
  - career sustainability and progression
  - movement between screen, games and other industries.
  - key challenges and opportunities across different stages of creative activity.
- provide granular, comparable data to complement existing national and industry data sources (e.g. ABS, Screen Australia, IGEA, Skills and Workforce studies).
- capture both domestic and international activity and recognise multiple income streams and cross-industry roles.
- enable future repeatability by creating a standing survey instrument that Screen Australia can use to track change over time and support ongoing industry engagement.
- generate insights that can inform qualitative case studies, helping to link economic and business data with industry experience and outcomes.

These objectives have informed the design, sampling methodology, and delivery considerations.

The survey was designed collaboratively with Screen Australia and informed through early consultations with industry stakeholders. The survey was tested prior to release.

## Target population and sampling considerations

The target population for the survey included all participants (organisations and individuals) working in Australia's screen and games industry as defined within the industry value chain definition.

Questions, including categorisation of individuals' and organisations' work activities and income were aligned to the value chain and mapped accordingly through the analysis of the survey responses.

It was not possible to establish a target population size at a subsector level within the established value chain. This is due to a lack of standardised and consistent data collection across the industry and a lack of centralisation of aggregation of data and information across established industry bodies and government agencies.

Due to this complexity, a specific target sample size was not set, and effort was instead focused with support from Screen Australia and key industry peak bodies and stakeholders to:

- maximise the overall sample size (with a minimum desired sample size of 250 to satisfy a threshold degree of confidence in the overall statistical robustness of the sample assuming simple random sampling principles)
- ensure sufficient coverage of the sample within the different areas of the industry value chain
- ensure sufficient coverage of organisations of different sizes
- ensure the survey design and dissemination method did not unnecessarily contribute to non-response or response bias.

Survey responses are presented and used distributionally and presented alongside other data and information to make observations and inferences about the screen and games industry at large. The sample distribution across industry sub-sectors reflects those participants who chose to respond, and some parts of the value chain may therefore be over or under-represented compared with their actual share of the workforce. Survey results are presented with clear sample sizes and any specific limitations (e.g. low sample size) noted. Financial and numeric questions have not been extrapolated to derive population level estimates due to the survey not being designed as a census and given the complexity of defining target populations across the value chain.

# Survey period

The survey was opened on 13 November 2025 and closed on 7 December 2025.

## Survey response rate

There were **1,101 responses** to the survey, and of these, **765 were assessed as suitable to be included in the sample.** Suitability was based on completion of core demographic questions and a sufficient proportion of the mandatory core survey questions.

Information about the sample is provided in the following tables.

| I am responding to the survey on behalf of: | Number of respondents |
|---|---|
| Myself, as an employee, freelancer, or contractor working in Australia's film, television or games industry (only) | 517 |
| A business, not-for-profit organisation, industry peak body or association working in Australia's film, television, or games industry (only) | 202 |
| Both | 46 |
| **Total** | **765** |

| What is your usual place of work? | Number of respondents (n=765) |
|---|---|
| ACT | 16 |
| Greater Adelaide | 55 |
| Rest of SA | 13 |
| Greater Brisbane | 94 |
| Rest of QLD | 71 |
| Greater Darwin | 4 |
| Rest of NT | 9 |
| Greater Sydney | 206 |
| Rest of NSW | 47 |
| Greater Hobart | 10 |
| Rest of TAS | 6 |
| Greater Melbourne | 163 |
| Rest of VIC | 28 |
| Greater Perth | 49 |
| Rest of WA | 18 |
| Other AU | 14 |
| New Zealand | 12 |
| All other international | 34 |
| Did not respond | 194 |

Note: Individuals and businesses could select multiple locations for their usual place of work, so the sum of responses will be greater than the number of respondents to the survey.

