



WHAT'S THE NEWS? ISSUE 17

OCTOBER 2006

FRIENDS OF THE NATIONAL FILM AND SOUND ARCHIVE INC
Founding Patrons: Gil Brealey, 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 and welcome to a special issue of *What's the News?*

This issue contains some of the latest information on moves by the Archive's supporter groups to convince Minister Kemp and his fellow politicians to make a positive difference to the future of the National Film and Sound Archive.

It also gives details of the imminent SEAPAVAA Conference and our upcoming Annual General Meeting. Please come along and support the Friends.

In addition, this issue presents information on the Review on Australian Government Film Funding Support.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**Please join us
at 7.00 pm
on Friday 10 November
in the National Film and Sound Archive Theatre
at McCoy Circuit, ACTON**

Speaker RAY Edmondson
The Joint Statement—Its Background and Rationale
More details below

CALLING ON MINISTER KEMP TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

The resolution below was adopted on 17 October by the Australian Society of Archivists, at their Annual General Meeting.

RESOLUTION ON THE NATIONAL FILM AND SOUND ARCHIVE

Background notes

The ASA AGM passed resolutions concerning the NFSA in 2004 and 2005 are appended.

The Arts Minister, Senator Rod Kemp, responded to last year's resolution, but not to ASA's requests (items 4 and 5). However, persistent representations by ASA and kindred bodies have had some effect.

At each Senate Estimates hearing, Senator Kate Lundy has raised questions about the well being of the NFSA. (There are three hearings every year).

In February, the CEO of the Australian Film Commission, Kim Dalton, resigned and has not been permanently replaced. Around the same time, the AFC Board began actively building bridges with stakeholder bodies and addressing their issues of concern, such as the progressive subjugation of the NFSA's identity to that of the AFC. (This has since been reversed).

On 10 July, in a welcome move to establish a cross-cultural industries position on this matter, the ASA joined with the Australian Historical Association (AHA), Archive Forum and the Friends of the NFSA to release a joint statement on the necessity of separate statutory authority status for the NFSA. It was sent to every MP and Senator, and the media. In response, ALP Arts spokesman Peter Garrett and Democrats leader Senator Lyn Allison lodged questions on notice to the Minister, and Garrett issued a supportive press release. (At its AGM on 4 July the AHA had already resolved to 'call for the NFSA to be established as a statutory authority separate from the AFC without delay').

On 12 July, the Minister announced a 'Review of Government Film Funding Support', including a review of agency structures. At the Minister's invitation, the joint statement, with a covering document, was submitted to the Review. The outcome may be months away, but is widely expected to replace the AFC and the Film Finance Corporation (FFC) with a single funding agency. Several submissions, including the FFC, urge that the NFSA then becomes a separate body.

The Minister has foreshadowed his retirement, so the outcome may be announced by his successor. ASA should monitor the situation and, if appropriate, seek to meet with Senator Kemp or his successor.

RESOLUTION AS ADOPTED – 19 OCTOBER 2006

1 The ASA draws the Minister's attention to the matters raised in its joint public statement *Independent Statutory Authority Status for the National Film and Sound Archive* and its subsequent joint submissions to the Review of Australian Government Film Funding Support, and invites the Government's response

2 The ASA urges that any structural rearrangements, arising from the Review, which impact on the National Film and Sound Archive be most carefully considered. Because it now lacks its own Council or other high level governance body to represent its interests during the current process, it is appropriate for professional bodies like the ASA to be its advocate.

3 The ASA reaffirms the widely expressed view that the National Film and Sound Archive should be established as a statutory authority in its own right, and asks the Minister to use the opportunity afforded by the Review to take this step. The changing circumstances of the film industry which have made the Review necessary demonstrate the need for the Archive to follow its own independent path as a national institution.

2005 RESOLUTION

1 The ASA 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.

2004 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.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING NOTICE

Following on from the above, our very special speaker for this year's Annual General Meeting will be Ray Edmondson, who will speak on the topic of *The Joint Statement – Its Background and Rationale*. Several documents relating to the Joint Statement on Independent Statutory Authority Status for the National Film and Sound Archive are included later in this newsletter. They make very interesting reading and will bring you up to speed on some of the recent and earlier 2006 doings of the Friends.

