



Computer game developers make WA their base

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THE digital world has set its sights on Western Australia, with three new computer game development companies choosing Perth as their new base.

Industry and Enterprise Minister Francis Logan was today the first person to play the new locative game Ghost Town at the week-long digital content festival Byte Me! at the Perth Town Hall.

Ghost Town is an innovative game that uses a player's mobile phone to send messages, pictures and calls to help them uncover clues and solve puzzles as they explore the streets of Perth.

Players search the CBD for special stickers that unlock the game's challenges and unravel a mysterious storyline. The game uses Bluetooth, SMS and VOIP technologies. Similar games have attracted thousands of competitors when played in New York, London, Toronto and Amsterdam.

Mr Logan said Ghost Town was an exciting new concept for the gaming development industry, which was one of the fastest growing sectors in the world and worth \$110 million annually in Australia.

"WA is working hard to secure our share of this expanding industry by supporting the development of a strong digital media industry," he said.

"The fact that international companies are moving to Perth confirms that WA has a burgeoning games development sector.

"Game developers are attracted to our creative writers - we have the edge in this field, as well as internationally competitive capabilities in animation, visualisation and simulation."

The three new companies to establish offices in Perth are:

Giant Dice: A company founded by former Canadian residents that develops games using phones, websites and actual cities to create surprising and compelling experiences.

Floor Pty Ltd: An established games developer from Japan that develops unique titles for next

generation platforms and is working towards online game development. The Perth studio is its first overseas venture.

Subversive Games: A games development company founded by a UK team and dedicated to producing games for the PC casual games market.

Canadian David Fono, the co-founder of Giant Dice, said his company's aim was to create games that made the player interact with the real world.

"Ghost Town is an example of a locative game, which has received quite a lot of attention internationally over the past few years," Mr Fono said.

"Ghost Town is a mixed-media game that is played on mobile phones and is the very first game of its kind in Perth.

"The plan is to put Perth on the map as a hot spot of cutting-edge technology to tell stories and engage audiences.

"We chose to come to Perth because of the incredible opportunities the State presents."

Floor Co Ltd general manager Jeremy Burton said his company wanted to expand internationally and had chosen Perth as the ideal location.

"Floor chose Perth because of the lifestyle, the pool of innovative and well-trained graduates and the ease of establishment due to a shared time zone with Japan," Mr Burton said.

"Transferable infrastructure makes it easier and cheaper to relocate because we do not have to reconfigure our games."

Byte Me! is a festival celebrating creativity in the digital content sector. More information is available at <http://www.byteme.net.au>

Ghost Town will run until December 9.

To play, participants should register at the Giant Dice booth at the ByteMe! Festival between 10am and 5pm or by visiting <http://giantdice.com/ghosttown>

Players require a mobile phone with Bluetooth and MP3 capabilities.

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