

FEDERAL ELECTION 2022

CANDIDATES' POLICY STANCES ON THE NFSA

Updated 18 April

The Federal election has been set for 21 May.

In recent weeks, the Friends has been approaching the main parties, as well as a sampling of independent members and candidates, inviting them to state their policy positions in relation to their support of the National Film and Sound Archive.

This has been done by email contact, including sending them a short questionnaire and inviting them to indicate their support – or otherwise – of five policy positions. These related to the composition and appointment process of the NFSA's Board; the restoration of funding and staffing levels; the rebuilding of neglected functions and the lowering of access fees. *The questionnaire can be read in full at the end of this post.*

Below is a summary of the responses received to date.

THE PARTIES

Questionnaires were sent to the relevant spokespersons for the Liberal/National Coalition, Labor Party, The Greens, One Nation and the United Australia Party.

Labor's response came from the office of **Tony Burke MP**, Shadow Minister for the Arts:

Labor has yet to announce our arts and culture policy, and we will have more to say before the election. Unlike the government, which has subjected national institutions like the National Film and Sound Archive to a succession of cuts, Labor respects the important role our cultural institutions play in our shared history, as well as the special place they hold in our national capital.

A response was also received from the Greens' ACT candidate for the Senate, which is featured below. No response has yet been received from the other parties.

SITTING INDEPENDENTS

It was **Zali Steggall MP** who originally raised the issue of the composition of the NFSA's Board, and funding and staffing levels, in a question on notice to the minister, Paul Fletcher, in October 2021. *She supports the policy positions proposed in all five questions.*

Dr Helen Haines MP and **Rebekha Sharkie MP** have each responded that they *support the policy positions proposed in all five questions.*

Andrew Wilkie MP has advised that he would *support amendments to the NFSA Act to mandate a public appointment process for members of the board* (Question 1). He supports the policy positions proposed in Questions 2,3 and 4. In response to Question 5 he says *I believe access fees to NFSA resources should be lowered and priced appropriately to ensure all researchers can afford to access archival documents and that the collection is used to its full capacity.*

INDEPENDENT CANDIDATES

Nicolette Boele and **Janine Kitson** are both candidates for the Sydney electorate of Bradfield (currently held by the NFSA's Minister, Paul Fletcher from whom no response to the Questionnaire has yet been received). They hold similar policy positions on NFSA:

Janine Kitson: *As someone who has been a student of history I know the work of the National Film and Sound Archive is of critical importance. I welcome the opportunity to support, strengthen and fund the National Film and Sound Archive if elected as the member for Bradfield.*

Nicolette Boele's response was provided by her husband, Jonathan Geraghty:

I have worked as a television director for over 25 years and I advise Nicolette regarding policies relevant to the Arts. I have reviewed your questionnaire and the supporting document links.

Should Nicolette be elected, she would support and advocate for all of your policy points whilst in government.

We feel very strongly about transparency and integrity in government, and do not agree with "jobs for mates". The gradual erosion of budget support for all the arts in Australia has been very distressing. Particularly the short-term thinking regarding our history and the sharing of stories with an Australian voice.

Former journalist **Zoe Daniel** is standing in the Melbourne electorate of Goldstein. She has advised that due to overwhelming commitments, she is not in a position to respond to this survey right now. She would be more than happy to engage after the election, should she be successfully elected.

Professor **Kim Rubenstein** is a candidate for the Senate from the ACT. She supports *all five policy points in the Questionnaire* and draws attention to her Op Ed in the Canberra Times concerning independence, transparency and accountability in board appointments (<https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/7634801/we-need-to-ensure-trust-in-government-heres-what-we-need-to-do> 1 March 2022)

Jane Caro AM of Reason Australia is a candidate for the Senate from Victoria. She affirms the importance of supporting a vibrant Australian arts and media sector, including the preservation of our rich media history, and hence the importance of the NFSA. *She supports all five policy priorities* proposed by the Friends.