**Please join us
at 7.00 pm
on Friday 10 November
in the National Film and Sound Archive Theatre
McCoy Circuit ACTON**

Looking forward to seeing you all there.

**10TH ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE OF SEAPAVAA – CANBERRA, 13 TO 17 NOVEMBER
Jointly hosted by NFSA and the New Zealand Film Archive**

SEAPAVAA is the South East Asia-Pacific Audiovisual Archive Association – the professional forum for film, sound and broadcasting archives in our part of the world. The NFSA, the Friends and National Archives are some of its Australian members. This is SEAPAVAA's first conference in Australia and it will be attended by archivists and archive supporters from across South East Asia, the Pacific islands and beyond.

The theme is THE VISIBLE ARCHIVE: ACCESS, ADVOCACY AND ACCOUNTABILITY and the conference will feature a 3- day symposium on this topic with a variety of local and overseas speakers – including Friends' president Andrew Pike and the chair of Archive Forum, Professor Chris Puplick. There are also receptions and social events, screenings, institutional visits – plus a day-long excursion by vintage steam train. In all, a very packed program - and a week to remember!

ALL ARE WELCOME. If you want to be stimulated and challenged by what is happening in archives across the region, join in! Full details of program and registration are now available on the website: www.pia.gov.ph/seapavaa – the regular SEAPAVAA website www.seapavaa.org - is having technical problems at present (due to a huge electrical storm in Manila!)

**KEY STAKEHOLDERS CALL FOR AN INDEPENDENT NATIONAL FILM AND SOUND ARCHIVE
MEDIA RELEASE: 10 July 2006**

Key stakeholder groups determined to preserve and make accessible the nation's audiovisual heritage have published a report claiming the recent integration of the National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA) with the Australian Film Commission (AFC) in July 2003 has linked two dissimilar bodies on unequal terms without a philosophical basis for the union. The groups have called for the NFSA to become a permanent, autonomous national institution with its own statutory base and legal personality.

The report published by the Archive Forum (AF), Australian Historical Association (AHA), Australian Society of Archivists (ASA) and Friends of the National Film and Sound Archive (FNFA) reveals the dynamic of the merger has resulted in differing perspectives, conflicting agendas, incompatibilities, and reduced

accountability and transparency. It also states that the merger militates against the protection of the NFSA's institutional integrity and autonomy and violates the principle of the separation of powers.

Professor Chris Puplick AM, Chair of Archive Forum said, 'The AFC has a job to do and we will assist the AFC under the current arrangements, however the AFC does not have the required expertise to run the NFSA. In 1984, the NFSA was established to preserve and make accessible the nation's audiovisual heritage and to do this reliably, efficiently and effectively it needs to be independent and autonomous, as defined by UNESCO, the International Council of Museums, the Australian Society of Archivists and other authorities', said Professor Puplick.

Catherine Robinson, President of the Australian Society of Archivists believes that the Federal government should not have control over what is defined as history. 'We have our history captured on film and sound and this should be in the hands of professional archivists not the government of the day. Curatorial independence ensures that the national film and sound collection continues to reflect the broad diversity of the Australian experience and the integrity of the collection,' said Ms Robinson.

The NFSA is by nature a permanent entity, but is under the control of the AFC, an inherently impermanent body, without safeguards for its continuity beyond the AFC's life. The NFSA has lost the governance protections available to all other national memory institutions and the present arrangement has failed to gain the endorsement and support of the NFSA's constituency.

'The NFSA is like any other national cultural memory institution such as the Australian War Memorial and the National Archives of Australia which are characterized by the very long term nature of their activities and the 'public good' nature of the institution,' said Ms Robinson. 'It's an accident of history that the NFSA isn't a permanent institution and by making the NFSA a statutory body it would guarantee its independence and curatorial independence.'

Professor Puplick said, 'The Federal government claimed that the 'integration' of the NFSA into the AFC would create 'synergies' to benefit both bodies. Undertakings were made that the NFSA's identity, budget and institutional integrity would be protected and advanced. It is time to review whether the public good has been served as a result, and whether the undertakings have been honoured. On all counts, the assessment appears to be negative.'

