



****UNDER EMBARGO: TUESDAY 24 JUNE 2025, 6AM****

SXSW SYDNEY® 2025 UNVEILS KEYNOTE SPEAKERS AND NEW PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS ACROSS CONFERENCE, SCREEN AND GAMES

*Hollywood icon **Paul Feig** and former Google X innovator **Mo Gawdat** announced as keynote speakers, with billionaire tech entrepreneur **Lucy Guo** also joining the SXSW Sydney line up this October*

Tuesday 24 June – South by Southwest Sydney® (SXSW Sydney) has today revealed exciting updates to its 2025 program, with several global leaders joining the conference, alongside an exciting array of films and games set to take the stage this October.

The Conference Program has announced its first 50 sessions, in addition to two new keynote speakers, including:

- **Paul Feig**, revered director of hit films such as *Bridesmaids*, and creator of the cult favourite TV series *Freaks and Geeks*
- **Mo Gawdat**, former Chief Business Officer of Google X and host of #1 mental health podcast *Slo Mo*

They join previously announced keynote speaker **Meredith Whittaker**, President of encrypted messaging app Signal.

Other newly announced featured speakers include **Lucy Guo**, the world's youngest self-made female billionaire and the CEO and Founder of Passes; **Lars Rasmussen**, co-founder of Google Maps, Panathēnea and angel investor; and **Niall Firth**, Executive Editor of MIT Technology Review.

The Screen Festival is proud to announce that Paul Feig will receive the inaugural SXSW Sydney Screen Pioneer Award, honouring his groundbreaking contributions to genre filmmaking and film culture. To celebrate his storied career, a retrospective of his most beloved works will be screened, spotlighting his legacy as one of Hollywood's most influential comedic filmmakers.

In addition, the Screen Festival also welcomes six feature films – **By Design** (starring Oscar nominee Juliette Lewis), **\$POSITIONS**, **Dead Lover**, **Zodiac Killer Project**, **The Last Sacrifice** and **Bokshi** – as well as a host of short films, including the BAFTA-nominated **Stomach Bug** and **Chasing The Party**, produced by Oscar-winner Sam Rockwell.

The first 40 games to be joining the Games Festival Showcase have been revealed. Hailing from 26 countries, these games will be available to playtest and demo at the Games Festival's new home: the ICC Sydney. More than 30 speakers and mentors will share their expertise through panels, hands-on workshops and one-on-one mentoring sessions, with the first wave of sessions now announced—covering everything from indie marketing and global publishing to creative resilience and the future of storytelling in games.

This latest announcement brings the SXSW Sydney program to more than 100 speakers, 50 conference sessions, 75 artists, 40 games and 27 films — with hundreds more to be revealed in the lead-up to October.

SXSW Sydney is proud to welcome back QMS and Accenture, this year as Major Conference Partners, to present Marketing & Media and Tech & Innovation respectively. This year's program is strengthened by a dynamic mix of returning and new partners including The Growth Distillery, CyberCX and Charitabl — alongside long-time Super Sponsor Commonwealth Bank, proudly returning for the third consecutive year.

SXSW Sydney 2025 will dive deep into the most pressing trends shaping our world—from AI's accelerating advancements and the future of work to quantum technologies, cybersecurity, sustainability and the ever-evolving creative industries. A must-attend event for professionals and innovators in leadership roles, SXSW Sydney runs from October 13-19, featuring 1,600 sessions and events including 400+ conference sessions, 150+ professional development sessions, 300+ music performances, 95 film screenings, 150 games and over 400 brand-led events.

SXSW SYDNEY 2025: 13 – 19 OCTOBER

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About SXSW Sydney

SXSW Sydney is an annual gathering of visionaries, thought leaders and emerging talents from the Asia-Pacific region. The week-long program is stacked with 1,600 events and networking sessions across the conference, expo and the tech and innovation, games, music and screen festivals. The event seamlessly integrates art and entrepreneurship with cutting-edge advancements, fostering a collaborative ecosystem where ideas are exchanged and partnerships are forged. SXSW Sydney 2025 will take place on 13–19 October, on the land of the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation. SXSW SYDNEY, SOUTH BY SOUTHWEST SYDNEY and other SXSW, LLC marks used under license.

About SXSW

South by Southwest (SXSW) dedicates itself to helping creative people achieve their goals. Founded in 1987 in Austin, Texas, SXSW is best known for its conference and festivals that celebrate the convergence of tech, film and television, music, education, and culture. An essential destination for global professionals, the annual March event features sessions, music, and comedy showcases, film and television screenings, exhibitions, professional development, and a variety of networking opportunities. SXSW proves that the most unexpected discoveries happen when diverse topics and people come together. SXSW 2026 will take place from March 12-18 in Austin. Learn more at sxsw.com.

About Destination NSW

Destination NSW is the champion and voice for the visitor economy within the NSW Government. Spearheading a whole-of-government approach to visitor economy growth, Destination NSW influences and shapes the visitor economy through strategic research, policy and thought leadership, stakeholder engagement and consultation, commercial partnerships and investment in visitor experiences, business support, marketing and events. Destination NSW is also the major investor in Business Events Sydney (BESydney) for the purpose of securing more international and domestic conventions, incentive travel reward programs, corporate events and exhibitions.

