



After 10 years, the ABC has cancelled *Good Game*. An official statement announced that the show would not continue in 2017 after it was revealed that Stephanie “Hex” Bendixsen and Nich “Nichboy” Richardson, would be leaving the *Good Game* team to pursue other opportunities.

The news came as a shock to many fans who were expecting to see Bajo, Hex, and the rest of the gang back for a new year of gaming news and reviews. Things had been looking up for *Good Game*, as they had just finished commemorating a decade worth of gaming TV and were looking forward to celebrating an eleventh.



Good Game's live episode was held in celebration of the show's 10th birthday.
Photo Credit: Good Game Facebook

The decision was also partially influenced by the way audiences are choosing to get their gaming news, although the primarily online shows *Good Game: Pocket* and *Good Game: Well Played* were also cancelled. Only *Good Game: Spawn Point*, the team's show for younger gamers, was spared the axe.

According to *GG: Pocket* producer Peter Burns, "We were approaching 2017 excited about the opportunity to pursue new directions for *Good Game*, *Spawn Point*, *Pocket* and *Well Played*. The plans were in place, and the rug was pulled out from beneath us."

Nichboy, presenter for *Good Game: Pocket* found out he wouldn't be returning to grace the digital screens in 2017. In a Facebook post he said, "Pocket had been decommissioned at the end of last year, as they did not see the value in YouTube or a 'new media' audience. We were planning on continuing it anyway,

pirate-radio style from within the building, and had big plans for the main TV show as well."

"This cancellation came swiftly. I won't say out of nowhere because the ABC never really knew what to do with us. But it came right at the time that *Good Game* could have begun its real transformation."

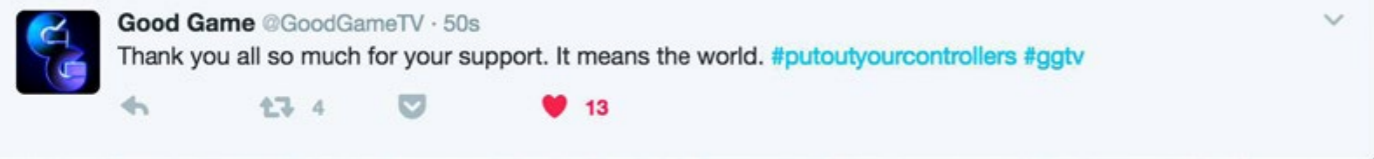
Pocket had gathered a dedicated following who loved the smaller show's casual feel and energetic host. They called themselves *Pocketeers* and, with the help of the small pocket crew, helped create a welcoming and open community with minimal toxicity (a rare sight on the web). Meet ups, in-jokes and community content were constantly happening online and across the country.

When fans heard the news that *Good Game* and most of its spin offs were cancelled, they quickly flocked to social media to start the hashtag *#putoutyourcontrollers*. By the evening it was trending across Australia with fans sending their support to the GG team. *Playstation* and *Ubisoft Australia* also weighed in online.





The Good Game team put out their own controllers after hearing about the wave of support from fans.
Photo Credit: Twitter



Members of the cast and crew urged fans to take their grievances up directly with the ABC and lodge an official complaint about the cancellation, as the ABC don't pay attention to social media.

Hex and Nichboy's departure from *Good Game* is not a departure from gaming as a whole. The pair are moving to *Channel 7* to start up a new going show on a commercial TV station. "Never, in a million years did I think the ABC would cancel the show after it had already been commissioned," Hex said in a response.

"The show could easily have continued without me. Bajo, Goose

and Rad sill remained and were excited to make the show - and I could have been replaced. I know this, because I myself replaced someone when I started on the show!"

"The show's cancellation is a direct reflection of the ABC's feelings about the *Good Game* brand and for having gaming content on the ABC," she said. "The *Good Game* team and I truly believe that even if I had stayed, the show would not have likely lasted more than 6-12 months. Faith in the brand seems to have disappeared - and my decision to leave, along with Nich, simply served as the catalyst for the ABC's decision to let it go."

2016 was a year of many departures from the GG team. Michael "Hingers" Hing, former host of GG: Well Played left the team to host the Oceanic Pro League. Janet Carr, the original pioneer behind the show, had also left late last year.

Good Game was the only programme on mainstream television proudly made for gamers, by gamers. It was able to be fully independent of any marketing influences due to the ABC's status as a public broadcaster and helped

to create a sense of legitimacy to the Australian gaming media landscape."

Originally the show was hosted by Jeremy "Junglist" Ray and Michael "Kapowski" Makowski for the recently introduced ABC2. It was a breakthrough moment for Australian gamers as they were finally being recognised as a demographic by stuffy old media executives. The first episode aired in 2006, just a few months before the release of the Wii.



Good Game's live episode was held in celebration of the show's 10th birthday.
Photo Credit: Good Game Facebook

What started off in a tiny shoebox office soon expanded as the fanbase grew. Steven “Bajo” O’Donnell would eventually replace Kapowski and Hex would replace Junglist in a controversial move that almost split the tightly knit fan community apart. Wounds healed

and the *Good Game* team and fandom only grew since then.

As a TV show, *Good Game* was able to help further discussion about the gaming world in Australia, contributing to the long settled R18+ debate. They were also in a prime position to explore sensitive topics in more depth, going further than just reviews and examining how particular issues like war or sex were portrayed in the medium.

The mental health special episode in particular was one of the team’s “proudest moments”. The program ran as a part of the ABC’s mental health week and looked at mental health within and around games. It explored how gamers could escape a grim reality for a few moments, how anxiety impacted creators and contributors, and how games were able to portray complex issues surrounding mental illnesses like anxiety and depression to help others understand what a loved one may be going through.

Good Game is more than just a TV show though. It inspired young people to get into the game industry as programmers, writers, journalists, and youtubers.

Bajo and Hex were and still are role models for a new digital generation. *Spawn Point* is an easily accessible and free program that helps kids who are getting into gaming find other people like them.

But gaming is not just for kids, though you might find it hard to explain that to media executives. The move to shut down the ‘big’ show and keep *Spawn Point* running is a step backward for legitimising games as both an artform and as a medium.

With gamers getting more of their news from an online space, GG launched Pocket to be able to keep up with the breakneck speed of online news. In addition, the show had been uploading their episodes of all their programming to YouTube, free of advertising.

Now the official Youtube channel is quiet. Ancient episodes from 2006 and 2007 remain the most recent thing published in what had been an end of year treat.

Work on *Spawn Point* continues, with Angharad “Rad” Yeo starting as the next host alongside Bajo.

It’s the end of an era for the biggest gaming TV show Australia has ever had.

GG *Good Game*. Well Played.

William Arnott

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