



WHAT'S THE NEWS? ISSUE 20

JUNE 2008

**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*

\*\*\*\*\*

Welcome to your 20<sup>th</sup> issue of *What's the News?* You will find it is filled with lots of good news! Margaret Mead's inspiring quote above has proven to be quite true for the Friends of the NFSA. We hope you enjoy reading the news as well as being a part of the new reality for the Archive.

#### **DEAR FRIENDS,**

As you may have heard, at long last, the NFSA will achieve independent statutory status as from 1 July 2008. The legislation has been passed and administrative arrangements are being put in place for the Archive's separation from the Australian Film Commission.

This new status will put the NFSA on a par with the other major cultural institutions of this nation, such as the National Library, the National Museum and the National Gallery.

#### **UPDATE ON RECENT EVENTS**

In the previous (January) newsletter, we reported on the prospect of the NFSA's 'demerger' from the Australian Film Commission, in line with the election promise of the incoming Labor government. As foreshadowed in that report, the Friends – in tandem with the Archive Forum group – submitted a package of material to the new Minister, The Hon. Peter Garrett, encouraging him to proceed promptly with the statutory authority legislation as promised, and offering its consultative assistance in the demerger process.

Events have since moved quickly. Here is brief update:

#### **THE LEGISLATION HAS PASSED!**

In the event, it didn't take long! ***The National Film and Sound Archive Act received royal assent on 20 March so it is now law, and the NFSA is now a statutory authority.*** This will take practical effect on 1 July, at which point the Australian Film Commission will be absorbed into Screen Australia and simultaneously cease to have any formal relationship with the NFSA. To read the Act, Google "National Film and Sound Archive Act" and you'll quickly find the text!

**In its passage through the House and the Senate, the NFSA legislation received bipartisan support.** The Shadow Arts Minister, Dr Sharman Stone, in particular, delivered a well-judged and well-informed speech which clearly drew heavily on past documents released by the Friends and other groups. It is very important for the NFSA's long term future that its creation as a statutory authority has been endorsed by both sides of politics.

## **ACTIVITY IN CANBERRA**

Since December, the Friends and Archive Forum have been maintaining regular contact with the Minister's office, other relevant politicians and the AFC. There were a number of meetings and a deal of letter writing and emailing, often at short notice. For example:

- There has been material assistance given to the Minister in working to obtain the all-important Opposition support for the NFSA Bill, and this included direct consultations with the Shadow Minister.
- There have been meetings with the Minister's office and the CEO and Chair of the AFC concerning the principles and details of the demerger process. While budget figures and staff numbers were hard to pin down, it seemed that all the relevant issues had been identified and were being handled in a timely and sensitive way. Among other things, the Friends expressed some firm views about the functions and resources that should come to NFSA.
- Views were expressed to the Minister about the range of competencies that should be represented on the new NFSA Board, and about priority issues that the Board will need to deal with.

## **WHAT NEXT?**

Clearly, with the establishment of the NFSA as a statutory authority, the Friends have achieved one of their major objectives. Because of the impending changes, it will be timely for the Friends to assess its future agenda and its potential relationship with the new NFSA and its Board, once the Board has been appointed and the landscape is clearer! Several options are open – including the traditional role of friends' societies in organising events and fundraising, and the activist model of commentator and advocate – and these are not mutually exclusive!

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE FRIENDS**

Until now, achieving statutory authority status has been the core objective of the Friends association. We can now move into a new era for the Friends, just as the Archive itself moves in to a new era.

The remaining Objectives of this association are as follows:

- To seek ongoing public assessment and affirmation of the core responsibilities and functions of the Archive
- To promote the optimum flow of information and ideas between the National Film and Sound Archive, the film and sound communities and the community at large.
- To promote principles of best practice in archival preservation and public access programs.
- To promote principles of academic and professional excellence in work using or based on archival resources.
- To promote public awareness of the Archive's work and its resources.
- To promote and assist the Archive in its proactive engagement with the current film and sound communities and the community at large.
- To promote creative initiatives involving archival resources.
- To promote and support the international work of the Archive.
- To stimulate and assist in the creation of, and support the work of, a professional association of film and sound archivists in Australia and in the South East Asia and Pacific regions.
- To build a broad base of members who will organise, support and participate in forums, conferences, screenings, lectures and special events to promote Friends objectives.
- To raise, or assist in raising, funds to support specific Archive programs.