The report is available for download at:

<http://www.archivists.org.au/pubs/positionpapers/Stat%20authority%20paper%20as%20released%20050706.pdf>

INDEPENDENT STATUTORY AUTHORITY STATUS FOR THE NATIONAL FILM AND SOUND ARCHIVE
A joint public statement by Archive Forum (AF), Australian Historical Association (AHA), Australian Society of Archivists (ASA) and the Friends of the National Film and Sound Archive (FNFSA)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA) was established in 1984 to preserve and make accessible the nation's audiovisual heritage. To do this reliably, efficiently and effectively it needs to be *independent* and

autonomous, as those terms are defined by UNESCO, the International Council of Museums, the Australian Society of Archivists and other authorities, and in accordance with the original intention of its creation.

The transfer of the NFSA to the Australian Film Commission on 1 July 2003 linked two dissimilar bodies on unequal terms without a philosophical basis for the union.

Essential features of a national audiovisual archive

- Like the other national memory institutions, the NFSA is characterized by:
- The very long term nature of its activities
- The 'public good' nature of the institution
- The key features of national memory institutions are:
- Longevity, continuity and stability
- Mandate from Parliament or Government
- Guiding philosophical and ethical basis
- Accountability and transparency
- Professional autonomy

What's the problem? Analysis of present arrangements

Almost three years after the AFC/NFSA 'integration' it is obvious that:

- The AFC Act does not provide an adequate basis for a national memory institution. *It does not even recognize the existence of the NFSA, whose survival is inherently at risk*
- The NFSA is by nature a *permanent* entity, but is under the control of an inherently impermanent body, without safeguards for its continuity beyond the AFC's life
- Reformation of the AFC to enable it to embrace the much larger NFSA has never happened
- The dynamic of the merger reveals differing perspectives, conflicting agendas, incompatibilities, and reduced accountability and transparency. It militates against the protection of the NFSA's institutional integrity and autonomy
- The merger violates the principle of the separation of powers
- NFSA has lost the governance protections available to all other national memory institutions
- A satisfactory legal deposit regime is not possible under the present Act
- The present arrangement has failed to gain the endorsement and support of the NFSA's constituency

Government claimed that the 'integration' would create 'synergies' to benefit both bodies. Undertakings were made that the NFSA's identity, budget and institutional integrity would be protected and advanced. *It is time to review whether the public good has been served as a result, and whether the undertakings have been honoured. **On all counts, the assessment appears to be negative.***

What's the solution?

Sound arrangements for memory institutions include:

- Public confidence and trust, which must be willingly given
- The institution's control of its own identity
- Adequate legal functions and powers, including ultimate control of its collection
- Control of its own staff, assets and financial affairs

- Independence in decision making
- Good governance, accountability and transparency
- Enabling legislation and independence

Conclusion and proposed action

The NFSA needs to become a permanent, autonomous national institution with its own statutory base and legal personality. Thereby have its identity, role, functions and powers recognised in law, and hence formalise the de facto autonomy with which it operated from 1984 until its 'integration' with the AFC in 2003.

Simple legislative steps are needed to achieve this outcome and two alternative courses of action are proposed.

The joint statement was sent to EVERY SENATOR AND MP IN FEDERAL PARLIAMENT. The full document can be accessed on the website of the Australian Society of Archivists at www.archivists.org.au Click on 'what's new' and look under July for 'INDEPENDENT STATUTORY AUTHORITY STATUS FOR THE NATIONAL FILM AND SOUND ARCHIVE'. OR go the website of Archive Forum: http://www.afiresearch.rmit.edu.au/archiveforum/pdfs_new/archiveforum_stat_auth_paper.pdf It will take you straight to the document.

MEDIA STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO JOINT STATEMENT FROM PETER GARRETT MP

CUPID'S ARROW MISSES ITS MARK

13 July 2006 Minister Kemp's foray into the art of wedding planning has been a failure as this week's report published by the Archive Forum, Australian Historical Association, Australian Society of Archivists and Friends of the National Film and Sound Archive, clearly shows.