About TEG

TEG is a global leader in Live Entertainment, Ticketing and Technology and has been at the heart of the live event experience for 50 years through its touring and ticketing operations. Every day TEG connects fans to experiences and customers with brands. TEG are proud partners of some of the world's largest and most iconic venues as well as leading global brands and events. Through TEG's integrated operating model, the business brings the best live content, ticketing, and technology to partners with access to the best and most compelling music, sporting, and entertainment events across the globe. TEG is headquartered in Sydney, Australia and operates globally with offices across Asia, Europe and the US.

QUOTATION LIBRARY

“The incredible lineup for SXSW Sydney 2025 will once again showcase our city as a global hub for culture and innovation, with the best of the creative and tech industries from across the Asia Pacific and beyond on display. This will be another unmissable week-long program of experiences that will not only spotlight Sydney as the nation’s major events capital, but also underline the exciting and transformative effect SXSW Sydney has on our music, screen, gaming and tech industries here in NSW.” - **Steve Kamper, Minister for Jobs and Tourism**

“We’re proud to see SXSW Sydney evolve into a uniquely powerful platform for ideas, connection and creative leadership across industries. With each wave of programming, we’re building a conversation about where the world is heading and who will lead it — bringing together thought-provoking ideas, emerging talent, new technologies and culture in motion.” - **Simon Cahill, Co-Managing Director of SXSW Sydney**

“The conference program continues to evolve, featuring ambitious visionaries and industry-defining content. The calibre of speakers we're attracting reflects not just our growth, but the urgent need for the insights they bring. The SXSW Sydney stage has become the essential gathering point for leaders who aren't just observing transformation — they're driving it and addressing some of the big challenges we all face, from business and leadership through to the creative industries. There is so much more to come, but the foundation is set for a week of conversation, networking, and actionable insights — and I cannot wait to see everyone at SXSW Sydney’s conference” - **Fenella Kernebone, Head of Conference Program**

“There’s a slate of fresh programming in the Tech & Innovation Festival this year that will be a superb way to showcase not just what’s next, but who’s next. After all, what is technology without people? The bringing together of conference sessions, professional learning experiences, Pitch, tertiary Tech & Innovation Showcase, Student Pitch and Hackathon, really creates a unique density of possibilities in one place. Played right, it can be the launchpad for global ideas, talent, and industry-wide collaboration that can work alongside traditional export or trade strategies to create impact all year round.” - **Caroline Pegram, Head of Tech & Innovation**

“In proper cinematic tradition, the SXSW Sydney Screen Festival is dropping a teaser to kick things off. Take this little taste of films and speakers as a sign of things to come, as again we’ll revel in the bold, the weird and the unconventional in 2025. This year’s industry program is also one for the, hem hem, freaks and geeks, as we’re beyond excited to welcome Paul Feig to the stage.” - **Luke Lancaster, Head of Games & Screen**

“We’re pretty proud of being the biggest showcase of indie games in Australia, but leaning just on the quantity diminishes the humbling quality of what we’re lucky enough to include at the festival. Indie games, it turns out, are pretty good! Complementing the Games Showcase is an industry program building on two years of connecting developers with new skills, international contacts and new audiences.” - **Luke Lancaster, Head of Games & Screen**

“We’re incredibly excited to be back for our third year as a Super Sponsor of SXSW Sydney. It’s such a unique event that brings together people with bold ideas and fresh thinking – the kind of energy that inspires us at CommBank. It’s a chance for us to listen, learn and share how we’re using technology and creativity to make banking better and help build a brighter future for all Australians.” - **Jo Boundy, Chief Marketing Officer at Commonwealth Bank**

APPENDIX

More on the SXSW Sydney Conference Program

The SXSW Sydney Conference program continues to grow with the addition of prominent global industry leaders from business, politics, tech, media and screen, alongside the confirmation of the first 50 sessions for this year's event.

The exciting lineup of new high-profile speakers includes:

Paul Feig

Paul Feig is an award-winning director, writer, producer, and actor whose work has helped define modern comedy on both the big and small screen. He is the creator of the cult-favourite television series *Freaks and Geeks*, which launched the careers of numerous stars and remains one of the most acclaimed coming-of-age shows of all time. Feig is best known for directing a series of hit comedy films, including *Bridesmaids*—which earned two Academy Award nominations—*The Heat*, *Spy*, *Ghostbusters* (2016), and *A Simple Favor*. His work has been recognised with multiple Emmy and DGA nominations, and he continues to be celebrated for his unique blend of humour, heart and character-driven storytelling.

Mo Gawdat

Mo Gawdat is a bestselling author, entrepreneur, and former Chief Business Officer at Google [X], the company's moonshot innovation arm. With a background in engineering and a long career in tech leadership across IBM, Microsoft, and Google, Gawdat has become a globally recognised thinker on the intersection of technology, happiness, and human potential. He is the author of *Solve for Happy: Engineer Your Path to Joy*, a powerful blend of science, logic, and personal experience written in honour of his late son, which has inspired millions worldwide. Gawdat is also the host of the podcast *Slo Mo: A Podcast with Mo Gawdat*, where he engages in deeply personal conversations with thought leaders, scientists, and creatives. Through his books, talks, and platform One Billion Happy, he is on a mission to help people live more consciously, joyfully, and meaningfully in a world increasingly shaped by technology.

