

BIRTHINGS

A HOMEBIRTH ACCESS SYDNEY QUARTERLY PUBLICATION



Homebirth After Caesarean

Plus all our regular features, birth notices, letters, birth stories,
pictures and updates on our community activities.

www.homebirthsydney.org.au

HOMEBIRTH ACCESS SYDNEY COMMITTEE* & OFFICE BEARERS

HAS Coordinator* Virginia Maddock
02 9501 0863 | info@homebirthsydney.org.au
Assistant Coordinator Naomi Homel
Treasurer* Veronica Cerbelli sales@homebirthsydney.org.au
Secretary* Nadine Fragosa nads@jonads.com.au
Memberships Coordinator* Serene Johnson
member@homebirthsydney.org.au
Website Jennifer Lorance admin@homebirthsydney.org.au

Fundraising & Events Coordinator
Holly Priddis hollyprm@hotmail.com
PLUS VACANT

Advertising Coordinator VACANT
advertising@homebirthsydney.org.au

Merchandise Coordinator Veronica Cerbelli 0451 969 152
merchandise@homebirthsydney.org.au

Birthings Editor Kirrilee Heartman
0438 582 229 | editor@homebirthsydney.org.au

Birthings Assistant Editor Virginia Maddock

Birthings Line Editors Nicola Judd, Amanda Vella and
Jacqueline Cooke

Birthings Designer Jacqui Fae jaxfae@gmail.com

Media Watch Naomi Homel

Mail Officer Naomi Homel

Distribution Coordinator Rebecca Perrin
rebeccaofleura@yahoo.com.au

General Information info@homebirthsydney.org.au

*Offices marked with an asterisk are listed as official committee members in compliance with the responsibilities of running an incorporated association under the Associations Incorporation Act 1984.

HONORARY LIFE & FOUNDING MEMBERS
Maggie Lecky-Thompson
Elaine Odgers Norling

HONORARY LIFE MEMBERS
Robyn Dempsey
Jo Hunter
Akai Khalsa

The views expressed in this magazine are those of the named contributors only and are not necessarily shared by Homebirth Access Sydney, its Committee or the Editors or Editorial Board of Birthings.

CONTRIBUTIONS, PHOTOS, CORRESPONDENCE

Please send to Kirrilee Heartman at editor@homebirthsydney.org.au
Photos and written submissions must be emailed. Prior notice to the Editor of your intention to submit work is appreciated.

DEADLINES FOR SUBMISSIONS

Autumn 2014 No. 121 | February 2014
Winter 2014 No. 122 | May 2014
Spring 2014 No. 123 | August 2014
Summer 2014 No. 124 | November 2014

BACK ISSUES Back issues of Birthings are like hen's teeth! But we will try to accommodate requests. Back issues cost \$4.00 – \$7.00 per issue. Postage is \$3.00 per single copy. A price for multiple copies can be arranged. The magazine is very valuable in that it contains many birth stories and information, plus give an insight into the homebirth movement and HAS activities.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS Please notify any change of address to HAS, PO Box 66, Broadway, NSW 2007 or by email to the Memberships Coordinator at: member@homebirthsydney.org.au

CONTRIBUTING TO BIRTHINGS

The strength of Birthings is all the thought provoking, inspiring and challenging writing from members of our community. To ensure that the magazine is balanced, responsive to our audience's interests and needs, and reflects the priorities of HAS, we have developed a set of contribution guidelines. We also work with an editorial board, selected by the HAS executive, to reflect the range of people in our community. The founding board members are Maggie Lecky-Thompson, Adrienne Abulhawa, Jo Hunter, Sarah McLean and Virginia Maddock. The role of the editorial board is outlined in the guidelines below.

CONTRIBUTION GUIDELINES

Here are some guidelines for how to write your story, and what happens once you have submitted it for our consideration.

WHAT TO SUBMIT Submissions are sought on the theme of the issue as stated on the back cover of the previous issue. Your response to the theme may be in a range of formats: poetry, opinion, artistic, personal or factual.

We also welcome birth stories from members. Your birth story is a special part of your family's journey and the story of homebirth in Sydney. It is also a great gift to share with other parents, especially those preparing for the birth of their own babies.

Other submissions apart from those outlined above are also very welcome, though we may not always be able to publish them, as we often receive more submissions than we have space to print. We will get back to you as soon as possible with a response and discuss the possibilities. If you have an idea for a submission that you would like to discuss before writing fully, please feel free to send us an email with an outline. We love a good idea!

STYLE Your submission should be written in your own style. You do not need to be a professional writer or have a poetic style to give a moving and interesting account of your own experience.

Your submitted writing should be all your own work – you must not borrow or copy words written by someone else, unless they are attributed quotes of a reasonable length.

LENGTH Please write your story in the amount of words you think you need. As a guideline, most birth stories work best when they are under 1200 words. Submissions on the theme should be under 1800 words.

We may edit for length and style and so may cut your story to ensure it is appropriate for use in BIRTHINGS.

EDITING Your story will be checked by our team of editors. The intention is to retain your voice, while ensuring that grammar, spelling and other style issues are correct and of a high quality. Your story may also be cut for length (see above).

Your story may not defame any person. If the editorial team is concerned that an issue of defamation may exist, we may decline to publish your work or require the defamatory material to be removed prior to publication.

If any major editing is recommended by our editors, we will contact you for permission and return a copy of the edited material for your approval. If our standard editing procedure is applied, we will not send it for your approval.

PICTURES We encourage you to submit some high-resolution digital images with your story, especially with birth stories. We will include as many as we can to illustrate your story.

TERMS OF USE Please note that by submitting your story to Birthings you warrant that the content is not confidential and that you have the right to offer it for publication. You also agree that you grant Birthings the copyright permission for the purposes of publication in this magazine and on the Homebirth Access Sydney website.

EDITORIAL BOARD All stories will be put before the editorial board before publication. The board's duties include:

- Reviewing copy to ensure it reflects the priorities of HAS and the interests and needs of its members and the community,
- Supporting the editors to make editorial decisions,
- Providing a guide for the future direction of the magazine.

PROCEDURES Please provide your story as a Microsoft Word or equivalent document attached to an email and sent to Kirrilee Heartman at: editor@homebirthsydney.org.au

You will be notified immediately of receipt and contacted before publication. There is often more material than we can publish submitted for each issue of Birthings. If your story cannot be published due to space limitations we will contact you. In some cases we will ask your permission to hold a story over for a future issue.

Thank you so much for considering a contribution to Birthings. Your experiences and insights are what makes the magazine so rich and interesting, and such a valuable resource for the homebirth community.

BIRTHINGS

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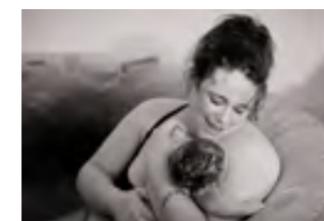


Photo of Britt and newborn Aria. By Joelle Skinner of Artography.

BACK COVER



Photo of Carla Stern. By Joshua Stern. (This photo was not a planned homebirth)

Editorial

Welcome to the final edition of Birthings for 2013! The theme for this issue is Homebirth After Caesarean: decided after a little Facebook poll on the HAS page regarding themes for the magazine. I have not had a caesarean myself, though I have supported a few close friends through the experience. I have seen the conflict some women face: wanting so desperately to be present and close to their babies at birth, but facing a sometimes complicated physical recovery that prevents this. Or deep feelings of grief or loss regarding the birth experience that can cloud the early days.

Nobody argues against the value of caesareans when needed, but there is increasing concern over the rate of caesareans in our public and private hospitals, sometimes well over the 10-15% recommended by the WHO (World Health Organisation). Currently in

Australia, it is reported that 1 in 3 women gives birth by caesarean (statistics supplied by mybirth.com.au). Success rates for VBACs (vaginal birth after caesarean) in 2009 were 7.4% in private hospitals and 13.4% in public hospitals (NSW Mothers and Babies Report 2009), despite it being acknowledged that 70-80% of women are candidates for VBACs, and that around this percentage of women desire a VBAC.

Why is there such a discrepancy between the desire and capability for a VBAC and the actual success rates? In all of the reading on this topic I have done, care-giver attitudes and practices seem to be the largest determinant: fear of litigation for an attempted VBAC, and old fashioned beliefs that 'once a caesarean, always a caesarean'. Then there are practices such as strict time limits on a labouring woman attempting a VBAC, requirements for continuous monitoring that render a woman immobile in some cases, and inductions and epidurals, shown to dramatically increase the likelihood of a repeat caesarean.

There don't seem to be any statistics on the success rates for HBACs, but based on the articles and stories included in this issue, I would guess that it is much higher. The (slightly) increased risk of uterine rupture, so much used as the reason against attempting a VBAC, is not ignored in Homebirth but kept in perspective. The attitude of an independent midwife is one that expresses confidence in a woman's ability to birth, as well as the tendency to intelligently respond, rather than

pre-emptively react, to potential issues.

I am so pleased to be including in this issue an article by Rachel Reed, an Australian homebirth midwife, who gives her view on VBAC and HBAC. It is very valuable to have a local, and homebirth-inclusive perspective from a birth professional. There is an amazing breadth of experiences, challenges and emotions contained in the HBAC articles and stories written by women in our Sydney community. In reading the articles and birth stories that have been submitted for this issue, I have been struck by the determination and strength that seems to be the hallmark of anyone attempting a VBAC, let alone a HBAC.

It seems to me that just as I turned to homebirth, partly to escape the policies and attitudes of the hospital system, so too are women who choose a HBAC – women who often have fiercer restrictions



and conditions placed on their upcoming births.

The theme for our Autumn 2014 issue will be Planned Homebirth > Hospital Transfer. I am deeply passionate about the importance of acknowledging all aspects of birth and motherhood. This magazine is a record and a celebration of the joys of birth as it happens at home, but just as relevant and important are the births that do not go to plan. Women who plan a homebirth but who end up birthing in hospital (for whatever reason) remain a part of this community, and are invited to submit their birth stories, reflections, and thoughts about their experiences. The deadline for submissions is 1st February, 2014. Please send all submissions or ideas, or questions to me at editor@homebirthsydney.org.au. Birthings is a community magazine, and I strongly encourage you all to send in a letter. My purpose is to provide a magazine that covers the topics which are most relevant to the community – so please let me know what they are! I also welcome feedback or responses regarding articles we have published. If you would like to donate a small prize for our letter page (and receive some exposure for your business or service) please contact me as above.

I must say a big thank you to all of you out there who have so kindly asked after or sent wishes for Robin's health, after I mentioned in the last issue that he had been in hospital with breathing difficulties. A couple of months ago he finally began walking (at

eighteen months old), and his graduation to this next developmental step has coincided with the dissipation of his chest issues, and a renewed sense of strength and vitality. After a severe case of whooping cough as an infant and the many repercussions from that illness, his first steps were as significant to me as man walking on the moon!

And as children grow and seasons change, so too does this change come to our HAS team. HAS is made up entirely of volunteers, who feel passionately about homebirth and the value of the stories, experiences and resources contained in this magazine. We give our deep thanks and best wishes to Lisa and Laurel, and a warm welcome is extended to Kiera, and Jacqueline (who is joining the editing team), and also to Rebecca, who has handled the postage of Birthings for a couple of issues now.

I've been editor for a full year now but don't think I could pull this magazine together without the support of the HAS team and especially Virginia's experience and confidence. I've loved getting to know such an inspiring bunch of women and urge you to consider getting involved at some stage. I wish everyone a happy and relaxing holiday season and look forward to more adventures in birthing next year.

KIRRILEE HEARTMAN

Birthings Editor WANTED

Birthings is published four times a year, and we are seeking a new volunteer to take on the highly rewarding role of Editor. The role involves about 3 weeks of involvement for each issue and includes the following:

- Initiating themes and content, receiving all other content
- Sending content to sub editors and editorial board, receiving content back
- Writing editorial
- Ensuring info in the magazine is current
- Designing the 'flatplan' - how the magazine is laid out
- Coordinating content, ads, photos and artwork to be sent to designer
- Liaising with designer and making final changes to the proof
- Liaising with printer and distribution co-ordinator.

Necessary skills include: excellent written skills, attention to detail, creative vision and ability to work to a deadline.

If you are interested please contact Kirrilee: editor@homebirthsydney.org.au. The position will begin with the Winter 2014 issue (May 2014), with handover and support throughout this issue.

Letters to the Editor

I very much enjoyed the last edition, Life After Homebirth. I thought I would add my two cents for your HBAC edition, as I am now in the afterglow of the homebirth I have dreamed of for nearly five years, since the first of my two caesareans. Life after homebirth is wonderful. My birth has healed me in so many ways. No longer do I feel like less of a woman. No longer do I feel my body is broken. No longer do other people's birth stories make me cry, while I wonder if I will ever have that experience.

What hasn't healed, and never will fully heal, is the grief I feel when I think of the ungentle way my first two babes entered the world. How my baby must have looked for me when I was separated from her for two hours after her birth. The look on my second baby's face when she was handed to me after being suctioned - she looked devastated. I hurt that I missed out on a peaceful birth too - but I am an adult, I can deal with my own hurt, accept it and move on. I can't accept the birth trauma of my babies. Having experienced how it should have been for us brought those feelings back for me.

I wondered how I would feel when I had a natural birth - would I bond with this baby more than my other two? The answer is no.

With my first two, I was shellshocked and grieving when they were newborns. I felt fiercely protective of them, but there was no sudden rush of love. I kept waiting for it, then one day I just realised that I was loving my babies all along, from before they were born. It was the same with my homeborn babe. She was loved all along, but there were no other feelings getting in the way, no self doubt and second guessing. In the peaceful days and weeks after her birth, I felt even closer to my other daughters, drawing them into the lovely post-birth bubble that was denied them.

Erin Quinn

Hi Kirrilee (and Jacqui).

Well done on another fantastic edition of Birthings magazine ('Life After Homebirth'). The cover was just gorgeous. As usual the whole mag was chock full of great articles and birth stories. Life after homebirth is a theme which we all can, or will, identify. Kirrilee I was particularly touched by your story of PND. Thanks for your courage in sharing your journey.

I was wondering if you could follow up this 'Homebirth After Caesarean' edition with the next (or following) being on the theme of 'Planned Homebirth > Hospital Transfer'. I know we have always welcomed these stories as a part of Birthings magazine, but to my knowledge this topic has not yet been specifically covered as a theme. Some of these transfer women may feel that they don't belong in either the homebirth community or the hospital birthing community, and I think they need a space to specifically tell their stories. They need to know that despite where they ended up birthing, they are still very much a part of our cohesive community, as it is very much about the planned journey, not the final destination. Let's honour their journeys and give them a voice by putting the spotlight on their courageous stories!

Virginia Maddock

Advertising Coordinator NEEDED ASAP

HAS is in DESPERATE need of a new Advertising Coordinator.

This involves managing our print and web advertising sales and maintaining our current advertiser relationships.

The position can be done from home on the phone and computer and is a fulfilling opportunity to increase homebirth awareness and raise money for our cause. For more information on this highly rewarding volunteer position,

Please Email Laural: advertising@homebirthsydney.org.au.

Free membership and HAS Tshirt to the successful applicant. (Please no time wasters!)

To encourage readers to write in, we now have a prize each issue for the best letter.

**This issue, our prize goes to Erin Quinn!
Erin has won a HAS Retro basketball style T-shirt and her choice of Homebirth children's book.**

Erin we will be in touch soon.

Send your letters to: editor@homebirthsydney.org.au



HAS 'Events & Fundraising Coordinator' WANTED

We require someone who is motivated to organise events to raise public profile of homebirth and fundraise for HAS such as film screenings, HAS presence at expos, markets etc.

It would be a great opportunity for a student studying events management to gain some valuable practice and further the cause for homebirth, or just someone who is willing and keen to have a go.

The role can be shared amongst two.

Successful applicant/s will get free HAS membership and Birthings Subscription.

Please email: info@homebirthsydney.org.au.

Birth Announcements

Send your birth announcements with a photograph to editor@homebirthsydney.org.au

Workshops with

Jane Hardwicke Collings Midwife, Author of Ten Moons - the Inner Journey of Pregnancy

Exploring, Honouring, Celebrating & Healing Our Sacred Feminine Path



Terry, Lucy and older sister Kiara are thrilled to announce the arrival earthside of Mylaya Akasha Rose Ellsmore. She was born at home in the water on Tuesday 21st May at 10.02am after a fast, intense labour. She weighed 3.43 kg and was 51cm long. A special thank-you to our fantastic midwives Robyn and Jane for all their support and guidance. It was an amazing family experience which we will treasure always.

Marlea, Ben and big sister Mya, are delighted to announce the arrival of Hudson Foster Gray, our precious baby boy. Hudson was born peacefully at home in the water, still cozy inside his caul, on 23rd May 2012 at 3:08am. He weighed in at 9lbs 8 oz (4.32kg) and was 53 cm long. Our family was lovingly supported by midwife Rachele Meredith, and doulas Kym and Sarah. Welcome to our family, Hudson. We are so happy you chose us to be your parents!

Verena and Bobby are excited to welcome their second son Lukas Singh Cheema into this wonderful world. He was born on Wednesday the 19th of June 2013 at 12.40pm through a natural home-lotus birth in water at 38 ½ weeks (49 cm and 2.9 kg). We are very thankful for this empowering birth experience and overjoyed to have Lukas, a very amazing, calm, alert and healthy child, in our lives.

Jack, Louise and their son Flynn welcomed Bonnie Lou Walton into their family on 14/08/2013 at 3.44pm. She was born into water, weighed 3.98kgs, was 51cm long and was safe and healthy. We thank our two lovely midwives, Melanie and Emma, and Bonnie's 2 aunties, Jess and Mel, who all helped greatly with the birth and we praise God, her Creator (and sometimes beg for divine help!), for this sweet, observant, sensitive, double-chinned bundle of a miracle He's given us to raise!



Jess, Pete & big sister Frankie are delighted to announce the arrival of Arlo Jack Baird born at home into water, arriving on his due date the 23rd of August 2013 @ 0434hours. 3820gm, 54 cm long. Another amazing & empowering birth at home. Thankyou to our wonderful Midwife Rachele Meredith.

Jacqueline, Alex and Sebastian are delighted to welcome Adalita Louise Cooke, a fantastic HBAC on 25 August 2013, 4.00kg and 55cm. Pregnancy and birth went beautifully and smoothly thanks to our fantastic midwife Rachele Meredith and friends Sarah and Maggie. We had the birth we wanted - safely and lovingly in our home.

Priscilla and Patrick are thrilled to announce the arrival of our beautiful third bubba, Jochlan Robert Gregson Bradshaw. After an epic delivery he was born at home in water on Fathers Day, 1st September 2013. Weighing an impressive 4.45kg and 57cm long! Welcomed into love by big brothers Ashton and Dylan.

Emilie Ritea, Tom Bellenger and their daughter Chloé were delighted to welcome Charles, born in Randwick on Sunday 29th Sept at 12:30pm, with the lovely and friendly guidance of their midwife Sheryl.

2014 workshops

Pregnancy – The Inner Journey Workshop
Wednesday 5th February – Friday 7th February 2014
Venue: Southern Highlands, NSW
9:30am – 5pm daily

Moonsong Workshop
Saturday February 8th – Sunday February 9th 2014
Venue: Southern Highlands, NSW, 2576
9:30am – 5pm daily

Pregnancy – The Inner Journey Workshop
Wednesday May 14th - Friday May 16th 2014
Venue: Melbourne TBA
9:30am – 5pm daily

Moonsong Workshop
Saturday May 17th – Sunday May 18th 2014
Venue: Melbourne TBA
9:30am – 5pm daily

Pregnancy – The Inner Journey Workshop
Wednesday October 1st – Friday October 3rd 2014
Venue: Southern Highlands, NSW
9:30am – 5pm daily

Moonsong Workshop
Saturday October 4th – Sunday October 5th 2014
Venue: Southern Highlands, NSW
9:30am – 5pm daily

Women's Vision Quest
November 4th – 10th 2014
TBA

Connecting With The Shamanic Dimensions of Pregnancy
One day workshop throughout the year in various places!
930-5

Moonsong

is a two day workshop for women from menarche onward, sitting together in a circle, reconnecting with feminine knowledge and remembering the wisdom of the cycles. Using the circle and the ever repeating cycle of menstruation, moon phases, life and Earth seasons, participants reconnect to a wisdom and inner knowing that forms the basis of the experience of being female. Practical information and creative and transformational processes over the weekend reconnect us to our inner wisdom and the magic that is the essence of female-ness - the blood mysteries, the spiritual practice of menstruation, the rites of passage of the menarche, childbirth, and menopause. Each woman receives a copy of Herstory, Thirteen Moons and Spinning Wheels.

Connecting With The Shamanic Dimensions of Pregnancy

One day workshop.

One day workshop for women - pregnant, planning to be or Birth Workers. Pregnancy is a portal into the sacred, spiritual and shamanic dimensions of womanhood. Using shamanic processes and ritual we will access information, insights, life lessons and healing. We will address and let go of fears, update our belief systems, connect with our baby inside, soulbaby or Inner Goddess and establish our Birth Temple in preparation for our birth.

Contact me janecollings@bigpond.com if you would like to receive my seasonal newsletter.

To book for a workshop or for further information email: bookings@moonsong.com.au



Pregnancy – The Inner Journey

is a three day workshop for women - pregnant, planning to be pregnant, midwives and doulas. Using ritual and art to compliment information sharing we delve into understanding our fears and why we think and act the way we do. We explore the inner journey of pregnancy and come to know ourselves more fully through this process, preparing for birth and mothering from our most in-tune and empowered centre. We look deeply at the sexuality and spirituality of pregnancy, birth and mothering, learning meditation, tools for labour and beautiful rituals to perform to honour pregnancy, birth and mothering. We invoke the ancient Birth Goddesses as our foremothers did, for their guidance, nurturance, protection and support. We do what women have been doing together longer than we haven't – sit together in support of each other sharing our innate wisdom focussing on the beauty and strength of Mother. Each woman receives a copy of Ten Moons.

Committee Member Profile

Naomi Homel:
Media Watch & Mail Officer

When did you join HAS?

My midwife gifted me my first HAS membership as part of her 'birth package'. My first copy of Birthings arrived just before my due date. The front cover was a beautiful picture of a mother feeding her newborn in bed, coincidentally the photo had been taken by my midwife. I loved reading the birth stories as I prepared to homebirth myself.

Who is in your family?

My husband Richard and I have two little boys, Lewis who is 4 and Rowan who is 2. My husband has an older daughter Charlie who is 30, lives in London and is very much a part of our family.

What did you do before children?

Before children I was a TV producer. I have a degree in screen production and I began my career making independent documentaries (most of which never saw the light of day). I worked in reality TV on Big Brother and 'I'm a celebrity get me out of here'. I moved to London in my early twenties and made a range of factual TV programmes. I have filmed in the trenches of WW1, interviewed Jamie Oliver and been moved to tears by the stories of war veterans.

Since children?

Since having children I am a stay at home mum: one of the most challenging and satisfying jobs I have ever had. I have been inspired by my positive birth experiences to work (mostly as a volunteer) as a maternity consumer advocate. I am on the consumer advisory committee for the ACM, I have spent most of 2013 on a working party for the ACM drafting a position statement on how midwives support women seeking care outside of professional advice. I am a consumer reviewer for the ACM's Midwifery Practise Reviews. I am currently advocating from NSW to continue to develop workable clinical privileging agreements with Eligible midwives so that women can have access to private midwifery care if they choose, or need, to birth in a hospital. I have also just begun teaching teaching swimming lessons a few days a week, this merges my life long love of swimming and water with a practical and child friendly part time job.

Why Homebirth?

My first son Lewis was born underwater in a birth centre. His birth was and still is, the best moment of my life. I had wonderful support from a caseload midwife and I felt safe, in control and free to birth the way I wanted. The decision to homebirth my second son came very naturally to me. I knew that birth was a normal, wonderful part of life and I knew that my son could be born in our family home and that his birth would be extraordinary and yet an ordinary part of life as well.