| What is your age? | Number of respondents |
|---|---|
| 18–24 | 12 |
| 25–39 | 136 |
| 40–54 | 176 |
| 55–64 | 80 |
| 65+ | 30 |
| Did not respond | 331 |
| **Total** | **765** |

| What is your gender identity? | Number of respondents |
|---|---|
| Man or male | 212 |
| Woman or female | 207 |
| Non-binary/gender fluid | 13 |
| Other gender identity (option to self-describe) | 1 |
| Prefer not to answer | 6 |
| Did not respond | 326 |
| **Total** | **765** |

| Are you of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin? | Number of respondents |
|---|---|
| Aboriginal | 8 |
| Torres Strait Islander | - |
| Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander | - |
| Neither | 403 |
| Prefer not to answer | 21 |
| Did not respond | 333 |
| **Total** | **765** |

| Are you living with a disability? | Number of respondents |
|---|---|
| Yes | 64 |
| No | 338 |
| Prefer not to answer | 31 |
| Did not respond | 332 |
| **Total** | **765** |

| Do you identify as a person from a culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) background? | Number of respondents |
|---|---|
| Yes | 66 |
| No | 345 |
| Prefer not to answer | 20 |
| Did not respond | 334 |
| **Total** | **765** |

| Distribution of respondents by industry and value chain stage N=765 | Businesses | Individuals |
|---|---|---|
| **Screen** | | |
| **Creation**<br>*e.g. Content creation, writing and visual design, packaging, pitching & testing, Financing/ dealmaking* | 98 | 65 |
| **Production/post-production/development**<br>*e.g. Pre-production, Production, Post Digital and Visual effects (PDV), Editing, Rights & legal* | 144 | 178 |
| **Distribution/dissemination**<br>*e.g. Sales & licensing, marketing, distribution setup, physical and online delivery, ancillary/ non-theatrical distribution* | 25 | 13 |
| **Exhibition/transmission /reception**<br>*e.g. Cinema screening, Broadcast/transmission, Online/streaming, Non-theatrical/ educational, Audience response/data, Monetisation/settlements, Aftermarket & preservation* | 12 | 24 |
| **Enabling/connected systems**<br>*e.g. Education/training, Infrastructure/technology, Investment, support & development, Advertising/marketing (if not embedded), Rights management & regulation* | 24 | 28 |
| **Other** | 17 | 23 |
| **Games** | | |
| **Creation**<br>*e.g. game concept development, design & prototyping, financing & dealmaking* | 19 | 25 |
| **Production/development**<br>*e.g. game development (in-house or outsourced development)* | 28 | 30 |
| **Distribution/dissemination**<br>*e.g. certification, digital distribution, physical manufacture/retail, marketing/community management* | – | – |
| **Exhibition/transmission/reception**<br>*e.g. digital content delivery, online hosting, monetisation, reviews/ratings/analytics, post launch* | – | – |
| **Enabling/connected systems**<br>*e.g. education/training, infrastructure and technology, investment support & development, advertising/marketing (if not embedded), rights management and regulation* | – | – |
| Other | – | – |
| **Both screen and games** | | |
| **Creation**<br>*e.g. Content creation, game concept development* | 21 | 22 |
| **Production/post-production/development**<br>*e.g. Pre-production, Production, Post Digital and Visual effects (PDV), Editing, Rights & legal game development* | 24 | 19 |
| **Distribution/dissemination**<br>*e.g. Sales & licensing, marketing, distribution setup, physical and online delivery, ancillary/ non-theatrical distribution, physical manufacturing, retail, marketing* | – | – |
| **Exhibition/transmission/reception**<br>e.g. Cinema screening, Broadcast/transmission, Online/streaming, Non-theatrical/ educational, Digital content delivery | – | – |
| **Enabling/connected systems**<br>*e.g. Education/training, Infrastructure/technology, Investment, support & development, Advertising/marketing (if not embedded), Rights management & regulation* | 22 | 38 |
| **Other** | 21 | 25 |

Note: Individuals and businesses could select multiple options so the sum of responses will be greater than the number of respondents to the survey. Small cell counts have been suppressed to protect confidentiality.

