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BIRTHINGS

A HOMEBIRTH ACCESS SYDNEY QUARTERLY PUBLICATION



*Fathers
& Partners*

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

www.homebirthsydney.org.au

HOME BIRTH ACCESS SYDNEY COMMITTEE* & OFFICE BEARERS

HAS Coordinator* Virginia Maddock
02 9501 0863 | info@homebirthsydney.org.au

Assistant Coordinator Jo Tilly
jotilly2009@gmail.com

Treasurer* Greta Werner
0402 035 069 | shop@homebirthsydney.org.au

Secretary* Yvette Barton
ymbarton@optusnet.com.au

Birthings Editor Virginia Maddock
02 95010863 | editor@homebirthsydney.org.au

Birthings Sub Editor Amanda Vella

Birthings Line Editors Jaia Shanti Baer & Yvette Barton

Birthings Design Leah White
leah_white@hotmail.co.nz

Website Jenny Carleton
0412 970 183 | admin@homebirthsydney.org.au

Events Coordinator Vacant

Advertising Coordinator Karen Gallagher
advertising@homebirthsydney.org.au

Memberships Coordinator Lisa Devenney
member@homebirthsydney.org.au

Merchandising Coordinator* Vacant
sales@homebirthsydney.org.au

Media Watch Krystal de Lima

Mail Officer Jenny Carleton

Fundraising & Sponsorship Leanne Clarke
lclarke2@tpg.com.au

Distribution Coordinator Amantha McGuinness

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
Akal 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 Virginia Maddock at editor@homebirthsydney.org.au
Photos and written submissions must be emailed. Prior notice to the Editors of your intention to submit work is not necessary, but can be helpful in planning content.

DEADLINES FOR SUBMISSIONS

Winter 2012	No. 114	1 May 2012
Spring 2012	No. 115	1 August 2012
Summer 2012	No. 116	1 November 2012
Autumn 2013	No. 117	1 February 2013

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 the current editor, 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 1700 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 approved, 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 Virginia Maddock 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.

With thanks to our postage sponsor

nature's child

BIRTHINGS

Fathers and Partners

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Photo by Peaches and Cream Photography featuring Nick Mirigliani and baby Erin.

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Editorial



Welcome to the Autumn edition of Birthings: 'Fathers and Partners'. In this issue, we have some great content by some 'significant others' in the homebirthing family – by not only fathers but a lesbian partner also, as well some great womanly advice for dads to watch out for post natal depression in their wives or partner. Of course as always there are some lovely and empowering birth stories, by the women who birthed and by the fathers/partners who were there for support at the birth of their babies.

While the delivery room used to be a no-go zone for anyone but the mother and the midwife/nurse or doctor in the hospital, our society has made great advances in welcoming men into what was traditionally known as 'women's business' (or in the case of hospital birth, doctor's business). This advancement has only come about because of the homebirthing movement where the whole family is embraced, and which has led women to demand that they be 'allowed' to be supported by the very people that helped put the baby in there in the first place. It is a shame that the many people who do not support homebirth do not recognise how far their birth rights have come because of how we birth normally at home!

My own partner Dan is one of the most admirable men that I know. In a kind of enviable role reversal, he is the far better partner for keeping our house spotlessly clean (while I take a much more relaxed approach!); he is a great cook – cooking delicious vego meals for me when he would probably prefer a steak; and probably due to the differences in our upbringing, has become great at gentle parenting, for which I myself often struggle. But the one thing he is not too crash hot with is giving verbal encouragement and complements (to me, though he is great with our toddler!), probably because he doesn't need these things for himself so he forgets that being a woman, I do (though I'm sure there are women out there that don't, I just don't think I've met any yet!).

So when I was planning my first birth, I had my doubts on whether he would be able to support me well when I would need lots of encouragement. So I arranged for a friend to be on call to be my doula if I felt I needed that extra support. But it just so happens that Dan really stepped up and I didn't need to call my friend after all, preferring the intimacy of just the two of us in pre-labour and the three of us with my midwife when the going got tough. Although I don't remember anything he said to me, I do remember that he rubbed my back, got me drinks and ice cold cloths, and physically supported me – at one point when trying numerous positions to push my baby out, I remember wrapping my arms around his neck then my legs around his body, and I don't know how he didn't drop me after putting on 19kgs during my pregnancy. As it was 36+ degrees that day in our little flat with no air con, at one point he needed a break himself and left me to go outside for some fresh air. When I realised he was leaving my side, I sobbed for him not to leave me, until my midwife gave me some reassurance. I also remember thinking during transition, that I didn't want to be one of those women who abused her partner like I had heard of others

doing, so I told him I loved him instead – probably influenced by reading the sweet Ina May Gaskin!

In my recent second birth, I also don't remember a word Dan said and it was so intense that I can't really remember much of his presence at all, but my friend Kylie who did come this time (in case my toddler needed support) just raved afterwards about how great he was in supporting me. So it is no surprise what a great father he has become – though I had little doubt after seeing how tenderly he treated my cat, before we had any human children. So this one's for you Dan – my rock!

Thanks to a great suggestion by one of our long time members (see Nat's letter on the next page), our winter edition will be 'Where are they now?' Hopefully we will be able to track down some older readers and contributors to write some articles to show the history (or should I say 'herstory') of HAS, as well as some stories of homebirthing mothers who have become grandmothers of homebirthed children. Alternatively, if you have homebirthed because your own mother or grandmother did, then we also want your stories. And we strongly encourage some of the midwives who have been around for a while to write something too. So if you fit this description and have any ideas on something to write about, we would love to have your submission.