Acupuncture
Chinese Herbal Medicine
Gabriele Rummel
Keely Edwards
Lawson
Ph: 4759 3462
www.lawsonacupunctureclinic.com

Membership

For new memberships or renewals
please go to
www.homebirthsydney.org.au
and click on 'memberships'.

New and Renewed Members

HAS would like to thank the following
new and renewed Members for their
support:

Megan Wallace
Sarah Bos
Lyn Tuckett
Alex Clarke
Kate McLeod
Vicaji Anderson
Rose de Belin
Zena du Vernet
Sonja MacGregor
Melanie Williams
Lucy Penhallow
Clare Colman
Therese Roche
Holly High
Beki Grice
Connie McGilchrist
Lauren Horton
Nicole Gifford
Natalia Baechtold
Krissy Huntington
Renee Rapson
Claire Green
Nicole Boundy
Beth Howison-Ryan
Rebecca Price
Brydie Pereda
UTS, Sydney
Sara Daniels
Elaine Burns
Rachele Meredith
Sarah Young
Doris Limnos

Coordinator's Report

Our committee is changing again for a few of our most important positions, each responsible for bringing in much needed funds to keep HAS running: the Memberships Coordinator position, the Advertising Coordinator position and one half of the Events & Fundraising Coordinator team.

So it is with great sadness that we farewell from the Memberships role, Lisa Devenney, and we wish her every success in her future endeavours. Lisa will be concentrating on growing her organic childrens' wear business Eco Divine. If you are after a gorgeous gift for your little ones or for friends', then look no further than Eco Divine! After a false start with someone who couldn't commit, we are very pleased to welcome our new Memberships Coordinator, Serene Johnson. We thank Serene so much for volunteering her valuable time and contributing to the organisation. If you need to find out your membership status or you are having trouble renewing on the website, please contact Serene: membership@homebirthsydney.org.au.

Speaking of false starts... our Advertising Coordinator's position is again in desperate need of a volunteer as Laurel Cook needs more time with her family as she has her hands full with her newest bubba Olive and will be home schooling her little boy Henry in the new year. Due to someone new being trained, then quitting past our deadline date with unfinished business, this issue is down a few advertisers and is very late to print. We wish to sincerely apologise to all of our advertisers for any inconvenience caused by this disruption to our schedule, and we thank Laurel for stepping back in from a very brief retirement to pick up the pieces as best she could, and save the magazine. If you would like to find out more about this fulfilling role, please email the

lovely Laurel ASAP so that she can again retire and so we are in a better position next issue: advertising@homebirthsydney.org.au. (Please no time wasters!)

We are also sad to see Kelly Lanfranca go who was sharing the Events & Fundraising Coordinator position with Holly Priddis, as she returns to fulltime work. We would really love to run some more events next year, such as movie nights or market stalls, especially as we need to raise some extra money to pay for a big website revamp we have planned - we really need some more user friendly layout and some more colourful design, utilising the gorgeous homebirth pictures from our membership that we are so lucky to see. If this is your forte, please contact us for a quote: admin@homebirthsydney.org.au.

Speaking of events, the main activity that HAS has been involved with in the last quarter was being a Gold Sponsor for the Trust Birth conference and having a merchandise table there. More on that on the 'HAS In The Community' page on page XX. The next conference we are exhibiting at is the Homebirth Australia conference in Brisbane on March 22nd and 23rd. There will be at least 4 of us from the committee driving or flying up for that to participate and help out on the stall - Amantha McGuinness, Nadine Fragosa, Naomi Homel and myself. I have been at every one since the 2006 conference in Geelong (with the exception of the Echuca one in 2010) and I can highly recommend attending these conferences for the excellent birth information and the friendships made with other homebirthers from many areas around Australia. I hope you can join us. Please come and say Hi to us on the stall if you are going.

One thing we did not end up doing this year was holding our annual picnic. In earlier years we used to hold this towards the beginning of the year along with our AGM



but as numbers were often struggling, we decided to shift it to the end of October to coincide with Homebirth Awareness Week. This year I must admit, time got away from us in organising it properly so we decided that we were going to join up with the very active Blue Mountains Homebirth Group and coincide our annual picnic with theirs. However we both had to cancel due to the massive bushfires that had enveloped the mountains that week, which made the whole concept impossible and potentially dangerous. So with the year fast getting away from us, it sadly looks like we won't be having one this year. But rest assured we will do our best to

VIRGINIA MADDOCK



HBAC:

The Difference For Me

My first daughter's birth was a scheduled caesarean section. I was told by my obstetrician that the less than 2cm distance between my cervix and the

baby's placenta was not safe for a vaginal delivery. Being a first-time mum, I took his advice and we booked the caesarean. The operation went smoothly. Both my baby and I came out of it healthy. It didn't affect our bond. It didn't affect our breastfeeding relationship (which lasted for almost four years). The minor (though unpleasant) complications I experienced in the first few days were quickly resolved and I had no ongoing issues or pain. I have no trauma from her birth.

But I always felt a nagging doubt on two fronts. One, that the operation was really not necessary, given I'd had such a healthy pregnancy and the baby appeared to be engaged for vaginal birth. Two, that a vaginal birth would surely be much better, immediately and thereafter.

Thanks to my daughter's caesarean birth, I began to research alternatives. I developed more trust in my body and nature through a more gentle approach to breastfeeding and parenting than that which I had envisaged pre-parenthood. When I planned to conceive my second daughter, the extra restrictions and less-than-ideal statistics on hospital VBAC had me sceptical. This time, I wasn't taking advice unquestioningly.

After conceiving, we met with two independent midwives, as well as our obstetrician. By allowing my partner to assess the two options side-by-side, it was clear to him that my preference for a home birth was the better option for us.

Again, I had an uncomplicated, healthy pregnancy. This time though, we put a lot of effort into preparing ourselves for a truly natural birth, emotionally and physically. Our midwives were a great support but, ultimately, we made all of our own decisions. I was empowered. Our whole family was involved.

There are no words to describe how we all felt after our second daughter and sister was born. The emotional high was unbelievable. I wanted to shout about her birth and my experience of labour from the rooftops for weeks. My partner and our first daughter bonded with our new baby immediately

and still tell stories about her birth. There was nothing clinical about this birth at all; it was pure, raw, spiritual, life-affirming.

It made me look back on our first experience very differently:

CAESAREAN:

- So nervous before the operation – delayed; cold in the theatre, all skin-to-skin plans shelved.
- Separated immediately afterwards – me by myself in recovery, my partner and daughter on their own with no support in another room.
- Our first night as a new family – we all slept in different locations (me in my hospital bed, our daughter in the nursery, partner at home).
- Our first few days – conflicting advice from midwives, not-always gentle physical treatment of both me as a new breastfeeding mum and baby (unnecessary physical expressing, needles, et cetera).
- No trouble bonding with my baby, but a lot of problems learning to work together



as parents and a lot of anxiousness about a second birth/child.

HOME BIRTH:

- Completely prepared and in control before and as labour began
- support arrived as soon as it was requested and was constant throughout the pregnancy, birth and antenatal periods.
- Whole family involved in birth, with things to do during and afterwards.
- Support and focus was on me
- I felt loved and encouraged.
- First night together as a family of four, all in the same room.
- Our first few days – we were all together, just getting on with life and getting to know our new baby. Blissfully normal.

NOW:

- With a surprise pregnancy when our second daughter was 16 months old, both my partner and daughter embraced the news with enthusiasm (they talk about the upcoming birth with the ease of pros!).
- While I'm a bit concerned about juggling an even busier family life, I'm very excited about the opportunity to give birth again! I can't wait to meet my newest daughter with a home birth.
- I am so very thankful for both of my birthing experiences, because undoubtedly without the experience of a caesarean birth I would never have been inspired to find such a wonderful way of giving birth; at home.

Jennifer Lorange is a proud parent to almost three beautiful daughters with partner, Anthony. In her formal working life she is a sustainability consultant to multi-national companies. She uses some of her so-called "spare time" to help out as website administrator for HAS.

VBAC: Making A Mountain Out Of A Molehill

VBAC (vaginal birth after caesarean) is big. A google search for 'vbac' results in 'about 1,390,000' results. Reviews, guidelines, policies and statements are being produced by every organisation with an interest in birth. Support groups and networks are growing. I am not going to add to this wealth of information. Others are doing a fantastic job and I will provide some links at the bottom of this article which is really aimed at putting VBAC into perspective risk-wise, and discussing how we can best support women planning a vaginal birth after caesarean. I haven't personally experienced the VBAC journey and would welcome some input from mothers who have via comments, suggestions and links. This is written from my perspective as a midwife...

With a C-section rate of around 1 in 3 (Australia) a significant proportion of women approach their subsequent birth with a scarred uterus. Of those women, 83% will have another caesarean. I can't find the stats in regards to how many of these repeat C-sections are planned vs emergency. But, considering the 50-90% 'success' rate for VBACs, I am assuming that most repeat C-sections are planned. I wonder if more women would choose to experience a vaginal birth if they had adequate information and support from care providers who believed in them? Guidelines suggest that women should be counselled about the risks of VBAC, and they should have additional monitoring and intervention during labour. The big concern is uterine rupture, and this is what I am going to focus on. (By the way – unless I provide a reference/link you can assume I am getting my numbers from the NIH Consensus Statement (US) or Having a Baby in Queensland (Aus). Both of these resources are based on current research evidence. So, if you need the original research sources check out their reference lists.)

What happens during a uterine rupture?

Considering this is the risk associated with VBAC, it is worth briefly describing what is involved. Uterine rupture can happen at any birth, even when no scar is present (particularly if syntocinon is used). There are two types of uterine rupture associated with VBAC (Pairman et al. 2010):

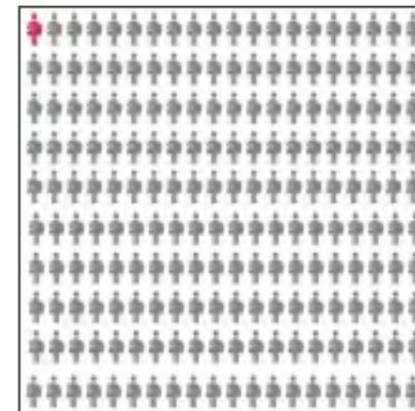
1. Catastrophic (symptomatic) – the old scar separates along its length, the amniotic sac ruptures and the baby is pushed into the abdominal cavity. This results in significant bleeding, shock, and the baby is in grave danger.

2. Asymptomatic – the scar separates partway along its length, the amniotic sac stays intact and the baby remains in the uterus. Bleeding and shock is minimal and the baby usually survives. This is the most common type. (A link to a youtube clip of what happens during a catastrophic uterine rupture: `<iframe width="640" height="360" src="//www.youtube.com/embed/DchAOgcXV2A?feature=player_embedded" frameborder="0" allowfullscreen></iframe>`).

For more information about uterine rupture (including symptoms) check out this article on BellyBelly: <http://www.bellybelly.com.au/birth/uterine-rupture>. You can read one woman's personal experience of uterine rupture here: <http://www.specialscars.org/tag/rupture/>.

Risk by numbers

Risk is a difficult concept. You can have odds of 1 in a million, but if you are the 1 it is 100% for you. It's also impossible to eliminate all risk from life (or birth) and every option has risks attached. All women can do is choose the risk that feels right for them – there is no risk-free choice. There are many ways of presenting risk and some ways may mean more than others for individuals. For example, if we look at the overall risk of uterine rupture for a woman who has had 1 previous C-section. By overall, I mean without adding or subtracting factors which increase or decrease an individual's risk (eg. syntocinon during labour; transverse scar). The risk can be presented like this:



- 50 out of 10,000 will rupture
- 9,950 out of 10,000 will not rupture
- 1 in 200 will rupture
- 199 out of 200 will not rupture
- 0.5% will rupture
- 99.5% will not rupture

Which of these versions would help you conceptualise risk? I know when I look at the picture versions of risk I assume I'm the 'red person'. Personally I like the 99.5% intact uterus odds.

As stated above these figures are the taken from the NIH Consensus Statement (US) or Having a Baby in Queensland (Aus). A more recent UK study (Fitzpatrick et al. 2012) found an even lower overall risk of rupture – 0.2%. The risk of rupture may be even lower in labours that are not induced or augmented (the stats above are a mixture of all labours). An Australian study (Dekker et al. 2010) found that the risk of uterine rupture during VBAC was 0.15% in spontaneous labour,

1.91% in augmented labour and 0.88% in labour induced using prostin and oxytocin. Fitzpatrick et al. (2012) also found an increase in rupture with induction and augmentation. In contrast a US study (Ouzouian et al. 2011) found no difference in rupture rates between spontaneous and induced labours – but found a significantly greater vaginal birth rate following spontaneous labour. Another study (Harper et al. 2011) found an increased chance of rupture during induction when the woman has an 'unfavourable' cervix. There are also other risks associated with induction which need to be considered before heading down that pathway. For women who have had multiple C-sections: Landon et al. (2006) suggest the risk of rupture rises to 0.9%. Fitzpatrick et al. (2012) also found a slight increase in risk for women who had had 2 or more previous C-sections. However Cahill et al. (2010) found that:

The story looks a little different again when you look at the mortality and morbidity caused by uterine rupture. Guise et al (2004) conducted a systematic review of research relating to VBAC and uterine rupture. They found that uterine rupture resulted in: 0 maternal deaths; 5% perinatal deaths (baby); and 13% hysterectomy. They conclude that: 'Although the literature on uterine rupture is imprecise and inconsistent, existing studies indicate that 370 (213 to 1370) elective caesarean deliveries would need to be performed to prevent one symptomatic uterine rupture.'

So, out of the small number of women who experience uterine rupture, an even smaller proportion will lose their baby or uterus because of it. When the uterus ruptures 94% of babies survive.

VBAC vs planned C-section: Uterine rupture

Most resources and guidelines compare the risk of a VBAC with the risks of a repeat C-section. This can be a brain-twister because of the multiple and complex risks associated with C-section. Childbirth Connection cover them well, so I won't. Having a Baby in Queensland directly compares VBAC with planned repeat C-section for a number of complications. I'm trying to stick to the risk of uterine rupture (the 'big' one). So, planned C-section wins with a 2:10,000 uterine rupture rate compared to 50:10,000 for a VBAC. That's if you are happy to take all the (more frequently occurring) risks associated with C-section in exchange.

Uterine rupture vs Other potential birth emergencies

A Woman's Guide to VBAC: Navigating the NIH Consensus Recommendations compares uterine rupture with other potential complications. You are more likely to experience a placental abruption, a cord prolapse or a shoulder dystocia (not associated with previous C-section) during your VBAC than a uterine rupture. Your baby is also more likely to die from the placental abruption or cord prolapse than from a uterine rupture.



Anecdotes

Anecdotes hold as much power as numbers. I can guarantee that I will get a comment telling me about a poor outcome associated with a VBAC. They do happen (see the stats above). Unfortunately when care providers have been involved in a traumatic situation, it can be hard not to let that experience colour their perspective and approach. The memory of one uterine rupture will be stronger than all of the VBACs they have seen. The only uterine rupture I have personally been involved with was an induction of labour – not a VBAC. So, I emotionally associate uterine rupture with induction rather than VBAC.

Obstetricians in particular have to deal with the fall out of major complications because this is their area of expertise. They also miss out on seeing physiological births which end well because this is the realm of the midwife (I know this is different in the US/private sector). This can lead to fear-based counselling and practice, and a general fear of normal birth. Interesting that a poor outcome associated with a C-section does not seem to elicit quite the same response – ie. Fear of C-section.

When parents find themselves the I in how ever many, it is even more devastating. Their stories are powerful and need to be heard. However, it can be difficult for other parents to contextualise the story without also hearing stories with good outcomes.



The real risks of VBAC (according to me)

I am a bit confused about why such a huge deal is made about the risk of uterine rupture during VBAC. Why are these women subjected to serious (and often biased) discussions with fearful practitioners about the dangers of attempting birth? Why are they categorised as 'high risk', limiting their care options and imposing additional monitoring and intervention during their labour? If we agree that this is the right approach, then we also need to treat all women like this because the risk of placental abruption or a cord prolapse is greater than the risk of a uterine rupture during a VBAC.

To be honest, as a midwife uterine rupture is the least of my worries when caring for a woman having a VBAC. I actually think the mountain that has been built out of the risk-molehill requires more energy and attention. These women do need special treatment, but not in the form of disempowering fear-based counselling or practice. They have often had a previous traumatic birth experience and are dealing with fear from family, friends, and the medical system, in addition to their own worries.

They have been labelled 'high risk' and are constantly reminded of the potential disaster waiting to occur. They also risk 'failing' if they encounter any complications or end up having a repeat C-section. This impacts on their ability to trust their body, follow their intuition and allow the physiology of birth to unfold. Often these women need more nurturing, reassurance and support from those involved in their birth.

Suggestions

During pregnancy

It is important to not only help women to prepare but also their partners and/or other close family members who may be at the birth. Often the partner was present at the previous birth, which may have been traumatic to witness. For a partner their priority is the safety of the woman they love – not a particular birth experience. Winning them over may be difficult. In some cases the decision the mother makes may be that the partner should not be present. OK – some suggestions:

- Find out the details of her previous birth experience. If she needs debriefing help her do so, or refer to someone who can. Knowing about her previous experience and her fears can help you know what she needs during her labour.
- Offer to discuss 'risk' and present the statistics in a number of ways. Find out what they (mother and partner) find most useful and empowering. I could say 'don't mention risk' but to be honest unless she is living in a cave she will already be aware that VBAC is 'risky' and will need to explore this.

- Make sure she is aware that she has a 50-90% chance of having a vaginal birth – greater than a first time mother. She can increase this chance by choosing supportive care providers (and setting) and not having her labour induced or augmented.
- Talk about the possibility of the pregnancy going beyond the prescribed 'due date'. This is often a feature of VBAC pregnancy. Some hospitals or midwives consider this to be a risk factor because the chance of a repeat C-section is about 9% greater (Coassolo et al. 2005). However, the risk of uterine rupture is no greater.
- Make sure she knows that having a C-section after labour has started holds more health benefits than a planned C-section. Her baby will have had a chance to initiate labour and make the physiological changes needed for life outside the uterus. They will be less likely to suffer respiratory distress and end up in special care. In addition, both mother and baby will have the important cocktail of hormones that assist with bonding. Even if she chooses a repeat C-section she can insist on going into labour first.
- Talk to her and her partner about what actually happens if the uterus ruptures. They may be imagining all kinds of horrific scenes such as the baby bursting out of an exploding abdomen.
- If she is worried about 'failure' reassure her that she doesn't need to tell anyone she is planning a VBAC. She can say she's not sure and will decide in labour. Some mothers planning a homebirth after C-section book into the hospital and pretend they are planning a hospital birth. Then, if they transfer in they don't have to deal with the 'failed home VBAC' situation. She needs to do whatever takes the pressure off, even if that's lying.
- If she is planning to birth in hospital she needs to know what the hospital policies are and decide what she will or won't go along with. This means talking about the risks of the usual interventions such as CTG monitoring. A very clear birth statement can help the staff to support her wishes.
- Encourage her to talk to other women about their experiences of VBAC, read positive birth stories and watch beautiful VBAC birth movies.
- Do not use disempowering language such as a 'trial of scar' or constantly refer to her birth as a VBAC. She is a woman having a baby, not a disaster waiting to happen.

During labour

The physical care of a woman having a VBAC should be no different (although I know it is in hospital). Yes, I'm watching for signs of a uterine rupture: unusual pain, fetal heart rate abnormalities, unusual bleeding, a change in maternal observations etc. But, those symptoms in any birthing woman would be concerning, so this is not different care. In addition, if a woman is unmedicated and connected to her body/baby she will be the first to notice a problem. I have found that women having a VBAC may have additional psychological needs. For example, they may seek vaginal examinations, particularly if their C-section was for 'failure to progress'

(aka failure to wait). Even with information about how poor VEs are at indicating progress they may want that dilatation number – some non-VBAC women do too. They may also want more frequent fetal heart rate auscultation to reassure them the baby is well. In general, these women, and even more so their partners need reassurance and a birth attendant who believes in them. Of course some women don't need any of this and choose freebirth.

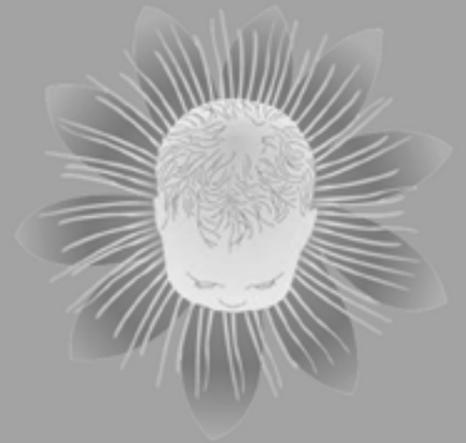
Is homebirth a safe option for VBAC? That depends on how you look at it. Birth is not 'safe' regardless of the setting. Different risks are associated with different options. In hospital there is greater risk of unnecessary intervention and associated complications.

At home, if you are the 0.2% and need to transfer to hospital, there is the risk of complications due to a delay in medical intervention. Bear in mind that this delay may also occur in a private hospital out of hours when theatre staff are not on site. Women also need to be aware that when it comes to homebirth, having a uterine scar places them in a 'high risk' category. The Australian College of Midwives classify a previous C-section as 'B' ie. 'Consult' with a 'midwife and/or medical practitioner or other health care provider'. This does not mean that a privately practising midwife cannot provide care. And you can decline a consultation if you wish. However, some midwives appear to be unaware of this, and tell women that they are not allowed to attend VBAC homebirths – this is not true. However, if you choose an eligible midwife, you may have problems securing a collaborative agreement from a medical practitioner so that you can claim medicare. Likewise, homebirth services run from hospitals or birth centres are unlikely to accept you as a client. Personally I love attending VBACs. These births are usually immensely healing and empowering for a woman and her partner. I wonder whether this aspect of birth is discussed at the 'risk consultations' along with the numbers.

You can read a birth story and watch the film here. I may be biased but this is the most beautifully filmed/edited birth film ever:

Madeleine's birth: <http://www.documentingdelight.com/2012/04/06/madeleines-birth-a-hbac-video/>.

Rachel Reed is a Lecturer at the University of the Sunshine Coast where she teaches midwifery. She is also a currently practising homebirth midwife and has practised midwifery in a range of models and settings in the United Kingdom and Australia. Rachel is committed to the promotion of physiological birth, and of women's innate ability to birth and mother. Rachel has written articles for journals, magazines and websites, and presented at many conferences and study days. She is also the author of <http://midwifethinking.com>.



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9501 0863

0415 683 074

5 Balfour Ave Caringbah NSW 2229

virginia@naturalbeginnings.com.au

www.naturalbeginnings.com.au

Interview with a HBAC-er Joelle Skinner



contraction; there was no way I could relax and open my body with them. By that night, after trying gas, pethidine and an epidural, oh and a foetal trace that they attached to my cervix (and ripped off twice!) they did another internal: 4cm. Devastated. They sent in the Obstetrician. He was a little Asian man who couldn't even look me in the eyes, but talked to my exposed breasts while he told me the worst news. I felt violated. Baby wasn't coming down, I'm not progressing, we could wait, but baby could die, it's better to have a Csection now. Actually, baby was completely fine, her heartbeat was stable the whole time, but of course, since we went to hospital so early I was on their clock. I do not remember signing a consent form. I most likely did but it is wiped from my memory.

