



## **NEWSLETTER NO. 48 AUGUST 2020**

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

#### **STAY SAFE - A COVID-19 UPDATE**

We hope that all Friends are safe and well as we continue to adjust our lives to the unpredictable pandemic. I'd like to update you on what the Friends are doing during these unusual times.

**The NFSA reopens on 1 August.** This is the current plan, and there will be a new exhibition as well as some resumption of other public programs. However, distancing rules will apply, so if you plan on visiting the NFSA after reopening, do check the website ([www.nfsa.gov.au](http://www.nfsa.gov.au)) before making your visit. We will forward on to all Friends the NFSA's monthly newsletter as it is published.

**A budget boost:** The NFSA has received a budget boost of \$5.5 million over 4 years to progress digitisation of the collections. You can read more at:

<https://www.nfsa.gov.au/nfsa-receives-55m-boost-digitise-national-collection?>

**Friends public events are still suspended.** Given the current lockdown rules in Victoria, and the uncertainties about virus hotspots in NSW which might in turn impact on the ACT, we have not reached the point where we could contemplate restarting regular events in Canberra or Melbourne. Many Friends members are in the highest risk demographic for the virus and we need to take this fact into account. For members in Canberra, **CMAG is currently open** for visitors to exhibitions but, again, distancing rules apply.

**Webinars:** In place of physical events, we have experimented with our first webinar! There is a review in this issue. We plan to do more webinars and we'll keep you advised!

**Advocacy:** This is a continuing task for the Friends, because - as the saying goes - it's the squeaky wheel that gets the grease!. Alex Gosman chairs the Friends Advocacy Subcommittee and provides an update of our latest efforts.

*President's message continued . . .*

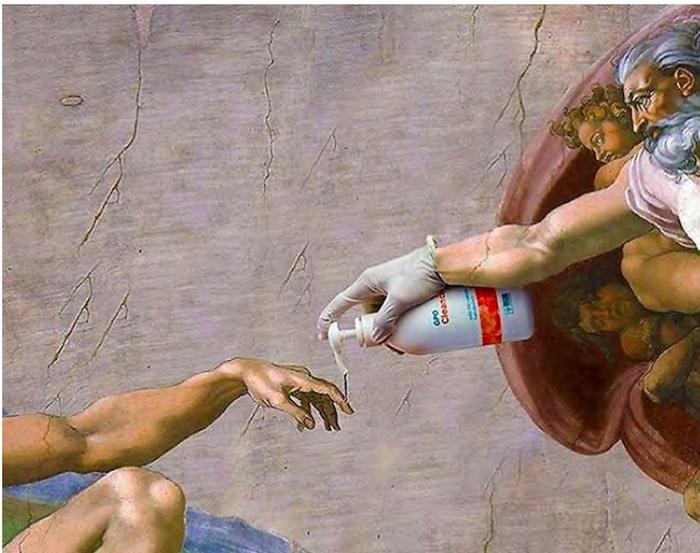
**Committee:** The Friends Committee meetings are now conducted via Zoom every month, and this has the benefit of allowing the Branch Committee in Melbourne to join in the discussions. Some clouds do have a silver lining!

**20th anniversary of the Friends:** This issue includes an article by our patron, Andrew Pike, which recall the establishment and early years of the Friends. Under present circumstances, a birthday party is not possible, so the article is a way of saying many happy returns to us!

Ray Edmondson  
President

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### **ATTENTION ALL MEMBERS**



At its last meeting, your committee decided to extend the membership expiry dates, by at least six months, for all members who were financial as at 1 March 2020. We will reassess and, if necessary, extend that time period as the COVID-19 situation runs its course.

We also decided to delay commencing the memberships of all new members whose applications had not yet been processed until we are free to offer programs to members again. These new members, however, have been added to our newsletter and email mailing list.

If you have any questions, please contact us as [archivefriends@gmail.com](mailto:archivefriends@gmail.com)

# Advocacy update



## AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL INQUIRY

The Friends of the NFSA recently provided a submission to the Inquiry of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works - Australian War Memorial Development (AWM) Project. The Inquiry is examining the \$500 million investment in the AWM to expand its exhibition space.

