



interactive games & entertainment association

Submission to Jobs and Skills Australia

Response to the Draft Core Skills Occupations List (CSOL) Consultation

May 2024

IGEA acknowledges and pays respect to the past and present Traditional Custodians and Elders of this land and the continuation of cultural, spiritual and educational practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We would like to extend our acknowledgments to the indigenous people from countries overseas & recognise their strength, wisdom and creativity.

Introduction & Overview

The Interactive Games & Entertainment Association (IGEA) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to Jobs and Skills Australia's Draft Core Skills Occupations List (CSOL) consultation, as part of the Australian Government's Migration Strategy (2023).

IGEA is the industry association representing and advocating for the video games industry in Australia, including the developers, publishers and distributors of video games, as well as the makers of the most popular gaming platforms, consoles and devices. We have over a hundred members, from emerging independent studios to some of the largest technology companies in the world. Amongst our various activities, IGEA also organises the annual Games Connect Asia Pacific (GCAP) conference for Australian game developers and the Australian Game Developer Awards (AGDAs) that celebrate the best Australian-made games each year.

About the video games industry

The video game industry is a major contributor to the Australian digital economy. According to our data, video games are worth around \$4.21 billion annually in Australia¹, while Australian-made games brought in \$345.5 million in largely export revenue in 2023. The Australian Government recognises the video game development industry's broader economic and cultural impact and has committed to supporting the growth of the industry. These initiatives include the 2023 Digital Games Tax Offset (DGTO)², Revive National Cultural Policy³ and Screen Australia's First Nations Game Studio Fund⁴. As a result, Australia has some of the most generous game incentives globally. According to international data, the Australian gaming industry had surpassed international growth rates^{5,6}.

Moreover, because the video game industry uniquely sits at the intersection of entertainment, the arts and technology, video game companies hire a wide range of artistic, technical and professional roles and are thus a wellspring of high-quality sustainable careers and are an engine for growth in the Australian national economy. This means various jobs and associated skills in the video games industry can easily translate into other forward-facing industries as identified in the draft CSOL.

Demand for talent

Despite the economic opportunities in our industry, labour supply is **not meeting the high demand for experienced video game developer workers in Australia.**

¹ <https://igea.net/2023/06/australians-subscribe-to-video-game-growth/>

² <https://igea.net/2023/06/dgto-passage>

³ <https://www.arts.gov.au/publications/national-cultural-policy-revive-place-every-story-story-every-place>

⁴ <https://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/sa/media-centre/news/2023/05-08-first-nations-games-studio-fund>

⁵ <https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/industries/tmt/media/outlook/insights-and-perspectives.html>

⁶ <https://www.konvoy.vc/content/gaming-industry-report-q1-2024>

Currently, video game developer workers fall under the ANZSCO occupation codes 'Multimedia Designer' (232413) and 'Multimedia Specialist' (261211). These two occupations are both on the Draft CSOL Targeted for Consultation List and are ANZSCO Skill Level 1 occupations⁷. Additionally, the 2023 Skills Priority List (SPL) suggests that both 'Multimedia Designer' (232413) and 'Multimedia Specialist' (261211) are in national shortage⁸⁹ and we recognise the broader workforce challenges in Australia. These results are consistent with empirical data from the video game industry.

According to IGEA's latest monthly job reports developed in collaboration with Games Jobs Live, experienced roles are seeing significant, long-term job growth¹⁰. This is a complex challenge that requires a measured and holistic approach by government and industry stakeholders.

In the short term, an education-focused solution will be difficult to implement to address the immediate shortage of mid- to senior-level video game developers. However, the industry is committed to its long-term responsibility of upskilling existing talent.

For example, driven by its members, IGEA collaborated with a project management consultancy to deliver an Agile Games Production course to close crucial skills gaps¹¹. Currently, this course is being delivered for the second time.

With the DGTO in force, the degree of specialisation in making video games will continue to expand due to larger productions taking place in Australia. Many of IGEA's members have expressed that the skills shortage of highly specialised positions is a major business blocker, causing disruption and cancellation of multimillion-dollar projects.

Having experienced this first-hand, one of IGEA's members provided the following comment:

"Similar to other Australian developers, recruiting aptly qualified senior talent is crucial to expanding our studio by means of increasing our capability to take on larger and more complex and ambitious projects. Key example: Our Technical Director left us earlier this year to design graphics chip processors for a US firm, working remotely on a salary that cannot be matched here locally, he's probably one of only five people in Australia who can do what he can do. It is going to be incredibly hard to replace that position.

...Yes, there is local talent and yes Universities and TAFEs are producing graduates of a high calibre, but without experienced skilled leadership in our studios we can't support the employment of any graduates, look at our team of roughly 40, we have only one junior on staff. Many of our roles are so specialised can each is fulfilled by only one to two people. We want to open the door to more junior talent but we're struggling to maintain a specialised leadership team and specialised capability set."

⁷<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/classifications/anzsco-australian-and-new-zealand-standard-classification-occupations/2021/browse-classification/2/26/261/2612>

⁸ <https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/data/skills-shortages-analysis/skills-priority-list?code=232413>

⁹ <https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/data/skills-shortages-analysis/skills-priority-list?code=261211>

¹⁰ <https://gamesjobslive.niceboard.co>

¹¹ <https://igea.net/2023/09/agilegameproducercourse>

Recommendations

To address the industry's immediate needs, we believe immigration is an important mechanism to ensure a sustainable talent pipeline for the industry. This will need to be informed by more robust and accurate data.

As discussed above, it is more difficult to employ Australians without experienced talent in these specialised roles due to the lack of mentorship and pathways. Any concerns over the displacement or substitution of local jobs are inapplicable when there are so few Australians who could perform these tasks at the skill level required.

IGEA had previously liaised with the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) as part of ongoing conversations with relevant Government agencies. We have recommended to the ABS that a standalone ANZSCO code for 'Video Game Developer' be adopted as a broad occupation, which encompasses anyone who works on any aspect of a video game and is involved in the process of creating video games. This reflects the specialised process in the development and distribution of games, which is ever-evolving due to rapid technological development. **We ask that the proposed ANZSCO codes that we had discussed with the ABS be reflected in the CSOL. While some video game developers have responsibilities that overlap with the descriptions of Multimedia Designer (232413) and Multimedia Specialist (261211), we ask Jobs and Skills Australia to recognise the breadth and depth of expertise in video game production.** Some examples of these specialised roles include virtual economy designer, Hero designer, Audio Designer, AI specialist and many more.

Further, while Jobs and Skills Australia acknowledges that ABS's consultation on the ANZSCO codes is still underway, it may be prudent to wait for the outcomes of that consultation, given the potential breadth of changes to the codes. Alternatively, Jobs and Skills Australia could undertake a subsequent review of the CSOL once ABS's ANZSCO codes update has been completed. We therefore recommend that Jobs and Skills Australia consider **deferring to the outcomes of ABS's ANZSCO code update.**

Should you have any questions regarding this submission, please contact

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