The next thing I remember is a scene that would traumatise me for years; the stark contrast from the dimmed birthing suite to the bright, sterile operating theatre. When I looked up, tears streaming, all I saw was bright lights and masked faces. It was scary and awful. Once my daughter was born, I briefly saw her face after she had been cleaned, cord cut and wrapped. Then she was taken away with Ben to be weighed and measured and both sets of our parents got to meet and hold her in a little room without me. I wasn't the first to hold her, far from it. And then because it wasn't visiting hours, they made Ben go home and then they took her away to the nurses station so I could 'rest'. I didn't want them to take her, I wanted to hold and meet my own baby! That night I stared at the ceiling, listening to babies cry, feeling absolutely helpless and terrified. I got abused when I asked for more drugs before the allotted time (which I wasn't aware of, nor did I have my watch since they took it). All I knew was they said I had to keep on top of the pain. It wasn't until 5am, five hours after her birth, that they brought her in for her first feed.

We found out I was pregnant with our son just a few days after our daughter's first birthday. This time, when I called the hospital to book in, I was very shocked to discover that just because I had a previous Csection I was no longer allowed to register for the birth centre. We knew we would need some back up, so we hired a Doula this time around. I had to meet with the Obstetrician about halfway through my pregnancy. He was a white-haired, pompous man who wore a bow tie. He scoffed when I said I was hoping for a VBAC. He said, "Who put that idea into your head? Midwives?!" I stuck to my guns; he listed off all the restrictions they would place on me, foetal monitoring on my back, and ridiculous time limits. I just smiled and nodded, planning to fight it all when the time came.

My waters broke at 38 weeks, we contacted our Doula, arranged my parents to come and pick up our daughter and we went out to have lunch and walk around at the local mall. Nothing happened, waters kept gushing out, but no contractions yet. Our Doula arrived that night and we tried bouncing on the ball, walking, resting and



mostly chatting and laughing. We all settled in and slept that night, woke up and still nothing, we did lots more walking and bouncing all day and still nothing. That afternoon, after no change, we decided it was time to head into the hospital. Once there, a tall, unfriendly female Obstetrician did an internal. She said I was only 1cm and not effaced at all. It was not looking good, so we asked for a few more hours to see if labour would start and they agreed to wait until morning. At that time, I saw the same bow-tied pompous Obstetrician having a literal tantrum outside our door because we were 'killing our baby' leaving the waters broken so long.

I got desperate, I did not want another Csection; I took castor oil, but it didn't do much at all. I bounced and bounced on the ball

and we walked the grounds of the hospital. Once Ben and my Doula went home for the night, I continued to walk the halls of the hospital all night long and nothing happened, not one contraction. By morning it was all over; we were booked in for a Csection. I had two amazing midwives who were very happy to accommodate most of my requests for a much nicer experience than our first.

I was able to have immediate skin to skin contact, I was able to feed him in recovery, he was not taken away from me at all. I even held him on my chest as I was wheeled back to my room. And there he was weighed in front of me, I even got to see my placenta. Such simple things made the world of difference, I bonded with him so much more and didn't feel so awful that I had another surgical birth. It hit me more when I got the three day blues, but it wasn't trauma as such this time.

I fell pregnant with my second son again, a few days after my son's first birthday. I knew this time a VBA2C was not even an option at hospital, not at our local hospital anyway. We knew vaginal birth is much safer than a repeat Csection so we were left with only one option, home birth! I called quite a few midwives before I found one who would agree to take me on as a HBA2C and would also be happy with us paying off her fees with our baby bonus.

Antenatal visits at home were such a nice contrast to going to hospital. Our midwife was excellent, she had a wealth of experience and knowledge and every time I expressed doubts, she would simply say with a grin, "Of course you can do it!" About halfway through the pregnancy, she asked if we would mind if she brought along a student midwife to our visits and birth; we agreed it would be fine, we were happy to help students be exposed to home births. Everything progressed fine until 40 weeks and a heatwave hit, it was horrendous, 40+ degree days every day and we had no aircon.

It was about that time that I started having some pretty intense contractions, we arranged for our friend to take the kids and we filled the birth pool. These contractions were nice and strong and regular. We called the midwife and she and the student arrived a couple of hours later and once they did, things slowed down. We waited it out for a bit, I rested and then they decided it was better that they leave and come back once

things pick up again. We went to bed and slept through, no more contractions.

Then each day that week, I would have contractions every 10 minutes on and off. By the end of the week, I had absolutely had it with the heat, so we decided to go over to my parents' place for the night and sit in their aircon. The next morning, they took our kids and went off to church and I had a bath. As I stepped out of the bath, my waters broke. Contractions started not long after; they were not consistently regular but they were strong. We called the midwife and we all decided I was too far progressed to contemplate returning home (half an hour away), so she and our student midwife made their way over to my parents' place. We were going to birth there, which was not ideal as my parents had expressed fears and worries over our choice to home birth.

Anyway, they arrived a couple of hours later and my midwife did an internal once she arrived and we were all surprised and elated to discover I was already 7 cm! I had never dilated that far before! I continued to have strong contractions irregularly throughout the day, but I was passing greenish meconium in my waters by this stage too so we were monitoring that. Things settled around dinner time and I was able to sit and eat with everyone. Once the kids were put to bed, things ramped up again. I laboured upright, I paced, I rocked, I lay down, I went on all fours. After a while my noises started sounding more intense and a little pushy. Upon examination, we discovered I was almost fully dilated, there was a cervical lip and baby's head was high though. My midwife then manually held the cervical lip out of the way while I pushed with each contraction.

Nothing changed after about an hour of this, so we decided to rest again. A few hours later, I was examined again and we were devastated to discover I had gone backwards, to 6cm! We made the decision early morning that we would have to transfer, considering the baby not coming down and the amount of meconium in my waters was increasing. My midwife called around to a few local hospitals to find out which would be most accommodating to us. During this time, while Ben frantically packed things for me in a bag, I sat down and wrote out a list of requests for my Csection; I was wanting it to be as positive an experience as my second one.

1. Who is in your family?

My name is Joelle, I'm 31 and married to my high school sweetheart Ben, also 31. We've been married nearly 12 years and have four amazing children with another joining us sometime in November/December. Our children are all precious miracles; I used to have PCOS and have an amazing story of healing through prayer, but I'll save that for another time.

2. Please describe your previous births?

Some of these details might be sketchy. I'm trying to remember as accurately as I can but I have purposely blocked most of it due to resulting birth trauma and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). This is the first time I am feeling brave enough to write down these stories.

When I fell pregnant with our first daughter, I read so much and decided the best birth path for us was a water birth in our local birth centre. I was a week 'overdue' when they started talking about booking me in for induction the following week. I knew enough that induction meant

very high likelihood of Csection, so I was terrified. I negotiated it to 40+12 days rather than the 10 they wanted, just to get the most time possible. If only I knew then I could have just refused altogether.

Anyway, the night before I was due to go in for induction, my contractions started on their own. I was so excited, I was going to avoid induction after all! The contractions were about a minute apart from the start and didn't go away when I was in the bath so we decided to go straight into hospital after only a couple of hours. Once we arrived, everything slowed right down. I laboured right through the night with irregular contractions but enough to not be able to sleep. By morning, they did an internal and I was only 3-4cm so they decided it was in my best interests to not be under the care of the birth centre midwives any more and that induction was to begin later that morning to move things along.

I then experienced the 'cascade of intervention'. I refused drugs all day even when they upped the drip to 2-3 times the usual dose. The pain was incredible and I clenched and grimaced with each





I'm usually quite shy and hate confrontation, but when the Obstetrician on duty spouted out some completely false statistics and refused most of my requests outright, I asked for another Obstetrician and I said that I refused to sign the consent to surgery unless they could meet those requests. They sent out a more senior Obstetrician who contradicted the first one's false stats right in front of her and agreed to accommodate most of my wishes (there were a couple that weren't possible but I was fine with that). He even went so far to say that we were doing the right thing having a home birth after two Csections. He made the whole experience so much better for all of us. He wasn't able to do the surgery but he came to visit me later to see how it all went.

Our second son was born with smelly hair and skin, in hindsight, we think he had an infection from the mec in my waters. I ended up having issues with my scar and got infected pretty badly and went back to hospital a few days after I got home and stayed another week with IV antibiotics. I ended up having recurring infections for that whole first year, each attack of pain was accompanied by very painful flashbacks and depression.

It was a bit longer before we fell pregnant with our fourth baby and second daughter; our second son was nearly two. By this time, our student midwife had fully qualified and was an independent midwife so we decided to book her as we had developed

quite a bond and trust with her during our last pregnancy. This pregnancy was more difficult; I was the heaviest I had ever been, ended up with severe Symphysis Pubis Dysfunction (SPD), and swelling in my feet that was so bad I couldn't even wear thongs at one stage. My belly was also massive this time and it stuck out and down, not ideal for a baby to engage and be born.

I went into labour late at night/early morning when I was almost 42 weeks. I stayed up all night with strong contractions about three minutes apart, lasting a minute. By around 5am, I had a bath and things were still as strong in there. We decided it was time to call our midwife and my friend who was our birth photographer. They both came over before daybreak and watched me as I continued to work through these intense contractions. Over the space of the next day, the contractions got stronger and stronger but also more irregular.

We decided to have no internal examinations this time around. I hopped in and out of the birth pool, changed positions as much as I could but my mobility was limited due to the SPD and my size. At one stage as I hit transition I was sitting on the toilet and my waters exploded! The contractions were so painful after that, they just felt 'wrong'. I really wasn't sure if what I was feeling was normal or if something was really wrong. We ended up all lying down to rest for the night and contractions spaced

out at that point. I was having weird dreams though, I was convinced that I had to push this baby out right now or we were going to both die, I was pushing in my sleep.

Around this point, my midwife started getting concerned about both mine and the baby's heart rates which were both quite elevated. We gave it a bit more time and things didn't improve, so the decision I was dreading was made: we had to transfer again, and quickly. I went to the toilet, absolutely gutted and furious that this had happened again, I ripped off my blessingway necklace and threw it on the floor. I wept all the way to hospital. All of us were so upset that this had happened.

Once there, we entered the clown show: we were not treated well at all. A nurse took my blood pressure with the cuff on my forearm and of course it gave a ridiculous reading. We later found out that there were a few rumours circulating the nurses stations about our transfer. Apparently, I was wheeled in having fits with severe pre-eclampsia that was a problem for my whole pregnancy. I had never had a high reading before!

When the time came for the surgery, I was really terrified that they would do something crazy and give me a hysterectomy or classic incision without my consent so I was super nice to them from that point. They then took my daughter away after I briefly held her and took her to special care nursery for precautionary antibiotics.

It was seven hours before they finally wheeled my bed to the Special Care Nursery (SCN) so I could properly meet my baby. I watched the nurse give her her first bath and dress her and I then spent time feeding and gazing on her; it was a really precious time, and we bonded right then.

The next few days were awful as they kept coming up with different excuses each day to keep my perfectly healthy 10-pounder in the SCN with all the teeny preemie babies. I walked there very slowly and with great pain every chance I could and spent hours there until meal times because they refused to wheel me over. They would constantly ask, "When did she last feed? How long for?" and so on, questions that just seemed irrelevant about our healthy big baby who fed well on demand. I ended up lying to them just to stop them giving her formula and inserting a feeding tube. We tried to get her out of the SCN and kept getting excuses and diversions, we just could not see why she needed to be there. They ended up almost calling security on Ben when he got quite angry about it. They let her out after nearly four days in the end: all tests clear; she was completely fine; even gained weight on top of her birth weight whilst there!

3. What in particular has led to your decision to have a HBAC?

It was never a hard decision, after my experiences in hospitals and seeing all the deceptiveness and scaremongering, I didn't want to be anywhere near one. We are convinced through research that vaginal birth is the safest option for us and the only way to achieve that is at home. Hospital birth is no longer an option for us.

4. What special preparations have you made for this upcoming birth (Joelle is pregnant with her fifth child)?

Before I fell pregnant this time, a lot had happened to bring me to a better place. I finally found freedom from my debilitating PTSD from birth trauma. The first and third births are the ones that affected me the most and I was getting triggered pretty much daily for seven years.

What got me out of that? I believe it was God. My faith in Him had taken a



battering over the years with so many unanswered questions. But He never left me and slowly, slowly, He restored me. I can't even explain exactly how but for about a year, I would cry every week at church as a new revelation was added and another piece of the trauma fell away.

I am completely better now, I am not affected by previous triggers at all. In fact, I just attended my friend's HBA2C as her photographer. It was the first birth I have ever witnessed and it was amazing! I never thought I'd be able to be there but I was and I was overjoyed for her when her beautiful baby was finally born.

I also lost 25kg in the year before I fell pregnant, I was fitter and healthier this time around. I started having regular adjustments with a Webster-certified chiro and managed to avoid SPD until a couple of weeks ago but even then they managed to make that go away. I am the fittest I have been in any pregnancy, I'm also quite compact this time around. I attribute that to the special diet my midwife suggested based on Chinese tradition, starting from 20 weeks, I increased my proteins and reduced my carbs to as little

as possible. I'm also drinking lots of water and pregnancy teas. Everything is looking better this time around, and against all odds, I'm not only feeling hopeful again, I am feeling quite confident that I can really do this.

5. How do you feel emotionally as you prepare for your HBAC?

I feel ready, extremely excited and also at peace with whatever happens. I know we will do everything we can to ensure a good outcome; if I transfer but know that we did everything we could, that's so much easier to deal with. At the same time, I want this so badly, so desperately. I can't wait to see how it all plays out and to finally meet our beautiful baby girl.

Joelle homeschools her kids during the week and is a photographer on weekends (currently on a break). Her kids are Israelle 8, Eden 6, Jyrah 4, and Amali 2.

Ben is a mobile music teacher who travels around to schools in a bus which is a fully equipped music classroom. They are Christians, and live in Sydney.

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Passing that Passion On

I always felt like I had gone into each of my pregnancies being as informed as possible. I thought I had read, made choices and never felt like a passive bystander. However, it was only my home birth and third time around that I finally felt all the information had at last come together. Every choice had been our own. Every option had been looked at, thought about, talked back and forth and finally decided; yes or no.

This was an amazing feeling and incredibly empowering.

I could make a decision after looking at all our options, decide and then take responsibility for that considered decision.

A responsibility that I certainly didn't feel shy about. It was my body and our baby. Isn't that the way it should be?

Shouldn't I be captain of my own ship?

After having a cesarean for my first born and a hospital vbac for my second, making the decision to have a homebirth in my first trimester for our third baby felt right in every possible way.

I didn't want to be dictated to by the hospital about how I would birth my child. I didn't want to be told how long I would labour for before they would intervene. I didn't want to be told what I could and couldn't do while in labour. And I certainly didn't want to be told I would be cut if I went over seven days over my due date. I didn't want that imagined knife hovering over my belly and my unborn child.

What I did want was to feel safe. To feel loved, warm, and surrounded by those dearest

to my heart. I wanted to be surrounded by my small corner of the world and all that I knew. I wanted to know I was in the wonderful hands of my very own midwife who always had my best interests first and foremost.

Twenty months have passed since I was given the honour and privilege of giving birth to my little daughter. Peacefully, at home and in water she was born. This quiet undisturbed birth truly opened my eyes to what birth really can be. It also ignited something and fueled my already small dreams of being a doula. This is the path I thought I wanted to be on and now I knew so.

While I can easily look back on all my births as positive, happy experiences it is my daughter's birth that still gives me delicious goose bumps when I think of it. When I think of how she made her entrance into this world I feel humbled, amazed and just so incredibly lucky that I got to experience that.

I think of the way she swam into both mine and her father's waiting hands, the yellow afternoon sun warming the apartment walls. The doorbell buzzing, just five seconds after first sitting back in the pool and holding her to my chest.

I will be forever indebted to our amazing midwife who gave me the courage and trust, to know what to do and how to calmly do it when I needed to.

I sometimes wonder whether I would have become as informed, educated and hungry to find out more about my birthing options if I had not had that first cesarean. There is an amazing feeling of empowerment and build up of knowledge

as I stand now having had a homebirth and three babies later. A passion that has simply grown and one that I can hopefully pass gently on to anyone else that might be considering a homebirth after cesarean.

Brydie is mama to three spirited children (Jasper 7, csec; Ruben 5, VBAC; Edie 20mths, HBAC). She has an obsession for baking sourdough, a passion for homebirth and dreams of having a big veggie patch one day. She blogs at cityhippyfarmgirl.com and finally feels ready to embark on the wonderful world of being a doula.



Home Birth After 2 Caesareans, by Britt Louwrens



That little phrase evokes one of two responses: praise or judgment. Some applaud the feat, while others think it was luck. Thing is, it really shouldn't be a big deal. After two traumatizing Caesareans (one being unnecessary, the other, a VBAC attempt in hospital, being a necessity), it was a no-brainer for me. I wanted a natural, calm birth in my own environment: where I was comfortable in my surroundings; confident in my medical care; and where I was assured that my birth wouldn't be interfered with. Where the clock wasn't watched, and where my body was allowed to do what it needed to do, in the way it needed to. Where my baby would be born into an environment where it was accustomed to the bacteria/germs already, where no other hands other than those of loved ones would touch her. Where I knew every member of my birth team intimately, and they were confident in my ability to birth and were positive it would happen. Safely. I knew the risks (very minimal), I knew the research, I was well educated on not only the safety of a VBA2C, but doing so in my home with my amazing and competent midwife, Rachele. It was a no-brainer for me. I knew I could do it, I knew my baby could do it. No big deal.

But, having gone through 24 hours of labour with my DS2 (and getting to 8cm), I knew what I was in for. And I was dreading it. Dreading the pain, the unknown. Dreading the possibility I would have to transfer, to never have the opportunity of a vaginal birth (this being our last baby). In the weeks leading up to labour, I started getting a lot of pre-labour – a lot of irregular and mostly painless, but uncomfortable, contractions. And in the days prior to labour, it seemed those closest to me wanted to lovingly voice their fears and worries about the upcoming birth. Although it was hard knowing that others were worried, I knew I had the research on my side, and I was more determined than ever to see this through. I remember the day before it all started, I had been having a lot of regular contractions, and it convinced me that I should probably clean the house in preparation. I spent a couple of hours that night a bit fearful of what lay ahead, but surrendering finally to what was meant to happen, what was

about to happen. That night I got absolutely NO sleep as I was timing contractions and riding through them as they intensified and started lasting longer. This was it.

Early Tuesday morning, 17 September, at 38 weeks and 3 days, I texted my midwife Rachele, and my dear friend and photographer, Joelle, to let them know that I was pretty sure things were happening and baby would be coming soon. My wise midwife said it was still early labour and she would give me a bit more time before coming. But having had a couple of bity contractions immediately preceding the text and having to vocalize through them, I simply didn't know how fast the birth would be, I told her I would rather her come sooner than later. And she did. OF COURSE as the sun rose, contractions started dying down. I was not happy with that, so as soon as Rachele (and Joelle) arrived, we started homeopathics to start things up again. And they did. But I still had hours ahead of me, and I sent Rachele away to pick up her friend from the airport (which was exciting as this friend is a birth guru and I was honoured that she was going to be at my house as I laboured!).

By the time Rachele and L got back from the airport a couple of hours later (about 2pm), contractions had definitely ramped up and I was happy to jump into the birth pool, which was BLISS. I kept thinking that SURELY I was at least 5 or 6cm dilated. Looking back, I am pretty sure I was not even that far along at that point.

The following hours are mostly a blur... hours filled with tears and a few emotional meltdowns. I was in and out of the pool (mostly to go to the toilet as I was constantly sipping water, raw milk, tea and labouraid), walking, squeezing the life out of hubby's hands, trying to rest between contractions (because I was so tired at one point, I couldn't keep my eyes open and kept wanting to pass out) and texting my best friend Mel, who had her mum and friend praying for me every step of the way (she even at one point drove to my house with her four boys in the car, parked outside and just prayed. Friends like that are diamonds in the rough!).

I begged Rachele to break my waters to hurry things along, to transfer me for an epidural, to do an internal to see how far I was... none of which she did, thank

goodness. Everyone kept telling me that I WAS progressing, that my body was doing what it was supposed to do, that I was doing amazingly. And I just kept whining and complaining that it was taking too long, that it wasn't fair I had to have these long labours, that I couldn't do it anymore, I was tired, blah blah blah. I did not labour gracefully as I had wistfully imagined I would. There was no escape, no rest, no end in sight and I was losing hope that this baby would ever come out... at least before I passed out.

I remember at about 7.30pm, I received an encouraging text from my friend Mel, and it literally changed everything. I resolved to finish this birth. At home. Where I had planned. I resolved to stop complaining, embrace the pain and just freaking get this baby out. There was no other choice. I hopped back in the pool, put on some worship music and while everyone left the room and turned off the lights, I slept. My body knew I needed the rest and the contractions died right down in intensity and I was able to sleep, hanging over the edge of the pool. It was silent in the house. Calm and peaceful.

At about 10pm, I started waking up to the contractions again and they had completely changed; they were solely in my tailbone and I was starting to get pushy with them. I was so afraid to push as I got pushy too early with DS2 and my cervix ended up swelling, so I didn't want a repeat of that. However,



after about an hour of fighting the urge to push, it became too intense to ignore and on Rachele's advice, I went with it (11pm).

I pushed sitting on the toilet (where my waters EXPLODED – literally there were pieces of membrane that we found later that had blown off), I pushed laying down on my side (that was torture), I pushed on my hands and knees, I pushed standing up, I pushed kneeling in the pool, I pushed sitting in the pool. But it was when I started pushing while squatting in the pool about an hour later (midnight) that things started moving. After a few pushes (the contractions were close together and VERY intense), I finally felt her head start to descend. I'll never forget that slightly burning sensation, and the relief of knowing she was coming and the end was near.

Three pushes. Rachele and Joelle moved to behind me and used a torch to see what was happening (and Joelle was filming it, which has become such a treasured memento) as soon as I said that I thought she was coming. First push brought her head down into my birth canal. Second push and I felt her head emerging. I thought at the time her entire head came out on that push, but the video proved that it was only the top half. It was at this point Jonno (hubby) realized what was happening (as he was in front of me, holding my hands), and ran to wake up the kids. I don't remember ANY pain with her coming out, just the relief of the knowledge that I was almost finished. Rachele suggested I reach down to touch her head, and I replied that I knew her head was there and just wanted her out. I could feel her twisting to maneuver her way out, and remember voicing my irritation that she was kicking me. I was not going to breathe her out like I had planned to. I just wanted her out. So on the third push, I just kept pushing until the rest of her was out. And as I felt her body leave mine, and heard Rachele telling me to pick her up (amidst the excited squeals of everyone in the room), I leaned back a bit and instinctively reached in (though I couldn't really see much in the water) and picked up my baby girl, Aria Giselle (12.23am on Wednesday, 18 September).

I'll never forget the look on her face as I brought her warm body out of the water. She was so alert and calm. She didn't cry. I just kept saying, "Hi. Hi. Hi." and holding her against my chest. She started breathing and making little sputtering sounds as the boys came in to meet their baby sister (I did double check she was indeed a girl!). I barely remember anything else going on in the room as I was enamoured of this new little being in my arms.

After cuddling in the warm pool for a bit longer, Rachele wanted to monitor my blood loss, so I got out and we lay down on my own bed. Aria wasn't interested in the breast at



all, so we just had some skin to skin while I stared at and talked to her. I started getting contractions again (ugh, after so many hours of them, I just wanted them to stop!), and about an hour after Aria arrived, the large placenta slid out (and Rachele said it was one of the healthiest she had seen in a long time). My youngest son (4 1/2) cut the cord. I had done it. All naturally. At home. It wasn't pretty and quiet and calm. But it was raw and wonderful and perfect.

After the placenta came out, Aria and I shared a beautiful herbal bath together, where I was able to just gaze at her and bask in her newness and my amazement that something I had planned for 4 1/2 years had actually just happened. While in my little bubble of bliss, Rachele pottered around cleaning up blood and towels and emptying the birth pool. We got out, got dressed, Aria got weighed and as everyone else was sleeping and Rachele and Joelle were leaving, Aria and I snuggled into bed together at about 4am (not that I would sleep more than an hour or two!).