Lucy Guo

Lucy Guo is the Founder and CEO of Passes, a creator commerce and monetisation platform. Previously, she co-founded artificial intelligence start-up Scale AI and launched venture fund Backend Capital / HF0, which has invested in over 100 start-ups under Lucy's leadership. In 2022, Lucy founded Passes to build a suite of tools for creators to capitalise on their fandom and monetise their brand. Lucy's experience in building exceptional products and expertise in AI has turned Passes into a growing digital ecosystem for creators and brands.

Lars Rasmussen

Lars Rasmussen is a pioneering software engineer and tech entrepreneur best known as the co-founder of Google Maps, a platform that revolutionised digital navigation and location-based services worldwide. Originally from Denmark, Rasmussen co-founded the mapping startup Where 2 Technologies, which was acquired by Google in 2004, forming the foundation of Google Maps. He later served as Director of Engineering at Facebook, where he led key projects including the development of Facebook Graph Search. With a career spanning some of the world's most influential tech companies, Rasmussen is celebrated for his innovative thinking, product leadership, and lasting impact on how we interact with digital information.

Niall Firth

Niall Firth is the Executive Editor of the newsroom at MIT Technology Review, overseeing all online journalism and managing the reporting team. Based in London, he previously served as Chief News Editor and Technology Editor at *New Scientist*, and as Science Editor and Assistant News Editor at *MailOnline*. Firth is a frequent speaker at events like

EmTech MIT, where he engages with experts on topics such as the future of generative AI and its impact on industries and society.

At SXSW Sydney, Firth will break down the biggest technologies, trends, and ideas shaping AI in 2026, from autonomous agents to AGI. Attendees will leave with a high-level understanding of where AI is now, where it's going, and leave with some practical tips to help them keep up and make smarter decisions in a rapidly evolving landscape.

Other newly confirmed speakers include music journalist and digital creator **Tait McGregor**, Walkley Award-winning investigative journalist and author **Jess Hill**, and entrepreneur and marketing expert **Neil Patel**. They join more than 40 [previously announced](#) speakers including Signal's President and a member of the Signal Foundation Board of Directors, **Meredith Whittaker**, Australia's National Cyber Security Coordinator, **Lieutenant General Michelle McGuinness CSC**, and GoFundMe CEO, **Tim Cadogan**.

The first 50 sessions across SXSW Sydney's major conference tracks – Business & Leadership, Tech & Innovation, Marketing & Media, Creative Industries, Future & Sustainability, and Culture & Lifestyle – have been confirmed, offering a taste of the thought-provoking ideas, boundary-pushing conversations and bold perspectives set to shape this year's event.

Session highlights include:

Skyнет in the Boardroom: Is AI Hijacking Your Business Strategy? (Business & Leadership)

What if your company's next big decision won't be made by your board—but by an algorithm? This panel pulls back the curtain on how AI is quietly making high-stakes decisions in ways executives don't fully understand. We will show you what AI-powered strategy looks like in action with a live strategy digital twin showcase. Moderated by Prof. Marek Kowalkiewicz (QUT Business School), this panel features top strategists: Dr. Graham Kenny (Strategic Factors, HBR Advisory Council), Prof. Ganna Pogrebna (AI & Cyber Futures Institute), and Dr. Roger Moser (SatSure, Macquarie University). Expect provocative questions and mind-blowing use cases. Will AI eliminate boards? Can algorithms really be trusted with billion-dollar decisions? What happens when AI strategy clashes with human intuition?

From Passion to Paycheck: Cracking the Creator Economy (Marketing & Media)

The creator economy is now worth over \$9 billion in Australia and growing fast. But it's not just for influencers - this booming industry offers big career opportunities across brand partnerships, tech startups, platform strategy and beyond. Whether you're a creator, marketer, or entrepreneur, this interactive workshop unpacks the business of influence, audience growth, and revenue streams. Led by creator industry experts Hannah McElhinney and Jamie Searle (Snack Drawer), this workshop offers real-world insights, industry trends, and practical tools to help you carve out your niche and succeed in the evolving digital landscape.

What I Learnt About my Product When my Town Burnt Down (Future & Sustainability)

In January 2025, Tim Cadogan, CEO of GoFundMe, found himself on the frontlines of a natural disaster close to home—the devastating Los Angeles wildfires. Tim saw his street directly impacted by the wildfires, and through volunteering to help rebuild LA, witnessed firsthand the power of the GoFundMe platform. In his first ever talk in Australia, Tim will discuss the role emerging technology has in fostering resilience, strengthening communities, and ensuring those affected by disasters are not only supported in the immediate aftermath but empowered to rebuild sustainably for the future. As Australia faces increasing environmental crises, his powerful insights will inspire new ways of thinking about building tools for charitable giving, focused on responding to real needs and behaviours witnessed during these major crises.

AI Ethics: Australia's Opportunity on the World Stage (Tech & Innovation)

Australia is falling behind the rest of the world in regulating AI. With no national bill of rights and minimal protections for free will, choice and agency, we are at risk of entering a tech-dystopian world where we become the product. Join Dr Joshua Krook as he explores some difficult legal questions raised by AI, including the risks of bias and discrimination, privacy, a lack of human oversight and human rights. As a co-drafter of the Munich Convention on AI,

Data and Human Rights, he will also discuss the relevance of ethical principles like transparency, accountability, and fairness, as well as the role of legal frameworks like the European AI Act, the world's first AI regulation.

