



WHAT'S THE NEWS? ISSUE 14

NOVEMBER 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

IMPORTANT REMINDER

**Please take this excellent opportunity to support the
essential work of the Friends. It is incredibly easy.
Just bring yourself and your friends along to our screening.**

FRIENDS FILM SCREENING AND ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

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

We will screen 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 no-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.

SPEAKER UPDATE: Michael Organ, former Greens MP in the Federal Parliament, and currently Archivist at the University of Wollongong had planned to 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. He has since been invited to attend (in the place of Senator Bob Brown) the Parliamentarians for Tibet conference in Scotland from 17 to 19 November and now sadly will not be able to join us. Hopefully, we will have another opportunity to hear Michael in the near future.

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.

SENATE ESTIMATES COMMITTEE ACTION

**Greens Senator Bob Brown's Questions on Notice
to the Minister for Arts and Sport, the Honorable Rod Kemp 1 November 2005**

National Film & Sound Archive Loss of Identity

Question 1 When the National Film and Sound Archive was transferred to the stewardship of the Australian Film Commission in June 2003, the Minister and government members gave iron-clad assurances that the Archive's independent identity as a national cultural heritage institution would be protected and that it "would not be subsumed by the Australian Film Commission."

At Senate Estimates on 17 February 2004, Mr. Kim Dalton of the Australian Film Commission reiterated those assurances, when he said: "*We consider it to be very important, as we have always said, that the [National Film and Sound] 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 [National Film and Sound] Archive can have a presence which is independent of the Australian Film Commission*".

Will the Minister explain why the Australian Film Commission is pursuing a strategy of stripping the National Film and Sound Archive of its independent identity, in direct contravention of previous assurances that this would not occur?

Question 2 Is the Minister aware that the National Film and Sound Archive has lost its independent logo and distinctive letterhead, and that these have been replaced by the Australian Film Commission equivalent?

Question 3 Is the Minister aware that the National Film and Sound Archive staff have lost their own distinctive Archive email addresses and that these have been replaced by Australian Film Commission equivalents?

Question 4 Is the Minister aware that the National Film and Sound Archive has lost its distinctive public programs, such as the Ken G Hall Award and the Longford Lyell Lecture, which have been homogenized into Australian Film Commission events?

Question 5 Is the Minister aware that the National Film and Sound Archive is required to inform all and sundry that it is now 'a division of the Australian Film Commission' and advertise its subordinate status?

Question 6 With the theft of National Film and Sound Archive identity by the Australian Film Commission (as illustrated in questions 2, 3, 4 and 5), in clear breach of previous Australian Film Commission assurances and having a negative impact upon the goodwill and reputation built up by the Archive over previous decades, could the Minister please explain how this identify theft will benefit the National Film and Sound Archive, the national collection and the Australian community in general?

Statutory Authority Status

Question 7 Does the Minister believe that a national cultural heritage institution like the National Film and Sound Archive can function within an environment of low staff morale, lack of independence, lack of understanding and support from the parent body (i.e. the Australian Film Commission) and continuing uncertainty as regards its future direction?

Question 8 Will the Minister consider statutory authority status for the National Film and Sound Archive, thus providing it with the necessary legislative protection and independence to fulfill its role as a premiere national cultural heritage institution of international standing?

Question 9 Is the Minister aware of the 1985 parliamentary report recommending statutory authority status for the National Film and Sound Archive?

Australian Society of Archivists

Question 10 Is the Minister aware of the following resolution in regards to the National Film and Sound Archive, adopted at the Annual General Meeting of the Australian Society of Archivists (ASA) on 6 October 2005?

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 The Australian Society of Archivists supports the call by Senator Kim Carr for a full response to this resolution to be tabled at the relevant Senate Estimates Committee.

3 The Australian Society of Archivists congratulates the Minister on the reinstatement of the National Film and Sound 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 The Australian Society of Archivists calls on the Minister to declare the definitive withdrawal of the Australian Film Commission's Directions plan.

5 The Australian Society of Archivists 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.

Question 11 Does the Minister intend to respond to the Australian Society of Archivist's 2004 resolution mentioned above (question 10) concerning the National Film and Sound Archive, which sought a comprehensive public response to:

- The Australian Society of Archivist's submission, in February 2004, in response to the Australian Film Commission's *Directions* paper.
- All the input gathered during the Stakeholder Forums of January/February 2004.
- The recommendations and resolutions of the July 2004 conference on *The Future of the Archive*.