In noting the Terms of Reference for this Inquiry, the Friends queried the expected benefits from the forecast \$500m investment in the project in comparison to what might be achieved if this amount had been invested across all the national cultural institutions, including the National Film and Sound Archive. The submission noted that a relatively small investment focused on the ongoing major digitisation of the NFSA collections would reap major cultural and historical benefits to the Australian

community.

Of the 80 odd submissions made to the Parliamentary Inquiry the vast majority were critical of the proposal to expand the AWM exhibition space. They can be accessed on the Inquiry website at [https://www.aph.gov.au/sitecore/content/Home/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Joint/Public\\_Works/AustralianWarMemorial/Submissions](https://www.aph.gov.au/sitecore/content/Home/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Joint/Public_Works/AustralianWarMemorial/Submissions)

The Friends submission has also been added to our website at <http://www.archivefriends.org.au/index.php/us/further-reading>

The Inquiry has featured regularly in the press and witnesses have begun to give evidence. One free online source is The Guardian: <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/jul/14/experts-deride-snake-oil-mental-health-claims-for-498m-australian-war-memorial-expansion>

## GENERAL SUPPORT FOR NFSA

Ray Edmondson and Alex Gosman met with the Hon. David Smith MP, ALP Member for Bean (southern ACT) to discuss its submission to the above Inquiry, on which Mr Smith sits as a member of the Standing Committee on Public Works.

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In an excellent meeting Mr Smith expressed his support for the need for increased investment in Australia's cultural institutions. Discussions also touched on issues around budgets, staff numbers, "efficiency dividends", and NFSA facilities. While under current management, a number of the Archive's public activities were re-opening, including exhibitions, placing extra pressure on a static resource base. Mr Smith asked to be kept informed on activities of the Friends.

Mr Smith advised that he is also a member of the Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories, which in 2018 conducted an Inquiry into the National Institutions (including the NFSA). The Friends made a submission to that Inquiry and its final report, tabled in April 2019, can be accessed at

[https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Joint/National\\_Capital\\_and\\_External\\_Territories/NationalInstitutions/Report](https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Joint/National_Capital_and_External_Territories/NationalInstitutions/Report)

Subsequently, the Friends wrote to the Minister For Communications, Cyber security and the Arts, the Hon. Paul Fletcher MP to congratulate the Government for its 30 June 2020 decision to provide \$5.5 million over four years for the NFSA to boost its important work in digitising the national collection and in developing the NFSA's role as a National Centre for Excellence in Audiovisual Heritage.

The Friends commented that this additional funding is a much-needed tonic to assist the restoration of the NFSA's standing after many years of declining budgets and consequential reductions in staffing levels. We expressed hope that within current budget constraints it will still be possible to increase future appropriations to the NFSA to accelerate the ongoing major digitisation program at a sustainable level without disruption to other NFSA functions, consistent with Australia's UNESCO obligations for the preservation of the national documentary heritage.

***Alex Gosman, Chair, Friends Advocacy Subcommittee***



**Friends of the NFSA membership brochure:** even though our activities are restricted at present, we are still promoting the advantages of joining the Friends, to the wider community. We are lucky to have the services of graphic artist Sabine Friedrich who has designed our updated brochure. Attached is an electronic copy of the new brochure – feel free to distribute to friends!

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**To the Friends, on our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary!**



Friends' Patron and well known film maker and film historian, Andrew Pike, reminds us of the early days of the Friends of the NFSA – 2000-2008

It was with a sense of urgency that, twenty years ago in early 2000, the Friends of the National Film and Sound Archive was created. Two decisions by NFSA management prompted the action. Both decisions seemed unwise in the minds of many people in the Archive's stakeholder and client base.

The first concern was the decision to change the name of the institution to ScreenSound Australia, thus removing reference to it being an archive, and thus potentially affecting its identity in the eyes of the film and sound communities. It also smacked of corporatisation and seemed a needless break with long-established practice.

The second issue was the relocation of the archive's Sydney office to space within the commercial Fox Studios precinct. This decision offended a number of vocal producers who were proud of their independence from corporate giants like Fox, or who could not afford to use the studios. The move also linked the archive, a national heritage institution with permanent preservation as its responsibility, to a commercial enterprise concerned with profit. Furthermore, such were security measures at the Fox precinct, that it was quite complicated for archive clients to gain access.