Next Generation Human Space Exploration (Future & Sustainability)

Human space exploration is entering a revolutionary era. Missions to the Moon, spearheaded by NASA's Artemis program and commercial partners, will establish a sustainable lunar presence, serving as a gateway for future Mars exploration. Cutting-edge propulsion systems, AI-driven robotics, and in-space manufacturing will redefine how we live and work beyond Earth. The rise of space tourism, asteroid mining, and orbital habitats is pushing the boundaries of human potential in space. As we prepare for a multiplanetary future, interdisciplinary innovation—spanning AI, biotech, sustainability, and human psychology—will be crucial for survival and success. Join Kiriti Rambhatla (Metakosmos) as we explore the bold future of humanity beyond Earth and how next-gen space exploration will reshape life on our planet and beyond.

How We Fund More Female Founders: Angel Investing 101 (Business & Leadership)

Despite the massive potential of women-led businesses, female founders receive less than 2% of venture capital funding. Angel investing is a powerful way to bridge this gap while generating strong returns. Led by Simran Kaur (Girls That Invest) and featured in Forbes, Financial Times and Nasdaq, this session will break down how to confidently invest in female founders, even if you're new to angel investing. We'll cover key investment strategies, how to evaluate opportunities, and common mistakes to avoid. Learn from real case studies and discover how you can diversify your portfolio while making a meaningful impact. Whether you're an experienced investor or just getting started, this session will equip you with the knowledge and network to support the next wave of successful women-led companies.

Inhabiting the Deep (Future & Sustainability)

We've all heard that most of the ocean remains unexplored, but what does that really mean for science, innovation, and the future of our planet? Beneath the surface lies a vast, mysterious world filled with potential discoveries that could transform our understanding of marine life, medicine, climate, and more. Submersibles and remotely operated vehicles offer part of the solution, but what if we could go further – what if we could have a permanent human presence on the ocean floor? Join us as we dive into the challenges and promises of ocean exploration.

AI is Here to Stay, So How Do Artists Stay Ahead? (Creative Industries)

AI isn't just a creative tool; it's the music industry's next inflection point. Songs can now be generated in seconds, labels and tech companies are training AI models on decades of recordings, and streaming platforms are facing an influx of machine-made music. How do artists protect their work when AI can imitate anyone? And what role do labels, publishers, and platforms play in setting the rules? This panel unpacks the legal and financial stakes for artists, explores how copyright laws are scrambling to keep up, and asks whether the industry is ready for the next era of music ownership.

Building Global Superfans: How Artists Can Use Direct-To-Fan Engagement to Break into New Global Markets (Creative Industries)

Earlier this year, MIXDOWN predicted that the Australian music industry would lean further into direct-to-fan relationships in 2025. As artists and their teams explore how best to nurture relationships with the most engaged fans in their fanbase (the "superfans"), how can artists leverage 1:1 fan relationships to grow their audiences outside of their home market? This panel will explore how artists can use superfan engagement strategies and develop 1:1 fan relationships to support the export of their music to new markets – and in turn, build a truly global fanbase.

Visitor-centred design for the built environment (Future & Sustainability)

From groundbreaking insights achieved with the invention of The O—the world's first location-aware museum guide at MONA—to the evolution of inclusive design practices at Pladia, this session captures a transformative journey in visitor experiences. Join, Pladia's Co-founder, Nic Whyte, CEO, Andi Mastrosavas and Via David, Senior Product Designer, who reflect on the challenges of creating engaging, accessible museum environments, share how those learnings were harnessed to develop scalable solutions that bridge the gap between physical and digital realms, and

discuss visitor behaviour and the complexities of wayfinding as an inclusive design challenge. This session explores how technology and design can create more accessible, engaging, and joyful public spaces for all.

Resale vs retail: Can pre-loved survive the fast-fashion frenzy? (Culture & Lifestyle)

Fashion is faster—and cheaper—than ever, with giants like Temu and Shein dominating the market. Can pre-loved fashion compete? The resale revolution is gaining momentum. eBay reports that over half of Australian consumers see secondhand shopping as a key trend and 84% have bought or sold pre-loved goods in the past year. But is sustainability enough to challenge ultra-fast fashion? Join industry leaders from Sendle, The Volte and eBay as they explore the forces driving resale's rise and the challenges it faces. From shifting consumer values and the economics of secondhand shopping to logistics, trust and brand strategies, this panel will dive into whether the circular economy can stand up to the fast fashion machine—and what it will take to win.

More on the SXSW Sydney Screen Festival

From new instant cult-favourites fast-tracked out of Sundance and SXSW to keynote sessions with one of Hollywood's greatest comedic directors, **Paul Feig**, this year's SXSW Sydney 2025 Screen Festival program will have something for everyone.

The Screen Festival is proud to announce that Feig will receive the inaugural SXSW Sydney Screen Pioneer Award, honouring his groundbreaking contributions to genre filmmaking and film culture. To celebrate his storied career, a retrospective of his most beloved works will be screened, spotlighting his legacy as one of Hollywood's most influential comedic filmmakers.