Pushing a 4.35kg (9lb 9oz) baby out left me with nothing more than a graze, which has already healed two weeks later, and everything is pretty much back to normal. The recovery has been such a dream after two Caesareans. I remember throughout the labour, I kept saying "never again"... and yet two weeks later, I'd be happy to go through it all over again just for that rush of feeling my baby being born, and being the first person she touches and sees. So very special and something every mother should have the honour of experiencing. I will never forget those moments for the rest of my life.

I'm so very grateful to my birth team

– my friend praying for me endlessly until Aria arrived earth side, my other friend who documented it all in photos (and video), my midwife who was nothing but a support and voice of reason when I had lost my willpower, for my husband who was my rock throughout it all. This would NOT have happened without my little "village". It's because of them my dream became reality. Eternally grateful. Always.

And for Aria. Who stayed strong through the labour, who didn't have any heart decelerations (the issue with DS2) and who didn't poop until immediately after she was born (no meconium in the waters). Thankful to you darling, for doing what you needed to do, for doing your bit to make it happen.

"Remember this, for it is as true as true gets: Your body is not a lemon. You are not a machine. The Creator is not a careless mechanic. Human female bodies have the same potential to give birth well as aardvarks, lions, rhinoceri, elephants, moose, and water buffalo. Even if it has not been your habit throughout your life so far, I recommend that you learn to think positively about your body." Ina May Gaskin, Ina May's Guide to Childbirth

Britt Louwrens is wife (of 11 years) to a business analyst and busy mum to three kiddos: Carter, master of all things Lego and infomercials (aged 7), Cade, expert in the art of tattling and cuddles (aged 4), and Aria, newcomer and milk princess (aged 6 weeks). Britt, based in south west Sydney, is a birth photographer currently on hiatus to spend more time with her young family.

(Photos by Artography by Joelle)



Home Labour, Hospital Birth



My first birth was a horrid hospital birth that ended in a C-section, as I failed to progress (due to limited time allowed within the hospital). I promised myself that the next one would be a homebirth as the first left me feeling violated, a complete failure as a woman and in so much pain, both physical and emotionally, for months afterwards. Also I didn't want to have to fight again while in labour. The next was going to be a homebirth!

I talk to my doula who had been at my first birth and a wonderful support before, during and after the first birth. She helped me with research into VBAC and HBAC. She also put me in contact with the local midwives. I rang and talked to two of the local midwives and made a real connection with one of them. She struck me as a person that was straight down the line and would be honest with me. So as the months went on we developed a friendship and I felt she was someone I could really trust.

At 40 weeks and 4 days I had a dream that I was in labour and light was flooding into my birth space, my husband, midwife and doula were by my side while I had our baby. I woke up on the Tuesday having mild 'waves'. I spent the day going through the normal routine of our household. The Birthing magazine arrived and I had a rest reading the wonderful birth stories knowing that we were going to meet our baby soon.

Around 7pm things started to pick up and I just wanted to be in my head. So we asked our doula to come and then our midwife arrived at around 11pm. I was so happy to get into the pool soon afterwards. The night passed with breathing, vomiting, and wonderful support. At around 4am I was on the bed when I just couldn't be

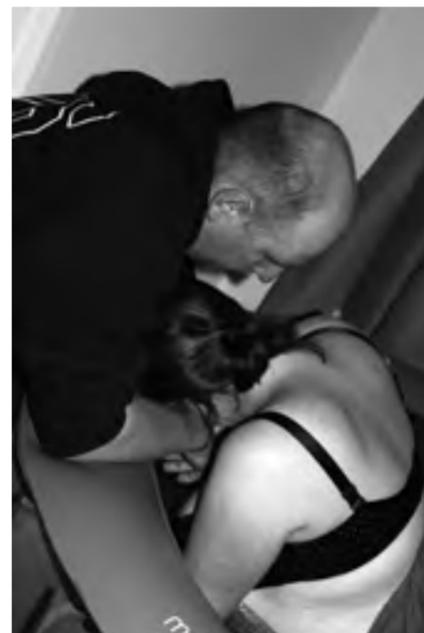
there any more. I jumped up just making it onto the tarp and my waters, show et cetera just flowed out in huge gushes. I just stood there as waves of waters left my body and I had a break for a few minutes and laughed about how much fluid there was.

Then the contractions come back quite strong. Then the pushing started. This lasted till the sun came up, then our midwife suggested changing to the toilet to help move things along. Then after a time I moved downstairs to have a shower for another change. Things still weren't progressing. I then moved back upstairs for a rest but after 30 minutes of trying to rest, I just couldn't. There had also been a little bit of meconium while I was downstairs and some more after my 'rest' though bub's heart rate was fine. I was only 7 cm.

After a discussion I made the choice to go to hospital though our midwife was encouraging and supportive. So while she was calling the hospital, bags were packed and we headed off. It was about 11am. We arrived at the hospital and there was no parking so we parked in the emergency car park got told off by a guard and walked in. Oh it wasn't a fun drive or walk. I arrived to a hum of people, one undressing me in front of everyone (not nice), and people asking me questions all at once while we tried to sort out our cars!

I'm so glad I had both our doula and midwife with us as I had so many people talking to me at once, plus being in full labour I couldn't cope. I just kept asking for an epidural then I would talk to them, I just wanted a clear head. It wasn't until our midwife made me look at her and say "Love, you need a C-section, bubba needs to come out now". All I could do was close the picture I had in my head and move on.

Our doula and midwife started negotiating my C-section: only work talk, not to tell us the sex of the baby, that I would be awake for the birth, and getting skin to skin as soon as possible. We tried to have our midwife in with us but that wasn't allowed. Five minutes later I was in the operating room alone where they told me I was going to have a general anaesthetic. I started to get really scared but told them that is not what we agreed on. They said "We only want to make sure you and baby are safe



and a spinal takes a few more minutes than a general". I said "Well you better stop talking and get a move on then". The look of shock on his face was priceless. The doctor walked in at that moment and said I was to have a spinal, which I'm so thankful for!

Then the next thing I know, I hear a little cry, see two little legs, a bottom and saw it's a little boy before he was taken away from me. He needed cleaning up, suctioning and oxygen. I was unable to have skin to skin with him in the operating room. It was nearly three hours later that I got to see his face for the first time on a camera when our midwife and doula met me in my room. The tears started to follow; I just want my little man.

I was taken down to NICU pretty much straight away and handed my little boy onto my chest where he started to look for his milk and started feeding happily. After an hour I was allowed to take him up to my room with me. He stayed skin to skin pretty much the whole time I was in hospital, less than 48 hours after arriving. I'm so thankful for that as I felt I had to be strong while I was there. But as I walked out of the hospital very slowly. I couldn't stop the tears from running down my face with the confusion of being so happy to have a healthy baby but so sad with what I had lost, with both physical and emotional pain. I couldn't even carry him into his home.

Our midwife has explained to me many times that our son was in a posterior position with an asynclitic head he wasn't going to come naturally. I'm now left feeling like I have failed again without anyone else to blame but myself. With the first C-section I could blame the hospital policy around time frames et cetera. With this one I could only blame myself. It took me so long to talk to my friends and family around to the idea of it being safe for me to have a homebirth and then I didn't have one anyway. It was also written in my son's blue book that his labour complication was a failed homebirth. Our midwife ripped it out and put the real reason.

So am I a failed homebirther? Does my story belong in a homebirth magazine or is my birth story another horrible homebirth story that could be told to scare people away from a homebirth altogether? Am I a complete failure as a woman? Which box do I fit in? Who knows. I don't. All I know is that I'm so sad that I couldn't have my sons enter the world in a peaceful way and have the love that they needed straight away. But at the same time, this doesn't mean I'm not over the moon to have our beautiful son with us. As our doula said to me after my first C-section, labour and birth is about your womanhood, your baby is about your motherhood, and they are two different things.

I am a mother of two wonderful, amazing

boys (I know all mothers say that about their children!). I am married to a wonderful and supportive husband who believes in me more than I believe in myself sometimes. I am also working as special education teacher which I love and enjoy so very much. I have also started studying Masters Degree in special education. I wish that my experience was different and I didn't have to feel like I failed and therefore couldn't get the best caesarean possible because of the restrictions placed on doctors within a hospital. I will say that the doctor of my second caesarean was gentle and kind and understanding. He spread peace over the madness that was happening all around me. I hope that all women receive the support and care whatever their wishes are to birth and how then end up birthing. I know at the end of my birth story I say woman hood is about labour and birth. I do understand that

being a woman is more than just labour and birth but for me it has been so hard to understand why I have not been able to do to something my body was made to do. I would also like to say a big thankyou to my midwife, doula, husband for the support they gave me through my labour and caesarean and to the people that have continued to support me in the time after. THANKYOU for the bottom of my heart. Also a thank you to the 2 people that help set up the Australian Planned Homebirth Unplanned Caesarean Support Group, Facebook page. As much as it upset me to know there are others who have gone through similar experiences, it is a comfort to know I'm not alone.

Michelle is a mother of two wonderful amazing boys. She is married to a wonderful and supportive husband, and works as special education teacher. She has also started studying a masters degree in special education. She would like to say a big thank you to my midwife, doula, and husband for the support they gave her throughout her labour and caesarean and to the people that have continued to support her. She also thanks the Australian Planned Homebirth Unplanned Caesarean Support Group Facebook page.

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The HBAC of Adalita

Adalita is our second child; our first, Sebastian, arrived in a private hospital via 'semi-elective caesarean' on Mothers' Day 2011, presumably because of 'failure to progress' after my waters had broken. We had chosen (sort of) a private hospital for a number of reasons: because we had private health insurance; our then-GP referred us to an obstetrician as soon as he found out we had insurance (probably a fair assumption on his part that we would want to use it and go to a private hospital); and having had two previous miscarriages we wanted to make sure that this baby arrived safely. Private hospital seemed the way to go. Hindsight is, as we all know, 20/20.

We had been advised to do the Calmbirth course, which we did, and we can't recommend it enough to prospective parents. We felt ready for, and excited about, the arrival of our little boy. But it didn't go to plan, as Calmbirth teaches is often the case. Although that experience was not what I would have chosen for Sebastian's birth, I have always focused on the positive outcome that we achieved - a beautiful healthy boy.

However, for our second child I was determined to seek a VBAC. My husband and I went on all of the hospital tours and asked a lot of questions about their approach to VBAC. All were open to the idea of 'attempting' VBAC, but all told me that they would insist on a range of continuous monitoring and 'rules', which we felt wouldn't necessarily lead to the kind of birth that I wanted: one that was as natural and intervention-free as possible. The only birth centre in our city wouldn't even accept me given I was a VBAC, which was initially deeply disappointing. Our perspective at the start of our journey was that we wanted minimal intervention, but wanted medical assistance quickly available should it be necessary.

The conclusion we reached in the end was that our best chance of having the kind of natural, minimal medical intervention birth that we wanted was to birth at home! I've been lucky enough to

know a number of happy home-birthers so I felt really confident and happy about our choice once we'd made it.

We worked with our fabulous independent midwife, Rachele Meredith, from about four months along in the pregnancy. She would come to our house and we would have a long chat and a cuppa and I always felt that she was all about me and about the baby. This is in stark contrast to how I felt with our obstetrician for Sebastian's pregnancy, where our five minute appointments always felt like an imposition on the obstetrician, and like they were always at their convenience, not ours. I was so relaxed and happy because of this approach!

My due date came and went, and then I managed to get a head-cold just before week 41 started. Given our experience with Sebastian's birth, I had been getting a bit worried about whether my body would actually spontaneously start labour, but my midwife and my 'homebirthy' friends were very reassuring that it would. But then when the cold arrived on Thursday, I suddenly didn't want labour to start! But of course it did. Kind of.

On Friday morning I started to have mild contractions around 2am. Because labour never established with Sebastian I wasn't



really sure what to expect from contractions. These seemed ok! They were about 90 seconds long, about 15 minutes apart, and just strong enough to not let me sleep through them. So I got up tired on Friday morning, and then the contractions stopped around 10am.

Saturday morning they kicked off again at around 2am, but this time they were definitely more intense. I rang our midwife around 4am and then at around 5am she said she would come to see me (which meant driving three hours!). Rachele was with a tired me all day, until around 3pm, at which point the contractions hadn't really intensified further, despite a painful and weird waddle around the block to see if that would help, (it didn't).

After Rachele left I started to worry that labour wasn't going to establish and that I would end up back in hospital for another caesarean. Thankfully I had amazing support from Rachele and from my homebirthy friends, who kept me buoyed throughout Saturday night as the contractions waned again. Also a special thank you to the folks at Joyous Birth, who were asked by my friend to send me happy, good birth vibes. I was really strengthened by those messages, relayed to me by my friend.

I needn't have worried. Like clockwork, I was awake at 2am on Sunday with much more intense contractions. I rang Rachele around 4.30am when I felt like it was not possible to identify individual contractions any more, and it was more like fluid waves of intense sensations rolling in one after another with hardly any break in between. We filled up the birthing pool (eventually - those things take a LOT of water!) in our bedroom and I got in just after Rachele arrived. Like the walk the previous day, though, the pool had the opposite effect from that intended, and labour slowed right down. Sure, I was a lot more comfortable, but given I kept asking Rachele whether I would have the baby that day, she suggested that I get out and try some different positions.

A couple of hours later and Rachele and my husband had been doing rebozo (sifting) on my belly while I was on all

fours for some time. I transitioned around 10.30am. I felt like I bellowed the house down for hours, but in reality it was only around an hour and a half of pushing.

I tried a number of different positions, including all fours, sitting on the toilet, lying on my left side, and squatting between my husband's legs as he sat on the edge of our bed. Lying on my side seemed to have the most effect, as I could feel Adalita moving down as I tried to (as Rachele suggested) focus on breathing through the contractions instead of actively pushing. I became determined to meet Adalita as soon as possible, and worked with my very intense contractions to push her out before my legs gave out in the squatting position! In the end she crowned for a while (and Rachele took some rather confronting photos on my phone to show me - they were amazingly inspirational!) but then I really focused and out popped her head, followed immediately by her entire body! Rachele caught her and passed her to me immediately. I held her close, and marvelled at the steam coming off her!

I could feel that I'd lost some blood with her arrival, and Rachele decided straight away to administer Syntocinon and to pull the placenta out. This went really well and

within only a few minutes I had had a quick shower and I was resting in my bed, giving my beautiful girl her first feed. A long pre-labour led to what was really only about 10 hours of intense effort on Sunday morning.

It's been so lovely to be able to be at home for the birth and the days afterwards! We've had time and private space to adjust as a family to our newest member.

I don't think I can understate how much of a positive impact Calmbirth and pre-natal yoga (including an active birth workshop) had on both me and my husband in my preparation for Adalita's birth. We were able to stay calm and to birth with love, using techniques that we'd learned together. I'm also extremely grateful to two fabulous friends (Sarah and Maggie) who came and looked after Sebastian while mummy birthed his little sister during his nap! He went to sleep an only child and woke up a big brother!

Again with my 20/20 hindsight, I'm really glad that the hospitals in our city were so unaccommodating of VBAC. Had they been even slightly more positive we may have gone there and would definitely have had an entirely different birthing experience.

Our journey to Adalita's birth was made smooth and relaxed by Rachele, and by the time the big day arrived, I felt incredibly

confident in my relationship with her. The importance of continuity of care with a trusted midwife cannot, in my opinion, be understated. Instead of being confronted with the duty obstetrician (that's right, not even the obstetrician we'd paid thousands of dollars to throughout the pregnancy!) and midwives we'd never met in unfamiliar surroundings, I was able to welcome Adalita to the world with my husband, son, midwife and close friends in my own space, in my own time, and in my own way. Bliss.

The cost of the carpet cleaning in our bedroom was well worth it! I hope everyone's birth experience can be as positive and rewarding as mine was.

Jacqueline Cooke lives in Canberra with her husband Alex, two and a half year old son Sebastian and shiny new daughter Adalita (born 25 August), plus the fur babies: cats Violet and Benjamin. She is a public servant currently spending a year at home with Adalita. She is very grateful to have met such an incredible group of supportive women, and to have found her feet on the path to successful HBAC. What an incredible journey motherhood takes us on.





The Birth of Samara Caitrin

My first two daughters were both born by caesarean. The first was a classic failure to progress, or failure to wait. I planned a homebirth with my second, but after four days of labour, my waters broke with thick meconium. I transferred to hospital, labour stalled, and after several hours the baby started to show signs of distress.

They were both big babies. They both went from more favourable to less favourable positions during labour or shortly before. Neither of them ever engaged in my pelvis. I thought my body was truly a lemon. I could blame the hospital for my first surgery, but after my second surgery, when I had planned a homebirth and completely trusted the process, I felt the buck stopped with me. And I had failed.

I wanted a third child, but I was scared to conceive again. I was scared that I wanted another chance to birth naturally, instead of another baby. I was scared of going through the whole emotional journey again, only to fail again.

Samara got tired of waiting for me to work it out - her conception was a happy surprise for us! I planned a homebirth - of course I did. I don't have it in me to choose caesarean. I believe the way we are born matters. Deep in my soul, somewhere I knew what birth was supposed to be like. I had to try again, though for the first time I had no



belief in my body. I was lucky enough to be able to surround myself with three wonderful women - two midwives and a doula - who did all the believing for me. It was an emotional pregnancy, not knowing if the birth was going to be my life's high or low point.

I cut out sugar from my diet, and as much processed food as I could, though I fell off the wagon at Christmas. I did techniques from Spinning Babies every day to balance my pelvis. My husband bought me a rebozo and we started using it. In the third trimester I began having Bowen therapy and acupuncture to optimise my pelvis. I had warm baths and talked to my baby, asking her to help me birth her beautifully. Even my three year old started saying "Move down baby!".

At my 35 week prenatal visit, my midwife announced that my baby was slightly engaged. I promptly burst into tears and asked if she was lying. It was such a huge moment for me. I had seriously wondered if there was some kind of physical barrier preventing my babies from entering the pelvis! But there she was! Maybe I could do this! Maybe my body wasn't broken!

I felt the first tightenings on a Monday night, while in bed. Nothing too bad, I was able to simply breathe through them. I felt a bit teary. I was afraid that I was going to be in labour for days again, and I didn't want to send my kids away. They were going to stay with my parents; as much as I love the idea of siblings at a birth, for this birth I felt the only one who needed mothering was me. But now that the time was imminent, I didn't want to say goodbye to them. I think they picked up on it; my two year old was restless, and my three year old ended up joining us in bed.

The tightenings stopped once I got up for the day, increasing again towards evening. I expected I was going to have a few nights of pre-labour, as I had with my others. I sent my husband off to his piano lesson. He insisted I text my birth support people. I sent a message to the effect that I was having contractions, but tonight wasn't going to be the night.

As soon as I tried to go to bed, the contractions notched up. I quickly realised I wasn't going to be able to rest, and decided to have a bath by candlelight. I laboured there for a while, just watching the flames. I tried again to go to bed, still in denial, and then ended up in the shower. I was banging on the wall, counting myself through the surges. I quickly changed it to banging on my own thigh, worried I was going to wake the kids.

I began to think that I might need my

doula there, but I couldn't call out. My husband must have read my mind because he came to check on me and suggested he call her.

When Nat arrived, I was kneeling against the lounge and moaning into the cushions. Later, Nat told me she could hear me from the street! She asked why we hadn't filled the pool or called the midwives. She proceeded to do so and I heard her say "She's vocalising quite strongly".

The pool got set up and I got in; instant relief! I spent most of the time in a kneeling position, leaning over the side. I tried some other positions, because I thought maybe I should, but I realised that the position I had chosen instinctively was the most comfortable one for me. I held on to loving hands through the contractions. I started off deliberately keeping my hands loose, but at some point that strategy was abandoned!

I stayed in the pool, moaning through surges and sleeping in between. Everyone was very quiet and just held the space for me. I was aware of how present and supportive they were. It helped so much, even though no one was 'doing' anything. I thought I was going to need a lot of guidance and cheerleading, but I didn't.

At some point I was aware of soft voices. I wanted to tell them they didn't need to whisper, but I couldn't. Almost from the first contraction, I had entered a trancelike state. In the pool I was in my own little world, in this state where I was aware of my surroundings but separate from them. I had random thoughts that I wanted to voice, but in my trance I couldn't verbalise. One of the only things I managed to say was "I can't do this for four days". Everyone assured me this was not going to last for four days, that I was in real, strong, active labour.

Dan called my parents. They arrived just as my two year old woke up at 5.30am. The kids transferred easily from bed to car, with some sleepy glances my way. My mum briefly poked her head into the lounge room to smile at me. After the girls were safely on their way with their grandparents, someone suggested I go for a walk before the sun came up. I didn't want to get out of the pool, but I recognised that we were in a lull, and I certainly didn't want to leave the house in daylight.

Somehow, I did get out of the pool and into a nightie. Dan and Nat accompanied me around the block. I remember Nat asking if we got possums, and Dan mentioned the local bat colony. I was vaguely disappointed we didn't see any bats that morning. I was



feeling a bit sulky, thinking of how tired I was, and that if labour was stalled, I wanted it to stop altogether so I could sleep. In hindsight, this was probably transition. Still I wasn't believing that this baby was really going to come without help.

Nat was encouraging me to walk through contractions, but I kept stopping and moaning into Dan's shoulder. The block seemed enormous to me. We got to the top of our street and our house looked like it was miles away. I finally decided to woman up and walk through the contractions; I think I was just so eager to get back home.

I laboured in the toilet for a while. I remember this time as being the hardest part. The contractions were coming harder and faster and I was finding it difficult to rally myself enough for the next one.

I reached down and I felt my baby's head, behind a bulging bag of waters, just a few centimetres inside me! Dan felt it too, and it was the most wonderful, intimate thing to be touching our unborn baby together. That was the first inkling I had that I might be about to birth a baby vaginally.

I moved into the pool again, but the contractions slowed right down, so I went back to the toilet. I was being encouraged to stay upright, and someone brought a step for me to put one leg up, but the contractions



were too intense for me to integrate this way. I dropped to all fours again, where I could surrender to the surges instead of fighting against them. Dan pointed out that the contractions were further apart in this position, and I said something rude to him.

Her head did get lower, against all my expectations. Someone said it was time to move back into the pool, and I didn't think I could, after all that. The few metres between toilet and pool seemed like an insurmountable distance, but with everyone's help and coaxing, I managed to get back in.

I don't remember much of this time. I remember being unable to avoid blowing bubbles during the surges.

I remember being told to push. It was only then that I realised that the enormous pressure I had been feeling at the peak of every contraction for quite some time was a pushing urge. It wasn't what I had expected. I expected it to be involuntary, a relief and a release, as I had heard it described. Instead I felt it as quite a scary, splitting sensation, that I did NOT want to push through. I couldn't. I just wanted to breathe through it. I pretended to push. I asked if my vagina was about to be ruined, and everyone assured me it wouldn't be.

They got me into a supported squat, and prepared me to catch my baby. I said I wanted Dan to catch her - reaching down seemed impossible to me, and I wanted him to have the honour anyway. He wanted me to catch her, and we actually argued about it for a minute! In the end, we both caught her.

There was no ring of fire. I didn't realise when her head came out, it was just a continuation of the splitting sensation I was already feeling. I remember the sensation of her shoulders rotating. I said something like "Ooh stop it baby", and someone explained what was happening. Then she was out!! My waters broke as she emerged in her caul. I saw her eyes wide open, looking straight at me from under the water as I lifted her out. The cord was short and I couldn't bring her up to my chest as I wanted to. She didn't cry, but she was making little gurgling noises. I was encouraged to rub her back and blow into her face. I wasn't worried. She seemed very present to me, and she was fine.

I thought I would have a huge outpouring of emotion when she was born. I wanted to have that 'I did it!' moment, but I think I was just too overwhelmed. Finally having the natural birth I had always dreamed

of, but never thought I would get - my whole world and self-identity shifted, and it was too much to process in a moment. I just calmly inhaled my baby. At the time of writing, Samara is eight months old, and I have 'I did it!' moments every day.

