

Question on Notice
No. 181
Asked on 1 March 2006

MRS ATTWOOD asked the Minister for Small Business, Information Technology Policy and Multicultural Affairs (MR CUMMINS) —

QUESTION:

Has there been any growth in the local Queensland games industry and what assistance is available from the Government?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for Mt Ommaney for her question and would like to congratulate her for her ongoing support for the Gold Coast's vibrant ICT industry.

The local Queensland games industry has experienced exceptional growth over the past two years, especially in the area of job creation.

In July 2003, the Honourable the Premier, announced an Interactive Games Industry Package providing \$800,000 over four years to support and develop the interactive games industry. This package was designed to put Queensland at the forefront of the Australian games development industry, ensuring Smart State companies have the skills, financial capacity and international exposure they need to increase their share of the global games market.

Since the introduction of the Interactive Games Industry Package, the local games industry has created in excess of 140 new jobs, with the total number of Queenslanders directly employed in the development of electronic games growing from approximately 380 in 2004 to over 520 in 2006. The local industry is predicting job numbers to reach 600 by the end of the year.

The Queensland industry now represents over 50 per cent of employment in the games development industry nationally. Importantly, Queensland is now home to a number of the larger Australian developers, such as Krome Studios (Australia's largest independent studio) and Auran, three multinational corporations Pandemic, THQ, Creative Assembly, and a number of medium and smaller studios such as Fuzzyeyes Studios, Halfbrick Studios, KaWoW, Doein Studios, Gridwerx, Wildfire Studios, and TheyerGFX.

Through the provision of approximately \$345,000 in funding over the past two years, the Queensland Government has actively facilitated the development of a strong and vibrant environment in which the local electronic games industry is flourishing.

Key initiatives and projects funded under the Interactive Games Industry Package to date include \$120,000 over three years towards hosting a national pavilion at the Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3) in Los Angeles and maintaining a Queensland presence at the Game Developers Conference in San Francisco. These two key international events afford Queensland companies the opportunity to showcase their innovation and products to entertainment industry executives, influential publishers, media representatives and potential investors who attend these leading industry events.

The Electronic Games Investment Fund was allocated \$47,000 to support the creation of a Pooled Development Fund. The Queensland Government provided financial assistance to enable the development of the business plan and prospectus which were the basis for establishing this innovative fund. The successful establishment of the fund in Queensland will provide investment capital for local games companies as they develop new games for international release. The official launch was held simultaneously in Brisbane, Melbourne and Canberra on 7 November 2005.

There was \$22,000 allocated for the delivery of a Business and Project Management Program for the Games Industry in Queensland. This program was designed to provide local games developers and related service companies with best practice business, marketing and project management skills in order to make them more competitive globally.

A \$27,000 grant for the development of the 'Behind the Screens' games industry DVD, an export and investment marketing tool to leverage awareness of Queensland's games development industry both interstate and internationally. The DVD has been distributed widely including to Queensland Trade and Investment Offices and Austrade offices.

A \$15,000 grant for the purchase of the Games Research Service Package from international research group DFC Intelligence. This market research package purchased under a group licence allowed local games developers access to key industry market research and data integral to their investment and publishing applications and proposals.

A \$40,000 grant over two years (2003/2004) to host a Queensland stand at the Annual Australian Game Developers' Conference in Melbourne. Queensland's presence at the Annual Australian Game Developers Conference showcases the innovative products of the local games industry as well as affording local Queensland games' companies the opportunity to network with global publishers. And \$59,000 allocation to provide local developers with access to Sony PlayStation 2 development kits. This program involves providing up to four PlayStation 2 development kits to Queensland games development companies in order to fast track their development activities and promote continued leading edge games development within Queensland. I announced in November 2005 that Halfbrick Studios was the first recipient of two development kits.

Queensland games development companies are also eligible to access other Department of State Development, Trade and Innovation programs such as the Queensland Industry Development Scheme and Financing Innovation Growth. In fact, Queensland games companies have received support through all of these programs and several are also currently giving consideration to participating in the Department's newest ICT initiative, Fast Tracking for Growth.