Dr Monique Ryan is standing in the Melbourne electorate of Kooyong. She advises that she does not have the resources to respond adequately to the many policy questions she is receiving at present. She adds *I'm aware of the NFSA and sympathetic to its aims but am not at this point able to commit to supporting specific policies regarding its staffing or future funding. [I] would be interested in discussing things further should I be successful in the election.*

A VIEW FROM THE HEART

ACT Greens candidate for the Senate **Dr Tjanara Goreng Goreng** developed a personal connection with the NFSA and its collection over several years during her doctoral research at the Australian National University. Here are some edited excerpts from her extensive response to the Questionnaire:

Question 1: *This does not surprise me! Transparency must occur in everything we do in the public sphere and non-political appointments are best for our community and country.*

Question 2: *Many of our institutions have had their funding cut over the past few years. I'm not sure that a federal budget surplus is more important than funding communities and important national business such as supporting NFSA. I'm not happy ever hearing about efficiency dividends when we choose to spend billions of dollars on nuclear submarines – just shows the priorities.*

Question 3: *If you cut staffing you lose corporate knowledge, expertise and productivity. You can't do the work you need to do without people.*

Question 4: *As a Greens candidate our platform makes it very clear that people in the creative and arts spheres must be supported - without the anxiety of not knowing where their support will be coming from.*

Question 5: *I'd make sure this is changed if I was in the Senate and I'd support any Senator or Member who would bring this forward.*

Go to the next page to read the questionnaire.



www.archivefriends.org.au

PO Box 9618, Deakin ACT 2600 ABN 26 270 031 807

POLICY STANCE ON THE NATIONAL FILM AND SOUND ARCHIVE

The Friends of the NFSA is asking parties and independent candidates for the forthcoming Federal election to state their policy position in relation to the support of the National Film and Sound Archive, one of our key national collecting institutions. We invite you to respond to each of the questions below.

1 The NFSA's governing Board is ministerially appointed. It is important that the board contain expertise in the relevant professional and academic disciplines, and have active connections with the audiovisual communities and industries. Would you support a transparent, non-political public appointment process for members of the board? Would you support amendments to the NFSA Act to mandate such a process?

2 The NFSA's base budget has declined about 20% over the last decade, while its task has grown larger. To restore the budget to the previous level will require an increase of \$6 million to the base, irrespective of additional, short term project funding. Would you support such restoration?

3 Permanent expert staff are the backbone of the NFSA. In 2010 the approved permanent staffing level (ASL) was 220. Now it is 20% lower, at 164. Would you support restoration of staffing to 2010 levels?

4 Ideally the NFSA should be rebuilding functions and profile that have been wound down because of budget and staff reductions, such as scholarship and research

awards and international connections. Would you support the restoration of these functions?

5 Should access fees for NFSA resources be lowered to encourage research and use of the collection?

Explanatory information:

Question 1: On 18 October 2021 Zali Steggall MP asked the NFSA's Minister, the Hon Paul Fletcher MP, whether he would fill two current vacancies on the NFSA Governing Board by appointing experts with academic and professional credentials appropriate to audiovisual archiving, and whether he would seek to amend the NFSA's *Act* to ensure future appointees satisfied such criteria. On 17 December 2021 the Minister chose to appoint close relatives of former Liberal Party leaders to fill the two vacancies, and stated that he had no intention to amend the NFSA *Act*. Bios of all current NFSA Board members are at <https://www.nfsa.gov.au/about/corporate-information/governance/nfsa-board>. The new appointees are Ms Caroline Elliott (chair) and Mrs Lucinda Brogden.

Questions 2, 3, 4 : "Efficiency dividends" over the last decade have severely shrunk the NFSA's capacity, activities and services and have caused a brain drain of expertise. This urgently needs to be reversed. Although the Government recently announced new project funding over 4 years to address the task of digitisation, this is a temporary band-aid and does not fix the underlying problem of growing long term career staff. There are solutions. For more detail go to <https://insidestory.org.au/time-for-another-visionary-moment-at-the-nfsa> and <https://insidestory.org.au/promises-promises>

Question 5: Fees for access to the NFSA collection, over and above fair cost reimbursement, are having a crippling effect – notably on new productions that re-use archival footage. <https://johnmenadue.com/changes-to-federal-government-film-funding-could-cripple-production-of-historical-documentaries>

Other strategic issues: On the pressing issues facing the NFSA the Friends have prepared a discussion paper for further information: <http://www.archivefriends.org.au//images/stories/2021/FRIENDS%20ADVICE%20ON%20THE%20FUTURE%202021%20November%202021.pdf>