

Creating opportunities for serious games in government

Video games are no longer just being used for enjoyment and entertainment. Serious games and gamified technologies are finding diverse uses in education, health, policing, defence, and social services, as well as in the business and community sectors. While the serious games sector is still an emerging part of our broader industry, many Australian game developers have significant experience in 'gamification' and we remind governments about how games can be used innovatively to deliver policies, programs, and projects.

How are serious games different from regular games?

While traditional video games are played for many reasons, including to entertain players and help them to relax, challenge themselves, or connect with others, serious games (or 'gamification') refers to the specific application of games for non-entertainment purposes. Serious games are the use or adaptation of video games, gaming technology, or aspects of traditional game design by government, non-government organisations, and industry for public or commercial purposes. One of the reasons why serious games are rising in prominence and use is because they are interactive and immersive, making them a highly dynamic way to teach, influence people, reach communities, convey a message, make an impact on consumers, or to engage with audiences.

What are some examples of how serious games are being used in Australia?

Some of the best uses of serious games by government anywhere in the world are found in Australia. One of the earliest government adopters of serious games was Melbourne Metro Trains, which included games in its viral *Dumb Ways to Die* safety campaign. The eSafety Commissioner also developed a game, *The Lost Summer*, to educate teens about online safety. Games-based technologies have been used by governments to create simulations for law enforcement and defence, training programs for public workers from frontline staff to surgeons, immersive experiences for schools and museums, and even a recruitment tool for an intelligence agency. Even many traditional digital apps created by governments and companies use design and user interface features first developed in games. The use of serious games outside of government are just as diverse. Prominent examples include two games related to ear health: *Sound Scouts*, which checks children's hearing and has received federal funding for a nationwide rollout, and *Bring Back the Beat*, which support the rehabilitation process for Cochlear implants recipients.

How can governments think about how to apply serious games?

Developing and implementing serious games is probably easier, cheaper, and faster than what many governments may think. We encourage anyone in government with a message, service, project, or program to deliver to ask themselves whether an interactive platform, service, or game could potentially help them to achieve outcomes even more effectively. If the answer is yes or even maybe, please reach out to us, because Australia has some of the best developers of serious games and gamification technology in the world, and many are members we proudly represent.

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