And don't forget to write me a letter (for your chance to win the best letter prize), submit your birth stories, photos, art and poetry. Email to: editor@homebirthsydney.org.au by 1st May 2012 – don't forget to check word limit (1800 words) and include a contributor's bio!

"I keep hearing from Australian men, over and over, in person and in the media, that they are, 'just an ordinary bloke'. The phrase could be interpreted as humility, yet when I keep hearing it I can't help feeling something is deeply wrong. When we learn that they have done something extraordinary they immediately cover it up with, 'I'm just an ordinary bloke'. This isn't humility, it's denial of their own extraordinariness. I can't even imagine myself saying that I'm an ordinary bloke, because I'm not. I don't feel ordinary. I never have. Ordinary is like 'average'. Take a heap of stones and weigh them. Then average the total weight. When you go back and weigh each stone individually you'd be hard pressed to find one rock that would weigh the average. 'Ordinary' is the same. It doesn't exist. There is NO reason NOT to be extraordinary! Men, please stop cutting yourself down with ordinary talk. Surrender your fears, embrace your extraordinariness, for the sake of the women and the children, for the sake of the earth and for the sake of all other brothers, please surrender!"

Gary Caganoff [quoted at 27th Homebirth Australia Conference, 2011]

VIRGINIA MADDOCK

Letters to the Editor

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

This issue, our best letter prize goes to Kim Ryder. Kim has won a wheatbag heat pack + baby massage oil + lavender oil (valued at \$54), kindly donated by Nicole Ronay-Sundin at Birth Partner. Your prize is on its way Kim.

Send your letters to editor@homebirthsydney.org.au

26/12/2011

Dear Virginia,

I wanted to write to thank you so much for sourcing and publishing "Loving Two" which appeared on the Heart to Heart page in the Siblings issue.

Off and on for months now, I have been thinking about the possibility of having another baby. My PND has lifted and as Treya approaches her 1st birthday, my yearning for another Bubba just gets stronger and stronger. But of late, I have been looking at her... sort of almost sitting outside of myself watching the two of us "be" together... like inseparable friends... and something I was unable to pinpoint or even fully express in the safety of my journal, just kept niggling away at me. I realised after reading "Loving Two", that a sadness accompanies the yearning for another pregnancy and birth. If we have another bubba, and it is a big "if", my relationship with Treya would be changed forever, and my gorgeous, beautiful, spirited daughter, who I love and adore, would become my "first born". She is my world, and I would choose her life over my own or Karl's in a heartbeat... but what happens when you have more than one child? What would happen if you had to choose between them? The mere thought brings me to tears as I write this.

Yes, there would be enough love for two, as the poem expressed, and Treya would learn to love, protect and enjoy her sibling... but this poem stirred up other feelings and fears within me. Mamas aren't supposed to have favourites, right? But we all know Mamas who do. I'm not sure how I'd deal with the sense of unfaithfulness or betrayal that I would feel if my feelings for my second born ran deeper than those I have for Treya.

**So as I contemplate adding another beautiful being to our already perfect family, maybe instead of entertaining the fears, I should just photocopy "Loving Two" and stick it on the fridge, as a heartfelt reminder that there is enough love to go around... and that I could just have two "favourites"! Love and hugs,
Kim [Ryder] x**

22/11/11

Hi Virginia,

I would like to begin by saying thank you; for your hard work and dedication to a very special practice - homebirth. The existence of Birthings really validates homebirth and encourages women to make a more informed choice about where they would like to birth their baby. In the political climate at present, it is a very empowering publication that will be revered for many years to come I'm sure.

Every quarter I look forward to the arrival of your magazine and I know when it is due in the mailbox because I find myself wondering where it is.

I am a qualified High School English Teacher currently on maternity leave (stay at home mum at present) and have a plethora of skills in writing, editing, graphic layout and design, art (especially oil painting) and natural healing and birth that I know would enable me to contribute in some way to your magazine. I would love to be involved somehow so that I may channel my passion in a productive way, so if there is ever a place that needs filling that you think I might fit, please let me know as I'm sure that I could make a valuable contribution...

Warmest regards,
Rachel Holt

20/12/2011

Hi Virginia,

Thanks for another inspiring edition of Birthings! I love seeing all the mountains mamas stories in there & it's great to know that homebirth is still going strong in surrounding communities. It's been 9 years since I resigned (end of 2002) as assistant coordinator & co-editor of HAS, but I still enjoy reading Birthings & am often thinking of new topics that I'd love to hear about.

Some ideas I have are... "Where are they now?" - homebirth babies all grown up... did they go on to birth at home? Did the experience of

knowing they were birthed at home influence/impact them in any way? What about our siblings at birth who are teenagers now? How do they feel about the option of birthing at home? Looking back, what was their experience like? Advice to other teenagers... what do teenagers need to know about birth from a teenager's perspective... most effective way to educate about homebirth & breastfeeding?

Grandparents that birthed at home... or shared in the homebirth experience of their child. Did their children go on to birth at home? Who was their midwife & where are they now? Are they still in contact? Their stories, photos etc

What inspired women/families to birth at home? What were the challenges they faced to take the plunge... fear, previous birth experience, family judgements, partners, money etc

Women &/or partners who pursued birth work after their homebirth/birthing experience?