**Over the coming months, your Friends committee will be re-assessing its priorities and working out a programme of activities for the immediate future. We will appreciate input from our members, either now or in the future, to assist in this process.**

## **THE FRIENDS COMMITTEE**

At the AGM Friday 8 February 2008, the following committee members were elected: Andrew Pike (President), Sue Terry (Secretary), Adrian Cunningham (Treasurer), Shelley Clarke, Ray Edmondson, Peter

Hislop, Chris Harrison and Simon Weaving.

We welcome our new Secretary, Sue Terry, who has recently retired from the NFSA, where she had worked for many years.

The incoming committee would like to thank the retiring Secretary, Andy Hayllar, for his dedicated and efficient service over the last few years. We appreciate his efforts greatly.

### **TRANSITIONS???**

The present NFSA Advisory Committee, on which the Friends is represented by its president, Andrew Pike, will have its final meeting on 20 May. Its functions will be subsumed by the NFSA Board as from 1 July.

Under the provisions of the Act, the NFSA Board will be appointed by the Minister. It is not known when the Minister will announce its membership, nor whether any members of the Friends or other supportive organisations will be among them.

The Act also provides for a CEO of the NFSA, to be appointed by the Board. However, the Minister has also announced that, for practical reasons, he will appoint the first CEO himself. We do not know whether his choice will be the present director (Paolo Cherchi Usai) or someone else, nor the duration of the appointment.

\*\*\*\*\*

### **ARTICLES BY TINA KAUFMAN**

*Metro* magazine's resident columnist, Tina Kaufman, has been conscientiously tracking the fortunes of the NFSA for several years in her *Shortcuts* feature, which appears in the opening pages of each quarterly issue. In the latest issue, No. 156 (March 2008), under the heading *Screen Australia merged, NFSA demerged*, she brings events accurately up to date. For more information on the magazine, go to [www.metromagazine.com.au](http://www.metromagazine.com.au)

In a separate article published in the daily e-news service *Screenhub* on 2 April, Tina gives a welcome insight into a less-publicised aspect of the NFSA: its 16mm film lending service for film societies. The article *Film Societies: crunch time in slow motion, with some support from the new NFSA* offers a detailed historical background to the operation, and assesses the prospects of the service in the 'demerged' NFSA. *Screenhub* is a subscription service: details at [www.screenhub.com.au](http://www.screenhub.com.au)

\*\*\*\*\*

### **TWO MEDIA RELEASES FROM THE MINISTER**

#### **NEW FILM AGENCIES HERALD EXCITING ERA FOR THE AUSTRALIAN FILM INDUSTRY**

Legislation to establish Screen Australia and the National Film and Sound Archive as separate statutory authorities has today been passed by both Houses of the Australian Parliament.

The Government made these election commitments a high priority and the bills are among the first passed by the new Parliament.

Screen Australia will be a strong central funding body, bringing together the Australian Film Commission, the Film Finance Corporation and Film Australia. The National Film and Sound Archive will be separated from the Australian Film Commission and become a national collecting institution in its own right.

The passage of this legislation means that both agencies will be able to begin operation as planned on 1 July this year. I am looking forward to the fresh approach that these newly created agencies will bring to their respective roles.

This is both an exciting and a challenging time for the Australian film and television industry.

Screen Australia will help restore investor confidence and put the industry on a new growth path. It will ensure a strong Australian voice across film, television, documentary and children's programs. The establishment of the National Film and Sound Archive as a stand-alone agency will protect its independence. I look forward to the Archive building its valuable national collection and expanding its public access and outreach.

**The Hon Peter Garrett MP** *Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts* PG/38 13 March 2008

### **STRONG PUBLIC ACCESS ROLE FOR THE NATIONAL FILM AND SOUND ARCHIVE**

The National Film and Sound Archive's access role has been further strengthened through the transfer of key public access programs from the Australian Film Commission, the Minister for the Arts, Peter Garrett said today.

These programs include:

- [www.australianscreen.com.au](http://www.australianscreen.com.au) which is a web-based resource of film and television material sourced from a range of archives;
- the Big Screen travelling film festival which presents new and classic Australian films to audiences across regional and rural Australia;
- Black Screen which focuses on access to Indigenous films; and,
- School Screen which offers schools around Australia free access to Australian features as part of their curriculum.

The National Library of Australia's National Film and Video Lending Service will also be transferred to the National Film and Sound Archive.

"In addition to building on the National Film and Sound Archive's strong international reputation as an audiovisual collecting institution, these programs will improve its ability to promote and deliver public access programs associated with the collection," the Minister said.