# Industry consultations

A targeted program of **32 in-depth interviews with experienced screen and games practitioners** was undertaken to provide context and deeper insight into how the industry operates in practice.

Interview participants included:

- creators, producers and studio leads
- distributors, publishers, commissioners and platform representatives
- workforce representatives and organisations
- public agencies, screen agencies and policy stakeholders.

Interviews explored key topics including, but not limited to:

- industry and firm dynamics and structure
- workforce, skills and talent pathways
- IP and ownership
- finance and revenue
- markets, distribution and discoverability
- innovation and technology.

These interviews surfaced and contextualised dynamics that are not always evident in aggregated industry data and discussed emerging trends. Insights were analysed alongside survey results and other data to build a more complete picture.

# Collection of existing industry and administrative datasets

Detailed industry and administrative data was collected from Screen Australia and the ABS in relation to:

- industry scale and structure (business counts and demographics)
- workforce size, composition and trends
- investment patterns and sources of finance
- market access, exports and inward investments
- growth areas and pressure points across the value chain.

Additionally, some stakeholders provided confidential insights and benchmarks.

# Document and literature review

A detailed review of publicly available local and international data and research was undertaken to support the value chain definition, inform primary research gaps and priorities, and inform the analysis and report. Sources are referenced throughout the report.

*Life of Kea*

# Limitations

This study draws on the best available data to analyse the structure and dynamics of Australia's screen and games industries. As with any analysis of a complex and evolving sector, there are limitations arising from data availability, definitional differences and the project-based nature of industry activity.

The following sections outline the key constraints relevant to interpretation of the findings.

## No single consolidated dataset or data definitions

There is no single data source that captures the full scope of Australia's screen and games industries.

Data relevant to the industry is collected, reported and categorised in different ways for different purposes. Similar metrics may be gathered by multiple stakeholders – including government agencies, industry bodies and commercial entities – but with different:

- definitions of revenue, expenditure and activity
- treatment of employment (e.g. headcount, FTE, contractor status)
- reporting thresholds and inclusion criteria
- geographic scope
- timing of collection.

No single dataset contains all information required to describe industry structure, business dynamics, workforce characteristics, ownership settings and market activity in a consistent way. Without standardised data collection or centralised aggregation across the sector, establishing the overall size and scale of the industry involves complexity and judgement.

In response, this study has adopted a "ground up" approach. A defined screen and games value chain has been developed to clarify scope and segment activity into identifiable sub-sectors. Within each segment, the most relevant and robust available data has been identified and applied, guided by established definitions. Where multiple data sources exist, the study has:

- considered the quality of the data and its source
- selected those most aligned to the agreed value chain definitions
- documented definitional differences where material
- used triangulation to check consistency where possible.

Differences in definitions and collection methods cannot always be fully reconciled, and some areas of activity remain only partially visible in available datasets. Identifying these gaps is itself an outcome of the study and provides a basis for strengthening future measurement and improving consistency over time.

## Value chain boundaries and sub-sector definitions

A defined screen and games value chain was developed to clarify the scope of analysis. This framework:

- separates distinct areas of activity
- maps industrial classifications to those areas
- allows each segment to be examined as cleanly as possible within data constraints.

Some businesses operate across multiple segments, and statistical classifications do not always align neatly with the value chain as defined.

The screen and games ecosystem also continues to change through new technologies, business models and distribution pathways. Existing statistical frameworks were not designed to capture all contemporary forms of activity. The value chain definition adopted in this study has sought to balance statistical consistency and current industry practice. Future iterations may refine these definitions as data systems evolve.

## Point in time measurement

The analysis reflects data relating primarily to the 2023/24 and 2024/25 financial years, depending on availability across sources. It provides a snapshot of industry structure and activity at that time.

While trend data has been included where consistent time series exist, the study does not:

- capture longer-term structural change in full
- account for cyclical volatility in production activity
- fully reflect lagged impacts of policy or commissioning decisions
- provide forecasts or projections.