Birth wisdom shared... could be one liners... key info that helped during pregnancy, labour, birth, breastfeeding?

Community groups (homebirth, ABA, conscious parenting/NP/AP)... How have they helped, inspired etc... Were/are they valuable? Friendships etc? Forums, Facebook... helpful or damaging? New age parenting with technology... how things have changed for those that have birthed/parented in both worlds?

All rambling, but I'm sure you could pull something together out of this mumbo jumbo :))

Having older children now (9, 13, 16 & 18), these issues intrigue me & I've also been privileged to support at homebirths where one of the parents or grandparents have been born at home, so I'd love to hear more.

Thanks so much for all the continuing work of HAS, you're all awesomeness & us mummies love the work that you do!

Much love & blessings

Nat [Forbes Dash]x

Ed: Thanks heaps for the ideas Nat. Our next issue will be "Where Are They Now?" Stay tuned...

23/12/2011

Hey Virginia!

My Birthings came yesterday! That was really fast!

I'd already read your Editorial by dinner time & thought it was great. Very honest & insightful, I really enjoyed reading it. I look forward to reading your birth story too. I like the way you write. Thanx for sharing.

You know, I get so stoked when I see photos of friends or women I know in Birthings & then have the privilege of reading their birth stories. And oh, to be on the front cover! That would be a dream come true!

Well, one of them. My biggest dream is to support a birthing Mumma or even just to be present at a birth (not my own)...one day, maybe. But not being a trained doula it's highly unlikely it will happen...unless when my daughter eventually home births (which is a long way off). She wants to wait another ten years at least. She's only 20, so has plenty of time yet. Gosh, that would be one of the most amazing, memorable experiences of a lifetime! I envy those trained in the field that get to do this work & are so damn good at it. Don't think I'd have the stamina to do it as a job though. Just once, that's my number one dream.

We are so very blessed to live here in the beautiful Blue Mountains.

We have such a diversity of people living here from all over the world.

We also have a very strong Home birth community. Our community is full of HB midwives, doulas & HB Mummas & I feel its a privilege to be surrounded by such warmth & knowledge. Apparently we have the second largest homebirthing rate per capita in Australia, second to the Byron Bay / Mullumbimby / Lismore area. Pretty good for a population of approximately 74,000!

I personally love living here. It has always been my home. So, it makes me really happy to see the women around me choosing to homebirth & then be featured in your wonderful magazine ~ the only magazine I subscribe to. In tutorials, letters, birth stories or front & back covers, I let each of them know how wonderful I thought their contribution was. I believe all birthing women should write their birth stories no matter what the outcome. It is a very positive way of reflecting, healing & coming to a place of acceptance in your life's journey.

It does matter how you birth your baby. I've met many women 5, 10, 20 years after birthing whom still carry birth baggage around with them. Being told over & over, (suppressing the mumma's feelings) "Oh, as long as the baby is healthy, nothing else matters". Well, it does matter. I myself didn't even know I was carrying birth baggage until I started talking about it 10 years after birthing. It took a long time to work through but I did it. It made me better. It's part of the reason there is a 14 year age gap between my first & second children....All part of my personal journey. We're all different, with different experiences, & all birth stories should be told & listened to. That's the healing part. Traumatic or beautiful, it's all very relevant. And I'll listen or read yours any day of the week, that's a promise :)

Have a lovely Xmas & fabulous New Year & many thanx again for sending me my one & only magazine. I intend to devour every chance I get!

With love,

Loulou Anderssen xx

5/1/12

Virginia,

I loved the last Birthings, it was beautiful, interesting and fun. You do such a fabulous job, thank you for being such a good editor.

I am sending them to my daughter in London, this is her only source of an alternative direction to the horrible hospital models and it is inspiring for her, as it comes straight from the hearts of young women fresh in their childbearing experiences.

Xx M

[Maggie Lecky-Thompson]

1/2/12

Hi Virginia,

Just a little note to say how wonderful you look with your kids and family... who would have thought... you did!!

Also that drive of yours is put to great use for the benefit of all families, good on you darls....

Thank you for your acknowledgement of being one of your mentors, I learnt off you also my dear!!

Just on a historical note as I notice the next issue is about Fathers, when I was working as an educator at Childbirth Education Australia and doing homebirths with John [Dr John Stevenson], I realised fathers were not catered for in any way and nor were the mothers in their after care. So I thought classes are out of balance and need a male childbirth educator, not a male midwife or male physiotherapist, so I suggested we start to train men that were interested to become childbirth educators.

That is what we did in 1978, we trained the first male childbirth educator. He was a father of 2 children and had been at their births and then many others in his training. It made a tremendous difference to the men and the women in the classes. They felt they were 'heard' and that they had a voice. Also the women said they had more understanding and empathy for what the men were going through having a male educator.

Then in Sydney, I was so shocked when I arrived here in 1984 at the state of classes and the state of the system in NSW, that I started training educators and trained the lovely Pete Gailey who has had such an impact over the years on men, women and families.

So there you go a bit of history darls, it has been a pioneering journey to keep opening things out for people. I never stop learning everyday in that burgundy room of what people really feel and what their real needs are...