In establishing its legal identity as an incorporated non-profit body the Friends quite deliberately identified with the original name of the institution, thereby keeping the name current and visible after the NFSA itself had abandoned it. This discouraged any other organisation from capturing the title and thereby allowed the institution to reclaim it, in due course, when circumstances changed.

The initial aim of creating the Friends Association was two-fold: to stimulate greater public awareness of the implications of the NFSA's decisions; and to put direct pressure on the NFSA and government to address the perceived damage.

Three fundamental principles of the Friends were established:

- that the association was independent from the NFSA (though a small grant for administration was sought and accepted);

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- that the association was committed to supporting and advocating for “best practice” in audio-visual archiving, and was therefore free to be critical of decisions by the NFSA if they seemed at variance with that principle; and
- that, at least in the association’s early years, membership should be free, to maximise our “membership” base.

Glenys Rowe, producer of feature films such as DOGS IN SPACE, and an energetic film publicist joined the small band involved in setting up the Friends association, and encouraged us to attach as many prominent people as we could attract in the film community to serve as official Patrons of the Friends. Chris Noonan (director of BABE and coincidentally Glenys’s husband) was the first on board as a Patron, and others followed – Gil Brealy, Bryan Brown, Anthony Buckley, Scott Hicks, Patricia Lovell, Michael Pate, Fred Schepisi, Albie Thoms.

Shelley Clarke joined the volunteer committee providing administrative support and linking the Friends with the Australian Federation of Friends of Museums association. Shelley also put in many long hours as editor of the association’s newsletter. All of those newsletters are now an invaluable resource on the Friends’ website.

The campaign included the preparation of a Discussion Paper that made a clear statement of what exactly the principle of “best practice” entailed – a paper that continues to be relevant today and was a centrepiece of later campaigns run by the association. Among other principles, the statement placed particular emphasis on the need for greater commitment by the NFSA to public programs.

In due course, minor modifications of the name were achieved, but not a full reversion to the original name of the National Film and Sound Archive. And dialogue with the archive management on a range of issues was facilitated by my appointment to the archive’s Advisory Council (though the issue of the name change was a closed topic since it had been formally approved by the Council before I joined it and the Council did not wish to re-visit the subject).

But in mid-2003, a major new issue emerged which gradually eclipsed all other priorities of the Friends association: the decision of the Federal Government to merge the NFSA with the Australian Film Commission, following a Review of national Cultural Agencies.

The Friends approached the integration of the NFSA with the AFC cautiously. Both the Minister for the Arts and Sport, as well as the AFC itself issued assurances that the integrity of the NFSA would be protected and nurtured. However, discussion papers issued by the AFC and a series of very tense and strangely managed public meetings did not bode well. Several key concerns became apparent, among them that the AFC intended to move the NFSA’s public programs to its own public programs division, thereby removing the essential direct link between the archive’s preservation’s work and its public programs, and reducing the NFSA to a centre for physical preservation, as the Friends argued in Newsletter no 8: *“The public programmes give sense and purpose to the Archive, and keep preservation resources focused on outcomes. (As someone once said, nothing is really preserved until it has been made accessible to the public). A broad range of access programmes cannot be removed without profoundly damaging the institution’s integrity. There is no doubt that the programmes need to be enhanced, but they need to be enhanced under the umbrella of the Archive, under the control of*

*the Archive's own Director and his or her staff. Without these functions, no major figure will be attracted to the position of Director of the Archive."*

The Friends was alarmed by the AFC's management of staff relations within the NFSA, as again we expressed in the same Newsletter: *"The AFC has announced that they will not be making any staff redundant in their restructure of the Archive. They have, however, by announcing redundancies and then withdrawing them, created an atmosphere of distrust and suspicion that is having the effect anyway that the AFC wanted to achieve. We are witnessing an exodus of key people from the Archive. An atmosphere of 'us' and 'them' has been created, which the AFC is going to have a hard time undoing.*

The AFC period did a great deal of damage to the NFSA's public relationship with its stakeholders and constituencies: loss of public confidence became a major problem that the AFC had difficulty managing.