Quantitative data has also been combined with qualitative research and survey and consultation insights to provide a more complete picture of activity and provide context to both:

- better understand and describe trends and dynamics evident in the quantitative data
- surface more specific issues that may not be evident in quantitative data.

All analysis should be considered in this context and as a point-in-time view based on best available information.

## Survey and consultation evidence

Primary research undertaken as part of this study provides additional context but has limitations:

- survey responses are self-reported
- survey response rates vary across sub-sectors
- some survey questions were optional
- some groups may be underrepresented
- commercial sensitivities limit disclosure in some areas.

Some respondents operate across both screen and games and are included in both samples. Results refer to the full screen and/or games individual or business sample unless otherwise specified, with varied response rates depending on the survey question. Survey results have not been extrapolated to industry-wide metrics and results are reported with clear sample sizes to show coverage. Where possible, survey findings have also been cross-checked against administrative and published data. In areas where quantitative data is limited, qualitative findings should be interpreted as indicative.

## Project-based business structures

Screen and games production is often undertaken through special purpose or project-specific entities. Income, expenditure and employment may therefore be recorded across separate corporate structures.

This affects measurement of:

- business longevity
- firm-level productivity and profitability
- workforce continuity
- accumulated enterprise value.

Conventional business indicators do not always reflect the full operating model of project-based creative enterprises.

## Limited visibility of IP ownership and downstream value

Public datasets do not consistently capture:

- IP ownership structures
- equity participation and backend rights
- international licensing flows
- platform-level revenue arrangements.

In some cases, IP is held offshore or revenue is realised through global platforms with limited public reporting. As a result, findings relating to ownership and long-term value capture reflect observable data rather than a complete account of all value flows.

# Appendix 2: Screen and games value chains

Understanding how value is created and exchanged across screen and games industries is essential for effective policymaking, sustainable business models and a strong national cultural voice. This appendix sets out how the industry study maps the business value chains of screen and games. It sets out how ideas move through creation, production, dissemination, exhibition, to audience consumption; how different participants contribute to specific activities.

In mapping the value chain, the study has 4 goals:

- **Clarify how value is created and captured** across the screen and games ecosystem, from initial concept through to audience and market.
- Describe **stakeholder roles and relationships**, showing where creative, financial, technical and market actors interact and depend on one another.
- **Recognise variation by content and business model**, noting where steps or relationships matter more for certain forms of production: such as live-service games, influencer-driven screen content, or commissioned drama, without altering the overall chain.
- **Provide a coherent frame for measurement** and case study work under the broader Screen Currency program, linking the value-chain view to indicators of industry scale, investment, ownership and capability.

## Conceptual framework

This section outlines several key concepts which provide the foundation for the analysis of screen and games value chains.

### Value chain analysis

> **“A value chain is the full range of activities required to bring a product or service from conception, through the different phases of production (involving a combination of physical transformation and the input of various producer services), delivery to final consumers and final disposal after use.”**

Michael Porter first defined the value chain in 1985,[173] focusing on a firm's activities, where and how it creates value within their operations and how each activity contributes to overall competitive advantage. Porter's definition is linear and firm-centred; despite this focus on the firm, in many sectors of the economy, value can be seen to flow linearly, from raw material to manufacturing, distribution and sale, with ownership and price determined at each step.

