

NEWS RELEASE



MINISTER FOR
HOME AFFAIRS
AND ENVIRONMENT

NATIONAL FILM AND SOUND ARCHIVE

The Government will establish a new National Film and Sound Archive, the Minister for Home Affairs and Environment, Mr Barry Cohen, announced today.

The Archive will preserve moving images and recorded sound as part of Australia's 20th century cultural heritage. The Archive, based on the existing film and sound archives presently located in the National Library of Australia, will develop presentational material such as literature and artefacts relating to the history of Australian film and recorded sound. It will contain facilities to encourage public and industry access to the collections, and for screening old films for public viewing.

The National Film and Sound Archive will be made administratively independent of the National Library immediately, and will initially be an Office within the Department of Home Affairs and Environment reporting to that Minister. Its staff and finance will be separated from the National Library immediately and its accommodation as soon as possible.

The position of Director will be established and advertised nationally.

A National Film and Sound Archives Advisory Committee will be appointed to develop planning for the future development of the Archive. It will advise the Government on a range of matters including accommodation, staffing, regional representation, appropriate charges for services, preservation program and timetable, relations with the industry and trade, and deposit requirements. The Advisory Committee will be asked to report within twelve months of its appointment.

The Government has also decided to provide increased resources in the form of staff, funds and equipment to develop the film and sound archives. The increased resources should permit preservation of more nitrate film and the handling of newer technical conservation problems.

The new National Film and Sound Archive will be more accessible to the public and the film industry. Offices will be opened in New South Wales and Victoria and the Advisory Committee will examine the desirability of opening offices in other States.

The National Library's management of its holdings of film and sound recordings has been criticised but I think this criticism is unfair. It must be remembered that the Library took the initiative to preserve this vital inheritance. The Library, as a whole, was restrained by its allocation

of resources from the previous Government, but its film and sound sections have received at least a fair share of those limited resources and some, apparently unrecognised, success has been achieved in building up the collections and establishing a working relationship with the industry.

Nevertheless, the Government has decided that there is a need for a separate institution with a charter of its own and guidelines established by the Government after consultation with all the interests concerned.

In addition, an Interdepartmental Committee will inquire into and advise on policy generally concerning all the Commonwealth's holdings of film, sound recordings and related issues. Policy advice will include matters such as the co-ordination and rationalisation of all Commonwealth activities in this area - acquisition of material, cataloguing, conservation, reproduction, access arrangements, and co-ordination with relevant State and private sector interest.

There are many complex issues involved in consideration of how other Commonwealth holdings of film and sound recordings will relate to the National Film and Sound Archive. In view of these issues, and the need for consultation, the Government will consider the requirements further after receiving the reports.

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