MEDIA RELEASE

Game on: Learning through game design

5 November 2016: The video games of winning students in the Australian STEM Video Game Challenge, announced at PAX in Melbourne today, indicate that game design offers an effective approach to hands-on and purposeful learning.

Coordinated by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) and supported by major partner Academy of Interactive Entertainment and innovation partners HP Australia, BigAnt Studios, Google and PAX Australia, as well as government, universities, corporate partners and game developers, the Australian STEM Video Game Challenge promotes engaging and interactive learning to increase interest and participation in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) disciplines by inviting school students to create an original video game.

Liam Hensel, ACER project director for the Australian STEM Video Game Challenge, said the Challenge shows that students don't have to be 'gamers' to make good digital games.

"In designing and building a game, students have to be good at solving problems, designing systems and understanding human behaviour," Mr Hensel said.

"To design and build a digital game, of course, requires some ability to apply or develop code, but students don't have to possess a great degree of technical skill in coding or programming to get started. The Australian STEM Video Game Challenge provides students with resources on programming using Scratch, Game Maker and Unity – whether they are absolute beginners or absolute professionals.

"The goal of the Australian STEM Video Game Challenge isn't necessarily to make students become scientists, engineers or mathematicians, or even game developers, but to engage them in developing the increasingly valuable set of skills that will empower them to succeed in the future. The Challenge helps students, to understand that STEM have applications beyond a laboratory and outside a textbook, that STEM is relevant and important not just across the obvious STEM fields but across every aspect of their lives."

Winners in the 2016 Australian STEM Video Game Challenge will be showcased at an award ceremony hosted by Steven 'Bajo' O'Donnell, co-presenter of ABC TV's *Good Game*, at 11.00am, Saturday 5 November, at PAX at the Kookaburra Theatre, Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre, when expert game industry professionals Dr Kristy de Salas, Josh Caratelli and Ben Buckton unpack what goes into making a great game and talk with the winning students.

Winning games will also be playable at the Australian STEM Video Game Challenge stand in the PAX expo hall. PAX, one of the largest video gaming events in the world, runs from 4 to 6 November.

Winners in the 2016 Australian STEM Video Game Challenge

Watch or download game play videos of the winning games using the password: **Stem2016**

Years 5-8 Scratch

- Nyibango Costa and Shiris Kayastha, St Vincent's Primary School, ACT, for *Magnetics*

- Luke Aguilar, Tacking Point Public School, NSW, for *Bounce*

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Years 5-8 Gamemaker/Gamestar Mechanic

- Aizaz Irfan, Renmark Primary School, SA, for *Hard Games to Play*

- Isabella Varda, Joseph Silveira and Dua Fatima, Glenroy West Primary School, VIC, for *Back to Earth*

Years 5-8 Open (Unity)

- Abhi Singh, Emmanuel Pranoto, Helen Yang and Cameron Ke, Churchlands Senior High School, WA, for *Time is of the Essence*

Years 5-8 Open (Python)

- Maximus Lorents, Sydney Secondary College – Leichardt Campus, NSW, for *PixelTanks*

Years 9-12 Gamemaker/Gamestar Mechanic

- Tom Hubeek, Nathan Lambert, Lachlan Wiliamson and Jacob Djaelani, St Bede's College, VIC, for *Spectrum*

- Macus Ing, Trinity Christian School, ACT, for *Superbug*

Years 9-12 Unity

- Joseph Smith, Varsity College, QLD, for *ColourSniper*

- Harry Waldon and Lachlan Weis, Ignatius Park College, QLD, for *TumbleCube*

Years 9-12 Open (HaxeFlixel)

- Stuart Rich and Eli Narev, Sydney Grammar School, NSW, for *Super Probe Quest*

Years 9-12 Open (RPG Maker)

- Aaron Hamilton-Gold, Celeste Oliffe-Gold and Tyler Whelan, Dulwich High School of Visual Arts and Design, NSW, for *Mole'd*

Further information on the winners in the attached information sheet is also strictly embargoed until 11.00am AEDT Saturday 5 November 2016.

The winning students and showcase participants will be available for interview after the award ceremony.

Registrations for the 2017 Australian STEM Video Game Challenge open in April 2017. For more information, visit < www.stemgames.org.au >

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