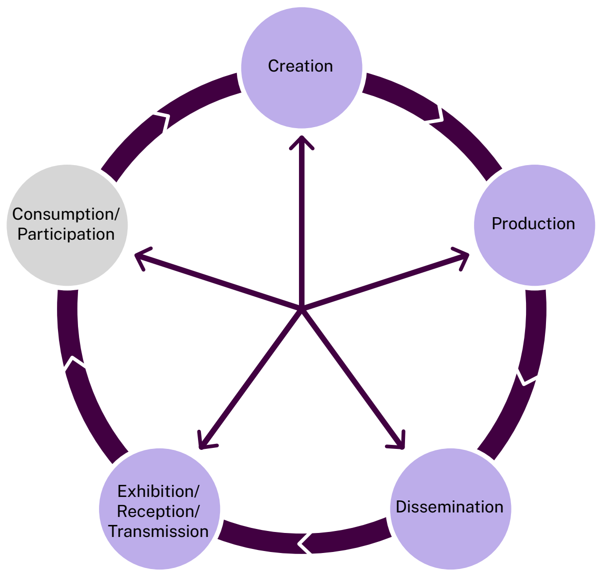
173 Porter M E 1985, *Competitive Advantage: Creating and Sustaining Superior Performance*, New York: Free Press.

# Creative value chains and the cultural cycle

Creative and cultural value chains can be more complex to map. A feature of cultural production is that it creates symbolic and material value and goods and services produced are primarily expressions of meaning and creativity, not simply the outcome of a physical process.[174] In creative industries, the same idea or work can generate multiple derivative products and revenue streams (e.g. a film, soundtrack, format, or game adaptation), rights may be shared or licensed across borders and value can accrue long after production through royalties, audience data, or cultural influence.[175]

Creative value chains can be conceived as networked ecosystems rather than linear processes, built around the creative process of an idea, stakeholder relationships and rights management rather than the physical transformation of goods. The UNESCO cultural cycle, introduced in 2009, is a useful way to visualise how creative ideas move through interrelated stages of **creation, production, dissemination, access and consumption.**[176] The value chains for Screen Currency 2026 map activities to the broad stages of the cultural cycle.

### Appendix 2: Creative value chains and the cultural cycle




While UNESCO's 2025 framework proposes an updated, value-generation-focused model, the earlier cycle's emphasis on networked processes and interdependencies provides a more practical basis for mapping the activities and participants that characterise Australia's screen and games industries within Screen Currency 2026.

As part of the same framework, UNESCO defined transversal (or cross-cutting) domains that can be measured across all cultural domains:

- education and training
- archiving and preservation
- equipment and supporting materials/ancillary goods and services.

The transversal domains identified in UNESCO's cultural cycle provide a useful foundation for understanding the enabling and connected systems that underpin value creation in Australia's screen and games industries. These domains highlight that creative activity depends on wider institutional and market systems that make production, exchange and preservation possible. It is important to recognise and understand these connected systems, as cultural and creative artefacts hold little meaning outside the systems of creation, production and exchange that generate and sustain its value.[177]

In Australia, these connected systems include education and training that supply creative and technical skills; advertising and marketing services that connect works to audiences and markets; infrastructure and technology, including the platforms, engines and digital facilities that enable creation and exchange of creative works; and industry and sector development bodies, including government agencies, screen offices and peak associations, that provide policy frameworks, incentives and collective coordination. Equally critical is the system of rights management and regulation – the legal, contractual and policy frameworks through which ownership, licensing and royalties are defined and enforced. Together, these systems sustain the conditions through which creative activity in screen and games is financed, produced and circulated and through which its cultural and economic value is ultimately realised.

174 Throsby D 2001, *Economics and Culture, Cambridge*: Cambridge University Press.

175 Caves R E 2000, *Creative Industries: Contracts Between Art and Commerce*, Harvard University Press; KEA & PPMI 2017, *Mapping the Creative Value Chains – A Study on the Economy of Culture in the Digital Age*; Towse R 2019, *A Textbook of Cultural Economics* (3rd ed. Cambridge University Press).

176 UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2009, *The 2009 UNESCO Framework for Cultural Statistics (FCS), Montreal*: UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

177 KEA European Affairs & PPMI 2017, *Mapping the Creative Value Chains – A Study on the Economy of Culture in the Digital Age*, Brussels: European Commission, Directorate-General for Education and Culture.