Among the standout titles joining the Screen lineup is Amanda Kramer's outlandish and absurd dramedy ***By Design***, fresh from Sundance. Starring Oscar® nominee Juliette Lewis, Mamoudou Athie and Robin Tunney, Kramer's latest body-swap offering promises to both fascinate and alienate. Other hotly anticipated buzz titles confirmed for the program include actor-director Grace Glowicki's horror comedy, ***Dead Lover***, which won the 'NEON Auteur Award' at SXSW; ***\$POSITIONS***, a twitchy, hyper-contemporary comedy with equal doses of laughs and panic attacks; Charlie Shackleton's much-hyped would-be film about the Zodiac serial killer, ***Zodiac Killer Project***; Bhargav Saikia's supernatural folk horror ***Bokshi*** which means "witch" in Nepali; and fascinating folk horror documentary, ***The Last Sacrifice***.

Cinephiles can also look forward to an eclectic mix of short films with horror sci-fi ***Chickenboy***, Slamdance selected ***The Sweater*** and BAFTA® nominated ***Stomach Bug*** all set to receive their Australian premiere. Winner of 'Best Midnight Short' at SXSW, ***Stomach Bug*** follows the disturbing unravelling of a single father struggling to cope with empty nest syndrome as it begins to manifest physically. Joining the shorts line-up will also be drama ***Chasing The Party*** produced by Oscar® winner Sam Rockwell; NEON x Kodak Short Film Award finalist, ***Steak Dinner***; animated mystery ***Detlev***; Kaboom Festival stand-outs ***JUDY1964*** and ***You've Got A Friend In Me; Fusion***, an experimental animation experience produced by drawing both sound and picture onto 35mm film; the comically lengthy titled short, ***Joey Earns Rewards Using the McDonalds Mobile App & Megh and Clev Discuss Their Future Together*** and Jan Saska's irresistibly clever short film, ***Hurikan***, which won the coveted Audience Award at Annecy. Local talent will shine in this strand with Australian short films ***Cellular Automata***, ***Are You Coming To My Birthday***, ***Rage***, ***Barbie*** and ***Stranger Brother*** directed by MIFF Australian Emerging Director winner, Annelise Hickey, all confirmed for the festival's shorts program. Receiving their World Premiere in this category will be Australian production, ***Siblings*** directed by Julian Tynan and ***Seismic Brain Implosion*** from director Alistair Quak, whose previous shorts have played at Slamdance, Fantasia and SXSW.

The first wave of conference sessions has been revealed, diving headfirst into the creative dilemmas, industry truths and personal breakthroughs shaping the future of storytelling and creative work — with highlights including:

Adaptation Sickness or: How To Write True Stories For TV Without Being Sued

How do we tell true stories? How can we be respectful of survivors, thorough in our research, humane in representation, and engaging to an audience all at once? How do we bring humanity when portraying terrible individuals? How does a writer take and mould the truth into a powerful drama, while deftly avoiding the exploitation

or sensationalism that can lead to legal trouble? In today's TV landscape, these are the questions storytellers must consider when walking the tightrope of adaptation, and the ones we'll be exploring in conversation with Sam Strauss, creator and co-writer of 'Apple Cider Vinegar', and Anya Beyersdorf, creator of 'Fake' and co-writer of 'Apple Cider Vinegar', moderated by Australian screenwriter Dr Benjamin Law.

Overcoming Procrastination: A Workshop for Creatives

Are you a victim of procrastination, perfectionism or imposter syndrome? When facing big goals and creative challenges, do you find yourself playing small and self-sabotaging? Nothing is more frustrating than being passionate, driven and creative, but getting in your own way time and time again. Join Dr Ash King, Support Act's in-house psych (and recovering self-saboteur) to learn why we can be our own worst enemy in our creative work and explore strategies to reconcile conflicting parts of ourselves. Through interactive group activities and self-reflection prompts, you will explore how self-sabotage shows up for you, and learn fresh strategies to manage it and, in the process, enhance your productivity, resilience, and creative bravery.

Additional features, shorts, speakers and sessions will be announced in due course. Visit sxswsydney.com for more.

More on the SXSW Sydney Games Festival

The SXSW Sydney Games Festival returns in 2025, with a new home at ICC Sydney, the vibrant heart of the festival's innovation precinct. From 15–18 October, the Games Festival will spotlight the most exciting voices in game development with a lineup of events designed to empower, inspire, and elevate games professionals across the industry.

Discover the Future of Indie Games at the Games Festival Showcase

The Games Festival Showcase is a curated collection of cutting-edge, independent titles from studios around the globe. Celebrating originality, experimentation and storytelling craft, the showcase gives attendees the chance to engage directly with creators shaping the next wave of indie games. The first 40 titles have already been revealed, with applications for remaining Showcase spots open until 30 June. <https://www.sxswsydney.com/participate/games-submissions>

Games Investment Forum

The 2025 edition of the **SXSW Sydney Games Investment Forum** is a curated program designed to connect game developers with publishers, investors, scouts and funding bodies. Participants will have the opportunity to demo upcoming titles and prototypes directly to key industry decision-makers, pitch projects, receive valuable feedback, and explore new business development opportunities.

All studios are eligible and can apply online [here](#) with an Expression of Interest to participate in the VIP Evening Event.

Skill Up x NoClip

Join **Ralph Panebianco** (Skill Up) and **Danny O'Dwyer** (NoClip) as they dive into their careers as pioneers of longform games media on YouTube. With over two decades of combined experience, they'll share how they built loyal audiences through deep storytelling, game reviews and documentaries — and how they've stayed relevant amidst shifting platforms, short form trends, and audience expectations. This session is a must for developers and content creators seeking to better understand the evolving relationship between games, creators and their communities.

