



WHAT'S THE NEWS? ISSUE 13

OCTOBER 2005

FRIENDS OF THE NATIONAL FILM AND SOUND ARCHIVE INC
Founding Patrons: Gil Brealy, Bryan Brown, Anthony Buckley, Scott Hicks,
Patricia Lovell, Chris Noonan, Michael Pate, Fred Schepisi, Albie Thoms

**'Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world.
Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.'** Margaret Mead

HELLO FRIENDS

Welcome to issue thirteen of the Friends NFSA newsletter. This issue contains items on a wide range of topics, including the Archive's identity and statutory authority status, a recent Australian Society of Archivists resolution, some quotable quotes, an introduction to our new administration assistant, information about a Canberra Friends screening, and notice of our Annual General Meeting and Friends' Talk.

We hope you enjoy the newsletter and look forward to, hopefully, seeing or hearing from some of you soon.

FRIENDS FILM SCREENING, ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND FRIENDS TALK

The Annual General Meeting of the Friends will be held at Electric Shadows cinema on Sunday 20 November at 7.30pm.

The meeting will be preceded by a film and a short address by Michael Organ, former Greens MP in the Federal Parliament, and currently Archivist at the University of Wollongong. He will speak about the current status of the Archive in relation to the Australian Film Commission, and consider the Howard Government's track record in relation to national cultural institutions.

In a recent email to the Friends, Michael wrote, *'Congratulations on your bulletin. In noting that 'Labor has committed' to establish the Archive as an independent statutory authority as soon as possible, it should also be noted that the Greens have made such a commitment and have been actively campaigning in this direction since the amalgamation was first mooted.'*

Michael Organ's talk will be followed by the screening of a superb 35mm print (on loan from the US Library of Congress) of a rarely seen film: *ABROAD WITH TWO YANKS*, directed by Allan Dwan in 1944. The story is set in wartime Sydney but the film was made entirely on a Hollywood backlot, with Americans in all of the Australian roles. It provides a remarkable insight into how Aussies were perceived by the Yanks at this time. Historical interest—and title pun—aside, the film is a real charmer, high-spirited and delightful. William Bendix and Dennis O'Keefe star as two American soldiers on leave who both fall for the same Aussie girl (played by Helen Walker). Their exuberant high jinks and adventures are depicted in a lively and non-nonsense style by Hollywood veteran director, Allan Dwan.

The screening will be a fund-raiser for the Friends, and all tickets will be \$14 (no concessions). We ask that you please remain in the cinema after the film for our brief AGM. Please come along for both an enjoyable evening and to support the work of the Friends in a very tangible way.

Due to censorship restrictions, no-one under 18 can be admitted. The film runs for 85 minutes.

Presented with the assistance of The Motion Picture and Sound Division, Library of Congress, USA, the National Film and Sound Archive (a division of the Australian Film Commission) and the National Cinematheque. Thanks to Mike Mashon, Library of Congress.

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

With our AGM fast approaching, we are now calling for nominations for the Friends of the National Film and Sound Archive Committee office bearers—President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer—as well as general Committee Members. We'd love to welcome you so please don't hesitate to contact us and find out how to nominate.

NFSA IDENTITY SUBSUMED BY AFC: MORE IRON-CLAD PROMISES BROKEN; LEAKED DOCUMENTS REVEAL NEW PLANS

In direct contradiction of its own and the Minister's undertakings, the Australian Film Commission is steadily whittling away at the National Film and Sound Archive's identity and making it more and more subservient to the AFC brand.

For several months now, all emails, publications and other communications have represented the Archive as: 'National Film and Sound Archive—a division of the Australian Film Commission'. All invoices for NFSA services go out on AFC letterhead.

A short time ago, all email addresses were homogenised under the AFC's name. Now, if you are emailing Joe Bloggs at the NFSA, the email address will read joe.bloggs@afc.gov.au. It will not longer be obvious whether the person you are contacting works for the AFC or the Archive.

But that's not all. Business cards and stationery are about to get similar treatment. A package of material has come into the hands of the Friends which sets out the new corporate design for NFSA letterheads, business cards, media releases and the like. They are dominated by the Australian Government crest and the AFC lyrebird logo. The words 'National Film and Sound Archive' appear in small—in some cases almost microscopic—type. Anyone not actually looking for those words would miss them entirely.

The proforma letterheads and other forms are accompanied by in-house memos from AFC staffers which make clear the strategy of having a single corporate identity for the AFC—despite all the promises made by CEO Kim Dalton and others. The clear intent is to reduce the NFSA to the status of just another branch or division, and strip it of any distinctive institutional identity.