Lotza love Marie xxxxxx

[Marie Burrows: Childbirth educator and doula trainer @ Birthing Rites Australia]

Contributors

AMANDA VELLA is a loving mama to two vibrant little girls, Jordy (10) and Indi (2). She's also a writer, Birthings sub-editor, yoga teacher and studio owner in Sydney's south-west. When she finds the time, she is also Ian's wife. Amanda is passionate about conscious birth, healthy living and aware parenting. www.illuminateyoga.com.au.

ANDREW SKOCZEN is the loving partner of Rachel Holt and adoring father of little star Elvy. He loves the simple things in life and is enjoying the sparkles and challenges of being a parent for the first time. He would love to have a rural property some day so that he and Rachel can fulfil their dream of self sufficiency.

CATHLIN DUGGAN lives in Maitland with her partner Daniel. They have 2 wonderful children - Dylan and Lilian. Dylan likes fishing with his dad and Lily loves her big brother. In her spare time Cathlin is a freelance photographer and a passionate barista. Daniel is a geologist and part-time yachtsmen.

CHARMAINE MIRIGLIANI is married to Nick and mother of 3 beautiful little ones, Oscar 5, Archie - 3 and Erin - 10 months.

CRAIG MCNAMARA is the proud father of the adorable and pretty Torah McNamara and husband to Jacqui. He is a graduate of the Australian Defence Force Academy and Royal Military College Duntroon and has spent the last 19 years as an officer in the full and part time army. Craig is an advocate of full paternal participation in all aspects of child birth including preconception health and support to the mother throughout the pregnancy and labour. He believes that this support can go a long way to assist the mother in a pain free and natural child birth experience.

DARREN MATTOCK is the former General Manager of The Fatherhood Project and is passionate about being an active and engaged Dad. He has also been an advocate and lobbyist for natural birth services in the Northern Rivers. Darren's plans include continuing to co-facilitate educational and support groups for expectant and new fathers, as well as to keep writing about fatherhood. He and his family live happily in an old farmhouse in Alstonville.

DAVID VERNON is a full time writer and editor. While he is known for his non-fiction books about birth: Men at Birth, Birth Stories and With Women, he has turned his hand to writing science articles for newspapers and magazines as well as scribbling the odd short story or two. Some would emphasise the word 'odd'. He is currently writing an Australian history book. David's website is: <http://www.davidvernon.net> Email: david@davidvernon.net

EVELYN DWYER is a mostly stay-at-home-mum to 3 year old Joey and 3 month old Patrick in Sydney's inner west.

GARFIELD DARLINGTON was born in Guyana, South America and moved to London when he was 10. He later came to Sydney where he met his wife Tara Darlington and pursued his career as a commercial Photographer. Garfield now works in the film industry specialising in lighting and working as a cinematographer with a passion for film noir and renaissance and baroque art. He lives in the Hills district with his wife and six children, four of which were born at home!

GARY CAGANOFF lives in the Blue Mountains with his wife Bronwyn Kirkpatrick and their two home-birthed children - Alina (5) and Edan (1) - and is a documentary filmmaker of twenty years. He has a MAppSci in Social Ecology, a Grad Dip in Transpersonal Psychotherapy and a Diploma of Therapeutic Massage. He is available as a Daddy Doula. Contact: gary@landscapesofthesoul.com or 041 99 72 427.

JENNIFER LORANCE is a busy working Mum to Lucy 5 and new baby Hannah. She and her partner live in Sydney's northern suburbs and both work for themselves. Jennifer works in sustainability and was very pleased to bring her daughter Hannah into the world very sustainably - using little more than a borrowed birth pool, freecycled fit ball and a wheat pack! A joyous birth after a scheduled caesarean for Lucy's birth.

KAT HAND is a science teacher and mum to 2 children birthed by her partner

KIM RYDER lives with her partner Karl and gorgeous, spirited 13 month old daughter Treya on the Central Coast of NSW. Having spent much of the first year of motherhood struggling, she now delights in the daily fun and games that comes with having a toddler in residence, and nourishes her creative side by contributing to Birthings and painting.

LUCY PERRY is the creator of Beer + Bubs childbirth education for men at the pub and the author of Cheers to Childbirth: a dad's guide to childbirth support. She is a mother of three, two born at home.

NICOLA and BRAYDEN GIFFORD had a tough road to achieving a home birth due to Nicola's epilepsy, a cyst on baby Suzannah's abdomen and difficulty coming up with the funds needed. Thankfully, all roadblocks were overcome and a wonderful birthing experience was had. Brayden, 34, an animator, and Nicola, 33, a communications executive, living in Sydney. Their first child was their first home birth. Suzannah is a happy, healthy little baby.

PETER GAILEY a High School Teacher, Pre Natal Educator, photographer, painter and a father of three. He began working in birth after the arrival of his second child Felix in 1990. This began a 20 year apprenticeship with the wonderful Marie Burrows who had the courage to take on a bloke. In 1999 he fell in love with the gorgeous Maggie Lecky Thompson, another one of his wonderful teachers. Nearly everything he learned about birth he learned from the women who he worked with. Pete still teaches prenatal classes at Birthing Rites Australia and at Royal North Shore Hospital.