The Friends was intensely active in this tumultuous period – working with a colleague lobby group, the Archive Forum, to organize a petition to the government, public demonstrations (supported by shadow Arts Minister Senator Kate Lundy), and most significantly a two-day public forum on 3 and 4 July 2004 to discuss the problems we all perceived and the solutions we sought. The Friends was also active in lobbying for support among archives internationally. Prompted by the Friends and the Archive Forum, questions were often asked in Senate Estimates hearings.

A few gains were made during this time. The original name of the National Film and Sound Archive was restored in December 2004 though it was a change that lacked meaning when the organisation had no independence, as the archive's letterhead awkwardly declared: "National Film and Sound Archive—a division of the Australian Film Commission". Identity was further confused when email addresses for NFSA staff became AFC addresses.

Significant potential for good occurred in late 2004 when the AFC managed to recruit a major archival figure, Dr Paolo Cherchi Usai, to take up the position of Director of the NFSA, with a consultative committee appointed to assist, although ultimate responsibilities lay with the AFC Board.

Parallel with actions to protect the NFSA and its work, a demand for independence for the NFSA was stimulated and began to be the primary focus of all lobbying work.

Finally legislation was passed on 20 March 2008 creating the NFSA formally as an independent statutory authority, receiving bipartisan support in the Federal Parliament. The new independent status took effect from 1 July that year, with a new Board under the Chairmanship of Chris Puplick AM.

My personal involvement with the Friends( of which I was nominally president by this time) ended when I accepted a position of this new NFSA board. I leave the story thereafter but I have been pleased to have this opportunity to reflect upon these difficult and challenging first 8 years of the Friends' life, begun in conflict and frustration but culminating in success. The Friends can be immensely proud of its achievements.

The detailed history of the NFSA during this period of turmoil, and the step-by-step evolution towards independent status is brilliantly documented in Ray Edmondson's PhD thesis which is available on the Friends website. I recommend it as a compelling and faithful account of a sequence of campaigns run and won by the Friends and many others in the film and sound communities. – **Andrew Pike**



## MELBOURNE FRIENDS:

[if you belong to the Melbourne Branch of the Friends, check out what's happening here!](#)

**!Melbourne Friends of NFSA on line event: *Michael Kirby: Don't Forget The Justice Bit***

The newly established Melbourne friends of the NFSA has adapted splendidly to the circumstances resulting from Melbourne's second round of COVID-19 restrictions. On 12 July they presented an on line event featuring the film

***Michael Kirby: Don't Forget The Justice Bit.***



The 2010 documentary was filmed before and after Justice Michael Kirby retired from the High Court of Australia. The film explores the personal, moral and spiritual convictions which provide the framework for understanding one of Australia's greatest legal minds. The unfolding exploration of Kirby's personal life, views and significant influence is delicately and powerfully presented.

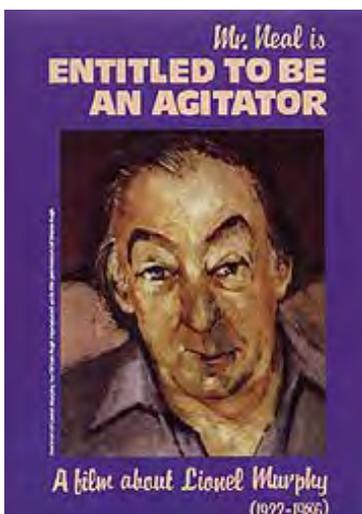
Daryl Dellora, the film's writer and director, and a committee member of the Melbourne Friends, made the film available on line prior to a Q&A session on Zoom. This format gave the 80 or more participants the opportunity to not only quiz Daryl on the background and making of the film, but also had the advantage of allowing Michael Kirby himself to attend. Participants enthusiastically took up the opportunity to find out more about Kirby's views on life and the law, as well as his experience being the subject of the film.

The success of the event was in large part due to the smooth running and professional approach led by Diana Fisk, Daryl's colleague at Film Art Media. It is likely that parts of Australia may need to continue exploring such innovative approaches for some time. This may include hybrid events which combine the advantages of face to face events with an on line component, which can free us from geographical limitations.