It was so wonderful to have the joy of a new baby unadulterated, without the accompanying grief of an ungentle birth. I cried so often when my older kids were babies. This time the only sadness I have experienced is that I will never get to experience real birth again. It was unquestionably the most amazing experience of my life. It wasn't painless, or technically orgasmic, but it was ecstatic. The contractions hurt, but I wasn't suffering, or unable to cope. Birthing uninterrupted, feeling safe and supported, allowing my hormones to work exactly as they were supposed to - I entered a primal place where the pain was not bigger than me.

I feel like I've discovered the secret of the universe and I could do it again and again. How heartbreaking to discover this just as our family is complete. How exquisite it would have been to know this secret on the day I became a mother for the first time.

Erin lives with her husband Daniel, and their daughters Abigail, Eilidh and Samara in the foothills of the Blue Mountains. She is a stay at home mother and future birth worker.

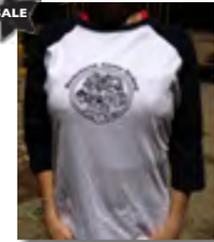


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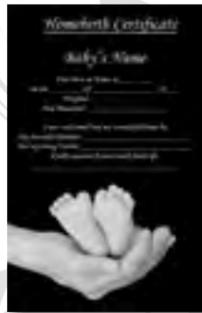


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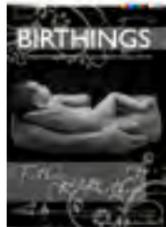


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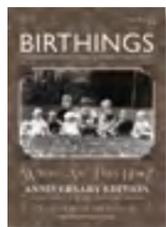


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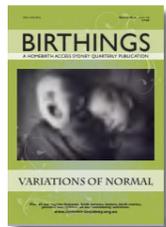
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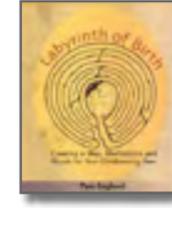
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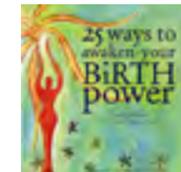
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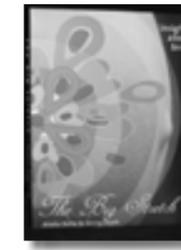
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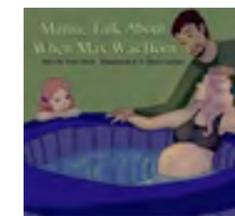


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Mama Is... "What We Learn #1"



Heather Cushman-Dowdee is mother, mom, or mommy, depending on who you ask, to four children and the creator of the long running comics: *Hathor the Cowgoddess* and *Mama Is...* Her comics follow the antics of a goddess-type mother and her side-kick babies as they attempt to save the world through breastfeeding, homebirthing, attachment parenting, and homeschooling. Her comics have been translated into Spanish, French, and Portuguese, and have been included in publications in Norway, Sweden, Australia, and England, to name a few.

Book Review:

'The Wild Rainbow - Journeying as Woman, Mother and Sage-Femme' by Sheree Stewart

Sheree Stewart is a 30 year old wise woman of indigenous descent, a mother of 6 and a midwife. She has written a fascinating book which follows her life's journey and shows how she is transformed to embrace her feminine self, with every chapter exploring a different aspect of what it means to be woman. The book is divided into three parts - Journeying As Woman, Journeying As Mother, and Journeying As Sage-Femme, and describes the mythology, archetypes, rites of passage, rituals and celebrations that can be embraced with each life stage.

She starts the book writing about the dual positive and negative aspects of her childhood then each chapter thereafter covers such topics as menstruation, sexuality, fertility, pregnancy, birth and motherhood, and it is interspersed with Sheree's personal stories of her births, her midwifery training and work, and her travels abroad to midwife in Ethiopia and Cambodia. I really enjoyed the autobiographical aspect which delved her into the proud woman, mother and sage-femme that she has blossomed into.

There are some wonderful suggestions from how to embrace the red tent ritual, to how to conduct a Blessingway, release

fears in preparation for birth and what to do with the placenta; and stories of births, breastfeeding, post natal depression, baby moons, adoption and death. There is a chapter



on homebirth (complete with homebirth stories), and hopefully the uninitiated will become empowered with information to want to choose this option for themselves. The book is also filled with stories, poems and contributions from many other wise women (such as Dr Sarah Buckley, Jane Hardwicke Collings and Shivam Rachana).

The Wild Rainbow is a must read for any woman, any mother of daughters, and any man who wants to understand the other half of the population intimately better. The only negative for me was that as a mother of only sons, it left me feeling (even more than usual), that I am missing out on that special relationship that only mothers and daughters can have - especially when reading of the beautiful ways of celebrating her first menarche! Regardless, it is a book I am happy to add to my library for my pregnant clients to borrow for the valuable gems which lie within, and which I will no doubt come back to when designing a Blessingway.

Virginia Maddock is the Coordinator of Homebirth Access Sydney as well as the Assistant Editor of Birthings. In a former life she played saxophone in a heavy metal band, was a sponsored skateboarder, skateboard coach, horticulturalist and 3rd world backpacker. Since then she has become a herbalist, nutritionist, doula and placenta encapsulator for her business 'Natural Beginnings'. Her sons Jetsun (almost 5) and Keanu (2) were born at home with her husband Dan by her side, and they continue to bring her her greatest joy (as well as her greatest challenges in patience!) www.naturalbeginnings.com.au.



ONCE UPON A TIME, BUT NOT SO VERY LONG AGO, WHAT WE CALL SHAMANIC MIDWIFERY WAS JUST A WAY OF LIFE.... *A way of life that all women knew inherently from their own birth.*

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At our time of Menarche we were honoured and initiated as women and welcomed to join the Motherline, ready to receive into our own hearts, the ancient ancestral women's wisdom of all those who had walked before us. As we lived our lives through Mother, Maga and Crone, the voices of our Ancestors called to us often, whispering wisdoms of Knowing, Truth, Intuition, Psychic ability, Healing prowess and the Midwifery that comes from being a Shamaness who walks between the worlds.

Whilst the time we live in now is different, the women's hearts and bodies we bring to this life are still the same perfect, precious instruments finely tuned to hear and receive the wisdom of our Ancestry as it calls.

The opportunity to find our way back to the Motherline is always there. We are the sacred vessels we have always been.

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The Births Of Noah And Her Little Brother Eli

For the longest time, I had not imagined that I would get married, nor could I really see myself as a mother. I thought it would be something that I would figure out as I went along, committed to having children with my amazing husband, who himself seemed to me to be like a gift of manna from heaven - falling into my life when I had least expected it.

So when I fell pregnant with my daughter Noah 3 years ago, I really had no notions of pregnancy or labor other than what the media and society perpetuate and often grossly misrepresent. I was nervous and excited about the impending unknown of motherhood, but I was also terrified of having an episiotomy, having suffered through a skiing accident that had left me with a huge perineal haematoma and a lot of pelvic floor issues, the repercussions of which I was finally overcoming but still dealing with.

So I viewed it as a challenge; at first I couldn't quite imagine that my body could handle a vaginal birth, but I certainly knew what I couldn't handle - an episiotomy, a caesarean, interventions that weren't necessary, another couple more years of my body being broken from forces outside of my control. I put a lot of effort into figuring out what I could do to avoid an episiotomy, which then led me to the factors that would inform my 'consent' for different interventions should they be needed. I became a physiologically-normal birth-junkie; reading up on Cochrane reviews, Ina May, and Henci Goer, as well as all the blogs I could get my hands on, like 'midwifethinking' and 'Stand and Deliver'. I booked into the local birth centre in Boston, MA where we were living at the time, after going to an open-house question and answer session there one afternoon. When we decided to immigrate to Australia part-way through my pregnancy, I felt lucky to be able to have a booking at

the local birth centre near my new home.

As a feminist and a scientist, I would rankle when people suggested or even judged the decisions I had made for myself, especially after the many hours of thoughtful research into the evidence available:

'no coffee for you!'
 'eating sushi is so risky!'



As I approached my due date, these judgments then started to come from the medical establishment, as I questioned or respectfully declined some 'routine' tests based on my informed consent and my own personal medical history. I told myself that it was fine to agree to disagree, but then as my 'due date' approached, I felt the pressure start to mount to intervene in ways that didn't sit well with me - or the evidence. Stretch and sweeps were offered at 37 weeks. Induction was booked (and cancelled)

at 41. And on and on.... The days began to feel like weeks, and with each passing day my frustration with my support (or lack of) grew, as did the creeping doubt over my decisions, and my body's ability to birth.

At an ultrasound- all looked good, but I was threatened with the impending stillbirth of my child if I chose not to induce. 42 weeks arrived. Multiple inductions had been booked by my care providers, and cancelled by me. By now, my faith in my body once again shaken, I was doing the stretch and sweeps, plus most of the 'natural induction' methods. I thought that if only I could go into labor, all would be fine.

As I have learned over the course of becoming a parent, we must each take on the risks that we feel comfortable with - and indeed, be prepared to take responsibility for our choices. There is no getting around it - there are risks at every turn in life, and particularly with pregnancy and the unknown twists and turns that we will face in labor and in raising children.

At '40 + 17', exactly at midnight on Monday, a bloody show, regular contractions every 8 minutes, and me so excited to finally begin labor. I didn't know it would go on for several more days to come. The vomiting began almost immediately - and continued on and on. Once I found out that the baby was posterior on day 3, I would do inversions between the contractions. It seemed like I was sleeping in the bath for hours on end. It was an endless ocean of contraction waves, and I felt as though I was on a raft set out to sea. There wasn't much I could do besides ride it out, and I wasn't prepared to go down the path that an induction would most surely lead. I had lost navigational markers and was adrift.

Finally on day four I felt as though I couldn't withstand much more. We went into the birth centre around 10am and after a discussion with Dr Bisits, we decided to rupture membranes to get things going.

The details of the remaining hours of labor are again filled with twists and turns,



Unfortunately probably all too common and familiar to those who have ended up having high-intervention births without wanting them. Offers of morphine, epidural, discussion with my partner that my contractions 'weren't strong enough', a stern talking-to mid-labour that I would need to be cross-matched (for a blood transfusion) because I would likely hemorrhage after delivery. The common mis-reading of the (intermittent) CTGs and "your baby is in distress" false alarms. I refused the interventions, and after I was given IV fluids to help re-hydrate me at around 4pm, I started to progress more rapidly and by 10pm that night began to push. Finally!

After 2 1/2 hours of pushing and multiple vaginal exams, the baby was found to be posterior, deflexed and her head tilted sideways (asynclitic) and I suggested vacuum to assist (consented? was offered? The details here are a bit hazy). What I do remember is that every time someone walked out the room and I had a contraction, I would push with all my might, thinking that this would be the contraction that did it. I would have the baby with no one around. When I had a discussion with the anesthesiologist in order to sign consent forms, I wasn't told that an epidural would hurt my chances of the ventouse being successful, just that if it didn't work then it would be longer while they got the epidural in place in order to do a cesarean.

Gowned and wheeled in to theatre, we were obviously hoping that ventouse would do the trick. It was unsuccessful. Then, offered forceps on the operating table as 'my last chance to have a vaginal birth', I broke down. I knew that forceps meant an episiotomy, and my whole sexual future came caving in on me. Broken once and healed, I now felt as though I was staring down the barrel of a gun; with my vagina as the target. I refused to consent to forceps, and we went ahead with the caesarean – there was seemingly no way around it now. I requested a double layer of stitching, certain then and there that the next labor I would try for a VBAC.

After '43' weeks of pregnancy and for all my 98 hours of 'labor' with Noah, her heart rate didn't falter once. There was no distress. The minute she was born (and I proudly announced her sex), I knew her and she knew me. She looked perfectly cooked. 3.14kg, Appgars 9 and 9. Squawking. The following days and months were a long recovery. I was physically spent

but my spirit had not been broken.

During my pregnancy with Noah, I felt that parenthood was my challenge. I didn't know what to expect nor what I would be like as a parent, but I felt like there was very little preparation I could do, and that only time, and a baby, would reveal it. For my pregnancy with Eli, I had already been forged as a parent. I knew I could this job, connect with and respond to my child; give them what they needed. That doubt had been washed away like a downpour of a summer storm the minute she was born. For my pregnancy with Eli, labor became my challenge.

I have spent most of this article writing about Noah's birth. It is the beginning of the story of Eli's. In the intervening years between her birth and his, I spent many, many hours actively trying to heal the hurt that would burn in my chest and throat when I thought of the struggle labour with her had become. How I had not been listened to. How things had gone off course.

I know to some this sounds overly dramatic and maybe over-playing a labor experience, but nonetheless it was a trauma to me. It haunted me when I would least expect it to. I tried to compartmentalize my life so that my dealing with labor and where it had gone from normal to not, physiological to intensely medicalised, would not interfere with my ability to bond with Noah. In some ways those days of waiting for her, and the many hours of labor, my steadfast refusal of routine interventions gave me the piece I had been missing. My intuition that my baby was fine, despite being weeks overdue and many days of contractions, had proven right. My ability to stand by my intuition that all was fine with my baby helped give me the confidence that I would know how to take care of her. It helped forge me as a parent.

When I fell pregnant again I immediately went about interviewing private midwives. Whether I would birth at home or at the birth centre with Dr. Bisits (the only OB my body trusted enough to have a contraction in front of) was still up in the air, but I knew I needed the best chance of a VBAC, and in my mind that began with a trusted care provider. Someone who had experience and candor; someone who would be honest with me and whose opinion I could trust and stop having to second guess the advice I would be given - especially during labour. I interviewed several wonderful midwives, but knew the minute that Sheryl and I started talking that it was a perfect fit.



Now, I don't love pregnancy. There's just so much unknown wrapped up in it. And somehow I do resent that everyone around you can see this thing that is really, really intimate. Your body can't hide your pregnancy even if you'd like to keep it secret sometimes. However, I was excited at the prospect of a new baby and adding to our family, and though I remained mostly calm about the thought of a VBAC, I would have days in which the terror of the unknown and another traumatizing labour experience would descend upon me.

Sheryl, my husband, and some very special friends were my cheerleading squad. They were so patient as I needed to process what could happen. I hadn't told many people about our plan to have Eli at home, nor of his due date - afraid of the same mounting pressure as before, even from well-intentioned friends and family who were just eager for his arrival. I lied so many times about his due date I actually at times forgot when it was. Early on I came to realise that I didn't think I'd be able to labour at the birth centre effectively. There would just be too much wrapped up in it, and it was too big an ask of myself. I did a lot of work to prepare for my labour – both counseling with a psychologist and physiotherapy with a pelvic specialist, to make sure my pelvis would be able to open as much as it needed to this time. As my due date approached this time, I tried to keep reminding myself that I had done all I could to prepare, and that the rest was up to time, fate, the birthing goddess, the baby, and my uterus!

I started having mild but frequent contractions in the early hours of the morning -ironically, just a day after my 'due date'. I put myself back to sleep through them until around 5:30am, when I texted Sheryl and we spoke. She would arrive around 10am, stay for a bit, set me up on the couch with pillows for support, and then she went to do a post-natal visit around the corner, promising to be back soon. I stayed on the couch, trying to visualize a spot on the horizon as the contractions would crest and fall.

Sometime around 12:30 I got up and headed to the shower. The force of gravity plus walking up the stairs made everything more painful. What I didn't realize was that the increasing pressure was actually the sensation of my body making such quick progress. A shower and another walk downstairs, and I felt like I was in agony. Each contraction I would raise on my tiptoes, as if trying to climb out of my body. Sheryl suggested that I put

my heels down and bend my knees, and by the next contraction I was pushing.

Still terrified that it would go on for hours, or that his head would get stuck, I would quiz Sheryl between contractions. "No, I can see hair, and the baby is coming soon!" is the answer I would get, with a chuckle. Also ironically, the pool we had set up was inflated but not yet filled. Josh went into a mad rush to fill the pool as Sheryl set me up at the pool's edge, for me to hop in the minute it was ready. Josh had to jump in to get the water level up and I quickly followed. The second contraction in the pool and Eli's head emerged. With the next push his body followed. You can see in the photo I look completely stunned.

In the end, as I write this not 6 weeks since he was born, it really did take my second labour to heal me from the psychological trauma I had from the first. If the first labour had made me a parent-warrior, the second was a re-birth.

I don't quite know who this new little person is yet, as I instantly had known Noah, but I sure can't wait to find out.

Carla and Josh live in Sydney Australia after many years in Boston, MA, USA. They are partners of 13 years and parents to Noah Harper 2, and Eli Isadore 5 weeks. Josh is a swim coach and Carla is a Business Analyst and strategist who has a passion for healthcare as well as environmental sustainability. They have a dog, Goose, and recently said goodbye to Charlie, their Rottie who they brought over from Boston with Goose 2.5 years ago. They are massive Red Sox fans. When I fell pregnant again I immediately went about interviewing private midwives. Whether I would birth at home or at the birth centre with Dr. Bisits (the only OB my body trusted enough to have a contraction in front of) was still up in the air, but I knew I needed the best chance of a VBAC, and in my mind that began with a trusted care provider. Someone who had experience and candor; someone who would be honest with me and whose opinion I could trust and stop having to second guess the advice I would be given - especially during labour. I interviewed several wonderful midwives, but knew the minute that Sheryl and I started talking that it was a perfect fit.

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The Home-Water-Lotus Birth of Lukas



support. Jayden came into the bedroom and was excited to meet his little brother Lukas. The umbilical cord naturally fell off on day six. Welcome into this wonderful world Lukas.

Verena Raschke-Cheema and Bobby Singh Cheema live in Austinmer on the beautiful Illawarra coast. Verena has a PhD in Nutritional Sciences (www.drverena.com) and is very passionate about natural health and wellbeing. She already enjoyed a homebirth with her first son, Jayden, and knew that she would like to experience a homebirth again and claim this empowering rite of passage for her second son, Lukas.

My pregnancy with my first son Jayden (now two years old) had gone well and I was able to have a wonderful but intense nine hour home-lotus birth. When I fell pregnant with my second son Lukas I knew I wanted to experience a home-lotus birth again but in water. My aim was also to be more relaxed and flow fully with the powerful sensations of birth. I truly enjoyed the pregnancy with Lukas, which went by fast. The practice of meditation, breathing and relaxation techniques in combination with weekly yoga made me very strong and relaxed during my pregnancy and I fully trusted in the flow of my upcoming birth.

Week 38 approached and my midwife told me she needed to fly overseas due to an illness in her family and she would not be able to attend my birth. I understood her decision and felt confident that I could

sent me to have a more relaxed birth compared to my first one: 'The wonder of birth is a normal and natural process. I go through this experience with ease and love.'

On Wednesday at 1.00am I felt my first contractions when going to the bathroom. I told my husband Bobby that our child could be born soon and was very excited. I went back to bed and felt my contractions coming every twenty minutes. I texted Sonja and told her a pattern of contractions had established and I would keep her updated. At 4.00am the contractions came every ten minutes and I continued to breathe through them in bed. When our son Jayden got up at 7.00am the contractions became more intense. However, every time I got out of bed they seemed to slow down.

Bobby made breakfast and when I got up to eat at around 7.30am the contractions came every five minutes. They were so intense that I was unable to sit down. I was holding on to the kitchen table and breathing through those intense sensations with excitement that I would meet our second son soon. I told Bobby that our child was coming

and that we would have to take Jayden to our lovely friends who lived five minutes down the road. I returned to bed and called Sonja to tell her she would need to come as soon as possible to attend my birth.

When Bobby returned from dropping off Jayden he set up the birthing pool in the kitchen and filled it with water. I took off my clothes and put on my birthing necklace, containing so many wonderful blessed beads from dear friends and family members. I felt very calm and excited to birth my baby. Sonja arrived soon after I entered the pool. Her presence made me feel secure. Bobby started to prepare the labor aid drink to supply me with energy and electrolytes and Sonja was setting up her space. I was irritated by the noise of the two and was looking forward to some silence.

Once Bobby and Sonja were finished with their tasks they set down beside the pool. I was leaning against the pool wall with my head resting on my hands. It felt wonderful to be in the water. Compared to my first birth I was able to go with the flow of each contraction and use my body as a vehicle

to let the birth power flow through me. I used my voice and breath as a tool to relax and go deep within when the contractions became really intense. After two hours I felt that our son was already very far down the birthing canal. However, I was wondering about my contractions being three to five minutes apart. On the one hand it gave me the time to relax and recharge but on the other hand I became impatient and thought this birth was taking a very long time.

After being in the same position for three hours Sonja suggested I get out of the pool and walk around for a little while to avoid cramping. I stood up and got out of the pool. Bobby and Sonja put some towels around my back to keep me warm. I walked around for a few minutes and then leaned forward on a chair. My contractions were so intense that I started pushing and our son crowned. Bobby was excited to see part of his head with so much black hair.

I decided to step back into the pool to birth our son in the water. It was amazing to feel his head with my hands. After pushing for thirty minutes I changed my position from sitting to squatting. I really wanted to birth our son so decided to push him out with the next contraction, causing a small tear.

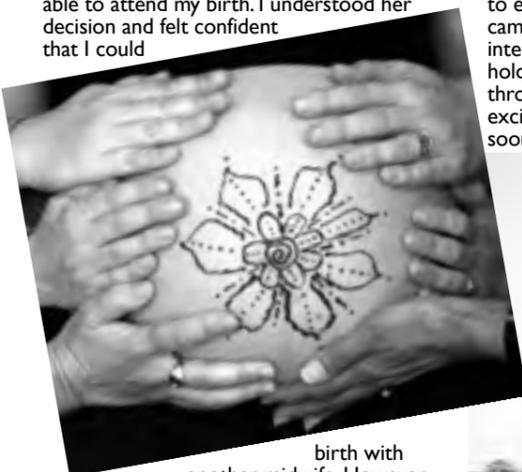
After a four hour active labor our second son was born in the water on Wednesday the 19th of June 2013 at 12.40 pm. I was able to catch Lukas with my hands. I lifted him up and put him on my chest. I felt total bliss that such a miracle unfolded again and was proud of being able to trust and go with the flow of birth. I was a mum

of two beautiful boys now. Bobby put his arms around us and felt very touched that he had witnessed such an empowering birth.

Our son Lukas opened his eyes and started to feed from my breast after a few minutes. He was sucking as if he had always known how to breastfeed. I

enjoyed this sacred time of bonding between us and looking into his beautiful blue eyes.

It took me one and a half hours to birth my placenta. As with the birth, I was being taught patience. We put the placenta in a colander after it was born to drain it well. I then stepped out of the pool, dried off and took Lukas with his placenta into our bedroom. While I had a shower Bobby and Sonja cleaned everything up. Bobby then picked up our son Jayden from our Justine and Wayne, who were of such great

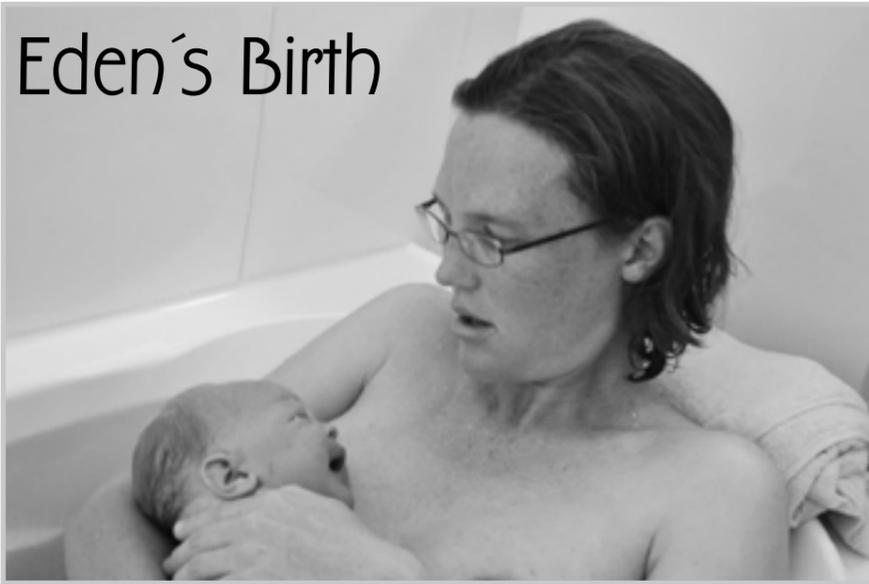


birth with another midwife. However, I was eager to meet my new midwife Sonja because I had the feeling that I would birth prior my due date. Sonja arranged to see me the next day, on Tuesday the 18th of June (38 1/2 weeks pregnant). I felt relieved to meet Sonja, a very experienced and knowledgeable independent midwife. We went over our birth plan and I felt satisfied that I got to know her.

