

BIFF empowers disabled debate

words: petrina berry

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THE screening of Michael **Noonan**'s controversial documentary at this year's Brisbane International Film Festival (BIFF) is a major victory for the local director.

Noonan, pictured, hopes all will be clarified with the screening of *Unlikely Travellers* which documents six intellectually **disabled** people's trip to Egypt.

The documentary sparked an ethics debate, including protests, in March when snippets were revealed at the Queensland University of Technology's PhD confirmation seminar.

Two **QUT** academics lecturers Gary MacLennan and John Hookham were suspended for six months without pay for publicly criticising the film. In a newspaper article they argued the film exploited the **disabled** and the university's ethics committee should not have sanctioned it.

The Federal Court later ordered **QUT** to reinstate their wages, and set aside October 22-24 for a review of the suspension.

Noonan said the controversy was consumed in the title of the thesis project, originally named *Laughing at the **Disabled**: Creating Comedy that Confronts, Offends and Entertains*.

Noonan's PhD project included *Unlikely Travellers* and a comedy show with the same theme.

My project shows people with disabilities are no different. They can travel, have romances, have problems and overcome them, he said.

Unlikely Travellers screens at GoMA on August 12 at 2.40pm. BIFF kicks off today.

Visit www.biff.com.au.

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