



## ***NEWSLETTER NO. 53 August 2022***

### **PRESIDENT RAY EDMONDSON'S MESSAGE:**



The Federal Election in March has brought a new government with a new approach to the cultural sector. The incoming Arts Minister, Hon. Tony Burke, has announced a period of consultation as the government develops a cultural policy. It is open now to written submissions from anyone – go to [cultural policy](#). The Friends will make its own contribution to that discussion. We will do our best to draw the new government's attention to the NFSA and its needs, as explained elsewhere in this issue.

We recognize, of course, that like other countries, Australia now faces economic headwinds that will militate against increased funding for public institutions. How the government will deal with that reality while creating a new policy base remains to be seen. Audiovisual archiving, like the other memory professions, is inherently optimistic. As detailed in our previous newsletter, our pre-election consultation with candidates confirmed that the NFSA has many supporters. Some of those supporters are now sitting in the new Parliament.

Ray Edmondson OAM  
President



Friends' members enjoying the special private tour of the 'Australians & Hollywood' exhibition at the NFSA. Even Eric Bana joined us!

## VALE RICHARD KEYS

On 8 July Richard Keys, a former NFSA staff member and former president of the Friends passed away at the age of 84. His contribution to both, as well as his warmth, his friendship, his enthusiasm and his immense knowledge will be remembered and missed by a large circle of colleagues.

Richard had a long and varied career in the film world. As a young man he cut short his university aspirations in favour of joining Movietone News, where he became assistant to the legendary newsreel cameraman Syd Wood. Later he moved to Cinesound to work on the Cinesound Review. His career then took him to London where he was employed as a camera operator for famed animation producers Halas and Batchelor. On returning to Australia he joined the Film and Television Board of the Australia Council, before becoming a project officer at the Australian Film Commission. Ultimately he migrated to Canberra to take up a post at the NFSA, from which he retired in 2001.

Throughout his adult life Richard was immersed in the film society and festival movement, beginning with the Sydney University Film Group in the 1950s. He was the founder and first president of the Willoughby Workshop Film Group in Sydney in 1986, ending that connection only in 1990 when he moved to Canberra – where he was soon involved in setting up and leading the Reel McCoy Film Society, which continues to operate today.

Richard also found time to record oral histories with industry identities and to be recorded himself about his career. The NFSA catalogue entries can be found [here](#).

To his family and friends Richard was often thought of as “the Sentimental Bloke”, a nod to the iconic Australian film that he loved. In memory of Richard, it is fitting to quote its closing title:

***Sittin’ at ev’nin’ in this sunset-land,  
Wiv ‘Er in all the World to ‘old me ‘and,  
A son, to bear me name when I am gone....  
Livin’ an’ lovin’ – so life mooches on.***

The Friends extends its condolences to Richard’s widow Ruth and to his children Josie, Malcolm and Nick.



## \*\*\* Our Next Friends' Event . . . \*\*\*

Ever wondered what the technical staff at the NFSA are beavering urgently away at, and spending hard won government resources on?

**DIGITISATION!! - the crucial race against time to preserve our old records and to safeguard all the vital resources in the vaults of the NFSA.**

On Wednesday September 7<sup>th</sup> join members of the NFSA's Collection Digitisation team to view its studios for magnetic media and sound digitisation. Through recent funding boosts the team has established 'Cine World', a digitisation lab with multi-ingest machines that increases digitisation capacity and allows each team member to manage four streams of content. The team will also demonstrate how it maintains obsolete equipment to allow for digitisation of all magnetic formats.

This is a special, members-only event that will run from 11pm – 12noon with a morning tea provided beforehand at 10.30. There is also the option to visit the free Corricks exhibition after the tour, and a discounted price of \$11 for the *Australians and Hollywood* exhibition for those who want to visit.

**BUT ONLY 10 MEMBERS CAN BE ACCEPTED FOR THIS TOUR DUE TO THE SMALL SPACES VISITED SO BOOK QUICKLY IF YOU ARE INTERESTED!**

Tickets for this event (including morning tea) will cost \$10. Please through this [TryBooking link](#).

### **GOOD ROWING, ARGONAUTS!**



The Friends' website is now the main source of memories and connections for the thousands of children in the 1940s, 50s and 60s who were members of the ABC's Argonauts Club. Here are a few reminiscences of those days.



**Leander 44 (Dragon's Tooth):** I loved The Argonauts Club and eagerly awaited its theme song each night. I especially loved the stories and segments about writing and music. I was thrilled to receive the Dragon's Tooth award but sadly I left without reaching the Golden Fleece. Imagine my surprise several decades later when I discovered my own name had a Greek legend attached to it. The wonderful story of Jason and his Argonauts will live on as the pattern in the stars has indicated for other generations to see and wonder! Thank you ABC for such a wonderful educational tool for the children of the 50's and beyond.

