

2026 POLICY PLATFORMER



JUNE 2026

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PRESENTED BY

NZGDA
NEW ZEALAND
GAME DEVELOPERS
ASSOCIATION

IGEA
interactive games & entertainment association

HOW THE GOVERNMENT CAN HELP THE INDUSTRY REACH ITS FULL POTENTIAL

GROWING NEW ZEALAND'S GAME DEVELOPMENT WORKFORCE AND CAPABILITY

Commit to long term policy stability and coordination

Provide clear, stable and coordinated policy settings across electoral cycles. Regular engagement with industry bodies will ensure initiatives remain effective, responsive and aligned with the needs of a highly productive, export focused sector.

Formally recognise game development as a distinct industry

Recognise game development as its own industry category across policy, data and funding frameworks. This would improve policy design, enable better data collection, strengthen cross-agency coordination and ensure initiatives such as the GDSR and CODE are implemented with a full understanding of the sector's unique characteristics.

Maintain and strengthen the Game Development Sector Rebate

Retain the baselined GDSR as a long-term policy setting and continue to refine it to support studio growth, workforce development and talent retention. The rebate should be considered not only as an investment attraction tool but also as a mechanism for building domestic capability.

DRIVING INDUSTRY GROWTH THROUGH TRADE AND INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT

Support international market access and trade engagement

Continue to invest in international travel and trade missions for game developers, including coordinated delegations to major global events. These initiatives place New Zealand studios directly in front of publishers and investors and deliver strong export returns.

BUILDING THE NEXT GENERATION OF TALENT

Address talent retention through immigration settings

Review immigration settings to attract experienced game development professionals who can provide leadership, mentorship and skills transfer, supporting the development of junior talent and strengthening local capability.

Enable career transitions and youth employment

Consider schemes that support adults transitioning into game development from other sectors and provide unemployed youth with access to paid training pathways that lead directly to employment opportunities in the industry.

ADDRESSING SKILLS GAPS THROUGH COLLABORATION

Support workforce ready training and flexible skills pathways

Enable industry aligned training through micro credentials, short courses and flexible learning models that respond quickly to changing skills needs. Education providers should be supported to co-design curricula with industry to ensure graduates are job ready.

Improve education to work transition pathways

Introduce or expand programmes that support graduates entering the industry, such as paid internships or partially subsidised salaries. These initiatives would help studios absorb training costs while accelerating workforce entry for new graduates.

SUPPORTING GAME DEVELOPMENT ACROSS THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

Strengthen STEAM education and early digital foundations

Continue to prioritise STEAM education and introduce computer science fundamentals earlier in the curriculum, including computational thinking, algorithms and how computers process information. Proven approaches such as Computer Science Unplugged should be supported and scaled.

Introduce "Game Design" as a Cross-Curricular Teaching Tool

Leverage game development as a student's first exposure to technology and support broader outcomes, the government should fund professional development for primary teachers to use game design as a cross-curricular tool. By teaching kids to design simple games, educators can simultaneously hit curriculum requirements for mathematics (logic, geometry), literacy (narrative design, storytelling), and digital technology, proving that tech education supports core competencies rather than competing with them.

FORMALLY RECOGNISE GAME DEVELOPMENT AS A DISTINCT MULTIDISCIPLINARY INDUSTRY

The path forward: Proactive co-design

The government should formally recognise game development as a distinct industry sub-sector within the broader technology and creative landscapes - much like farming is recognised as a specific, nuanced industry within the broader agriculture sector.

By establishing a formal classification and actively acknowledging how game development operates, policymakers can engage with the industry consciously and proactively. Early-stage consultation will ensure new regulations - from tax policy to immigration - are fit-for-purpose, allowing us to build a sustainable industry together and prevent unintended friction before new policies are finalised.

GOOD PUBLIC POLICY DESIGN DRAWING FROM INTERNATIONAL BEST PRACTICES

Implement best practice regulatory principles

Existing regulatory frameworks should be leveraged wherever possible before introducing new technology-specific regulations. Any new regulation should be clearly defined, proportionate, evidence-based, risk-based, and practicable. Consultation with industry is critical.

Avoid regulatory duplication

The government must ensure regulatory coordination to avoid duplication with existing regulatory frameworks for video games, thereby reducing complexity and streamlining compliance.

Ensure regulatory coherence with international jurisdictions

As New Zealand is a net importer of consumer electronic goods such as devices and video game consoles, new frameworks should be coherent with overseas regulations to prevent unnecessary trade barriers.

SUPPORT AND PROMOTE HEALTHY GAMEPLAY FOR ALL KIWIS

Recognise the benefits of games

Video games are a beloved activity, offering cognitive, social and mental-wellbeing benefits, and provide a meaningful and accessible activity for people who face barriers to participating in physical and community spaces.

Promote family safety controls

The video games industry has long been at the forefront of ensuring player safety, as a pioneering industry for SafetyTech. The government should partner with our industry to promote the uptake of family safety controls to support Kiwi families in their gameplay.

Support digital literacy and online safety awareness initiatives

Support civil society-led initiatives that promote online safety, digital literacy, and responsible play. Continued government support for Netsafe is essential to ensure the public has access to high quality educational resources that can help improve their digital lives.

Support the New Zealand Classification Office

Ensure the Office is sufficiently resourced to classify video games, providing clear age-specific guidance that empower parents and caregivers to assess suitability and support public education.

A MODERN CLASSIFICATION SCHEME FOR VIDEO GAMES

Adopt a digital labelling system

Given the limited coverage of digital games under the current system, adopting global age rating systems like IARC would streamline classification and reduce costs for smaller New Zealand developers and publishers.

Maintain existing labelling exemptions for user-generated games

Even with IARC adoption across many platforms, user-generated games should remain exempt from labelling requirements, as manual review is unworkable and prohibitively costly given the volume and variability of content.

CONSULTATIVE AND CONSTRUCTIVE APPROACH TO INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Maintain IP protection in device regulation

Any new regulation must not undermine our industry's ability to safeguard its IP, especially the TPMs used in consoles.

Preserve manufacturer warranty rights

We strongly oppose restrictions that prevent video game console manufacturers from voiding warranties after unauthorised repairs or modifications, which is necessary to protect the console integrity and safety.

Preserving copyright protections while promoting innovation

Copyright law must balance creators' rights with innovation, and we encourage government-industry collaboration to ensure protections are properly enforced.



FOR FURTHER INFORMATION
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