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## Archive Forum

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**Press Release  
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### **Incompetent Film Body wastes money**

The film development funding body, the Australian Film Commission is wasting massive amounts of public money according to the lobby group, the Archive Forum.

The Forum says it's wrong for the Film Commission to go ahead with any radical restructuring of the National Film and Sound Archive in the lead up to the Federal elections and just before a new head of the Archive takes up his position next month.

Forum Secretary and film archivist, **Ray Edmondson** says the AFC is defying its constituency which has clearly said it doesn't want the Archive dismantled or submerged. The AFC is going ahead with its discredited proposals of last year but doing it stealthily bit by bit so no one notices, he claims.

A current example is the huge amount of taxpayer's funds wasted by relocating the Melbourne Archive office. It has only recently moved into a new space with a ten year lease and now the AFC wants to move it again into its new South Melbourne offices. This and pointlessly forcing computer amalgamations will cost the Archive a lot of unnecessary dollars says the Archive Forum.

The ALP and the Greens have both committed to undoing the shot gun marriage of the AFC and the Archive pushed though last year by Arts Minister Rod Kemp. Despite hundreds of submissions and letters to the AFC and the Minister about the need to keep the Archive intact the AFC has been stealthily working behind the scenes. The Archive Forum is a lobby group headed by Melbourne film writer and academic **Dr Ina Bertrand** founded early last year to support the Archive and push for its independence. They claim the AFC wants to slice the Archive up, give it less public visibility and hand over its public functions to AFC staff instead.

The national tour of the reconstructed silent classic, "*The Sentimental Bloke*" is a case in point according to Edmondson. When the film was premiered at the Sydney Film Festival recently it was under the AFC's banner not the Archive's. Minister Kemp was slow hand clapped off the stage and no one from the Archive involved in the reconstruction was allowed to speak. The Archive needs to keep its identity, autonomy and public profile to be able to continue its important work says Edmondson.

The Archive Forum wants Minister Kemp to release the secret 2003 review of cultural institutions which led to the forced merger of the Archive and the film organization. And as well they want to know how much money has been spent by the AFC on the sham consultation process in January this year and on the many consultants who've been employed over the last twelve months to rebrand and restructure the Archive so it meshes better with the much smaller film commission.

The advocacy group is also alarmed that the Minister failed yet again to recruit anyone with significant archival experience or qualifications in recent Board appointments. Of the 10 AFC board members not one has worked in an Archive or is trained in the field. And they are worried that the merger has put the Archive's international standing at risk with its membership of the premier international professional organization (FIAF) now under review.

The newly appointed Director of the Film and Sound Archive also known as ScreenSound is Dr Paolo Cherchi Usai from the George Eastman House Film Archive in New York. He is expected to move to Canberra in mid September.

For more details of how the AFC and the Arts Minister are wasting public money and endangering the future of Australia's film television and sound recording history call Daniela Torsh on 0438 889 032 ([danielat1@bigpond.com](mailto:danielat1@bigpond.com)) or Deb Verhoeven on 0412 484 321

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