Ralph Panebianco (aka Skill Up) is the most watched independent game reviewer and commentator on YouTube. Combining a passion for the artform with a deep knowledge of industry commercials, Ralph's reviews, news coverage and podcast deliver thought provoking insight into the ever evolving world of videogames.

Danny O'Dwyer founded the crowdfunded video game documentary channel Noclip in 2016 and since then has produced well over 100 documentaries about games development filmed in studios around the world. Born in Ireland, Danny entered games journalism through his work at GameSpot UK in London before moving to San Francisco to become lead host for GameSpot. During his time at the website he developed an interest in talking to developers about the realities of games development. A passion that would lead him to leaving his dream job to found Noclip, where he works to this day.

Game Awards

The Games Festival culminates with the **SXSW Sydney Games and Screen Awards**, a night dedicated to recognising the visionaries across both disciplines. Join us in celebrating the artists, developers, and studios pushing boundaries and driving the future of Australia's screen and games industries forward.

Returning this year, the WINGS Award will once again honour the Best Game made by women and other gender-marginalised developers. The previous recipient of this award was Fishbowl by imissmyfriends.studio.

For the first time, Devolver Digital will present the Best Student Game at SXSW Sydney. In addition to the title, the winning team will also receive 12 hours of mentoring from the Devolver Digital team.

Games Sessions

The SXSW Sydney Games Festival includes a dynamic lineup of talks, workshops and panels that dive into the most urgent conversations and creative breakthroughs shaping the games industry. Bringing together developers, publishers, marketers and players from across the region and beyond, this year's newly announced sessions delve into the challenges and opportunities shaping the world of games today.

From influencer partnerships and global publishing strategies to cinematic storytelling, negotiation and the power of play itself, the program champions fresh thinking and practical insight. With contributions from leading voices and rising talent, the Games Festival continues to explore how games intersect with culture, technology, identity and commerce—and what it takes to thrive in a fast-evolving, increasingly competitive landscape.

Highlights include:

Indie Games and Influencers

Ralph Panebianco (Skill Up) leads a practical workshop for game developers and publishers seeking to collaborate with influencers and games media to reach wider, more engaged audiences. The session will explore effective strategies for building meaningful relationships with content creators and maximising the impact of these partnerships. It will also highlight the mutual value in spotlighting indie games—demonstrating how influencers can grow their own communities while supporting emerging talent and original creative work.

Play or Perish: Why Games May Save Us All

For decades, video games have been the scapegoat for society's biggest problems—obesity, violence, loneliness, even the decline of empathy. As mental health challenges heighten and community bonds weaken, video games are still taking the blame. In this talk, we will explore how misdirected moral panic has kept us from understanding games as one of the most powerful tools of the 21st century. All this time we have spent blaming video games as the source of society's problems, they have actually been making us smarter, happier, kinder, and more connected. It's time to stop pointing fingers and press start.

90- Minute Game School: A Games Industry Crash Course

A rapid-fire crash course for indie developers covering everything they didn't teach you in game dev school. From creative intention and team communication to data, finance, art, and pitching. Six expert-led micro-sessions give you practical tools, sharp insights, and fresh perspectives to level up your next project.

Publishing Across the Globe

Studios are often told there is only one way to get your game out there, find a publisher and let them do the work. But as the indie games industry grows and changes; different regions, publishers and investors are shifting their methods, scouting techniques and strategies. Join Vicky Wei (Akupara Games), Finley Cameron (Screen Queensland), James Marshall (The International Games Group) and Rachel Heleva (Spiral Up and Strange Scaffold) to take a look at the different perspectives and approaches that scouts and agencies are taking into the future.

What Nobody Tells You About Indie Game Marketing

All the secrets to launching an indie game. In this candid session, Akupara Games' Head of Marketing pulls back the curtain on the indie launch process, sharing the real strategies, hard-won lessons, and often-ignored truths that can make or break your release. From platform politics to community cultivation, discover what it actually takes to stand out in today's tough-but-fair market. Whether you're self-publishing or working with a publisher, this talk gives you the insider perspective no blog post ever will. No fluff. No gatekeeping. Just actionable insights from the front lines.

If You Can't See the Shelves, You're the Product: Surviving Game Dev in a Bloated Industry

In an age where developers double as influencers and content as currency, the line between creating games and selling yourself has all but vanished. This talk reflects on the state of the industry, its exhausting demands, and how to stay creatively and mentally afloat when the system wants you to commodify your identity.

Playful Negotiation

Good negotiation actually feels like creative problem-solving. This workshop reframes negotiation as a collaborative, principled process and offers playful tools to find hidden opportunities in the negotiation process.

Your Film Is A Game, Your Game Is A Film - Anatomy Of A Cutscene

Cinema is drunk on video game adaptations right now - and most of them suck. Meanwhile videogames are becoming more cinematic than ever. While games reach upward for the cultural status of film, Hollywood reaches down for memes, nostalgia and chicken jockey. Why are these two mediums trading places? How wide is the gap between them and how can you use a cutscene to make your video game cinematic? In this session, we will go through the opening cutscene for our new video game and investigate how a good opening can establish the vibe, setting and theme of the story in under two minutes. Conversely, we will also look at TV shows and films who have adapted the best elements of videogames into the medium - without resorting to condescension or dank parody. The key takeaway from the session would be what games and cinema can learn from each other, what we learned from merging the two and how to make it out alive!