VIRGINIA MADDOCK is Mum to her home born boys: 5 month old Keanu and 3 year old Jetsun; and her feline child 14 year old Yin Yin; and will be marrying Dan, her best friend of nine years, in a year. She loves her other roles as Birthings editor; HAS coordinator; Beer and Bubs presenter and Sutherland Shire homebirth group hostess. She is also a doula, herbalist and nutritionist, and is passionate about natural health, fertility, birth and parenting. www.naturalbeginnings.com.au

Coordinator's Report

VIRGINIA MADDOCK

Not much has gone on in birth related federal politics (that I know of) since the last issue of Birthings, however there seems no end to the negative media towards women's choice to birth at home, always whipped up again when some tragedy happens. Things go wrong all the time in hospitals with babies dying from unpreventable as well as preventable causes (though the doctors will most likely walk away unaffected by any accusation of negligence or fault). It is always a tragedy but fortunately for the grieving families, they are left out of the media spotlight and left in privacy to mourn their lost child.

So too, in the rarer event of a mother dying within the first 24 hours of childbirth. It is rarely splashed across the headlines of newspapers and television channels across the country. Not so, if the birth happened to be at home. It doesn't really matter what the cause is and that it most likely would've happened in hospital anyway (mums and babies die in hospitals too, right?), but the media will never let the truth get in the way of a good (i.e. negative) story and love to play up the fears of many hospital birthers who wrongly think that anyone who chooses birth at home are putting their own selfish needs for comfort above the safety of their babies.

One 'opinion piece' writer has even gone so far as to call for a legal ban on homebirths, as if the government should have the right to mandate how and where a woman births and decide what is best for her child. That this anti women's choice was written by a woman makes it even more ridiculous! It is about time that journalists were held accountable for the rubbish that they print, made to do proper research and to stop printing absolute lies when it can do such harm to the mental health of vulnerable and grieving families.

But on to more local issues. There are a number of volunteer changes happening at Homebirth Access Sydney. As is often the case with volunteer run organisations, people get busy with their lives and move on to other things – not surprising when our main focus is on birth and babies which is a life stage of which the interest can

wane when the kids are well out of nappies! So it is imperative that to keep the organisation running we regularly get new volunteers.

Sarah McLean will be leaving us and is handing over the Merchandise Coordinator position to a new person to be announced soon. Amantha McGuinness is taking over the Birthings distribution from Sandy Bucknell who has just birthed her new baby girl. (Congratulations Sandy and welcome to the world Scarlett).

This issue will be the last that our designer Leah White will be donating us with her time and awesome creativity, though the reason is not due to kids growing up and interest waning - Leah has not even had kids yet (though we do hope that when she does, it will be at home!). The many hours she has donated to us were during the time she was still studying design at uni in New Zealand. Now she has finished, moved to Melbourne and will be getting a 'real' job, so will not have the time to put into the magazine anymore. We want to thank her for all her hard work and wish her all the best for her future in the workforce. The magazine has looked so awesome and really benefited from her input. But luckily for us we have another volunteer to take her place. Our new designer from next issue is Jacqui Faye from Marrickville. I have seen some of her art and design work and am very excited to see what she has in store for the magazine!

If you would like to contribute to the organisation in any way, please get in contact with us, or come along to one of our committee meetings.

Speaking of committee meetings, our annual general meeting (AGM) is right around the corner. We hope you will join us at 10.30am on Tuesday March 13th at the Australian Doula College. You're welcome to come along and find out what we're all about, volunteer for any positions that may come up, or just put faces to names and hang out. Kids are more than welcome!



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- Memories from your own childhood that may resurface during this time
- Feeling numb and wanting to escape



New parents or parents-to-be suffering emotional difficulties at anytime from conception through to the postnatal period can call Kathy on 0488 334 445

Kathy Solanki
BN (CMHN), Grad Dip Mid, Grad Dip PIMH, CIMI
m 0488 334 445
e kathy@bambinimama.com.au



choices for
CHILD BIRTH

Choices for Childbirth has been established to provide information and resources to women and their families so they can make informed choices about pregnancy, birth and parenting, with a healthy balance of up to date, evidence-based information as well as the wisdom and knowledge of mothers, birth workers and health professionals.
Contact: Anne Harris m: 0433 162 847 e: sydney@choicesforchildbirth.org.au

Session Name: PREGNANCY & BIRTH INFORMATION SESSION
Date: Sunday March 11th Time: 1-4pm
Date: Sunday May 13th Time: 10am – 1pm
Location: The Sydney Pregnancy Centre & Concord Yoga Studio: 13 George St, North Strathfield
Cost: \$35 per person & \$60 per couple
Presenter: Erika Elliott
Contact: 0425 217 788 or Email: erikabirth@gmail.com

Session Name: PRECONCEPTION AND EARLY PREGNANCY
Date: Thursday, 29th March 2012 Time: 6.30 – 9.30pm
Date: Thursday, 24th May 2012 Time: 6.30 – 9.30pm
Location: Transition into Parenthood: 9 Wilybrook Place, Sylvania
Cost: \$35 per person & \$60 per couple
Presenters: Briony Howland & Julie Clarke
Contact: 0403 006 723 or Email: briony@birthinbalance.com.au

More info: www.choicesforchildbirth.org.au
Like us on Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Choices-for-Childbirth/354151727945977>

Birth Announcements

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



Our little star, **Elvy Frances Czezia Skoczen**, was born in the peaceful and comfortable surrounds of our home on 25th May 2011. She was welcomed by her dada Andrew, who gently guided her into the world, her Granny Aileen, and Auntie Vanessa. Much love to my mum, who was a shining light throughout my 28 hour labour; also to my sister Vanessa, who kept my spirits high with her constant smile. Andrew my love for you is now a living breathing entity. What a divine experience; one that I wish for all woman-kind. Welcome to the world Elvy xo



Bryce and Ana are thrilled to welcome **Timothy Bryce Davy**. He was born at home at lunchtime on the 20th of July 2011 on a beautiful crisp sunny winter's day. Many thanks to our fabulous midwife Rachele for all her support and patience as I whinged my way through a complication free labour. We are grateful to God for our healthy and happy son, and our fabulous birth experience.