That evening I meditated in bed and connected deeply with my child. I also read the birth affirmation that my aunt, an experienced kinesiologist and astrologist,



Eden's Birth



Eden is nine months old and I finally feel ready to write his birth story. I've tried to sit down and write it before but it didn't want to happen – I guess I hadn't processed it enough internally to be able to put pen to paper. One of my favourite quotes about birth is by Jane Hardwicke-Collings:

We have the births we need to have to teach us what we need to learn about ourselves and about life and the way of things, that then takes us to the next place on our life journey to wholeness. No failures, no mistakes, just opportunities for self awareness and choice.

I could see very clearly what I had learned from my previous birth experiences and for months I have been keen to discover what the lesson behind Eden's birth is.

It might come as a surprise to some people that I would need so much time to process the experience. In some ways his birth was everything I hoped and planned for – in our bath, at home, surrounded by my beloved husband, children, mother and sister-in-law and wonderful midwives. A labour lasting a few hours with its outcome a healthy mother and baby.

But I was in shock following the birth. It wasn't exactly as I'd hoped it would be. Why? Well, you see it HURT.

Hmmm, okay I don't expect a lot of sympathy, childbirth is often painful right? My



first experience of it certainly was. Twenty-four hours of agony if I remember rightly. But my second experience of giving birth was completely pain-free and ecstatic. I gave birth to my baby's head in my bathtub while my husband was in the kitchen making tea, my mother taking our toddler to breakfast, and the midwives on route to our house. And all I felt was the most wonderful exquisite joy you could ever imagine as I looked out the window at the trees and early morning sky.

Oh, except for a slight surprise stinging which made me wonder if his head was crowning. I excitedly put my hand down to see if I could feel anything and got the shock of my life to discover what turned out to be his entire head between my legs (I didn't believe it was actually a head at the time, it felt kind of squishy and I thought the placenta had come out first! It seemed impossible that a head could emerge from my vagina without me realising...).

So there was shock during that birth as well but it was short, happy shock. I had a moment of concern when I brought him up to my chest and he was not breathing but I laughed at it straight away as I knew with complete and utter confidence that nothing could go wrong, of course he would be fine, the universe was completely perfect in every way. What a hilarious joke that we ever worry about anything in this life!!

Wow. No wonder I wanted to give birth again after that.

The thing was I knew that I wouldn't have had an ecstatic, one-with-the-universe, merging-with-the-divine type of birth if it had gone to plan and anyone else had been in the room. I'm just not that uninhibited.

So I toyed with the idea of planning to birth completely alone but it seemed a bit too risky. Plus I wanted my children, aged 7 and 9, to be there. I wanted to give them the gift of being present at birth that my mother had given me. And I wanted my mother to be there, to give her the gift that she'd given me. And my husband too of course!

So I was left with these conflicting desires – wanting to birth alone and wanting to birth safely and to share my birth with others. For years I really didn't know how I was going to reconcile these and one day it hit me. The perfect solution! I would feel so much love for the people around me that I would be completely uninhibited, forget about them, go deep within and birth ecstatically just like I had the time before.

Phew, I was glad I got that sorted!

It's a bit awkward to admit that wanting to give birth again was one of your reasons for having a third child. I'm sure the homebirth haters would have a field day with that one! As well as the sensual indulgence of birth though I yearned also to experience those other pinnacles of sensual indulgence – pregnancy, breastfeeding, and the closeness and dependence of a baby.

It would be a shame, my ego argued smugly, not to do it again when you enjoy it so much and do it all so easily.

The irony didn't hit me in the first trimester but it should have. I hated being pregnant. It was so incredibly exhausting and I felt horribly sick all the time. Not at all what I was expecting based on my other two experiences.

Breastfeeding was a nightmare from day one. I remember looking at this screaming alien that had exploded my life apart after almost a full night of non-stop suckling and wishing he would just disappear so I could go snuggle peacefully with my cosy husband in our comfortable bed.

It got better after that of course. But then a couple of months later it got much, much worse. My eldest child was admitted to hospital with what I perceived, in my hyper-alert postnatal state, to be a life-threatening infection. I developed anxiety and started having panic attacks. I didn't realise at the time but my let-down and supply were affected. It got so bad I gave Eden formula a few times, something I never imagined I would have to do with a newborn. I came very close to giving up feeding altogether.

Ego wasn't so smug by this point. But back to the birth:

It was Sunday night, a couple of days past my due date, and I was really hoping I would go into labour. The school holidays had just started and it would be perfect timing for my husband to start his paternity leave (e.g. no early morning starts for two weeks, just us all hanging out as a family). Plus I was huge



really didn't want this baby getting any bigger.

My husband set his alarm for 1am to get up to watch his football team play in the Premier League (he's English) and as I went to bed after watching Call the Midwife on the ABC I joked (actually I was pretty serious) that it would be great if I went into labour while he was awake in the middle of the night.

Sure enough, I was woken by a surge at 1:30am. What a relief! I got up, excited that there was someone awake to share the news with.

In the morning I called my midwife and support people to let them know stuff was happening and that I would be in contact.

My mum and sister-in-law came over at around 9 or 10am I think. My birth plan had stated that I was going to spend the early labour alone in our spare room, focusing on my breath and resting. This was what I had done the time before and as it worked so well it seemed like a good plan. But that had been through the night. This was daytime and I could hear my mum and Eleanor chatting and eating in the kitchen. I didn't want to miss out on conversation or food so I went to hang out with them. I chatted, ate and drank tea in between surges.

After a couple of hours things felt like they were ramping up so I called my midwife and said it was probably time for her to come because contractions had been five minutes apart for an hour.

Then after that, all of a sudden, it started to get intense. I decided to get in the bath. I felt the need to release sound with each surge.

I was alone mostly, as I'd specified in the plan, but I remember at one point asking my mum to sing my favourite hymns to me. She is a beautiful singer. I'm a Buddhist now but was brought up a Catholic and I still love many of the hymns I learnt as a child.

My husband and kids came in to use the toilet (we have another toilet so I don't know why they felt the need to use that one!) and my husband made a joke, or tried to share some light banter. I told him this wasn't appropriate while I was surging and realised I should have made him read the birth plan... At one point Cain, my middle child, came in and exclaimed "Mum, do you know we can hear you on the trampoline!!!" I laughed because we live next to a big park and being school holidays it was full of people, no doubt surprised to hear birthing noises coming from over the fence!

And then it was time for the baby to emerge and suddenly the room was full. My midwives stayed outside though – they could see what was going on through the crack between the hinges of the door.

I was glad to see my son filming as I'd requested, and to see my nephew sitting on my pregnant sister-in-law's lap. I was pleased to have all the people who were there be there, but at the same time I did feel a bit like a noisy animal in a zoo giving birth in front of spectators.

The second stage in my memory is something of a blur. It took a lot longer than I was expecting, close to an hour I think.

I remember at one point holding onto my midwife's hand, asking her advice on what sort of breathing I should do. Experiencing the same feelings of desperation and helplessness that I'd felt during the birth of my first son wasn't at all what I had expected. Looking to the 'expert' to guide me rather than following my instincts hadn't been in the plan.

My waters finally broke as the head was born. I could feel something was holding Eden back, it felt to me like he was stuck but I couldn't really articulate this at the time. Nothing budged for the next two surges and

then my midwife came in and untangled the cord around his neck so that the body could be born, I was supremely grateful to her in that moment.

The period following the birth is also a blur.

My mother exclaimed that he was big but he didn't look that big too me. Later I was so stunned by his weight (4.6kgs) that it brought a tear to my eye! I was relieved that my midwives had reassured me throughout the pregnancy that my baby was "a good size, but not too big." If I'd known I'd be birthing a baby a kilo heavier than my previous two it would have freaked me out!

I was surprised that the placenta didn't pop out easily the way it had with Cain's birth. I was pleased when Cain, with his Dad's help, cut the cord as it was too short to be comfortable. So what do I need to learn from Eden's birth and life so far?

Well a lot of things but the main ones are: - Humility and at the same time, paradoxically, self-acceptance and self-confidence.

- How wonderful it is that life gives you other than what you want. If I could have chosen my baby it would have been a girl as we now have three boys (about six or seven pounds birth weight thanks!) but I wouldn't want my adorable, strong-willed, strong-muscled, beautiful, big, bouncing boy to be ANY different to what he is. If I'd got the birth, easy newborn period and breastfeeding relationship I hoped for I would have missed out on the deeper empathy and compassion I know have for all mothers.

- The futility of trying to repeat a pleasurable experience. Trying to impose my will onto life, to control it, only turns it sour. Listening to life, flowing with it, is much wiser.

- If I want to have unconditional love for everyone I encounter, or even just a few people, or for myself, or overcome my propensity for people-pleasing then I need to be willing to do the work. I can't just snap my fingers and be a different person to who I am. I need to cultivate awareness of the desires I have for connection with and differentiation from others and the conditioned behaviours



surrounding those desires. I need to feel the pain of embarrassment, perceived inadequacy, rejection, hurt pride and defensiveness so that instead of escaping into self-pity, judging, indignation or the relative comfort of my conscious mind



I can continue to open my heart.

- Ultimately the main message from all three births can be summed up by one word: surrender. Going into Cain's birth I vowed that I would accept myself no matter what, if I screamed my head off no big deal, and the result was the birth of my dreams. But with Eden's the expectations of myself were back – I would be composed, loving, etc – and this caused great suffering and disappointment. It wasn't the pain that was the problem – plenty of women feel great pain during childbirth but are then flooded with joy straight after it, not stunned and numb like I was – but my mental rigidity and clinging to how I thought things should be, rather than surrendering to how they were.

In hindsight there were a few things during the pregnancy that may have contributed to me feeling numb following the birth. Enduring guilt at begging my reluctant husband into a third child. Being with my seventy-five year old aunt (who had no children on her own and lived with us during my childhood) in intensive care during her last conscious hours after a sudden illness and as excrement flowed from her burst bowels into her bloodstream. Fighting for the doctors to listen to and follow her last wish, to avoid theatre, and losing. Irrational, intense anger towards my extended family during the grief period. My husband being called to England with just a couple of days' notice when his mother was told she had just weeks to live. A major fall from grace at work involving huge changes and disappointments due to my role being essentially 'privatised' as part of dramatic restructure.

However Eden is now twelve months old and life is wonderful! I completely adore him and so does the rest of the family. He is an incredibly bossy, adventurous and curious toddler but so deliciously cute that I find myself wishing I could have another baby (no chance of that, part of the 'deal' to get the third was I had to guarantee no number four!). There are of course challenging days and sometimes I feel the familiar intense craving for escape from full-time motherhood, but I know from experience that acting on that desire (for example by getting a job) is not the answer and instead let the feelings of desperation and craving wash over me as in between waves I marvel at how infinitely beautiful the sunlight sparkling in the trees is, and how amazingly blessed I am to have this view of those trees, this home, this family and this time to spend caring for them, my communities, my kids' school, my wonderful extended family and so much more.

Heidi is stay at home mum of three boys (Isaac, 9, Cain, 7 and Eden, 1), recently qualified as a HypnoBirthing instructor.



The Birth of Micah John Maegraith

stopped completely. Absolute bummer that I then had to go into the hospital to have a scan; this was protocol for anyone whose waters have broken early. Did the scan; all totally fine. Very, very cool to leave the hospital to go home to have a baby.

Settled in at home with some nice distractions. Icing a birthday cake, walking around in the sun and the fresh air, organising beanbags and cushions in random positions around the birthing room.

Labour kicked in. For the first time I felt like I just loved it. I was going for orgasmic birth this time and each time the contraction came on I just tapped into the feeling of just letting your whole body go. It was incredible! It meant that I actually had something to focus on as each one came. I also imagined a huge Tsunami like wave that I was riding. It was like a massive surge in the sea that my body was being joyfully lifted up over. I was so, so happy.

Wow! This is truly the most incredible experience a human being can know. I felt so privileged and instead of fighting against the work my body was doing, I kept thinking "This is my body, I am my body, I am birthing!!"

My third boy, Gabriel, was born at home. One of my memories of his birth was that towards the end, I felt absolutely exhausted. With this birth I never once felt

to birth? As it turned out, I don't think physical fitness has very much at all to do with birthing. You use your uterus. The only time it gets exercised is when you are in labour. The last thing I had on my list to do with this pregnancy was to go to Coogee beach and get some full term tummy bikini pics! Once I did that I was ready to birth.

My waters broke late one Saturday night. Woah! I'd never had that happen before. Amazingly

I was able to go back to sleep even though I noticed quite strong contractions starting. The next morning labour had

So our family was done. My husband booked in and had his vasectomy. I felt sad but it was realistic. We were pretty tired with our three boys and we were keen to live near the city. That means smaller spaces and more expense. Best to finish up now.

Amazingly, the thought of completing our family must have sparked something in my body, as we still conceived, sometime before or after the procedure (you are still potentially fertile for up to 6 months). Sadly, little Asher died 17 weeks later. His birth story is in a previous issue of Birthings. After an intense time of grief we were in a strange place. We'd stopped at three children, adjusted to having four children and now we were back to three again. A couple of years later I couldn't get this thought out of my mind: what if we did a reversal?

The thought kept driving me insane and I knew it probably would for the rest of my childbearing years. We therefore decided to open the window again to more babies. Rich and I did a (not so very) romantic weekend away on the gold coast for the vasectomy reversal (the private clinic also performed penile enhancement!) and the procedure was done.

A couple of years later I was pregnant again. I can now say that after having four previous pregnancies and births, I was blessed with a birth that exceeded all my expectations.

We chose to birth through the St George hospital homebirth program. It was such joy to have continuity of care throughout the whole journey with Nicole, one of the midwives. I clicked with her straight away. She was a no-nonsense and down to earth woman who I just felt secure with. It was so lovely to be instantly respected by the midwives. Even though I was trooping into hospital for the antenatal visits, I always felt like she was 'on my turf' and she said to me with all sincerity that she would be learning from me. What a beautiful, honouring place for me to start with.

As the pregnancy went on, I was dealing with anxiety after having lost the child before this one. I was also very unfit and the last few weeks were hard. If it was difficult for me to walk up the street how was I going



physically tired, even though the last few weeks of pregnancy were really hard work. The energy and the hormones just took over once labour began. I loved having my three boys around. At one point after a big contraction my oldest son Jed leant over to whisper something in my ear. I thought he was going to ask if I was okay, instead he said, "Mum can we please watch the footy?" Birth is just a normal part of everyday life!

After the birth, I asked my second boy Jonah which bit he remembered and he said, "The bit when all your blood and guts were coming out." (My placenta took a lot longer this time)

Well, you would remember that. Soon the contractions heated up. The wave thing just didn't cut it any more and the vocalising stepped up a notch. At that point I knew we were getting close and I was feeling panicky.

Soon after, Nicole and her partner midwife arrived as well as Lynn. My husband works at the church in Marrickville and our new pastors are seasoned homebirthers (Lynn had four of her six children at home). I was so blessed to have Lynn as part of the experience. There was something about having the presence of these three strong women. Peace descended. I felt a bit like the aboriginal women who just all go off together into the bush and have a baby. Birth is a communal thing, it's a woman's thing.

Soon I asked for an internal and I was 5 cm dilated. For once it wasn't disappointing to hear.

That's exactly where it felt for me and that's also exactly what my husband guessed! (The midwives were impressed with that.) I got into our big deep, custom-made birth pool and wished I'd got into it earlier. It was warm, cushioned and deep. I'd like to hug the person who designed it. In fact, I'd like to own one just to use any time.

From this point on I just checked out of reality. What felt like five minutes was actually an hour in the pool. Transition was

like going to another universe. Soon I felt that intense point of what I would honestly describe as pure terror. Everything about homebirth is wonderful, except for those few short moments when you feel like your whole body is being torn apart.

Then all of a sudden, for the first time I consciously felt the baby coming through the cervix.

Amazing. Then I reached down and held his little head. Heaven. I thought, "Wow! I'm here already." Hell and Heaven all within a few short minutes.

I swept him up out of the water and he just hollered! What a joy. None of that romantic,

gentle kind of birth that you hear about. He entered the world shouting from the rooftops.

We called him Micah John. Born in three hours, surrounded by my husband who I love, my three boys, three strong women, one dog and two chickens.

Signing off from birth now (I think). Not sure that you can get a birth better than what I was so richly blessed with.

Thank you, Jesus, for all you have done in my life and for giving me more than I could have ever dreamed of.

Ali Maegraith



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A Bonnie Birth by Louise Walton

At my son Flynn's six week check up, our lovely midwife, Melanie, suggested we decide on a contraception method. Woops! Never crossed that off the to-do list, so lo and behold, 7 months later I found myself expecting again. It was a pretty good pregnancy, about as good as you can expect with a terrible back and a one year old, and the only thing that worried me was Group B Strep, which kept showing up in my urine. I had 3 or 4 UTI's during this pregnancy and had to take a lot of antibiotics, and I knew that intravenous antibiotics during labour was recommended for GBS. The GPs weren't very helpful, two of them actually had to google Group B Strep to see what I was talking about. But in reading up on it even more extensively than Google and discussing it with Melanie and Emma, my lovely midwives, I decided that I'd rather not pump my baby full of antibiotics at birth 'just in case' and instead I would just closely monitor the baby in the week after it was born (although who doesn't do that anyway!).

I was due early to mid August, and lots of my family were busy then: my Dad was getting back from Europe on 14 August; and my sister Mel (who I wanted to attend the birth) was leaving on the 16 August, so I jokingly told Melanie I would have the baby on 14 August as it suited my schedule. So sure enough, at 12.30am 14 August I started getting contractions. We'd decided to send our 17 month old son Flynn to mum's during the birth, but because it was night, I was happy for him to sleep through it and got excited that he would wake up to meet his new sister.

By about 3am my contractions were two to three minutes apart, getting quite intense, so I felt like it would be soon. My sister Jess was already over and setting up with me. I decided to ask Melanie and Emma, my back-up midwife, to come, plus my sister Mel too. I then felt a gush of something and went to check what it was. I felt a bit sick when I saw a big patch of bright red blood in my undies, and felt more blood drip out - I didn't realise bleeding a bit could be normal as I'd had nothing like this with Flynn. I woke Jack up and called Melanie, who reassured me that a bit of blood was ok, they didn't start to worry unless it was more than 50 millilitres.

Feeling a bit shocked and shaky after that scare, my contractions started to slow down and by the time my midwives arrived at 4am, they were very far apart and irregular. By the

time the sun rose, they were 10 minutes apart again. By the time Flynn woke up, there was almost nothing. He was very excited to see a pool in the middle of the lounge room, so before my mum arrived to take him, he went "twimming" and "plashing" with Daddy!

Because I'd just about stopped labouring, the midwives went home for a bit and my sister Mel went off to do a presentation at uni. Mum and Flynn left, and the house was very quiet. Jack, Jess and I all had a nap for over an hour until I was woken up at midday with a very sharp, intense contraction. Soon I called Mel and the midwives. It was time for this little girl to start her journey down!

By 2pm it was my turn for a swim. I remember it being quiet and warm and sunny that afternoon. It was peaceful and I was managing the pain fairly well for an hour and a bit, starting to give some long, low groans with each intense wave. Soon I found it hard to get comfortable, but the worst thing for me was the sound of the kettle boiling - it was really grating my nerves. Sure enough, I was transitioning and started getting the urge to push, and since nothing felt comfortable, I chose to get onto all fours to try birthing that way. Melanie had warned me the baby would probably be born very soon after my waters broke. I didn't feel ready yet (I was being a wimp) so I stopped pushing half way through each contraction.

Finally, after doing this for 10 contractions or so I gathered the courage to break my waters with the next push. Meanwhile Melanie's husband had just handed over her five month old son at the front door for a feed. Not sure how long the little guy had to wait for a feed because at that moment my waters broke and I could feel Bonnie coming out in an instant, so I frantically called, "Melanie!" and she had to almost throw Charlie back and come rushing in!

The next three minutes were the hardest in my life (physically at least)! Bonnie would have just shot out like a rocket so I spent the whole time trying my hardest to hold her in to give myself a chance to stretch. I couldn't find a way to get relief from the pressure - I felt like I must have looked like a bucking bronco in my distress, but I was relatively still when I watched the birth on video so it must have been all in my head. Melanie was telling me to breathe, and made some quick "HA HA HA HA" noises for me to copy, which was great, as I couldn't comprehend instructions at this stage, but I was able to mimic.

I could feel Bonnie's head slowly stretching my perineum and I finally let go completely and pushed in earnest. I got a little worried that she wouldn't fit and wondered if it would be possible to give up at this stage, then suddenly panicked and realised this was a real little human being that I had to make sure stayed alive! I prayed a quick prayer to God to keep her safe, and then felt assured that I could do it. And then out came her head. After peeling the bags away from Bonnie's head, Melanie noticed some meconium so told me to push out her body as soon as I could, and I pushed hard and gave a big growly scream in the next contraction to get her out. Jack handed her to me in a bit of a tangle of umbilical cord and I held her close and talked to her, waiting for her to take her first breath and show some signs of life. It was a long 60 seconds, but she finally gave a little grunt then a cry. And just like my first birth, Jack and I shed no tears, just relieved laughter at how little and squished and squirmy she looked!

Having lost a bit of blood, the midwives got me out of the pool 15 minutes later, gave me a synto shot and pulled out my placenta (I waited 2 hours last time with no success, so was quite happy to have it actively managed early on), all while Bonnie started feeding. Bonnie had great attachment - not quite as strong as Flynn, which was nice, and she fed for two hours straight. I had torn a little bit in the quick birth of her shoulders, but didn't need stitches like last time, hooray (my 4.7kg son must have stretched me nicely)!

My mum came over with Flynn and he met his sister, although he was more interested in the candles than the baby. He loves her now though and gives her many enthusiastic "tuddles" a day. I'm surprised at how much she loves him even though she's so young; she follows his voice and watches him whenever he's nearby and her first real smile was for Flynn, despite the daily accidental elbows to the stomach and kicks to the head.

By 5.30 or 6pm Bonnie, although looking like a tiny, scrawny newborn to me, weighed in at a reasonable 3.98kg. It was starting to get dark so I cleaned up a bit, got half-dressed, and feeling very dizzy, hopped into bed. I felt more tired than my first birth; I think it progressed much quicker this time round but was more intense and draining. Bonnie's breathing was a little quick so I slept with her cuddled up close to me to regulate it, and that's still how she falls asleep best.

Bonnie is still thriving nicely two months on and I feel completely recovered and back to normal, which is great because it took me closer to eight months last time. Actually I never really completely recovered from Flynn's birth - I felt like I had a low, heavy cervix or achy vaginal walls that made it slightly uncomfortable to stand still for more than 5 minutes and sex had sometimes still hurt around the area I got stitches. None of these were too severe, and I didn't mind if I had to live with them, but this second birth not only gave me a sweet little girl, but the added bonus of clearing up all previous problems! Bonnie is very different to Flynn - at two months I would have described him as fat, funny, friendly and strong. Bonnie is sensitive, a bit anxious, sweet and observant. I love her to bits. We are so happy and content with our beautiful family right now!