The report is critical of the 'arranged' marriage between the National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA) and the Australian Film Commission (AFC), resulting in 'differing perspectives, conflicting agendas, incompatibilities, and reduced accountability and transparency'. The findings of the report again reinforce the need for an independent and autonomous body to collect and store Australia's audiovisual heritage, which has been Labor policy since the 2004 Election and stipulated by UNESCO and the Australian Law Reform Commission.

Unless Minister Kemp can provide evidence to support his claim in 2003 that the merger would 'provide national leadership in enhancing access to and understanding of audiovisual culture and also enhance their current educational and exhibition activities', then it's time for him to act. The imminent release of Labor's Arts Policy Discussion Paper, which canvasses the possibility of a merger between the AFC and the Film Finance Corporation and related film bodies, together with the release of the DCITA Issues Paper into the *Review of Australian Government Film Funding Support*, provides the government with an ideal opportunity to remove the NFSA from under the AFC and restore its independence and autonomy.

If, as reported yesterday in *The Australian*, Arts Minister Kemp believes 'the current arrangements are appropriate' then he is seriously divorced from reality.

Peter Garrett is Member for Kingsford Smith and Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Reconciliation and the Arts

**REVIEW OF FUNDING SUPPORT FOR AUSTRALIAN FILM PRODUCTION
MEDIA RELEASE MELBOURNE 12 July 2006**

CALL FOR COMMENT ON GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR FILM

The Minister for the Arts and Sport, Senator Rod Kemp, today called on film industry professionals and other interested parties to respond to a review examining the effectiveness and appropriateness of government funding support for Australian film production.

'This review will take a broad-ranging look at the effectiveness of current Australian Government direct and indirect support, including taxation incentives, for the film industry,' Senator Kemp said.

'The Australian Government has a strong record of support for our film sector and this review will provide options on the best and most effective ways of targeting that support in the future.

'Today I am releasing an Issues Paper that details the way members of the public can make submissions to this review. I am encouraging all interested stakeholders to take up this important opportunity to comment on the most appropriate mix of Government support for the film industry.

'The purpose of the review is to improve the long term viability and effectiveness of the Australian film industry to help it grow and prosper,' Senator Kemp said.

The review, which was announced in the 2006–07 Federal Budget, will outline the Government's policy objectives for the Australian film industry, analyse the state of the industry and examine the support measures for funding films and the structures that underpin them.

A major focus of the review will be the very low and declining level of private sector investment in the industry and it will develop possible options for improving the effectiveness of tax incentives and other Government support measures.

Future funding for the film industry will be considered in the light of the outcomes of this review.

The findings of the current review of the 10BA and 10B tax incentive schemes, which is examining issues relating to clarity of the schemes' operations, will inform this broader review.

Visit www.dcita.gov.au/arts/filmreviews to view the Issues Paper for the Review of Australian Government Film Funding Support.

The closing date for submissions to the review was Friday 11 August 2006.

**OUR JOINT SUBMISSION TO THE REVIEW OF AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT FILM FUNDING
SUPPORT**

This submission refers to the request for comment on whether current agency functions and structures are appropriate and proposes future arrangements for the National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA), which is currently part of the Australian Film Commission (AFC). It may be made public.

Joint public statement

On 10 July 2006, our four organizations released the attached statement *Independent Statutory Authority Status for the National Film and Sound Archive* together with an accompanying media package. The statement and the package are attached and are hereby submitted to the Review. Although the statement was prepared before the Review was announced, it has proved highly prescient and directly relevant to the Review. We ask that its assessment of the relationship between the NFSA and AFC, and its recommendations, be carefully considered.

Inappropriate context for a national memory institution

The issues paper makes only passing references to the NFSA, and then only to its film-industry-related functions, which – while important – represent only one aspect of its role as the public guardian of the national sound, radio, television and film heritage. It is therefore inappropriate that its funding arrangements and structural attachments are viewed as a subset of the film industry. The Australian War Memorial is not a subset of the Department of Defence or the defence budget; the National Library and National Gallery are not funded as subsets of the publishing industry or the arts funding agencies. Like them, the NFSA should be funded in its own right for what it is: a separate national memory institution of comparable stature.