Mr Garrett said that some key public access programs will be transferred from the Australian Film Commission to the National Film and Sound Archive along with \$1.7 million per annum in indexed funding to underpin the new public outreach function, fulfilling a long standing election promise.

The National Film and Sound Archive's creation as a statutory authority from 1 July 2008 was announced in the 2008-09 Federal Budget.

In addition to the transfer of its core funding from the Australian Film Commission, a further \$500,000 per annum will be provided to the National Film and Sound Archive from Film Australia to ensure additional costs in administering the new entity, for instance Board and Chief Executive Officer costs, do not impact on its programs.

The Minister said that Screen Australia will not be disadvantaged as it will have a single board and one CEO which will be resourced from AFC and Film Finance Corporation funding currently allocated for these functions.

**The Hon Peter Garrett MP** *Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts* PG /68 15 May 2008

\*\*\*\*\*

### **WHAT THE SHADOW MINISTER AND MINISTER SAID—SOME KEY EXCERPTS FROM HANSARD**

Here are some brief Hansard excerpts from the speeches by Dr Sharmian Stone, Shadow Minister for the Arts, and Peter Garrett, Minister for the Arts, during the (very brief) debate on the *National Film and Sound Archive Bill 2008* on 12 March. These speeches, as well as the NFSA Act itself, will act as reference points in the future. They can always be cited as more fully expressing the government's intentions, and as fleshing out the provisions of the Act, on topics such as resourcing, legal deposit, transparency and the role of supporters. The Bill passed through both houses on 12 and 13 March.

**12 March – House of Representatives Debate resumed from 20 February, on motion by Mr Garrett: That this bill be now read a second time.**

**Dr STONE** (Murray) (12.04 pm)—‘The second bill before us is the National Film and Sound Archive Bill 2008. **This is a bill to establish an independent agency.** The National Film and Sound Archive is Australia’s pre-eminent audiovisual archive...it is a very significant facility. It was established in 1984 to provide for the preservation and accessibility of the nation’s audiovisual heritage. Independence and autonomy are not ends in themselves, but a means to an end. In fact, the existence of an effective and sustainable guardian for the national audiovisual memory is essential, but it too must be adequately funded...’

‘...The National Film and Sound Archive Bill will create a stand-alone statutory authority with, as I said, the responsibility for collecting and maintaining Australia’s film collection for the enjoyment of future generations. The Australian National Film and Sound Archive is already internationally renowned; in fact, it has *The Kelly Gang*, which has recently been acknowledged as the world’s oldest feature film, made in 1906-07. The significance of our Film and Sound Archive is recognised globally, and long may we be able to retain its excellence...’

**Mr GARRETT** (Kingsford Smith—Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts) (12.34 pm)—in reply—‘...this government will ensure that Screen Australia and the National Film and Sound Archive are properly resourced...’

‘...I am also excited by the potential of the new National Film and Sound Archive to become a national collecting institution of some note and to build on the good work that has been done by archivists there. **I know that many people have lobbied hard for the archive to have statutory independence to assist it to be an even more effective institution than it has been to date.** In particular, I want to thank Senator Kate Lundy for her ongoing support for the archive, and also the member for Fraser, Bob McMullan. **I trust supporters will continue to provide input to the archive’s objectives, priorities and programs.**

‘As I said when introducing this legislation, the archive cannot just be about maintaining and preserving the national collection. It will need to have a high public profile and an outward focus on developing public awareness of and access to the collection, as well as providing support to other less well-resourced collecting bodies around the country. With its new autonomy comes a requirement for greater transparency and accountability. Both the government and the industry will have high expectations of what the archive can achieve. **I hope the archive itself will embrace this new role and status and seek to work with all its stakeholders to strengthen and expand its role so that generations to come will see it as a valuable resource and leader in its field.** This legislation is important...’

\*\*\*\*\*

## **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](mailto:info@archivefriends.org) or ring us on 6248 0851.

**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](mailto:info@archivefriends.org). All offers of assistance will be greatly appreciated.

\*\*\*\*\*

**WITH BEST WISHES FROM YOUR COMMITTEE,**

Shelley Clarke, Adrian Cunningham, Ray Edmondson, Chris Harrison, Peter Hislop, Andrew Pike, Sue Terry 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](mailto:info@archivefriends.org) Website: [www.archivefriends.org.au](http://www.archivefriends.org.au)

\*\*\*\*\*