

## MOVING IMAGE RECORDS PRESERVED BY THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF AUSTRALIA

The National Archives of Australia holds more than 170 000 film and video records produced by or for the Australian government by a range of production agencies including Film Australia (previously, the Commonwealth Film Unit), the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), the Australian Film, Television and Radio School (AFTRS) and by various government agencies including the Department of Defence, the Tourism Commission and the Australian Government Advertising Service (AGAS).

Film and video records preserved by the National Archives' include:

- ABC productions including ABC television's first night broadcast in 1956 and television programs such as *Mr Squiggle*, *The Aunty Jack Show*, *Seven Little Australians* and *Six O'Clock Rock*;
- Commonwealth Film Unit productions including the *Australian Diary* and *Australian Colour Diary* newsreels series;
- Film Australia documentaries, including significant ethnographic films by Ian Dunlop such as *Yirrkala*;
- AFTRS student productions including films by Gillian Armstrong, Jane Campion, Chris Noonan and Phillip Noyce;
- advertising and promotional films, including television commercials produced by the AGAS to promote government programs and initiatives;
- surveillance films created by the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO);
- scenes and segments cut from feature films and television programs by the Commonwealth Film Censorship Board;
- Department of Defence films, such as *Diggers in Vietnam* and various training films;
- School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine training films; and
- films documenting the construction of the Snowy Mountains Hydro Electric Scheme.

### Types of film

The National Archives' collection includes a variety of film and video formats. The bulk of the film held by the National Archives' is 16 mm and 35 mm acetate-based black and white and colour film.

### Storage

Storing films in appropriate conditions slows the rate of their deterioration. The National Archives has three specially designed, temperature and humidity controlled storage vaults for film. Most moving image records are stored in the National Archives' repository in Sydney. Smaller quantities of

film and video records are also held in the Archives' repositories in Canberra, Melbourne and Perth.

### **Preserving film**

The National Archives has developed a preservation plan to address the long-term preservation of the collection. The plan outlines the strategies and projects being pursued to target items most at-risk and also provides for essential ongoing preservation services aimed at safeguarding the collection.

Although audiovisual materials represent only 10% of the shelf space occupied by the entire National Archives' collection, audiovisual items constitute some of the most at-risk records. Audiovisual records deteriorate rapidly when stored in less than ideal conditions. It is very difficult, and sometimes impossible, to stop or reverse this deterioration. Audiovisual records need active preservation treatments and optimal storage conditions to survive.

Technological obsolescence is also a major factor affecting the continued accessibility of films and videos. Whilst the physical items may last for a number of years in appropriate storage conditions, the equipment and technology required to play the items may have been superseded.

### **Accessibility of moving image records**

The *Archives Act 1983* provides the public with a general right of access to most records of the Australian government after 30 years. The access and disposal provisions of the Act apply to records of the Australian government regardless of their format.

The process of giving access to film and video records is more complex, time-consuming and expensive than giving access to records in other formats such as paper files and photographs. Often preservation work needs to be undertaken on the moving image records before they can be viewed by researchers.

Online access to records is the National Archives primary means of servicing researchers who wish to make direct use of the collection. The National Archives is exploring the online delivery of film and television records. We are a partner with the Australian Film Commission's web-based *australianscreen online* which will offer free access to a vast range of Australian moving image and audio material, including material from the National Archives collection.

## **Working with other organisations**

The National Archives works closely with the ABC Archives, Film Australia and the Australian Film, Television and Radio School in preserving their audiovisual records.

The National Archives collaborates with the National Film and Sound Archive, which is responsible for the preservation of audiovisual materials of non-government owned productions in Australia.

The National Archives is a member of the following organisations:

- The Southeast Asia-Pacific Audiovisual Archive Association (SEAPAVAA), which aims to promote audiovisual archiving in Southeast Asia, Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands.
- The Association of Moving Image Archivists (AMIA) which is an international organisation which aims to develop the field of moving image archiving