Cat, Dan and Dylan would like to welcome little **Lillian Daphne Saunders** into the world. After much deliberation she decided that 4.35pm on the 6th of October 2011 was the day she wanted to meet us. Many thanks to Lisa Richards and Jules Cook for their wonderful support and early mornings. Much love to mum Elizabeth, Elly and Helen - my awesome birthing team. And to Grandma Wendy who surrounded us all in warmth and love. We miss you dearly.



Imogen and David are overjoyed to welcome our lovely girl **Indigo McKay Starr**, born on 20th November 2011 at 10.22pm on the family lounge. She was born into a soft candlelit room caught by Dad, wearing his cricket shirt for good luck, with Joni Mitchell playing on the stereo. Weighing in at a modest 4.36kgs, and measuring at 53cm in length, Indigo came out singing after an 8 hour labour. Eternal thanks to mega midwife Jo Hunter for all the care and support as we embark on the most amazing journey of our lives. Sweet little Indigo, we love you more every day!



Brayden and Nicola Gifford welcome with joy the birth of their beautiful daughter, **Suzannah Elizabeth Gifford** on 1st December 2011 at 9:40pm, safely into the water at home. Weighing 7 pounds and measuring 50.5cm, special thanks goes to midwife Lisa Richards.



Torah Scarlett was born 16th December, 40 weeks and 6 days, at 3.84kgs and 50cm. She shot out into Daddy's arms at 8:15pm. Thanks to the amazingly competent Melanie, for being so empathic and worrying so I didn't have to; and to the lovely Emma for managing to squeeze that 1ml blood out of the placenta in the end, and for collaborating with me to stay upright and drug free; and to our lovely doula Brooke for a wonderful placenta preparation. Our little Lotus Born girl seems very pleased with the whole experience. Get ready for our next bubba, I will need the whole team back to make sure it is just as fantastic :-)



Jennifer, Anthony and big sister Lucy are delighted to welcome **Hannah Jane Fillbrook** to their family. Born 4th January 2012 into her Mummy's arms, at home in the water. Assisted by two wonderful midwives, Melanie Jackson and Emma Fitzpatrick; and our fantastic doula, Christy Janssen. 2835 grams, 47 cm long at just over 40 weeks. An amazing, joyful birth!



Andrew, Tiffany, and proud big brothers Aden and Tyler, are excited to announce the arrival of the beautiful **Sienna Ivy Schaafsma**. She was born in an amazing and peaceful waterbirth at home on 24th January 2012, weighing 2990gms and measuring 52cm. Sienna was so alert and calm as she entered the world, we feel so blessed to welcome her into our family. A very special thank you to our wonderful midwife, Jo Hunter, for all of your support and calm presence at the birth, reminding me to breathe at all the right moments! I couldn't have done it without you! Welcome to the world Sienna, Love forever & ever, Mummy, Daddy, Aden & Tyler xo

Committee Member Profile

Amantha McGuinness – Birthings Distribution Coordinator



JOINED HAS: September 2010, signed up by my beautiful homebirth midwife Jo Hunter.

FAMILY: I live with Cyril, my wonderful husband of 6 years, my two gorgeous sons Ayden 5 years and Eli 10.5 months, our cat Thomas, two diamond pythons Wally and Eva and a tank full of fish.

LIFE BEFORE BIRTHING: My first job was counting cash for an armoured car company were I met my husband 13 years ago, I then did everything from Human resources to Remedial Massage at a physiotherapy clinic to a Day Spa to temping in Administration.

WHY HOMEBIRTH? I was considering a Homebirth when I first got pregnant with my eldest son but I settled for the birth centre to appease my family. Everything went a little pear shaped though and it ended in a caesarean. It took quite a few years and a Doula course with the Australian Doula College for me to feel ready to have another baby. Having a HBAC has been transformative and healing for my whole family and fuels my passion to help other women to find their birthing power, voice their choices, and birth without fear.

New and Renewed Members

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

Sandy Bucknell	Dani Brown	Tamara Hale
Claire Heslop	Kristy Yeadon	Rebecca Zuchetti
Erin Duff	Kassandra-Mae Freys	Justine Ward
Nerissa Walsh	Megan Carter	Petra Winkler-Hirter
Yvette Larkin	Abigail Harris	Joelle Breault-Hood
Hannah Ridgeway	Bonnie Pearl	Evelyn Dwyer
Susan Courtney	Sally Grant	Emma Lamont
Kim Hol	Tara Morrison	Rebecca Tyson
Louise Young	Layla Tan	Adiine Bigelow
Regan Matthews	Abby Zensea	Tamara Hale
Marlea Gray	Vanessa Kret	Rebecca Zuchetti
Hannah Walsh	Atalya Mather-Zardain	Justine Ward
Jackie Bysouth	Melanie Jackson	Hannah Oekinghaus
Nadine Carroll	Lisa Johnson	Deirdre Turner
Hayley Craddock	Donna Edwards	Rebecca Broadbent
Amy Tyson	Kim McNamara	Carmel Pasfield
Alison Bradford	Kelly Lanfranca	Jenny Belluco
Alanah Cole	Jane Wheeler	Melanie Mitchinson
Keira McEvoy	Melody Cook-Williams	Melinda Ras
Michelle KennedyAniko	Louise Burford	Liz Curtin
Zirig	Lisa James	Kirsty Barron
Rebecca Dunlop	Orit Holtzman	Betty Vella
Phiona Voyazis	Emma Lamont	Vanessa Stasinowsky
Tanya Sternberg	Rebecca Tyson	Vanessa Harrington
Loretta Salakas	Adiine Bigelow	

Membership

Homebirth Access Sydney is the only group of its kind in Sydney.