**Loparis 43:** I was born and spent my childhood in Dalwallinu in the WA wheat belt. I remember being so thrilled when a poem I'd sent in was read out on the radio. Who'd have thought that all these years later I would still be writing and have now published two books of my poetry. It all started with our band of happy rowers.



We are planning to run a Friends' desk during the weekend screenings of CIFF (the Canberra International Film Festival) and are calling for volunteers who would like to help us. The role is to:

- welcome patrons who come to the Friends' desk.
- offer the CIFF program brochure to patrons.
- field basic enquiries - which can be answered either with the program brochure and/or by referring patrons to the NFSA's Reception counter.
- process sales of Desley Deacon's Judith Anderson biography which is being promoted by CIFF (price \$30).
- represent the Friends, which will include providing the Friends' brochure to anyone interested, and taking membership applications.

The hours we would like to cover are:

- **Saturday 27 Aug, 1pm to 7.30 (last session starts at 7.30)**
- **Sunday 28 Aug, 1pm to 4.15 (last session starts at 4.15)**

The desk can close down when screenings are in progress.

**CIFF has generously offered to provide free tickets to films selected by the Friends volunteers who serve on the desk.**

We have heard from a couple of members that they would like to volunteer, but we would appreciate hearing now from *everyone* who is interested, letting us know also your preferred times. Someone from the Friends will be there before 1pm on both days to get the ball rolling with the first roster. We will also have a sheet of instructions that we will email to volunteers and leave at the desk.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Sue Terry

Friends Secretary: [archivefriends@gmail.com](mailto:archivefriends@gmail.com)

More information: <https://ciff.com.au/>





*Rod Wallace (centre) with National Library Film Section staff at his retirement party in November 1977. Rod is flanked by Sue Terry (current Friends Secretary, standing immediately behind) and Ray Edmondson (current Friends president). Past Vice President of the Friends, Chris Harrison, is crouching in front, far left.*

## REMEMBERING ROD WALLACE

Roderick Wallace AM (1916-1997) was a founding staff member of the Film Division of the (then) Commonwealth National Library in 1946. He ultimately rose to head the emerging Special Collections area of the Library, embracing films, music, sound recordings, materials conservation, pictures and maps. In the 1950s he guided the development of Australia's non-theatrical film library network across all states, with the Film Division as the central member. In the 1960s he conducted, in his own time, a national crusade to find early Australian films. In the early 1970s he oversaw the creation of the National Library's film archive and sound archive units. In all of these areas he was an innovator, pioneer, skilled negotiator, advocate and mentor. A quiet achiever, he retired in 1977. He had laid the foundation for the creation, in 1984, of the National Film and Sound Archive, an event that he regarded as one of the great moments of his life.

The Friends is establishing an annual lecture series to honour the memory of Rod Wallace. Each year a distinguished speaker will be invited to prepare and deliver the lecture. It will be a public event, open to members of the Friends. The topic of the lecture will be left to the speaker, with the suggestion that it reflect an aspect of the preservation and dissemination of the audiovisual heritage - taking that term in its broadest interpretation. Following delivery, a recording of the lecture, together with its text, will be made available on the Friends' website.

The inaugural lecture will be held later this year and details will be announced soon.

## . . . and a great event organised by our Melbourne Chapter of the Friends of the NFSA

Dear Friends,

**You are invited to a Q&A Webinar, organised by our Melbourne Chapter, about the documentary film *Hunt Angels* on Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> September at 2pm, by Zoom.**

**Hunt Angels** is a true story of film industry outlaws Rupert Kathner and Alma Brooks who in the late 1930s began a movie-making spree that took on the Hollywood barons and the police, all in their passionate pursuit to make Australian films.



This innovative production creatively uses archival film from the NFSA and photographs of the period to vividly recreate the era.

Our webinar will comprise a lively discussion with the producer Sue Maslin, co-producer Daryl Dellora, and writer/director Alec Morgan about its making, chaired by film critic and Melbourne chapter committee member Peter Krausz.

We recommend you view the film prior to the webinar. You can view the film [here](#). The password is: angels!

Further details about the film and the awards it has received can be [viewed here](#).

**This event is free, but bookings are essential: Please book [here](#). Donations to support our work are always appreciated.**

The zoom invitation for the Q&A will be sent a few days before the talk.

We look forward to your attendance.

## More News from the Melbourne Chapter



In June, the Melbourne Friends toured the Salvation Army Limelight Studios in Bourke Street.

The Salvation Army's role in the history of cinematography in Australia was outstanding. Its epic *Soldiers of the Cross* was shown in 1900 and in 1901 the Army was commissioned to record the birth of the Australian Commonwealth on film.