Bruce Watson

**... and coming up on August 9<sup>th</sup> another Afternoon With Friends webinar event.**

***Melbourne Friends and FilmArtMedia are teaming up to present a screening and Q&A of this moving profile of the life and work of High Court judge Lionel Murphy and his role in the introduction of many radical legal and political reforms. This stylish documentary highlights the complex legal procedures that both protect and fail Australian society. Featuring Ernie Dingo as Mr Neal.***



<https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/mr-neal-is-entitled-to-be-an-agitator-online-event-screening-tickets-114244955738>

**2pm Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> August. This is set as a free event with the option of making a donation of any amount, but \$10 is suggested.**

**And this terrific event is available to all Friends, all over Australia!**

## 2020 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:** Jude Briscoe



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

Find the Friends on Facebook [www.facebook.com/NFSAFriends](https://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!***

Friends of the National Film and Sound Archive Inc.

PO Box 9618 Deakin ACT 2600.

E: [archivefriends@gmail.com](mailto:archivefriends@gmail.com) Website: [www.archivefriends.org.au](http://www.archivefriends.org.au)



## *Do you live in Melbourne?*

*If so, we have a Melbourne group for you, with its own regular series of events.*

*For further information about this group and its programs, or to put yourself on Melbourne's email list, please contact us at [melfriendsnfsa@gmail.com](mailto:melfriendsnfsa@gmail.com).*

*Do you love old and new Australian cinema?*

*Are you fascinated by the world of radio, recordings, TV and the digital landscape?*

*Do you enjoy talks, presentations, outings with like-minded enthusiasts?*

*Then the Friends is for you!*

*To learn more about us visit the Friends of the NFSA website:*

*[www.archivefriends.org.au](http://www.archivefriends.org.au)*

*or find us on Facebook*

*f <https://www.facebook.com/NFSAFriends/>*

*Join the Friends of the NFSA and support Australia's world-renowned audiovisual archive.*

**[www.archivefriends.org.au](http://www.archivefriends.org.au)**





# Membership application form

Please send completed applications to:

Secretary, Friends of the NFSA, PO Box 9618, Deakin, ACT 2600  
(or hand to Committee Member at Friends function) or scan and email.

# Who we are

The Friends is an independent non-profit, incorporated society that has a formal relationship with the NFSA. It is the visible public community of NFSA supporters.

As one of the nation's great cultural institutions, the NFSA preserves and provides access to our heritage of film, recorded sound, radio, television and new media. The Friends is for those who wish to

- Enjoy the NFSA collection and its curatorial knowledge
- Contribute their energy and enthusiasm in volunteer work
- Advocate for the NFSA's needs
- Get behind the scenes of the NFSA's work
- Learn about preservation
- Meet other Friends at special events

Friends can also join online at

<http://www.archivefriends.org.au>



There are tangible benefits from Friends' membership:

- Discounts at the NFSA on-line shop
- Discounts on admission to NFSA screenings, the Thornbury Picture House, and other events
- Regular newsletter
- Entry to regular Friends' events, including presentations, talks, "white glove" evenings, screenings
- Entry to events organised by other Friends' associations
- Social contact with other Friends
- A growing and interactive Friends' website

## MEMBERSHIP DETAILS

Mr  Mrs  Ms  Miss  Other .....

Given Names .....

Family Name .....

Address .....

State ..... Postcode .....

Phone (.....) .....

Mobile .....

Email .....

(Email is our preferred method of communication)

### One year

Individual \$25.00  Family \$35.00  Concession\* \$15.00

### Two year

Individual \$45.00  Family \$55.00  Concession\* \$25.00

Donation .....

(Optional and not Tax Deductible)

## METHOD OF PAYMENT

Cash

Cheque pay to: 'Friends of the NFSA'

Direct Deposit to: BSB: 313140 Account: 12141910

(Reference: your Family Name)

Credit Card go to <https://www.trybooking.com/BFFGU>

Unless paying by Credit Card please mail/email/hand in this completed form so we can record your details).

Total amount \$ ..... Date sent ..... / ..... / .....