As evident in recent advertising in the Canberra Times 'Panorama' events supplement, the Archive is now no longer permitted to use its own logo but is required to use the AFC's logo alongside the Commonwealth crest. And while its peer institutions in the adjoining advertisements are proudly proclaiming their identities and activities, the NFSA alone is required to promote its now subordinate status as 'a division of the Australian Film Commission', in turn diminishing the relative status of the audiovisual heritage.

The AFC explicitly promised that it would not do such things. On 17 February 2004, AFC CEO Kim Dalton told the Senate Estimates Committee: *"We consider it very important, as we have always said, that the archive has a distinct identity—an identity which is distinct from the Film Commission's identity and one that can operate independently, so that the archive can have a presence which is independent of the AFC"*.

Are the AFC's actions, above, consistent with this undertaking?

The AFC does not answer questions or participate in open debate. It has never responded to the resolutions and questions arising from the conference on the Future of the Archive, organised by the Friends and the Australian Society of Archivists in July 2004. It has similarly ignored questions publicly tabled by other stakeholder organisations. It has never responded to the 140-plus public submissions it said it was so eager to receive, and which flooded in during early 2004. It is regularly quizzed in Senate Estimates Committees but manages to stonewall questions, as the Hansard record shows.

The AFC does not, it seems, feel bound by its own promises or those of the Minister. Now donors will be unclear whether they are giving material to the NFSA or to the AFC. They may end up deciding they can't take the risk and not deposit it at all.

QUOTABLE QUOTES

Maureen Barron, Chair, Australian Film Commission

"I encourage you to contemplate the benefits we envisage for the Archive, the audiovisual industries and the community...and to engage in a productive and reasoned debate..." Public statement 12 Jan 2004

Hon. Peter McGauran

"[the Minister has given] an assurance that the National Film and Sound Archive will retain its identity under the new arrangements...On behalf of the ministers involved, I categorically state that the organisation will not be relocated. If the assurances I have already given are not enough.....I can further assure [the member for Cunningham] that the National Film and Sound Archive will not be subsumed by the AFC... [the bill] will give a statutory underpinning to the National Film and Sound Archive activities and organisation." House of Representatives 18 June 2003

Kim Dalton, CEO Australian Film Commission

"We would expect that ScreenSound, or the National Screen and Sound Archive, would retain its identity as the national collection and the repository for our film heritage and that it would retain that identity and sense of integrity within the Australian Film Commission." Senate Estimates Committee 28 May 2003

"We consider it very important, as we have always said, that the archive has a distinct identity—an identity which is distinct from the Film Commission's identity and one that can operate independently, so that the archive can have a presence which is independent of the AFC." Senate Estimates Committee 17 Feb 2004

Hon Peter Slipper

"The national screen and sound archive will not lose its identity as a result of this integration. The archive has an important place among our national cultural institutions as the repository of the important national collection of audiovisual material." House of Representatives 26 June 2003

ERODING THE ARCHIVE'S IDENTITY "DIRECTIONS" BY STEALTH AND MORE BROKEN PROMISES

During the last 12 months, in sequence

- * The National Film and Sound Archive's Sydney office at Fox Studios closed, and was removed to an upper floor at AFC headquarters in William St., Sydney. No longer a separate, visible entity in Sydney.
- * Phone calls to the Sydney office are diverted to the AFC switchboard. When you phone the Archive, it is now the AFC that answers the phone.
- * Emails, publicity and statements from the Archive now prominently carry the tag line A Division of the Australian Film Commission. The Archive's subordinate status and lack of autonomy are advertised.
- * The Archive no longer has its own logo. It's required to show the AFC logo in tandem with the Australian Government coat of arms.
- * The NFSA's email addresses have been changed to remove any reference to the Archive. They refer only to the AFC: joe.smith@afc.gov.au. Those who deal with the Archive are no longer sure whether they are dealing with the NFSA or the AFC
- * A new design for the Archive's stationery and business cards, which minimises the identity of the NFSA

These changes are in direct contradiction to Kim Dalton's undertaking. How do they benefit the NFSA? The AFC? The public good?

What's more, NONE OF THESE CHANGES WERE NECESSARY. THEY ARE ALL DELIBERATE ACTS OF AFC POLICY. THEY COULD BE REVERSED TOMORROW:

- * The Sydney Office could be given its own phone number and the AFC switch could answer it as 'National Film and Sound Archive'. Simple technology.
- * The tagline declaring subjection to the AFC could be dropped.
- * The AFC logo could be dropped and only the Australian coat of arms used.
- * Distinctive email addresses for the Archive joe.smith@nfsa.gov.au could be easily restored.

WILL THE AFC HONOUR ITS PROMISE TO PROTECT THE ARCHIVE'S IDENTITY AND DO THIS?
IF NOT, WHY NOT?

SENATE ESTIMATES COMMITTEE ACTION

Arising out of the Senate Estimates hearing of 25 May 2005, ABC news in Canberra announced that the NFSA had received an addition \$6.9 million in funding. This is not true. Despite any contrary impression created at the Estimates, none of this money comes to the Archive.