**The Friends** tour visited the historic Salvation Army Museum and Limelight Studios built on the roof of the Salvation Army's heritage building. The remnant studios are the oldest surviving film studios from the beginnings of film production in Australia.

And in July, **Susan-Gaye Anderson** spoke to a substantial and appreciative audience, all fully masked.



Susie was a pioneer as a television presenter in those days, as she says, 'when we stood in the street, staring in a window, at a box with black and white images flickering on a screen. This was the 1950s, this was television, and they said it wouldn't last!'

Susan-Gaye worked primarily on the children's program *The Tarax Show*, with GTV9. She spoke about the people she worked with, and the shows, when 'everything was live: no second chances'. She describes it as 'a time when so much went wrong, but you just kept going!'

She also worked on various other shows at GTV9, including *In Melbourne Tonight*, with Graham Kennedy and Bert Newton. Susie showed images from her archival collection. Since the 1980s Susie has worked as a professional freelance writer, poet, feature article writer and playwright, with many stage shows workshopped

and produced at La Mama, TheatreWorks, The Malthouse and the Griffin Theatre in Sydney. She has recently completed her first novel, *A Red Hibiscus*.

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## **ADVOCACY UPDATE: THE FEDERAL ELECTION AND ITS OUTCOMES**

When the NFSA became a statutory authority in 2008, its minister appointed an initial governing board which exemplified the academic and professional backgrounds, as well as the connections to the NFSA's stakeholder base, that were essential to the leadership of the institution. With the churn of board appointments by different ministers over time, however, the maintenance of this skills matrix was lost from view. This has long been a matter of concern for the Friends and other supporters, as has the continued shrinkage of the NFSA's resource base.

With the federal election approaching, the Friends felt it was time to sound out supporters from potentially sympathetic election candidates as a possible path to change. During March and April the Friends surveyed the major parties and several independent candidates – both sitting and prospective – seeking their policy stances on the NFSA's resource allocation, access fees and the process for appointment to the NFSA's Board. The results of that survey, and the questionnaire on which it was based, can be read [here](#).

The deteriorating resource base of memory institutions is not a new issue, nor is the related and long standing matter of politicised appointments to public sector boards and committees. Both have now become the concern of several media commentators, and with the change of government, as well as the attention of major think tanks, the issue of objectivity in appointments has come more clearly into focus. It now seems likely to be on the parliamentary agenda sooner rather than later.

Following the election in 21 May, Hon. Tony Burke was appointed as the incoming Arts Minister (and therefore the Minister responsible for the NFSA). Writing in *The Australian* on 18 June, Gideon Haigh mapped out a grim picture of the condition of our national memory institutions, including the NFSA, with his article [Neglected heritage how could it happen](#). Karl Quinn followed up on 1 July in *The Age* and *The Sydney Morning Herald*, with [Lazy and indulgent](#), quoting Burke as recognizing the gravity of the issues, having already met with "every collecting institution", and encouraging them to make direct submissions to the Creative Australia cultural policy review that would frame Labor's approach to regulation and support of the arts. Some changes, such as quotas, could be made without great cost to the government, he said, but others would need to be fought for in upcoming budget discussions.

In June, the Centre for Public Integrity had released [Public appointments framework](#), a briefing paper on the need for merit-based processes. This was followed on 18 July by the Grattan Institute's report, [New politics public appointments](#), on the objectivity of public sector board appointments. The report analyses the level of politicization of the current boards of major cultural institutions, including the NFSA (page 17 of the report) and advocates replacing the traditional system of ministerial appointments with an independent, arm's length mechanism, as is the case in New Zealand, Canada and the United Kingdom.

On the same day, newly elected independent MP Dr Sophie Scamps announced that she will be introducing a Private Member's Bill to establish "an independent and merit based process to select candidates for government boards, committees and departmental appointments".

The Friends have written to Minister Burke, picking up these issues and proposing a means of applying a skills matrix to future appointments to the NFSA Board.



## VISIT NFSA ON YOUTUBE

Have you seen [the NFSA's YouTube page](#)? With over 600 items to choose from, there are film clips, talks, interviews and much more to explore, taking you inside the work of the Archive.

## 2022 Committee:

**President:** Ray Edmondson      **Vice-President:** David Kilby  
**Secretary:** Sue Terry      **Treasurer:** Chris Emery  
**Committee Members:** Jill Matthews, Tony Briscoe, and Lindy Ross  
**Public Officer:** Sue Terry  
**Newsletter Editor:** Lindy Ross



*The Friends would like to acknowledge the support of the IT firm, Blue Packets, in hosting our website.*



*Find the Friends on Facebook*

<http://www.facebook.com/NFSAFriends/>

or on our website [www.archivefriends.org.au](http://www.archivefriends.org.au)

***Check the Friends' website and Facebook page to keep up with what's happening!***

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