Australian Film Commission Directions Plan

Question 12 Does the Minister intend to respond to the Australian Society of Archivist's 2004 resolution mentioned above (question 10) in relation to the National Film and Sound Archive, which sought a comprehensive explanation of the Australian Film Commission Board's non-communication with stakeholders over previous months, while still proceeding to implement the *Directions* paper proposals and reduce the autonomy and identity of the Archive?

Question 13 The Australian Film Commission's *Directions* plan has been thoroughly rejected and discredited in the above-mentioned stakeholder forums and in numerous submissions. To allay fears that the Australian Film Commission is still intent on implementing it by stealth, will the Minister declare its definitive withdrawal?

Position of Ms Sabina Wynn

Question 14 Will the Minister confirm that the author of the *Directions* paper, Ms Sabina Wynn, was recently promoted to an SES position at the Australian Film Commission?

Question 15 In regard to Ms Sabina Wynn, will the Minister advise:

- Was Ms Sabina Wynn paid any bonuses by the government for the financial years ending 2003, 2004 and 2005, and if so, what were the amounts of those bonuses?
- In regards to Ms Sabina Wynn, and the bonuses referred to in Q.6(a), what were the bonuses for, and did the bonuses relate to her work on *Directions* and other matters connected to the National Film and Sound Archive?
- In regards to Ms Sabina Wynn, what is the level, salary, nature and title of her present position with the Australian Film Commission/National Film and Sound Archive?
- In regards to Ms Sabina Wynn and here present position with the Australian Film Commission/National Film and Sound Archive, has this position, or is this position destined to have, similar duties to those proposed for the Industry and Cultural Development Branch Director as outlined in Appendix F of *Directions*?
- In regards to Ms Sabina Wynn and her present position with the Australian Film Commission/National Film and Sound Archive, when was the position created, and when and where was it publicly advertised?

Low Staff Morale

Question 16 At Senate Estimates on 25 May 2005, Mr Dalton was asked to describe staff morale at the National Film and Sound Archive. He went on record as saying that it was 'very good'.

On 26 May 2005 the CPSU (Community and Public Sector Union) issued a bulletin deploring the Australian Film Commission's 'systemic failure to consult with staff' at the Archive. It subsequently took the Australian Film Commission before the Australian Industrial Relations Commission to resolve the dispute.

Does the Minister realise that either Mr Dalton is unaware of the low morale at the National Film and Sound Archive or that Parliament was misled by claims that staff morale was 'very good', when in fact it is very bad, and had been since the amalgamation with the Australian Film Commission was first proposed in 2002?

Inadequacies in Management of the National Film and Sound Archive by the Australian Film Commission

Question 17 After nearly two and a half years of the Australian Film Commission's control of the National Film and Sound Archive, is the Minister aware that there is a growing body of evidence that the Australian Film Commission:

- does not respond to stakeholder input;
- does not answer questions properly put to it on the public record;
- does not consult adequately with Archive staff;
- does not feel any obligation to be properly accountable to its constituency or, indeed, to the Parliament;
- does not keep its promises; and
- has not earned the confidence of the archival community in regards to its management of the National Film and Sound Archive?

Statutory Deposit Scheme

Question 18 At what stage is the development of legislation to provide for the statutory deposit of audiovisual material in the National Film and Sound Archive?

Question 19 Can the Minister give an assurance that when statutory deposit of audiovisual material legislation is introduced, it will give specific provision for the beneficiary to be the National Film and Sound Archive, and not the Australian Film Commission?

The Friends of the National Film and Sound Archive have made arrangements with the National Library to deposit its records in the Manuscripts Section.

The purpose of this decision is to preserve the Friends' records for posterity so that researchers will be able to consult the collection as additional information about the NFSA.

The records include letters, press clippings, minutes of meetings and ephemera such as flyers. Of particular interest is material concerning the Friends' hard work to gain the name change for the Archive. The Friends were successful in getting the Archive renamed to the original National Film and Sound Archive from the previous name of ScreenSound.