More on the SXSW Sydney Tech & Innovation Festival

The Tech & Innovation Festival at SXSW Sydney 2025 offers a refreshed program designed to spotlight not just what's next in technology—but who's next. This year's festival brings together a dynamic mix of conference sessions, professional learning opportunities, the Pitch competition, a showcase of tertiary talent in tech and innovation, the new Student Pitch, and a collaborative Hackathon. This convergence of ideas, talent and industry insight creates a rare density of possibility in one place—opening up new pathways for global ideas to take shape and meaningful partnerships to emerge. It's an environment where innovation meets impact, helping drive year-round outcomes that complement traditional export and trade strategies.

Tech & Innovation Conference Sessions

The Tech & Innovation conference at SXSW Sydney 2025 is set to be a dynamic convergence of global thought leaders, pioneering technologists and visionary entrepreneurs.

Industry-leading voices such as **Mo Gawdat** (former Chief Business Officer at Google X), **Meredith Whittaker** (President of Signal), **Lars Rasmussen** (Co-founder of Google Maps), **Ivan Zhao** (CEO and Co-Founder of Notion), **Niall Firth** (Executive Editor of MIT Technology Review) and **Nicholas Renotte** (Head of AI Developer Advocacy at IBM) and more will contribute their insights, enriching the dialogue on innovation and its impact on our world.

Attendees can look forward to a diverse array of sessions that explore how emerging technologies are reshaping the way we live, work and connect. From questions of ethics and agency in an AI-driven world to the role of neuroscience in creative expression, the Tech & Innovation conference sessions dive into the opportunities, risks and responsibilities that come with rapid innovation.

Session highlights include:

AI Ethics: Australia's Opportunity on the World Stage

Australia is falling behind the rest of the world in regulating AI. With no national bill of rights and minimal protections for free will, choice and agency, we are at risk of entering a tech-dystopian world where we become the product. Join Dr Joshua Krook as he explores some difficult legal questions raised by AI, including the risks of bias and discrimination, privacy, a lack of human oversight and human rights. As a co-drafter of the Munich Convention on AI, Data and Human Rights, he will also discuss the relevance of ethical principles like transparency, accountability, and fairness, as well as the role of legal frameworks like the European AI Act, the world's first AI regulation.

Redefining Art With Neuroscience

Advances in neuroscience and technology are revolutionising the way we engage with art and creativity, opening doors for deeper human connection. At the forefront of this innovation is the Quantitative Electroencephalography (QEEG) device, a cutting-edge tool that allows brainwave activity to manipulate sound and visual parameters in real time. This breakthrough not only expands the boundaries of artistic expression but also paves the way for inclusive collaboration between individuals from the disability cohort and those without disabilities, fostering shared experiences and bridging the gaps that often divide us. This session aims to highlight the creation of a piece of audiovisual art crafted by brainwaves in real time using QEEG device.

Trenchcoat not required: The critical role of cyber intelligence in business decision-making

During this session, CyberCX's Executive Director of Cyber Intelligence, Katherine Mansted will demystify cyber intelligence and its increasingly important role for organisations in managing cyber risk. Katherine will discuss how intelligence empowers informed decision making at all levels of a business. Using a number of real-world examples, Katherine will share how intelligence has the power to shift cyber defence from a reactive to a proactive activity, helping organisations find and anticipate trends.

Digital Sovereignty - Don't build your castle on someone else's land

Digital sovereignty is about reclaiming your data, identity, and digital presence. As individuals, we too often surrender control to platforms and apps, sharing more than we realize. This talk reveals the hidden costs of that complacency, from invasive data-mining and manipulative algorithms to weakened personal agency. We'll explore how to protect your online self and you'll learn how to secure your information, shape your narrative, and navigate the digital world on your own terms. Rather than relying on distant tech giants, discover how to set boundaries and demand accountability. Join us to see why digital sovereignty isn't just for governments or corporations. It's a personal right that starts with you.

Tech & Innovation Expo

The Tech & Innovation Expo at SXSW Sydney is where the future comes to life. Across four buzzing days at ICC Sydney, the Expo showcases the most exciting tech, ideas and inventions from across the Asia-Pacific and beyond. Explore interactive displays, discover world-first product launches, and connect with innovators, startups and industry leaders shaping what's next across AI, robotics, health, sustainability and more. Whether they're entrepreneurs, investors, tech enthusiasts, or simply curious, attendees can get hands-on with breakthrough innovations and connect with the minds behind them at the Expo.

For the first time ever, the Expo will be free and open to the public on Saturday, offering everyone a chance to experience the cutting-edge advancements and engage with the future of innovation.

Tech & Innovation Showcase

SXSW Sydney is proud to reveal the first selected projects for the 2025 **Tech & Innovation Showcase**. Featuring next-generation tools for health, performance, transportation and clean energy, these early selections highlight the innovative ideas and concepts shaping our future, developed by some of the brightest emerging innovators across Australia.

