

Where to for Aussie Development

Predictions for the future of Australia's video games from PAX Aus 2014

Author: Brooke Geller



It's been a tentative few years for Australian game developers. A string of studio closures, retracted government funding and the lure of overseas job opportunities have made for a slightly scary climate. The question of whether video games really are 'recession proof' or not still hangs in the air. The once promising future of tablet gaming isn't looking quite so secure anymore. Despite being a massively profitable industry for our little island nation, many budding developers are double guessing themselves- and you can't really blame them.

'Where to now for Australian game development' was the final panel I attended at this year's PAX. To be entirely honest, I wasn't in the finest form. I could count the hours of sleep I'd had on one hand, and the multiple coffees and overpriced lukewarm chips I'd downed throughout the

day had ceased to have any sort of awakening effect on me. Any energy I was experiencing had to be some sort of remaining buzz I'd absorbed from the chaos of the showroom floor. My ability to form thoughts in to coherent sentences had vanished, and I was seriously doubting my ability to focus during another hour-long panel.

As tempted as I was to jump on the nearest tram and be welcomed in to the warm embrace of my nap-ready bed at home, this panel seemed important. I somehow knew that there was an important message to be heard, and I was going to regret missing out on it. So I stayed.

Somewhat ironically hosted by Scottish Mark Serrels, the Kotaku Australia editor reflected on watching the Australian industry transform and rebuild from a time of destruction and chaos. More

Above: The future for Aussie games is bright.

importantly, he highlighted the importance of the changing stories of the industry. That's exactly how I like to view the local industry right now: a changing story.

Games excite me. I love the anticipation of a new installation in a beloved franchise of big-title games. Seeing how far a massive studio can push the boundaries with breathtaking graphics, twisted dialogue and yes, even that shamelessly irresistible DLC gets my heart rate up. But

Below: There's more to the Australian games industry than this, guys.



"THEY DON'T NEED FLASHY GRAPHICS OR A HOUR HUNDRED MILLION DOLLAR BUDGET"



you know what excites me even more about games? The simple beauty of indies- especially when they're proudly Australian made.

I've never been one to call myself patriotic. My relationship with my own country is a strange mixture of ironic jest and muddled embarrassment. Australian indies, however, make me beam with Aussie pride, which is strange for someone who's never been a hard-core indie devotee.

You know what's so great about great indies? They don't need flashy graphics or a four hundred million dollar budget to impress. A great indie is undeniably unforgettable, because it pushes the envelope on the creative capabilities for video games, with a tiny little budget and even tinier development team. The future of Australian game development lies with indies.

It's an exciting time to be an Australian gamer as our industry heads in a brave and wildly creative direction. While

the rush of fan girl love I felt at PAX outside the Bethesda stall was amazing, it actually couldn't compare to the amazement I experienced over discovering the Indie pavilion. These games were so intricate, yet so simple and beautiful. It was inspiring.

This was the definite tone of that final Sunday panel. The quality games coming out of this local industry are not only inspiring, but incredibly innovative and progressive. Let's shift the focus from big titles and monetary success and focus on what really matters: celebrating a high standard of creativity and encouraging the evolution of a rapidly-growing community. The future is bright for this industry, and I can't wait to see the next chapter of this exciting story.

Above: The recently released Framed is a terrific example of innovative Australian game development.