It is hard to compare budget figures year-on-year because the goalposts keep changing, but it seems that under AFC stewardship the Archive's budget has been significantly reduced.

Kim Dalton's evidence about staff morale being 'very good' is in contradiction of the CPSU's news release, *NFSA: Archive director must talk to staff* http://www.cpsu.org.au/news/1117081904_28349.html, which confirmed informal, anecdotal evidence from several staff that morale is very low. The Director of the Archive no longer has control of the formal staff consultative mechanisms.

It seems to be widely understood within the Archive that PALM consultants have found considerable fault with the AFC and its culture but no fault with the Archive.

It might also be noted that the AFC has failed to produce a satisfactory response to Senator Carr's previous question on notice, which required an answer to the resolutions and questions put to the AFC by Archive Forum, Friends of NFSA and the Australian Society of Archivists, and ignored by the AFC. They have been told to do it again.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY STATUS FOR THE NATIONAL FILM AND SOUND ARCHIVE?

A resolution passed at the Annual General Meeting of the Australian Society of Archivists on Thursday 6 October 2005, repeated the call for statutory status for the National Film and Sound Archive. The resolution was proposed by Anne Picot and seconded by Kathryn Dan, and was passed unanimously. It is a follow up to a resolution passed 12 months earlier (see below).

For the Australian Society of Archivists, independence for the NFSA involves matters of fundamental archival principle.

ASA RESOLUTION ON THE NATIONAL FILM AND SOUND ARCHIVE

Background

At last year's AGM, the Society passed the attached resolution on the National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA), and subsequently included it in a press release issued on 20 September 2004.

The resolution was sent to Senator Rod Kemp (Minister for the Arts), Hon. Helen Coonan (Minister for Communications). It was also sent to Senator Kate Lundy (then Shadow Arts Minister), Hon. Lindsay Tanner (then Shadow Minister for Communications), Senator Aden Ridgeway (then Arts Spokesperson for the Democrats), Senator John Cherry, Senator Bob Brown, Hon. Michael Organ, Hon. Mark Latham (then Leader of the Opposition), and Senator John Faulkner.

Neither Minister acknowledged receipt. Neither has responded to the resolution, nor apparently taken any of the actions which it called for. Demands by Senator Lundy's successor as Shadow Arts Minister, Senator Kim Carr, for a satisfactory answer to the ASA resolution to be tabled in Senate Estimates Committee have so far not been met.

In the past 12 months, Dr Paolo Cherchi Usai has established himself as NFSA Director. He has restructured the Archive on curatorial lines and the title 'National Film and Sound Archive' has been officially reinstated. However, concerns have mounted that the Australian Film Commission (AFC) is quietly pursuing its 'Directions' agenda—decisively rejected by the constituency—reducing the National Film and Sound Archive's range and autonomy, and progressively subordinating the Archive's identity to its own.

The ASA, together with Archive Forum and the Friends of the NFSA, is developing a detailed statement setting out the need and rationale for separate statutory authority status for the Archive.

Resolution

1 The Australian Society of Archivists calls on the Minister to respond to the resolution from the 2004 annual general meeting, sent to him on 20 September 2004.

2 It supports the call by Senator Kim Carr for a full response to this resolution to be tabled at the relevant Senate Estimates Committee.

3 It congratulates the Minister on the reinstatement of the Archive's original name, and calls on him to honour the Government's promise that the Archive's identity would be kept separate from, and not subordinated to, the identity of the Australian Film Commission.

4 It calls on the Minister to declare the definitive withdrawal of the Australian Film Commission's 'Directions' plan.

5 It endorses the widely expressed view that the National Film and Sound Archive should be established as a statutory authority separate from the Australian Film Commission, and asks the Minister to take prompt action to achieve this.

TWELVE MONTHS AGO...

ARCHIVISTS WANT ACTION ON NATIONAL FILM AND SOUND ARCHIVE

Australian Society of Archivists Press Release 20 Sept 2004

The national conference of the Australian Society of Archivists, just concluded in Canberra, has called on the incoming government to move quickly to establish the National Film and Sound Archive as a statutory authority separate from the Australian Film Commission.

The resolution, adopted unanimously at the Society's Annual General Meeting, also calls on the Australian Film Commission Board to immediately provide a comprehensive public response to the Society's submissions on the AFC's controversial 'Directions' paper on the development of the Archive, lodged in February this year. It also wants an immediate response to the resolutions of the conference on the 'Future of the Archive', held in July. The Society co-hosted this event with the Friends of the National Film and Sound Archive. To date there has been no feedback on any of these documents.