Inara (University of Technology Sydney)

Inara is a compact, wireless wearable sensor and companion app that delivers real-time muscle activation feedback during exercise, helping personal trainers, athletes, and rehabilitation professionals replace guesswork with objective, actionable data. Unlike bulky or garment-based EMG solutions, Inara's lightweight design allows for quick repositioning across muscle groups and seamless integration into everyday training and rehab routines. The app visualises live muscle engagement, logs performance over time, and enables users to track improvements, detect imbalances and reduce injury risk. By making elite-level muscle tracking accessible and intuitive, Inara empowers users to adjust technique in real time, builds trust through science-backed insights, and enhances outcomes across fitness, rehabilitation, and sports. Inara was founded and developed by Anthony Biscotto, who is currently pursuing a dual degree in mechatronic engineering and business at UTS, with a focus on mechatronics, robotics, and automation engineering, and finance. Its long-term potential lies in powering predictive injury prevention and AI-driven performance optimisation, transforming how we train, recover, and perform.

MonSol (Monash University)

MonSol's Concertina PV Array is a lightweight, modular solar power system designed to deliver clean, cost-effective energy to remote industries, isolated communities, and critical operations like defence and disaster response, where grid access is unreliable and traditional solar systems fall short. With fast deployment, minimal material requirements, and a compact design, Concertina addresses key barriers such as high labour and logistics costs. It can be packed in half the space, deployed in a third of the time, and with half the materials of conventional systems, making it ideal for short- to mid-term energy needs. Easily redeployable and compatible with diesel generators and battery storage, the Concertina enables flexible hybrid systems that reduce fuel use, cut emissions, and lower maintenance demands, transforming off-grid solar deployment through efficiency and adaptability. MonSol is the first spin-off from the Woodside Monash Energy Partnership, and its mission is to drive down the cost of electricity produced by clean energy sources to power the activities of humankind.

UTS Motorsport (University of Technology Sydney)

At UTS Motorsports, each year, a team of students designs, builds, and tests a Formula SAE vehicle from scratch, managing the entire process while balancing full-time study, part-time work, and other commitments. This interdisciplinary project brings together engineering, business, media, and logistics under a fully student-led structure. Our innovation lies in combining hands-on technical development with data-driven decision-making and creative communication. The result is a high-performance electric vehicle and a team of industry-ready graduates skilled in sustainable mobility, project management, and cross-functional collaboration.

Focus Bear: AI-Powered Nudges for Deep Work and Study (RMIT University)

Focus Bear is an AI-powered app designed to help users stay focused while studying or working, without relying on willpower. Originally built for neurodivergent individuals with ADHD and Autism, it now supports a broader audience, including students, remote workers, and creatives. Unlike rigid website blockers, Focus Bear uses on-device AI to detect digital distraction and mental fatigue in real time, providing gentle, adaptive nudges to refocus or take timely breaks. With 8,000 signups, 500 monthly active users, and 81 paying subscribers, it's already making a meaningful impact. Focus Bear offers a humane, brain-friendly alternative to traditional productivity tools by supporting sustained attention, promoting mental wellbeing, and reducing burnout, ultimately fostering inclusion, independence, and

success in a world full of digital noise.

Sonorus (Monash University)

Sonorus is an AI-powered medical device designed to transform the early detection of rheumatic heart disease (RHD), a percent preventable yet deadly condition affecting over 40 million people globally, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. Using advanced algorithms, Sonorus analyses heart sounds with 80 percent specificity to detect murmurs and signs of valvular heart disease through a simple 45-second recording with no specialist training required. It empowers patients to self-test and offers clinicians a fast, non-invasive screening tool that can reduce unnecessary echocardiograms by up to 68 percent. As global health systems face workforce shortages, Sonorus provides a scalable solution, aiming to make RHD detection as routine as checking blood pressure, whether in a Melbourne clinic or a remote NT community.

More to come - submissions are still open!

This is just the beginning. The Tech & Innovation Showcase at SXSW Sydney 2025 will feature a curated selection of bold, future-focused projects at the pre-commercial stage, from prototypes to platform tools across design, hardware, health tech, energy and more.

The Tech & Innovation Showcase is accepting applications until **31 July 2025**. Tertiary or university students developing an innovative idea, concept or prototype within their field of discipline are encouraged to apply.

XR+

The XR Showcase returns to SXSW Sydney in 2025 as XR+, spotlighting immersive experiences and interactive projects that push the boundaries of immersion and interactively through technology and experimentation. The first three pioneering projects selected to captivate audiences this October as part of XR+ have been unveiled, with more to be announced soon.

Rising River, A Personal Odyssey To Your Shadow - HYZ studio

Rising River is an AI-driven VR experience merging Jungian shadow theory with the VIA Character Strengths framework to guide participants through therapeutic self-reflection. Created by HYZ Studio, renowned for storytelling that bridges technology and human insight, Rising River has previously showcased internationally at GEN-AI Summit Silicon Valley, ARTECHOUSE NYC and SIGGRAPH 2025 Vancouver.

Revolving Time Domain - FutureZoetrope (HASE Kaihei & YAZAKI Syunji)

Revolving Time Domain invites participants to physically generate virtual "time" through a tangible rotary controller, blending animation and interactive VR in an innovative installation that challenges perceptions of temporality. FutureZoetrope's compelling work previously featured at Recto VRso / Laval Virtual in Laval, France.

The Extraterrestrial Divining Stick - Thomas Marcusson

Blending traditional water-divining practices with astrophysical exploration, this interactive installation by Thomas Marcusson provocatively bridges Earth-bound rituals and interplanetary science. Marcusson's critically acclaimed works have appeared globally, including at the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney and Science Gallery in Melbourne.

XR+ is still accepting submissions until **30 June 2025**. Those developing an innovative, interactive or immersive project are encouraged to apply.