Louise is the full-time mum of Flynn and Bonnie, who often fills her non-existent extra time with running or helping with kids' events for church, though at the moment is just working on her own kids exclusively for a few months. She is married to Jack, in the house that Jack built, and they are both probably in the top 2 per cent of the world's untiest people, so she feels that keeping the house in a "reasonably liveable" status is a great achievement.

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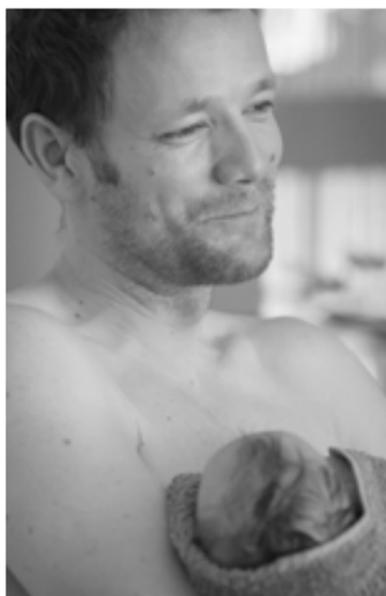
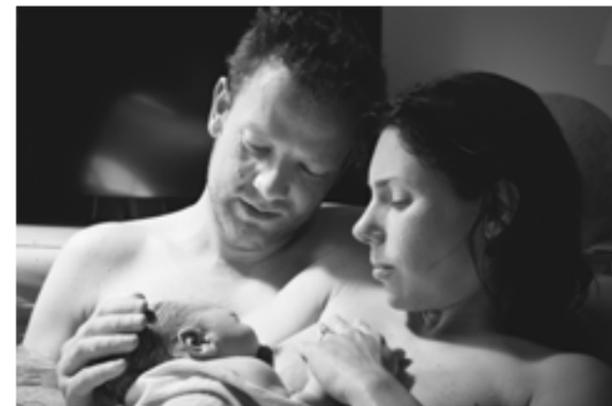
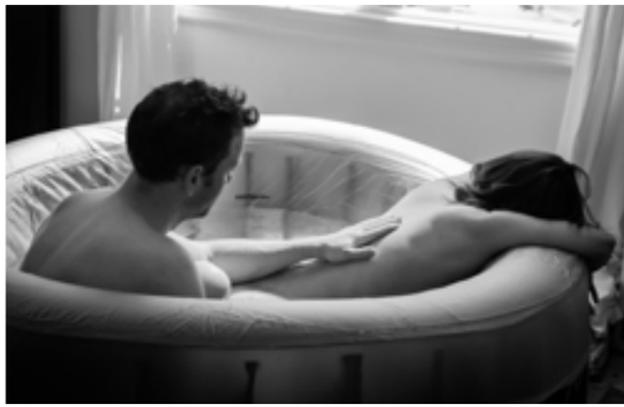
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Photo Essay:
The Birth of
Charles
Shirin Town



A mother of 4-y-o Chloé and now 1 m-o Charles, Emilie was born and raised in France and now lives with her Australian partner Tom. She is a freelance English to French Translator. Emilie started being interested in births when her brother was born – she was 4! She feared throughout her 20's that she would have to have an episiotomy when she would give birth to her own children as it is a routine practise in France. Fortunately she met some inspiring women as a young adult, started to be passionate about homebirth and eventually had her own children, both born at home with the guidance of beautiful midwives, Betty and Sheryl.

Shirin was born in Sydney to an English father and a Persian mother. Her grandparents were Polish and Romanian W(as well as Persian). She now lives in Sydney and am married to the most wonderful hu(man) I have ever known. They have two amazing boys aged 4 and 6.

Photography is her passion and she loves to tell stories with the pictures she creates. Her style is natural and unposed (reportage) photography. Shirin believes there is an inherent and unrivalled beauty in truth, and sees her role as photographer as capturing those moments that embody that beautiful truth.

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HAS was a Gold Sponsor for the Trust Birth conference recently which entitled us to one of only four tables to sell merchandise. Fortunately we had more to sell than the other three tables combined. Our most popular items were the Down To Earth Birth book by Jenny Blythe, (which is always a sell-out item), and Birthings magazine – we had two women from America buy a copy of every different edition that we had in stock! I am proud that they were taking one of the world's best homebirth specific magazines to their own countries to read and share around.

I was fortunate to be able to attend each day of the conference so I didn't miss out on any day of the fantastic speakers. I was joined on the table for two days by our old Distribution Coordinator Amanda McGuinness, and on the third day by our Merchandise Coordinator and Treasurer Veronica Cerbelli with her gorgeous bubba Abby (pictured). We ended up taking in about \$1600, which fell short of our outlay, but hopefully we made up for that by potentially increasing our magazine coverage to other parts of the world.

The conference itself was fantastic with many well respected birth professionals speaking on various topics – it was a difficult decision to choose who to see, as there was a choice between 3 speakers at the same session times. But in the end I chose which topics were the most relevant to me in my professional work as a doula, nutritionist and placenta encapsulator.

The conference opened with an inspiring talk on 'Reclaiming Birth from the Medicalized Female Body' with author Elizabeth Noble and Trust Birth founder Carla Hartley. Then it was off to see my personal choices, starting with 'Placental Birth & PPH' with the wise and interesting midwife Rachel Reed, which explored the physiology of placental birth, ways to avoid complications and how to manage them effectively.

Then I saw Joy Jones (who created the Brewers Pregnancy Diet website) speak on 'The Truth About Gestational Diabetes' which was an eye opening discussion which further affirmed my doubts and criticisms of this over-diagnosed condition.

The next day I saw Joy again in her next talk on 'Nutrition and Pregnancy: The Truth About Health and Complication Prevention Part 1' which explained how the Brewers Diet can help mothers follow the normal physiology of pregnancy.

Next up was 'Optimal Foetal Positioning' with Claire Hall which challenged how we see babies' "unfavourable" positions as she proposed that OFP causes an unhealthy obsession and fear of posterior births that is actually detrimental to women and births, and undermines a woman's confidence and a baby's wisdom of how to navigate their way out.

Following this was midwife Gail Hart's in depth presentation: 'Vaginal Bacteria-Flora and Group B Strep: Toward a new paradigm' in which she gave plenty of preventative and alternative treatments to antibiotics for a GBS infection by helping to promote healthy vaginal flora.



Next up was 'Mapping the Pelvis' with Lisa Barrett which was a practical way to measure our own (and other pregnant women's) pelvises to increase confidence that a baby will fit – a must have when too many women are told that their pelvises are too small. It would have been a comical sight for anyone watching us on the floor with what looked like our own fists up our asses. I know someone took a photo of that with me in the pic and I am hoping it never sees the light of day!

That evening I participated in placenta junkie Patricia Edmond's practical demonstration, 'Exploring the Form and Function of the Placenta'. We were fortunate enough to have three fresh placentas brought down by a midwife from Queensland and we learned so much on how to read the placenta, and to recognize anomalies that may signal the need for more in depth study that can be lifesaving for the newborn baby.

On the Sunday morning I went to see Lisa Barrett again with her amusing and interesting session titled: 'Hanzoutta; Progress without VEs' which made us question why there is the obsessive need to know dilation in the first place when early labour is obvious, late labour is obvious, and everything in between is just the means to an end! I learned a great deal about the interesting outward signs of labour which I did not know before.

I then attended Joy Jones's third talk 'Nutrition and Pregnancy: The Truth About Health and Complication Prevention Part 2' which outlined the physiology of falling blood volume that triggers various complications of pregnancy, and how optimum nutrition and diet can help prevent and treat such complications. I also had to do a bit of unlearning around using certain herbs for treating fluid retention (ie herbal diuretics are a no no!).

We then broke for lunch and were privileged to choose which speaker's table to sit at. I chose Rachel Reed's but in being late I was at the far end and didn't really get much of a chance to chat to her specifically (although I didn't really know what to say anyway!).

The final session was 'Perinatal Relationships' with author of the book 'Becoming Us', Elly Taylor, however unfortunately I was caught up on a long phone call so I missed all but the end. But what I did hear was fascinating and made me regret not hearing the rest of it.

Over the course of the weekend, we had been collecting money for a raffle of a Manduca carrier, a book and some HAS memberships, and we probably made about \$100 from ticket sales. Then after we raffled off our prizes, to our surprise we were suddenly overwhelmed with donations of other prizes from speakers and stall holders in the audience (which mostly comprised of books). So the people that did buy some tickets were extra lucky to get more chances of winning some stuff, and those who didn't buy any were rather spewing that they missed out on a chance to win the extras!

The closing ceremony was by Carla Hartley which was truly heart-warming and inspiring, and it made us all hopeful that despite the financial hardships which these Trust Birth conferences (and specifically this one) has been for her, that she loves it so much that she is willing to do it all over again (even though she had said this would be the last!). I hope to attend the next one if it ever comes here again!

Virginia Maddock

28/08/13

Radio Prauge

<http://www.radio.cz/en/section/curaffrs/constitutional-court-decision-encourages-further-discussion-on-home-births>

Constitutional Court decision encourages further discussion on home births
The Constitutional Court made a landmark ruling on Wednesday morning, which struck down the verdicts of three previous courts on the guilt of midwife Ivana Königsmarková. A leading home birth advocate Königsmarková was given a suspended two-year prison sentence, a hefty fine and a ban from her profession for delivering a baby with serious neurological defects during a home birth. For proponents of more liberal birthing regulations this can mean a big step forward, but whether the decision will actually advance the debate on home births remains to be seen.

3/9/13

Irish Times

Second Opinion: Take control of your medical experience – it's your right

<http://www.irishtimes.com/life-and-style/health-family/second-opinion-take-control-of-your-medical-experience-it-s-your-right-1.1513751>

Although they may not realise it, women have control over what happens to their bodies when they avail of a hospital birth. In fact, men and women can control all decisions regarding consent to medical, surgical, and other treatments and procedures, whether carried out in hospitals or by community services.

6/9/13

ABC Online

Women rally for return of right to home births

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-09-05/home-birth-rally-parliament-house-darwin/4938264?section=nt>

Home birth advocates gathered at Parliament House in Darwin today to press the Northern Territory Government to reverse new restrictions on midwife services. They said recent Health Department changes were denying women who have had Caesarean deliveries the right to give birth at home, with the assistance of a midwife. A group of around 50 home birth supporters and pregnant women called on Health Minister Robyn Lambley to allow them access to midwives.

6/9/13

ABC News

After homebirth deaths, midwifery board tackles alleged professional misconduct by former midwife Lisa Barrett

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-09-06/midwifery-board-acts-on-alleged-professional-misconduct-lisa-ba/4939968>

A former midwife present at homebirths in which four babies died could be fined and banned from practising under disciplinary action launched by the Nursing and Midwifery Board. Documents obtained by ABC News show former midwife Lisa Barrett is accused of professional misconduct damaging to the reputation of the midwifery profession. In January 2011, she voluntarily surrendered her midwifery registration and commenced practice as a birth advocate, working privately in the homebirth industry

7/9/13

Irish Times

Aja Teehan says she intends to become 'birth refugee' by having baby in the UK

<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/aja-teehan-says-she-intends-to-become-birth-refugee-by-having-baby-in-the-uk-1.1518900>

A woman who lost her case against the Health Service Executive (HSE) to give birth at home says she will go abroad to have her baby next month. Aja Teehan had a partial victory yesterday when a judge refused to award costs against her, accepting that her case involved an issue of public interest. Speaking after the costs issue was resolved, she said she was now prepared to become a "birth refugee" by travelling to the UK when she goes on maternity leave at the end of this month. Her second child is due on October 13th. Last month Ms Justice Iseult O'Malley had decided that Ms Teehan, a university lecturer, was not entitled to compel the HSE to accept liability for the risk involved in a home birth when it did not believe the risk was justifiable.

7/9/13

The Independent

Mothers don't have the 'right' to a homebirth

<http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/mothers-dont-have-the-right-to-a-home-birth-8804703.html>

A woman wanting a home birth has the option of hiring an independent midwife. However, now that EU law is making professional indemnity insurance compulsory for healthcare professionals, independent midwives will have to get indemnity cover to continue practising. The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC), which regulates midwives, says that if there is conflict between service providers and a woman's wish to birth at home, the midwife has a duty of care to attend the woman. This has put some midwives in a dilemma. Must they attend a home birth, even when their NHS employer doesn't agree? The NMC says that they should. Indirectly, it seems, a woman could require attendance at home by this route; whether she would be wise to do so is another matter.

10/9/13

Irish Times

Midwives should not deal with home births alone, coroner says

<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/crime-and-law/midwives-should-not-deal-with-home-births-alone-coroner-says-1.1522334>

The burden of responsibility on midwives when assisting at home births is too great for them to be on their own, a Coroner said today. Coroner John O'Dwyer called for changes to ensure that no midwives deal single-handedly with home deliveries. Mr O'Dwyer also recommended that the ambulance service should be notified whenever a home birth is planned in case an emergency develops.

26/9/13

Daily Mail

'Home birth was beyond painful': Alanis Morissette calls the drug-free delivery of her son a 'transcendental experience'

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-2433412/Alanis-Morissette-calls-drug-free-birth-son-transcendental-experience.html>

Alanis Morissette has opened up about the painful yet 'transcendental' experience of giving birth to her baby boy at home, without drugs or doctors. 'The experience was beyond pain,' she told Today.com of her home birth, which she did with the help of a doula and a midwife. 'It was a transcendental experience. I just went to this whole other world.'

15/10/13

NT News

Women push birth freedom of choice

http://www.ntnews.com.au/article/2013/10/15/326146_ntnews.html
BIRTH choice advocates will demand more maternity services for Northern Territory women during a vigil at Parliament House. Darwin Homebirth Group president Alison Sharma said hundreds of women had signed a petition and more than 40 women had written personal letters to NT Health Minister Robyn Lambley as part of an ongoing Birth Choices campaign. The Childbirth Education Association and Darwin Homebirth Group have requested legislative change to enable privately practicing midwives to operate in the Northern Territory in accordance with the National Maternity Services plan signed by the Northern Territory in 2010.

25/10/13

Daily Mail

'Home birth is not a wild or erratic choice': Doula and photographer shares intimate images of labor to 'demystify' experience

http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-2475672/Home-birth-wild-erratic-choice-Doula-photographer-shares-intimate-images-labor-demystify-experience.html?ITO=1490&ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490

For one woman, there is nothing more sacred than capturing the moment a mother gives birth. Jackie Dives, who for the past three years has been practicing as a doula, specializes in photography for families who are interested in documenting their birth experience. 'Too often, birth is portrayed as a scary and dreaded event in a woman's life,' the 29-year-old Vancouver resident told MailOnline. 'As a doula and birth photographer, I witness wonderful births, and think they should be shared in order to demystify the experience.'

12/11/13

The Age

Private midwives for public hospitals

<http://m.theage.com.au/victoria/private-midwives-for-public-hospitals-20131112-2xft.html>

Victorian women may soon be able to pay a private midwife to deliver their baby in a public hospital in the same way they can employ a private obstetrician to manage their birth. In a long awaited move, the Victorian Government has published new advice for hospitals this week which allows them to set up agreements with private midwives to act as primary carers for women giving birth. This means private midwives who meet certain criteria will be able to not just care for women privately during their pregnancy, but also book them into hospitals for birth under their care in the same way private obstetricians do for a fee. Up until now private midwives employed by women for a hospital birth have only been able to act as "support people".

PRE-NATAL SERVICES

Inner West

BIRTHSENSE WITH JACKI MCFARLANE

Birth Art Group, Prenatal Counselling, Hypnosis and Creative Preparation for Pregnancy Wellbeing and Positive Birthing. For group details and individual sessions please phone Jacki: 90433079 or 0419286619
ackchip@internode.on.net

KRISTIANE HEIDRICH

In Adults CranioSacral Therapy Treats a wide range of conditions such as:

- Sensory Integration Disorders/ Learning Disabilities
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- Emotional Difficulties: Depression, Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome, Anxiety
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- Sleep Disorders
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- Migraines and Headaches
- Chronic Neck and Back Pain
- Motor-Coordination Impairments
- Stress and Tension-Related Problems
- Traumatic Brain and Spinal Cord Injuries
- Chronic Fatigue/ Exhaustion
- Scoliosis
- Central Nervous System Disorders
- Temporomandibular Joint Syndrome (TMJ)

Kristiane Heidrich is a mother of 3 children aged 21, 19 and 17. She is a Physiotherapist, Massage Therapist, CranioSacral Therapist, SomaticEmotional Release Therapist, Visceral Manipulation Therapist and a teacher of these therapies. CranioSacral Therapy enabled her to realise that instead of pushing against the body's restrictions causing 'dis-ease', that she could follow the body's own innate patterns and wisdom to facilitate the healing process. Kristiane has a special interest in working with mothers in the pre-conception (fertility) phase, during pregnancy, postpartum and also treats children of all ages in her clinic (0-90). She is a Doula, a Placenta Encapsulator and a midwifery student at UTS. For fees/conditions and further information contact 0405 501 012 or visit the website www.ashfieldphysio.com.au

North Shore / Northern Beaches

HEATHER CRAWFORD

Acupuncturist + Midwife
Please see my listing under "Birthing services: Midwives"
Acupuncture and Chinese Herbal Medicine for fertility, pregnancy and postnatal home visits.
Crows Nest Ph: 0423 171 191
Manly Ph: 02 9977 7888
heather@heathercrawford.com.au
www.heathercrawford.com.au

Sutherland / St George

ACTIVE CALMBIRTH® COURSES SYLVANIA

The calmbirth® course imparts the knowledge of birth preparation techniques such as deep relaxation, visualisation, breathing, positive imagery, attitudes/expectancy to achieve a rewarding, easier, more comfortable stress-free birthing experience. Julie Clarke is an experienced homebirther. Many women who have done the calmbirth® course during their pregnancy are far more likely to have positive feelings about their birthing experience. Their partners and midwives are quite often very impressed with how beautifully they've worked with their body during the labour.
For enquiries of dates and available times and bookings phone 95446441 - available weekends, weekdays, evenings. Visit: www.julieclarke.com.au see website for dates and discount.
Special note: Julie's calmbirth® course is very reasonably priced.
Mobile: 0401265530 / 9544 6441.
9 Witherbrook pl. Sylvania (20mins south of airport).

NATURAL BEGINNINGS

Herbal Medicine, Nutrition & Birth Support
I have a very personal interest in treating preconception, pregnancy and children's health, naturally. With some help from herbs and nutrition, my partner and I prepared our bodies' health naturally for conscious conception, and I enjoyed 2 trouble free pregnancies, and gave birth at home to my 2 healthy, full term baby boys and they continue to enjoy perfect health. You too can benefit from my experience in natural health care.
I can assist you with:

- ~ preconception health and natural fertility
- ~ preparing for a healthier baby
- ~ overcoming health conditions, (including during pregnancy)
- ~ preparing your body and mind for a better birth
- ~ birth support for mum & dad, and/or siblings
- ~ treating your children's health naturally
- ~ chemical-free home-made herbal skin products

Natural Pregnancy, Birth and Post-Natal Kits also available which make great gifts for the expectant or new Mum!
Virginia Maddock
Herbalist, Nutritionist & Doula
0415683074. 5 Balfour Ave Caringbah 2229
www.naturalbeginnings.com.au

TRANSITION INTO PARENTHOOD

Active Birth and Newborn Care Courses
The most comprehensive and best value birth and parenting courses in Sydney. Facilitator is Julie Clarke who is respected as a specialist in natural active birth including waterbirth. Importantly she also presents information beyond the birth to encompass the newborn period, specially on the practicalities and reducing stress, helping you to enjoy the first weeks as a family. Pregnant couples receive professionally presented, well organised course notes. Very suitable for homebirth, birth centre and delivery suite. See Julie's website for more details, birth stories and pictures, and information. www.julieclarke.com.au
Julie has a great sense of humour and a very gentle approach, she is regarded as one of the most inspirational educators in Sydney. Good variety of courses to choose from: 8 wk evening course 1 night per week, or 2 full Saturdays condensed or 1 full Sunday super condensed.
Julie is a unique birth educator who also provides post natal in home baby care support service exclusively to the couples who have attended her courses.
Julie Clarke / julie@julieclarke.com.au / Mobile: 0401265530
Landline: (02)9544 6441

Southern Highlands

PREGNANCY WORKSHOPS

Midwife Jane Hardwicke Collings gives regular workshops – "Pregnancy The Inner Journey" – in the Southern Highlands and in other places by arrangement. As well as "The School of Shamanic Midwifery" – a women's mysteries school for doulas and midwives
Jane Hardwicke Collings
48882002, 0408035808
janecollings@bigpond.com
www.moonsong.com.au
www.placentalremedy.com

DOULA SERVICES

ELS VAN LUEWAN

Qualified Doula, Childbirth Educator and Child Care Worker, providing personal care and practical support in honour of your authentic and empowered path through birth and early parenting. Please get in touch to arrange an obligation free meeting.
0403233719
els76@hotmail.com

NATURAL BEGINNINGS HOLSITIC HEALTH AND DOULA SERVICE

As a homebirth mum, I have the experience and trust in natural birth to be your ideal birth support, whether you choose to birth at home, in hospital or birth centre.
As a natural therapist, I have the resources to assist you with reiki massage, herbs and flower essences in case the journey of labour becomes difficult.
As an ex-nanny, I can help look after older siblings so that Mum can focus on birthing, Dad can focus on Mum, and older sister or brother can still feel important and included in the process, without fear.
My birth package includes 2 prenatal visits, birth support incl. herbs/flower essences and reiki massage, follow up visit to debrief, and a beautifully presented photo book of your birth for you to keep.
Natural Pregnancy, Birth and Post-Natal Kits also available which make great gifts for the expectant or new Mum.

Virginia Maddock
Herbalist, Nutritionist & Doula
9501 0863
5 Balfour Ave Caringbah 2229
www.naturalbeginnings.com.au

Blue Mountains & Western Suburbs

SIMPLY BIRTHING DOULA SERVICE

In my six years as a doula I have been witness to many natural and gentle births. I believe strongly in a women's ability to birth her own baby and in her wisdom and instinct as a mother. I've also been teaching Pre-Natal Yoga for the past eleven years and am a Childbirth and Early Parenting Educator.
My focus as a doula is to ensure that you and your partner are feeling confident, reassured and supported in preparation for your birth. I am also available as a calm support to your family and other children.
Jenny Schellhorn: Doula, Childbirth & Early Parenting Educator, Pre-Natal Yoga Teacher
9625 7317, 0403 957 879
jenny@simplybirthingdoulas.com.au
www.simplybirthingdoulas.com.au

PLACENTA SERVICES

KRISTIANE HEIDRICH - Placenta Encapsulation Specialist Offering

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~Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) Encapsulation
~Placenta Tincture (optional as homoeopathic remedy)
~Placenta Smoothie
For fees/conditions and further information contact 0405 501 012 or visit the website www.ashfieldphysio.com.au

LOTUS BORN - Lotus Birth Supplies.