Why the NFSA was created

The NFSA was created in 1984 from elements of the National Library. In 1985 an expert advisory committee set out the vision for the new institution, affirmed its name and affirmed the Government's intention that it be created as a separate statutory authority. The NFSA represents the audiovisual heritage in its own right as part of the national memory, affording it equal status with 'older' media. Like other memory institutions it has its own distinctive professional worldview and philosophy. (Attachment 1 in the *Statement* provides a historical summary).

Recent history

The role, work and status of the NFSA has been seriously compromised in recent years by two policy decisions, made under the aegis of DCITA, which appear to have been based on a misunderstanding of the NFSA's character as a national memory institution.

The first was the rebranding of the institution in June 1999 with a commercial, market-oriented name, ScreenSound Australia. Following sustained criticism the original title National Film and Sound Archive was reinstated in December 2004: a tacit admission that the rebranding had been a mistake.¹

The second was the NFSA's 'integration' with AFC in July 2003 to create 'synergies' – in reality, a forced marriage, without any philosophical basis, of two dissimilar entities. This decision, too, has clearly been a mistake – and one which has threatened the very survival of the institution. It has attracted international concern and criticism. The attached *Statement* provides a thorough analysis of the issues and the events of the last three years.

Both these decisions had certain features in common:

- They were reached in secret and not tested beforehand with the NFSA's peers and constituency organizations – indeed, such consultation appears to have been deliberately avoided
- They resulted in the waste of millions of dollars in public funds

¹ The sequence of events is currently the subject of a doctoral research project at Charles Sturt University.

- They offered no cogent rationale or philosophical basis
- Public promises and predictions about the well being and advancement of the institution were made but never kept nor fulfilled
- The outcome never gained the endorsement of the NFSA's constituency, and diverted its energies into protecting the institution rather than developing its potential

Future direction

Recent history invites a natural concern that this Review will result in yet another unfortunate and secret decision to again reconfigure the NFSA, or subordinate it to yet another entity, inevitably sparking yet another wave of protest and activism to protect it.

It is disturbing and puzzling that policy decisions over the years seem to have moved in every direction except the obvious and only satisfactory one: the creation of the NFSA as a statutory authority in its own right. It is a mature institution which has long since been ready for such a step and at times has come very close to attaining it. There have been numerous calls in recent years for the Government to finally make this a reality.²

It has been speculated in the media and elsewhere that one outcome of this Review will be the abolition of the AFC and the dispersal of its functions to other bodies. Should this happen it provides a logical opportunity to take the long overdue step of giving the NFSA its statutory base. The concluding paragraphs and Appendix 2 of the attached *Statement* propose a way forward.

Submitted on 10 August 2006 by: Andrew Pike *President, Friends of the National Film and Sound Archive Inc.* and on behalf of: Catherine Robinson *President, Australian Society of Archivists Inc.*; Prof. Chris Puplick *AM Chair, Archive Forum*; and Prof. Desley Deacon *President, Australian Historical Association Inc.*

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; and a broad, outward looking focus that locates Australia in the South East Asia-Pacific region and globally.

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 we would love to hear from you on any Friends topic. You can contact us at info@archivefriends.org or ring us on 6248 0851.

² See, for example, the petition at <http://www.afiresearch.rmit.edu.au/archiveforum/petition.html> signed by many prominent Australians.

There are many ways that you can help:

☐Helping with the newsletter ☐Becoming a committee member ☐Word processing or database work ☐Writing letters ☐Helping to photocopy and collate documents ☐Signing up your family members and friends as new Friends ☐Helping with fundraising ☐Attending rallies ☐Working on a stall ☐Attending events. Please don't hesitate to put up your hand for any of these activities by emailing us at info@archivefriends.org. All offers of assistance will be greatly appreciated.

WITH BEST WISHES FROM YOUR COMMITTEE,

Lucy Battersby, Shelley Clarke, Marlene Collinson, Adrian Cunningham, Ray Edmondson, Andy Hayllar, Chris Harrison, Peter Hislop, Andrew Pike, Cheryl Stevenson and Simon Weaving.

CONTACT DETAILS

Post: PO Box 1005, Civic Square, ACT, 2608 Phone: 02 6248 0851 Fax: 02 6249 1640
Email: info@archivefriends.org Website: www.archivefriends.org.au