It fills an extremely important function in providing a centrally organised group of caring people, gathering information and making it available to everyone who is interested in childbirth alternatives and the myriad related issues.

Please support this vital work by subscribing to birthings

- 3 year membership: \$90
- 1 year membership: \$40
- Midwives subscribing clients: \$20 per client

Membership entitles you to receive Birthings four times a year and satisfaction in knowing that your money is being used to keep the group alive in order to make it easier for families to birth at home.

Please deposit correct money into our bank account:

Homebirth Access Sydney, BSB: 062 257, Acc #: 1017 2779

and email your details (as below) with receipt number to

member@homebirthsydney.org.au, or send your completed form with cheque or money order to HAS, PO Box 66, Broadway, NSW 2007

*Name

*Address

*Telephone:

*Email:

Occupation:

Can you volunteer help?

(Typing, fundraising, emailing, events, organising etc.)

Please tick: New member Renewal Email receipt required

Please enclose: \$90 for 3-year membership

\$40 for 1-year membership

\$15 for midwife client membership (1-year)

Midwife's name:

*NOTE: REQUIRED ENTRY FOR OUR DATABASE.

For receipt request and enquiries: member@homebirthsydney.org.au

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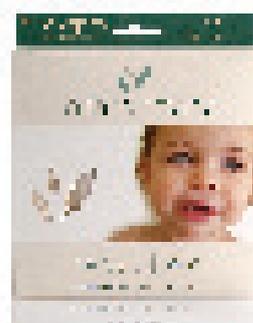
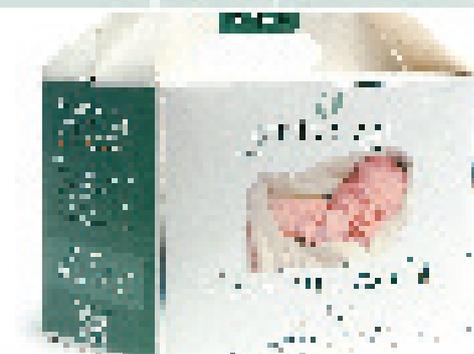
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2010



2010



2008



2009



2007



2007



Heart to Heart

Labour of Love Virginia Maddock

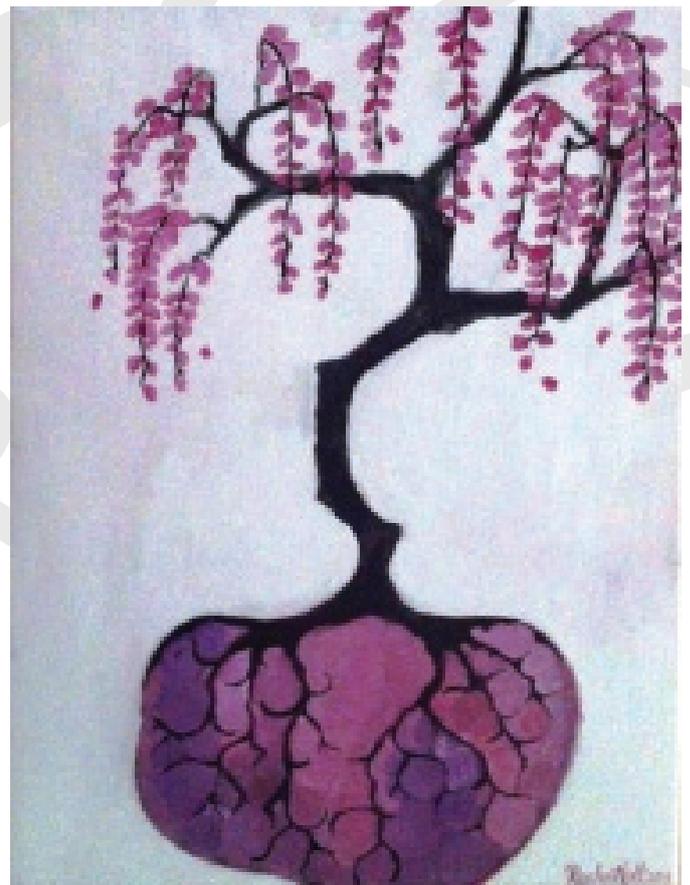


300,000 women will give birth with you today
A thousand generations before you have all done it the same way
You will open up your cervix like a summer rose in bloom
A million female souls and goddesses will fill your birthing room
Helping you to bring to earth your long awaited babe
So surrender to the tightenings that engulf you like a wave
Don't let your head be full with thought of any kind
Your inner strength will carry you if you just empty your mind
Your body knows exactly what it is designed to do
So trust, relax and surrender to the labour of love in you

[Written for Sandy Bucknell on the occasion of her Blessingway]



'Mother, Father and Child'
Artwork by Rachel Holt



'Placental Blossom'
Artwork by Rachel Holt

Another Crazy



When my wife Evie first said she wanted a homebirth I thought “Here we go. Another crazy hippie moment!” I was scared about something going wrong. My only experiences of birth were TV, where every birth is an emergency and people often die suddenly in dramatic circumstances, and our 3 year old Joey’s birth, which seemed like an emergency even though it really wasn’t.