Lotus Birth Kits, Placenta Bags, Placenta Wrapping Cloths and Drying Herbs.
All Lotus Born products come with full Lotus Birth instructions. We welcome custom orders.
www.etsy.com/shop/lotusborn
lotusborn@y7mail.com

NATURAL BEGINNINGS

Doula, herbalist and nutritionist Virginia Maddock is now offering placenta encapsulation in the St George and Sutherland shire areas, to give back what your body has lost after birth. The placenta can be ingested in a palatable way once it is dried and encapsulated, to nourish your body and replace nutrients and hormones that will help with post natal bleeding, mood regulation, breast milk production and energy boosting.
I can also make your placenta into a tincture to be taken by you or your baby for years to come, create a beautiful tree of life artwork, have the cord dried into a heart or spiral shape keepsake, and make a placenta salve infused with herbs and essential oils for many skin conditions. Please see my website for more information and prices.
Virginia Maddock 0415683047 Virginia@naturalbeginnings.com.au
www.naturalbeginnings.com.au

HOSPITAL HOMEBIRTH PROGRAMS

BELMONT MIDWIFERY GROUP PRACTICE HOMEBIRTH PROGRAM

Our service provides individualised women centred continuity of care throughout pregnancy, birth and for two weeks postnatally. Healthy women have the choice to birth at home if they are within 30 mins to our supporting hospital, John Hunter Hospital (New Lambton Heights in the Hunter/New England area).
For further information contact Kelley Lennon: 49232291

ST GEORGE HOSPITAL HOMEBIRTH SERVICE

This public health service is available to women in the St George and Sutherland Shire area. Continuity of care is provided by two midwives throughout pregnancy, birth and the postnatal period.
For further information, call the Birth Centre on 9113 3103.

WOLLONGONG HOSPITAL HOMEBIRTH SERVICE

This public health service is available to women in the Helensburgh to Kiama region. Continuity of care is provided by two midwives throughout pregnancy, birth and the postnatal period. Contact the Antenatal Clinic on 42534256 and ask to book in with the Midwifery Group Practice (MGP). Your details will be taken down and MGP will return your call.

Homebirth Access Sydney provides a list of midwives currently offering homebirth services in the Sydney area and a list of questions to ask when interviewing them on our website. Midwives are listed when they agree to sign up their clients for a year's membership of HAS. Listing does not imply endorsement by HAS.

ACORN MIDWIFERY: KATIE SULLIVAN

I am a midwife in private practice on the NSW Central Coast and have been a midwife for 10 years, having worked in continuity of care models for all of my clinical experience. I can tailor your care to your needs. Antenatal or postnatal care individually or as part of the suite of services including labour and birth at home. I am a placenta specialist certified to provide placenta encapsulation, placenta tinctures and placenta salves. I will travel to Newcastle/Hunter Valley/Port Stephens and Upper North Shore/Northern Beaches area to work with women and their families.
Katie Sullivan: 0408614029 katie@acornmidwifery.com.au

BIRTH WITH GENTLE CHOICES

Offering continuity of midwifery care during pregnancy, birth and postnatally. Birth is a natural, and empowering experience that is part of a normal life journey rather than a medical event. Providing support for women and their families and encouragement to believe in herself and her ability to birth instinctively.
Betty Vella (Gynea)
9540 4992 bpvella@optushome.com.au

BELLA BIRTHING: LISA RICHARDS

Holistic Women Centred Midwifery on the Central Coast, in Newcastle and the lower Hunter Valley. I work with women, their family and their chosen supports for birth at home. I practice with the philosophy that pregnancy, birth and the postnatal period are normal and when a woman is nurtured individually, sensitively and with no intervention, she is empowered to make choices that suit her and her family's needs and to birth the way she wants. I provide full antenatal, birth and postnatal care in the home.
Lisa Richards (Central Coast, Newcastle and the lower Hunter Valley)
0404422617 bellabirthing@live.com.au
www.bellabirthing.com.au

THE ELLA MAY CENTRE

[Midwives @ Sydney And Beyond]
The Ella May Centre provides an alternative to the medical management of fertility, pregnancy, birth and beyond by providing Midwifery and Naturopathic care to prospective and expecting families. Your midwife will provide you with individualised care throughout the preconception, pregnancy, birth and postnatal periods and is on call 24 hours a day. The Ella May Centre supports you to birth in the way and place of your choosing. For full details of services please visit our website or book a free information appointment.
Melanie Jackson (Western Suburbs & Blue Mountains)
0425 280 682
www.ellamaycentre.com

EMMA FITZPATRICK: MIDWIFE IN PRIVATE PRACTICE

[Midwives @ Sydney And Beyond]
With over 11 years experience in Midwifery, I am passionate about supporting women and their families throughout the journey of pregnancy, birth and the postnatal period. As well as being a passionate Midwife I am mum to 3 children, my littlest recently being birthed at home in the water. I am located in the Hawkesbury, and happy to provide support and service to women in Western Sydney, The Hawkesbury and The Blue Mountains areas.
Emma Fitzpatrick (The Hawkesbury)
0432724103 emma_gu77@yahoo.com.au

HOLLY PRIDDIS: BECOMING PARENTS

[Midwives @ Sydney And Beyond]
Based in Western Sydney, I am passionate about sharing the journey with women and their families as they experience pregnancy, provide care and companionship through labour and birth in the location of their choice, and support them as they become parents during the postnatal period. In addition to providing midwifery support, I am a photographer who specialises in maternity, birth and newborn photography and love sharing the beauty and miracle of birth through the creation of art.
Holly Priddis (Western Sydney and Blue Mountains)
www.hollypriddisphotography.com.au
0438 731 816

JO HUNTER: HOMEBIRTH MIDWIFE

I believe that women should be placed at the centre of their own experience, supported to empower themselves with knowledge and skills, given time and encouragement from their midwife, as well as being surrounded by those they love and people who believe and trust in their

ability to birth. It is the midwives role to have patience and trust in the innate ability of women and babies and to be comfortable and confident to support this process in any setting the woman chooses. Pregnancy, birth and postnatal care up to 6 weeks is provided in your home. I live in The Blue Mountains and service local families, inner west and western Sydney.
Jo Hunter (Blue Mountains, Inner west and Western Sydney)
(02) 47519840 midwifejo@bigpond.com
www.midwifejo.com.au

MEGAN BARKER

Hi my name is Megan and I have practiced as a midwife for the past 15 years. Throughout my career I have always enjoyed every aspect of midwifery care. My philosophy of care is that pregnant women have the natural ability to nurture, birth and care for their babies. I provide information and education about pregnancy and birth options, and above all respect the informed choices made. I am a guest in the birth space and feel very privileged to be there. I see my role as guiding and supporting women and their partners throughout the pregnancy, birth and early parenting journey.
Megan Barker (Central Coast, Hunter Valley and Newcastle)
0458 160 185

NEW BEGINNINGS MIDWIFERY PRACTICE

[Midwives @ Sydney and Beyond]
New Beginnings Midwifery Practice offers a personalised approach to pregnancy, birth and beyond. Receive comprehensive prenatal care with your own midwife. New Beginnings can assist you with homebirth, hospital birth or birth centre birth. Extensive postnatal visits. Access to information, resources and a large lending library. Care and support available 24 hours a day.
Robyn Dempsey (North Ryde) 9888 7829
midwiferobyn@optusnet.com.au
www.homebirthmidwives.com.au

PREGNANCY, BIRTH & BEYOND

[Midwives @ Sydney and Beyond]
Looking for special care during your pregnancy, birth and as new parents? Receive personalised, professional care by an experienced midwife. Pregnancy, Birth and Beyond supports women and their families birthing at home, birth centre or hospital. Midwifery care helps you avoid unnecessary interventions and to be recognised as the most important member of the birth team. Pregnancy, Birth and Beyond aims to assist families achieve an empowering birth experience. For full details of services please visit our website.
Jane Palmer (Dundas Valley) 9873 1750 jane@pregnancy.com.au
www.pregnancy.com.au

SHERYL SIDERY

Hi my name is Sheryl, I live on the northern beaches and have been in private practice for over 23 years. I believe that pregnancy and birth is a transformative process that is essential for mothering. I cover the northern beaches, eastern suburbs and the inner west. Having Medicare eligibility provides women with a rebate for some of their pre and postnatal care. I can be contacted on: 0409760548 email: secretwomensbiz@bigpond.com or via my website: www.sherylsidery.com

TANYA MUNTEN

Having trust in the normal process of birth is Tanya's foundation for her midwifery practice along with the understanding that every pregnancy, birth and pathway into parenthood is a unique and profound life experience.
As an eligible Independent midwife from Sydney's Northern Beaches Tanya is able to provide a medicare rebate for your antenatal and postnatal care for up to 6 wks after the birth of you baby. All visit take place in your home at a time that suits. Area's covered are Sydney's Northrn beaches, Nth Shore & Eastern Suburbs.
Tanya Munten 0412 210 222 tanyamunten@hotmail.com
www.tanyamunten.com.au

WITH WOMAN MIDWIFERY CARE

I am an independent midwife based in Shellharbour. I provide continuity of midwifery care throughout pregnancy, birth and the postnatal period to women planning to birth at home. All visits take place in the woman's home at a time that suits the family. Areas covered include the Illawarra, Southern Highlands, Southern Sydney, Shoalhaven and Canberra.
Rachele Meredith 0421 721 497 rachele@withwoman.com.au
www.withwoman.com.au

For a downloadable list of these questions to ask your midwife, please go to the 'Find A Midwife' page on our website.

Different midwives have different personalities and practices, and different midwives are right for different women. finding the right midwife for you is your responsibility. when selecting your midwife, we recommend you:

- Interview as many midwives as you can from different practices
- Talk to as many of their clients as you can

Here are some questions you might consider asking midwives you are considering for your care:

QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

- Are you registered?
- How long have you been practising?
- Where did you train and when?
- Do you do regular continuing education? What about refresher courses and extra skills courses?
- Have you had any long periods away from practice? If so, what did you do to update your skills and knowledge?
- Do you have regular peer review of your midwifery practice?
- Did you work in a hospital setting and then become a homebirth midwife? When?
- Do you combine hospital shift work and a homebirth practice?
- How many births have you attended as primary caregiver?
- How many of these were at hospital? In a birth centre? At home?
- How many births per year and per month do you attend?
- Do you have a specialty area of practice?
- What is your rate of transfer to hospital? Rate of caesarean section? Rate of assisted delivery?
- Have you ever had to resuscitate a baby?
- Has a baby ever died under your care? What were the circumstances?
- Are you certified in neonatal resuscitation? Do you carry oxygen to the birth?

ELIGIBILITY

- Are you registered as an eligible midwife?
- Can I claim Medicare for pre and post natal services?
- How much will I get back from Medicare per visit?
- Can you prescribe antibiotics, vitamin K etc?
- Do you have a collaborative relationship with a GP or obstetrician?
- Do you have midwife visiting rights to my local hospital?

PHILOSOPHY AND ATTITUDE

- Why did you become a midwife?
- What do you perceive your role to be - during my pregnancy, during my labour, after the baby is born? How does your practice vary for different women?
- Do you see yourself as actively involved in a woman's labour? How? (Some midwives prefer to sit back and let you do it with your birth support people, others will become actively involved if you want that and talk to you, massage, hold heat packs)
- What is your attitude to complementary therapies such as homeopathics, acupuncture, etc
- What is your attitude to circumcision? Immunisation?
- What do you expect regarding self-care during pregnancy?
- What is your view on nutrition and weight gain during pregnancy?

COLLABORATION/TEAM

- Will you provide all my midwifery care or will others be involved?
- What are your back-up arrangements if you are not available to provide my care? Do you work with a regular second midwife?
- If you work alone, what happens if two women go into labour at the same time? What is your backup system? If you work with other midwives, when can I meet them?
- Are there any collaboration requirements with doctors, obstetricians or others? Do you have any collaboration agreements? If so, with whom? Please explain how these will work, how the team collaborates and how much each element will cost. How does collaboration affect my care and specifically continuity of care? When will I meet these people?
- Who will you bring with you to the birth?
- What is your experience of working with doulas? Do you prefer a woman to have a doula at birth? Do you have any doulas with whom you regularly work?

- What will happen if I need to see a specialist during my pregnancy or labour?
- What will happen if my baby needs to see a specialist?
- In what circumstances would you recommend my baby see a paediatrician or doctor?

PRACTICAL MATTERS

- Legal, contractual, financial
- What do you charge for your services and what does that cover? Is it a lump sum or segmented for different phases of care? Will there be a written contract?
- When do you expect payment? Is there flexibility?
- What rebates are available?
- What happens if we discontinue our relationship during my pregnancy? For example, if I don't want you to be my midwife anymore, if there is a medical situation that recommends against my having a homebirth, or if you are unwilling or unable to continue my care? Will you refer me? How will the finances work?
- Please explain the current situation regarding professional indemnity insurance and how it affects my care or our relationship.

TIMING

- What happens if two clients are in labor at the same time? How many clients do you have due around the same time as me? Will you take on more?
- Do you combine hospital shift work and a homebirth practice? What if you're working when I am in labour?
- Are you likely to be away when my baby is due?

SPECIFIC ISSUES...

...DURING PREGNANCY

- Where will the prenatal appointments be? What do they include? How long will they take? How many antenatal visits do you recommend, and why?
- How and when can I contact you if I need help or advice during the come up between visits?
- In what circumstances would you transfer me to obstetrical care for during pregnancy? What is your rate of prenatal transfer?
- What is your attitude to 'due dates' and how would you feel about my pregnancy going over 40 weeks? What would your advice be?
- How do you feel about natural induction methods? Can you offer any of these services?
- What would you do in the case that I was having twins? Had a breech baby?
- What prenatal tests do you require? What do you recommend? Do you have an obstetrician to whom you refer?
- Do you provide education as I prepare for the birth? Do you have a lending library of books/DVDs?

...DURING LABOUR AND BIRTH

- In what circumstances do you recommend transfer to hospital? How often do your clients transfer and for what reasons? Do you stay with your clients who transfer? In what capacity?
- Do I need a backup booking with the hospital? Which one? What is involved in this? If it's a private hospital, do I need private health insurance?
- What equipment do you provide (eg birth pool)? What must I provide?
- How and how regularly will you monitor the baby during labour?
- Do you support me labouring in water? Birthing in water?
- What do you do in the event of a long labor? A "stalled" labor? Do you stay? Go away and come back? In what circumstances?
- When will you come to me after I begin labor? Have you ever missed a birth?
- How often do you perform an episiotomy?
- What is your attitude towards premature rupture of membranes (PROM)?
- How long do you wait to cut the cord after the baby is born?
- Do you support lotus birth?
- What do you do if there is a post partum hemorrhage?
- What procedures do you perform immediately on the newborn? What can wait? Will you wait if I request it?
- How long will you stay after I give birth?

...DURING THE POSTNATAL PERIOD

- What is the schedule of post-natal visits? Where will they be? What do they include? How long will they take?
- Will you help me with breastfeeding? If so for how many weeks?
- How do I get my baby's birth certificate?

HOME BIRTH SUPPORT GROUPS

Sydney & NSW

Eastern Suburbs Homebirth Support Group

3rd Wednesday of every month
Time: 10.00-12.00
Location: Bondi Beach
Contact: Nadine Fragosa 0468 382 580 or nads@jonads.com
Next Meeting: 18th Sep, 16th Oct, 20th Nov
Please feel welcome to join us if you're pregnant, have children or are just curious about home birthing.

Inner West Homebirth Support Group

First Wednesday of Every Month
Time: 10am - 12pm
Location: changes every month, so please email your details to Magda or call to find out where we are meeting.
Contact: magda.jansen@gmail.com 0410 139 907
Please feel welcome if you're pregnant, have children or are just curious about home birthing. Partners welcome too!

Northern Beaches Homebirth Group

NEW Weekly Meeting
Time: TBC Dates/Location: TBC
Location - Different each week
Contact: Kristie Ussher on ussher.kristie@gmail.com to find out more.

Sutherland Shire Homebirth Group

Every Thursday
Time: 10.30am weekly
Location: 5 Balfour Ave Caringbah.
Contact: Virginia 0415683074 or maddvirg@yahoo.com.au
If you're pregnant or have babies or kids in tow, come on over, let the kids run amok and enjoy a cuppa and some fresh baked delights with some like-minded mamas.

Pregnancy & Parenting Network meeting - Dundas Valley

4th Thursday of the month
Time: 10am-12pm
Location: Jane Palmer's home: 27 Hart St, Dundas Valley.
Contact: Jane Palmer 1300 MIDWYF (1300 643 993)
jane@pregnancy.com.au
Dates and Topics:
3rd October - Baby wearing
7th November - Unexpected outcomes
5th December - Parenting a new baby: Settling techniques, co-sleeping and elimination communication and Christmas Party
Info: <http://www.pregnancy.com.au/resources/support-groups/index.shtml>
Please bring a plate of food to share. All welcome.

Pregnancy & Parenting Network meeting - Hawkesbury

2nd Tuesday of the month
Time: 10am - 12 noon
Location: Emma Fitzpatrick's home: 5 Rowland Ave Kurmond
Contact: Melanie: 0425 280 682 mkjackson@live.com.au
Dates / Topics:
17th September - Baby moon - postnatal support and mental health
15th October - Baby wearing
19th November - Unexpected outcomes
17th December - Parenting a new baby: Settling techniques, co-sleeping and elimination communication and Christmas Party
Info: <http://www.ellamaycentre.com/Events.html>
Please bring a plate of food to share (anything you can manage).
As always, mums, dads, friends and kids are all welcome!
See you there!

Illawarra Birth Choices Group

3rd Monday of each month
Time: 10.30am to 12.30pm
Location: Russell Vale Community Hall - corner of Keerong Ave and Channon Street Russell Vale.
Next Meetings:
September 16- Models of Care, presented by Sarah, place: Figtree Dragon Park, back up: Samantha Rudd, Mount Keira
October 21- Homebirth, host: Samantha Contri, Dapto
Nov 18- Antenatal Testing, place: Austinmere park
Dec 16- Coping with Labour and end of year picnic, place: Figtree Dragon Park- Antenatal Testing, place: Austinmere park
Contact: info@birthchoices.info

Mothers & Midwives of the South (Southern Highlands)

Every month
For more details contact Kylie Woods: 486801691 / 0416204424 or candlebark@hotmail.com.
Everyone welcome!

Blue Mountains Homebirth Support Group

Every 2nd Thursday
Time: 10am-12pm
Location: Lawson Family Day Care room, unless otherwise specified!
Cost: A donation of \$2-5 is appreciated to help with group running costs.
Contacts: email Krystal: bmhomebirth@gmail.com or visit our website <http://www.bluemountainshomebirth.com.au/>
To join our mailing list of upcoming meetings / topics please email Krystal.
Bring a healthy snack to share if you get a chance, if not come anyway.
No meetings in school holidays

Central Coast Homebirth Group

1st Wednesday of each month
Time: 10.30-12.30
Location: Various venues in group members' homes
Contact: Lisa Richards bellabirthing@live.com.au
Come along if you are pregnant, trying to conceive, mums, dads, kids, doulas, midwives, and anyone interested in homebirth (including homebirth & hospital transfers).

Hunter Home and Natural Birth Support (HHNBS)

2nd Wednesday of every month
Time: 10am.
Location: See below
Contact: Rachel 0415 435 045 or email hhnbsgroup@gmail.com
Next Meetings:
Jun 12th - Alternative Therapies in Pregnancy & Birth -Jersmond Park, Newcastle Road, Jesmond
Oct 9th - Planning a homebirth - TBA
Nov 13th - Birth Sharing - TBA
Dec 11th - Fourth Stage - The Babymoon and Motherway

Armidale and District Homebirth Support Network

1st Sunday of every month
Contact: Rebecca Pezzutti hbsarmidale@gmail.com

Interstate & National

Homebirth Australia

Contact: Chris Wrightson 0414 812 144 homebirthaustralia@gmail.com
www.homebirthaustralia.org

Homebirth Queensland Inc.

Contact: 07) 3839 5883 info@homebirth.org.au
www.homebirth.org.au

Alice Springs Homebirth Group

Contact: Anne Yffer 0402 424 780 wildisha@gmail.com

Darwin Homebirth Group

Contact: Justine Wickham 0438 888 755 dnbginfo@gmail.com
www.darwinhomebirthgroup.org.au

Homebirth Network of SA

PO Box 275, Seaford, SA 5169
Contact: Claire at admin@homebirthsa.org.au
www.homebirthsa.org.au

HOME BIRTH ACCESS SYDNEY (INC)

- 1) To create an awareness in the community of planned attended homebirth as an accessible and attainable alternative and to be actively involved in maintaining homebirth as a choice and improvement of conditions for homebirthers. In the interest of furthering the cause of homebirth, our public relations policy will be one of assertive, non-aggressive approach.
- 2) To provide an information and referral service by way of newsletters, pamphlets, telephone contacts, a permanent mailbox, a reference library and regular public meetings.
- 3) To provide support to HAS members by holding regular public meetings and maintaining and publicising a list of contact phone numbers and addresses.
- 4) To represent HAS members on or to any regulatory or advisory body, Local, State or Federal, which is formulating policy or implementing decisions which affect homebirth.
- 5) To work with other homebirth groups and other groups concerned with birthing to further the aims of HAS.
- 6) To be involved in public gatherings that are relevant to and consistent with HAS' aim regarding homebirth.

YOU ARE WELCOME TO ATTEND

Homebirth Access Sydney (HAS) Committee Meetings

2nd Wednesday of every month

Time: 10.30am

Location: Naomi's House

9 Essex Street Marrickville

Contact: Virginia to confirm: 0415683074 or
info@homebirthsydney.org.au.

All welcome, including kids!

Next meeting:

11th February

Other dates TBA

HAS POLICY STATEMENT

This policy statement was written because of the need to promote unity and understanding among our homebirth members and the wider community.

- 1) Homebirth Access Sydney is an organization which was established in 1973 to provide information and support to those interested in homebirth our members include parents, birth attendants, educators and midwives.
- 2) HAS recognises that Australian families have the right to have their baby in any setting – be it their home, a clinic, a birth centre or a hospital.
- 3) The members of HAS believe that home is a safe place to give birth and that there will always be an element of risk in birth whatever the choice of birth place.
- 4) Families who choose homebirth are taking a shared responsibility in the births of their babies. They are opting for a birth outside of an institution and its model of mass health care which is restrictive and frequently denies individuals requirements.
- 5) The midwives who attend homebirths are specialists, educated to provide total care throughout pregnancy, labour and the post-natal period. They consult with other health practitioners when appropriate.
- 6) Midwives are accountable to their clients and their peers (through quality assurance and standards review) as well as the Dept. of Health, the Nurses Registration Board, the Australian College of Midwives and the various courts.
- 7) With the widespread misconceptions about the safety of homebirth, a homebirth midwife's professional status is in jeopardy whenever anything goes wrong. However skilled she may be, deregistration and loss of career is a constant insecurity in the face of social hostility to her chosen profession.
- 8) Birth is an intense, emotional, life changing experience. In the event of conflict or unresolved issues, HAS encourages mediation and conciliation between all parties whatever the birth place and whoever the birth attendants.

MAGAZINE ADVERTISING RATES

	Single (1 Issue)	Annual (4 issues)
Service Pages		
Doula Listing	n/a	\$25
Services Listing	n/a	\$35
Advertisements		
Business Card Display	\$20	\$70
Quarter Page Display	\$30	\$110
Half Page Display	\$40	\$150
Full Page Display	\$65	\$250

For print and online advertising please email Karen
advertising@homebirthsydney.org.au

HAS ABN 75 947 458 113

HAS MISSION STATEMENT

Homebirth Access Sydney is a viable and visible organisation working with integrity to support mothers and families' rights to informed and empowered home birth.

The topic for the next issue is:

Planned Homebirth > Hospital Transfer



[Photo of Carla Stern. By Joshua Stern. (This photo was not a planned homebirth)]

Birthings is your magazine, so please contribute!
The Autumn 2014 Issue is on the theme of 'Planned Homebirth > Hospital Transfer'.
Please send in your birth stories where the unexpected or challenging occurred and you transferred to hospital.
Also welcome are your thoughts, feelings and reflections on this experience.

As always, we welcome your letters, birth announcements and Homebirth stories. The 'Heart to Heart' page exists for more creative expressions regarding birth: poetry, art etc....

Submissions due by 1st February, 2014.

Please check submission guidelines on page 2 and don't forget some photos and a bio!
Email the editor at editor@homebirthsydney.org.au

REMINDER: please ensure we have your current email address so you can receive membership expiry reminders, as well as our e-newsletter. If you have recently moved, please send us your new address so you don't miss out on any issues.
Email member@homebirthsydney.org.au.