# Industries, products, occupations and the creative trident

The value chains described in this paper also serve as the foundation for economic measurement within Screen Currency 2026. To ensure consistency with national data sources, the analysis aligns with the statistical classifications used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and international standards, while recognising their limitations in capturing creative and hybrid activities.

**Economic activity** is classified under the Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (**ANZSIC**), which groups businesses by their primary activity: for example, motion picture and video production (5511), post-production services (5514) and computer system design (7000). These codes support analysis of business counts, employment and value added. ANZSIC is not a perfect model as it does not fully exclusively capture the scope of the screen and games industry that we are interested in, particularly in game development, but also PDV and online content creation.

**Products** are the outputs of screen and games activity, classified under the Australian and New Zealand Standard Product Classification (**ANZSPC**).

The workforce, **or occupations**, are defined using the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (**ANZSCO**). This framework allows us to identify the roles that drive screen and games value creation and provide data for analysing scale, skills, training and workforce mobility.

The **creative trident** model[178] distinguishes:

- Specialist creatives – individuals employed in core creative occupations within creative industries.
- Embedded creatives – creatives working in non-creative industries.
- Support workers – non-creative roles within creative industries.

## Scope of measurement

Screen Currency 2026 study covers:

- **Industry:** ANZSIC4
  - 5511 Motion picture and video production
  - 5512 Motion picture and video distribution
  - 5513 Motion picture exhibition
  - 5514 Post-production services and other motion picture and video activities
  - 5621 Free-to-air TV broadcasting
  - 5622 Cable and other subscription broadcasting
  - 5700 Internet publishing and broadcasting
  - 7000 Computer system design and related services (partial – as it relates to the development of digital games)
- **Products:** Products associated with the above industry classifications, including screen, TV, streaming and games outputs produced for commercial or cultural release.
- **Occupations:** Specialist creatives and support workers within the screen and games value chain.
- **Geography:** Australian-based activity, including co-productions and foreign-financed projects undertaken domestically.

**This conceptual framework provides a way to map creative activity and a measurement structure aligned with (but not necessarily constrained by) national classifications**, enabling consistent industry analysis across screen and games.

However, it should be noted that **the value chain stages used in this report do not align one-to-one with, the discrete ANZSIC categories** (which are the basis for the Screen Currency economic study).

**The ANZSIC framework predates many contemporary forms of screen production** and does not fully capture the diversity of activity across the value chain – particularly at the creation stage, where participants may be classified across multiple ANZSIC sectors depending on their business model and content type (for example, a creator producing content primarily for online or streaming platforms may be classified under internet broadcasting rather than production; or an animation studio whose creative and production work are closely integrated may span both production and post-production classifications). The ANZSIC framework does not contemplate the games industry as a distinct sector at all.

178 Higgs P and Cunningham S 2008, "Creative Industries Mapping: Where Have We Come from and Where Are We Going?" *Creative Industries Journal*, 1(1), 7–30.

The tables below shows how the two frameworks primarily correspond.

## Screen value chain

| Value chain stage (this report) | ANZSIC sector (economic study) | ANZSIC code |
|---|---|---|
| **Creation** | *See note above.* | |
| **Production** | Motion picture and video production | 5511 |
| | Post-production services and other motion picture and video activities | 5514 |
| **Distribution, broadcast, streaming and exhibition** | Motion picture and video distribution | 5512 |
| | Motion picture exhibition | 5513 |
| | Free-to-air TV broadcasting | 5621 |
| | Cable and other subscription broadcasting | 5622 |
| | Internet broadcasting | Subset of 5700 |

## Games value chain

| Value chain stage (this report) | ANZSIC sector (economic study) | ANZSIC code |
|---|---|---|
| **Creation** | **Computer system design and related services (subset)** | 7000 (subset) |
| **Development** | | |
| **Distribution, broadcast, streaming and exhibition** | | |

Digital games development does not map to a dedicated ANZSIC industry class (or classes). The economic study treats it as a subset of ANZSIC 7000 (Computer system design and related services).

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