Records will continue to be added to the collection. The collection will have open access status which means anyone is entitled to consult it.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE ARCHIVE ON APPOINTMENT OF GRAHAM SHIRLEY

To quote Paolo Cherchi Usai, Director of the National Film and Sound Archive, 'It is my pleasure to announce that Graham Shirley has been appointed to the newly established position of Senior Curator for the Documents and Artefacts Branch of the National Film and Sound Archive, commencing with the NFSA Division on December 12, 2005. In welcoming Graham and providing the impressive outline of his achievements below, I must also thank Elizabeth Jamieson for her commitment and support in filling this role during its establishment period. Her work provides an essential and very much appreciated foundation for the next phase of the Documents and Artefacts Branch and I know that she has become a champion for the documentation aspects of the national collection. Thank you Elizabeth! Please join me in giving Graham a warm welcome to the NFSA.'

ABOUT GRAHAM SHIRLEY: Graham Shirley is a documentary film director and scriptwriter, researcher, film historian and oral historian. He has worked with the National Film and Sound Archive on many projects and has a wide ranging experience of the national collection—film, recorded sound and documentation.

He has spent three decades researching and writing on Australian film and TV production history. He is co-author of the book *Australian Cinema: The First 80 Years* (published in 1983 and 1989), considered the most comprehensive account of the pre-1975 film industry. He has written on this subject for other books and periodicals as well as lecturing on it for the AFI, UTS and AFTRS. In 1995 Graham lectured on Sydney on Film to the Sydney Film Festival. For the 2002 Sydney Film Festival, and for the Travelling Film Festival, he delivered a presentation on how films and TV programs have viewed The Outback.

Graham has put much of his film industry knowledge to use in researching a string of landmark documentaries, including *Wings Over Australia* (1979), *The Dunstan Documentaries* (1980), *Allies* (1983), *The Dismissal* (1983), *Bodyline* (1984), *Cowra Breakout* (1984), *Wharfies* (1988), *Hindsight* (1990-1991), *Submarines: Sharks of Steel* (1992), *Federation* (2001) and *Colour of War: The Anzacs* (2003). He has also worked as a general researcher on projects like *Peach's Australia* (1975) and *Australian Biography*. He was script editor on the ABC's *The Way We Really Were* (1990), a documentary on Australian social change in the 1960s, which he wrote and researched; and *Celluloid Heroes* (1995), which examined a century of Australian cinema. On George Miller's documentary *White Fella's Dreaming*, the Australian episode of the international *Century of Cinema* series, Graham worked as associate producer, script consultant and researcher.

Since 1971, Graham has recorded numerous oral histories with veterans of film, television, radio, recorded sound and theatre. In the early 1990s he recorded a wide-ranging oral history of the Sydney Film Festival. He

has also recently worked as an interviewer for the Australians at War Film Archive, a video oral history project funded by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Since the mid-1980s Graham has written and directed a string of historical documentaries. They have included *Prisoners of Propaganda* (1987) which told of Australian prisoners of war forced to appear in a Japanese propaganda film during World War Two, three episodes of the sports history series *Blood, Sweat and Tears* (1988) and *Striking for State Aid*, an episode of the ABC-TV social history series *Timeframe* (1997). For the Australian Army he researched, wrote and directed *Behind the Lines: The Secret War of Z Special Unit* (2001 and 2003), a two-hour documentary on special operations during World War Two. In 2003 he directed *White Bay Power Station*, which won an Electronic Media Award in the Energy Australia National Trust Heritage Awards. Graham was also the recipient of the NFSA's Ken G. Hall Award in 2004.

In 2005 he wrote and directed *Road to Tokyo*, screened nationally on ABC television to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the end of World War Two. (Thanks to the AFC for this bio.)

SENIOR CURATOR RECRUITMENT

John Peebles Associates are currently searching for a Senior Curator of Moving Images, and Senior Curator of Recorded Sound, for an Australian archive company. These exceptional individuals will need to have previous experience in archival, and understands Australian culture and heritage. All interested replies should be addressed to: belinda@jpasearch.com

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 on our new email address info@archivefriends.org.au or ring 6248 0851.

MANY GOOD WISHES FROM YOUR COMMITTEE,

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

CONTACT DETAILS

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