Gong joins in global gaming marathon

By RACHAEL MICALLEF

THREE years ago Rebecca Fernandez was huddled over a computer, competing to produce a video game in a single weekend.

As part of the Brisbane branch of the Global Game Jam, Ms Fernandez and her team created their own video game, won the competition and eventually founded their own Wollongong-based game company, Convict Interactive.

At the weekend, Ms Fernandez brought the same event to the University of Wollongong, to give the region's "tech heads" the opportunity to experience the 48-hour gaming marathon.

"This area is picking up a bit of the game development scene," she said.

"The University of Wollongong has a game development degree, so there are a lot of local students who are interested in making games."

During the weekend, teams working at the University of Wollongong's SMART Infrastructure Facility and simultaneously at more than 140 locations around the world - both amateurs and professionals - spent an intense 48 hours working to design and prototype video games.

While Global Game Jam has been held in NSW since 2010, this is the first time it has come to Wollongong. Ms Fernandez said the event was an important way to sustain the Australian gaming industry.

"We want everyone to learn a lot about making games and to discover that it's not actually as hard as it may seem," she said.

"Hopefully they'll go away from here and be able to start their own game company, or just become more involved in the industry."

The entries will be play tested and presented to the public at Sydney's Powerhouse Museum on February 4.