

Annual Report for Homebirth NSW

Homebirth New South Wales is a not for profit, community organisation whose main aim is to support homebirth families and increase access to homebirth in Australia. Our organisation is run entirely by passionate, dedicated volunteers who work to increase awareness of homebirth in the wider Australian community, and protect and promote homebirth in Australia so that this birth option can be maintained for Australian families. Our organisation is New South Wales based and so much of our advocacy is localised to New South Wales, but we do often coordinate our activism with other organisations, protecting homebirth Australia wide.

As an organisation, we have achieved a great deal over the past 12 months:

- Rebranded ourselves from Homebirth Access Sydney to Homebirth New South Wales
- Changed the area we support to include all of New South Wales
- Started making contacts and setting up local groups in areas outside Sydney
- Begun to design and create a new website and employed a designer for this
- Supervised a university intern to undertake homebirth research
- Completed two research projects looking into the barriers to homebirth that women and midwives are exposed to in Australia
- Published our research online on our website, and shared with the wider homebirth community
- Presented our research projects to the homebirth community
- Obtained funding to print an issue of Birthings magazine, promoting homebirth to the wider community
- Sourced new volunteers to move into various committee roles
- Obtained all of the data for a National Homebirth Register, enabling women to more easily find midwives Australia wide, and collaborated with Homebirth Australia to get this information more publicly available
- Ran a homebirth picnic to raise awareness, inspire and motivate fellow homebirth families
- Attended the Homebirth Australia conference to present research findings
- Provided submissions to the Australian Government regarding Medicare rebates for intrapartum care provided by Privately Practising Midwives
- Liaised with other homebirth organisations and significant people to push for a Professional Indemnity Insurance product to be made available
- Assisted other homebirth organisations to ensure the Professional Indemnity Insurance exemption expiry was extended to ensure homebirth with a Privately Practising Midwife was still an option for Australian women
- Liaised with hospitals and local women's groups to push for new Publicly Funded Homebirth programs to be created and old ones to be maintained

In the coming year we plan to do a lot more advocacy and continue to rebrand our organisation. Some of our action plan points include:

- Complete the National Homebirth Register and ensure it is made accessible via the Homebirth Australia website
- Push for wider coverage for Publicly Funded Homebirth programs Australia wide, but particularly throughout New South Wales
- Liaise with hospitals offering Publicly Funded Homebirth programs to ensure the restrictions that are being placed on women throughout pregnancy and birth are reduced
- Help to create local homebirth community and advocacy groups New South Wales wide
- Develop relationships with women in our local communities to ensure we are receiving information about the barriers and challenges to homebirth these women are experiencing
- Continue bringing in more committee members to fill any vacant positions, and strengthen our current positions by creating clear position descriptions with clear expectations/boundaries
- Create better systems for dealing with membership data through our new website
- See the completion of our new website with rebranding
- Release two Birthings magazines for our members
- Reduce the focus of merchandising in our shop and instead focus on creating relationships with local business and birth-workers to provide affiliate links and improved advertising
- Support Homebirth Australia in their advocacy plans, including:
 - Find a Professional Indemnity Insurance solution for Privately Practising Midwives
 - Develop/propose new pathways for undergraduate midwives to attend homebirths, and enable graduate midwives to be better trained for branching into providing care for women who choose to birth at home
 - Provide support for midwives branching into private practice
 - Push for endorsement of Privately Practising Midwives to not be a requirement to obtain Professional Indemnity Insurance, so that midwives are able to choose whether they are endorsed or not
 - Liaise with other organisations to find solutions to the requirement for two midwives to be present at every birth, so that homebirth is less restricted based on location
 - Push for the removal of mandatory collaborative agreements with GPs/OBs/Health services for midwives, an autonomous profession, to provide medicare rebatable care to women
 - Request a full, independent inquiry into the vexatious reporting of midwives to the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency
 - See the inclusion of intrapartum care for homebirth in Medicare funding
 - Push for a change in the way funding is provided to women so that homebirth isn't an 'alternative' option, but rather a recognised, acceptable birth option for Australian women

We look forward to 2020 being one of our biggest and best years for homebirth advocacy yet, and hope to see some big changes in this space!