The Society wants the AFC Board to explain its non-communication with stakeholders over the last several months, during which it nevertheless proceeded to implement proposals in its 'Directions' paper which were supposed to be still under discussion with stakeholders. This has reduced the autonomy and identity of the Archive, also known as ScreenSound.

The Australian Society of Archivists is the peak organisation representing the archival profession in Australia. It has 800 individual and institutional members nationally, with branches in each state and territory. Contact: Catherine Robinson, ASA President asapresident@emailme.com.au or tel. (02) 8247 8631 (w) or 0409 123410 (m) Kathryn Dan kathryn.dan@adm.monash.edu.au or tel. (03) 9905 2074 (w)

RESOLUTION ON THE NATIONAL FILM AND SOUND ARCHIVE

Background

In February 2004 the Society lodged a public submission with the Australian Film Commission in response to its 'Stage 2 Directions' paper on the 'integration' of the National Film and Sound Archive with the AFC. It also participated in the 'stakeholder forums' organised by the AFC, transcripts of which were posted on the AFC website. Inter alia, the Society urged the establishment of a legislative mandate for the Archive, and the protection of its independence, autonomy and identity.

In July 2004, the ACT Branch of the Association co-hosted a conference in Canberra on the 'Future of the Archive', the recommendations and resolutions of which were promptly communicated to the AFC. These included a call to formally withdraw the 'Directions' paper, since it had become an impediment to constructive discussion, and a call for the Archive to be established as a statutory authority separate from the AFC. The conference applauded the appointment of Dr Paolo Cherchi Usai as the new Director of the Archive.

None of these inputs has yet received any response from the AFC.

Throughout this time there has been mounting evidence that the AFC has been proceeding regardless with its 'Directions' proposals, and progressively diminishing the identity and autonomy of the Archive.

Resolution

- 1 The ASA calls on the AFC Board to immediately provide a comprehensive public response to:
The ASA's February submission in reply to the 'Directions' paper
All the input gathered during the January/February 'stakeholder forums'
The recommendations and resolutions of the July conference on 'The Future of the Archive'
- 2 It calls on the AFC Board to explain its non-communication with stakeholders over the last several months, while still proceeding to implement 'Directions' proposals and reduce the autonomy and identity of the Archive.
- 3 It calls on the incoming government to move quickly to establish the National Film and Sound Archive as a statutory authority separate from the AFC
- 4 It welcomes the arrival of Dr Paolo Cherchi Usai as the new Director of the Archive.

INTRODUCING OUR NEW ADMINISTRATION ASSISTANT

We have now fondly farewelled as administration assistant our fabulous Lucy Battersby, who very competently took care of the Friends Executive Committee, greatly assisted in the work of the Friends and continues to make a contribution via the Friends Committee. Now, with much excitement, we welcome our new Administration Assistant, Andrew Hayllar. After majoring in Film Studies and Political Science, Andy is currently completing his Honours year in Film Studies at ANU. He is extremely interested in working in the area of film. Particularly passionate about the survival of the National Film and Sound Archive, he views his new position as an opportunity not only to enter the film industry but also as a way to ensure the maintenance of an institution in which he strongly believes. Apart from film, his interests include politics, downhill mountain biking, US society and culture, architectural photography, camping and weight training. In 2004, Andy was an intern at the Pacific Film Archive at Berkeley, California, whilst studying at the University of California at Berkeley, and a volunteer at the *Art of the Documentary* Conference held at the National Museum of Australia. He has received many prizes and commendations for academic excellence and this year won an ANU Honours Scholarship. We are most fortunate that Andy has decided to offer his considerable interest and energy in assisting the Friends and we are very grateful for his enthusiasm and commitment.

ABOUT THE FRIENDS

The Friends is a group of advocates, working to further the aims of the Archive and to encourage links between the Archive, the film and sound communities and the general community. In essence, the Friends want to promote excellence in film and sound culture, including: best practice in preservation, public programs and access; promoting high level appreciation of film and sound heritage and contemporary culture; creativity in the use of our Archive; a broad, outward looking focus that locates Australia in the South East Asia-Pacific region and globally; and restoration of the correct name for the Archive.

To achieve our ends, we rely on Friends to contribute energy and enthusiasm, and to participate in events that will provide the resources. You can never have too many friends. Please encourage your friends and colleagues to join us. And if you feel you would like to contribute by joining our committee, don't hesitate to contact us.

We hope you have enjoyed this newsletter and would love to hear from you on any Friends topic. You can contact us at friendsofarchive@hotmail.com or ring 6248 0851.

MANY GOOD WISHES FROM YOUR COMMITTEE,

Lucy Battersby, Shelley Clarke, Travis Cragg, Adrian Cunningham, Ray Edmondson, Chris Harrison, Charles Higgins, Peter Hislop, Richard Keys, Andrew Pike, Cheryl Stevenson and Roger Westcombe.

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