AIMS For a better birth...

The face of birth

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Where the Personal gets Political – An Australian documentary about pregnancy, childbirth and the power of choice

This film offers an excellent portrayal of the issues that travel to the very core of discussions about women and giving birth.

There are interviews with a variety of mothers who have given birth in Australia and in the UK, interspersed with childbirth educators, obstetricians, midwives, midwifery lecturers, childbirth activists and indigenous Aboriginal birth attendants among others.

The interviews are woven together in such a way that many of the complexities in the provision of maternity care both within Australia and in the context of the wider world are eloquently portrayed.

Some of the topics covered are:

• The political debate about where to give birth, home or hospital, comparing the current situation in Australia with that of the UK.

• The qualities women need for normal physiological birth.

• How in Australia one in ten babies born to healthy women by caesarean section will be admitted to neonatal intensive care. There are long-term health implications for those children born by caesarean section.

• one in six new mothers in Australia develop mental illness and postpartum depression and suicide is rising.

• A shocking one in ten childbearing women who die in Australia do so by their own hand.

• Traditional Aboriginal midwives Lena & Rosie, they 50 years of practice and have never had a breech delivery. They use massage on the woman's belly to help straighten the baby's position ready for labour and birth.

One of the key points made is that a 'willing woman' who wants to give birth with minimal intervention is now considered counter culture.

I highly recommend this film to anyone who is interested to hear from a wide variety of people associated

with childbirth and to learn more about the political, social and cultural context of birth with a view to raising issues for changing the Australian maternity care system. This film also has wider, more universal points to make about birth in general.

Olivia Lester

Rated PG. Running time 87 mins.