It is only when I look back at Joey’s birth, having now experienced a homebirth with Paddy, that I realise just how crap it was.

Joey was meant to be born in a midwife attended birth centre. We attended the birth centre for all the pre-natal care, each time seeing a different midwife. Some of the midwives were lovely, some not so much, but all seemed harried and in a rush to check the heartbeat and Evie’s blood pressure and then see us on our way. We never really got to talk to the midwives about anything. It was made clear from the start the criteria that would apply to women/babies to ‘allow’ them to birth in the birth centre.

We got bumped from the birth centre because of some meconium. In the labour ward Evie was hooked up to continual monitoring and had to come out of her ‘calm birth zone’ to argue with a doctor about not getting up on the bed so she could stick a ‘just in case’ cannula in her hand.

The monitoring was very distracting and I kept checking it (as if I’d know what it meant anyway) concerned about the baby. I actually believed Joey might be in some trouble and was scared. It was a very fast labour, and in about 5 hours we had a perfectly healthy baby that Evie birthed mostly on her own.

The only good thing about the hospital stay was that we got a private room and they did all the nappy laundering. We still have

nightmares about the ‘dong dong’ noise of the call buttons going off all night. And it sounds dumb, but it was difficult that they delivered food for Evie to eat, but I had to try to find the time to run out to eat. A couple of days I didn’t eat until 2pm, and that on top of lack of sleep made me really irritable and irrational. At one point a nurse took Joey away ‘so we could sleep,’ but I went running after her to take him back. It didn’t seem right.

Joey was not the easiest baby in the world. Some breastfeeding issues at first and then reflux and we had a 3 month old on medication with breast refusal who would scream all the time, only feed lying down and had to be held in the ‘colic hold’ all hours of the night. I didn’t bond very well with Joey in those first 6 months. I’m not sure if that was because of how difficult those first few months were, or because of his birth, or even just because I had to get used to being a parent. In all honesty it was the most difficult time in my life, and I was very scared about the impact another baby would have on our lives.

I respected Evie’s decision to birth wherever she felt most comfortable, but had to admit, if it were my decision, it would have been to birth in hospital.

As Evie, and eventually I, got to know our midwife Jo, most of the fears I had about the homebirth eased. She was very professional but also warm and great with Joey, and since we intended for Joey to be present for the birth, that was important. I know Jo gave Evie a lot of time to talk about her birth plans and also any anxieties and issues that were coming up for her. She also spent a bit of time talking with me in the last few sessions about my role in the birth, and what to do should the birth be an accidental ‘free birth’ since we were anticipating another fast labour. I know it was fantastic for both of us to have that support.

Paddy was born in a very fast labour. I felt like I was doing a million jobs at once. I was watching Joey eat his breakfast, while rubbing Evie’s back every two minutes when she had a contraction. I was filling the birth pool and looking for the mandarin oil and burner, which when located and set up was quickly turned off when Evie changed her mind. I was sending text messages to Evie’s mum (Robyn) that read “Don’t rush but don’t stop for coffee on the way”. I was cleaning up Joey and changing his nappy, still rubbing Evie’s back, grabbing the phones every time one of them got an SMS from either Jo or Robyn.

I somehow managed to put on some boardies so I could get in the birth pool. I was definitely running on adrenaline, praying that Jo would arrive before Paddy did, but I also felt somewhat free. With the privacy of just us, I felt totally comfortable to say to Evie any supportive thing that came to mind, without feeling embarrassed or ‘naff’. With no-one else there I had to step-up, be the support person, and do a great job of it.

Evie wasn’t in the calm birth zone like she had been in her first labour, and that worried me a bit at the time, but in retrospect it was such a fast labour it’s not surprising she didn’t feel like it. Evie actually said to me at one point “fuck the special place,” at which point I thought I had better try a new approach. It made me feel good at the end of it all to know that I rose to the challenge and

Hippie Idea

was able to support my wife through a fast and full-on labour, mostly on my own (though I was very glad Jo made it for the 'scary part'). Evie went into transition pretty quickly. She said she felt like pushing. I felt like saying "Don't even think about it." Instead I texted Jo with "she says she wants to push", and Robyn with all I could manage at the time: "transition". Jo then sent a message that I kept open and looked at any time I felt a bit panicky. It basically said that everything would be ok, to tell Evie to breathe through it for as long as possible and remember to rub the baby with a towel if s/he needed it.

Paddy was born within about 10 minutes of Jo arriving. He was born into water and I caught him. I was a bit terrified that I would drop him or otherwise stuff it up, but it's pretty amazing for me to think that the first hands that touched him were mine.

I had the shakes a bit once everything calmed down, perhaps a bit of an adrenaline come down. Jo gave me some Rescue Remedy and it actually worked. So I had to change my mind about another 'crazy hippie thing' that day.

I am now a total homebirth convert. Like a born-again religious zealot, I tell everyone who's pregnant (or whose partners are pregnant, or who are thinking about one day getting pregnant) that they "just have to have a homebirth".

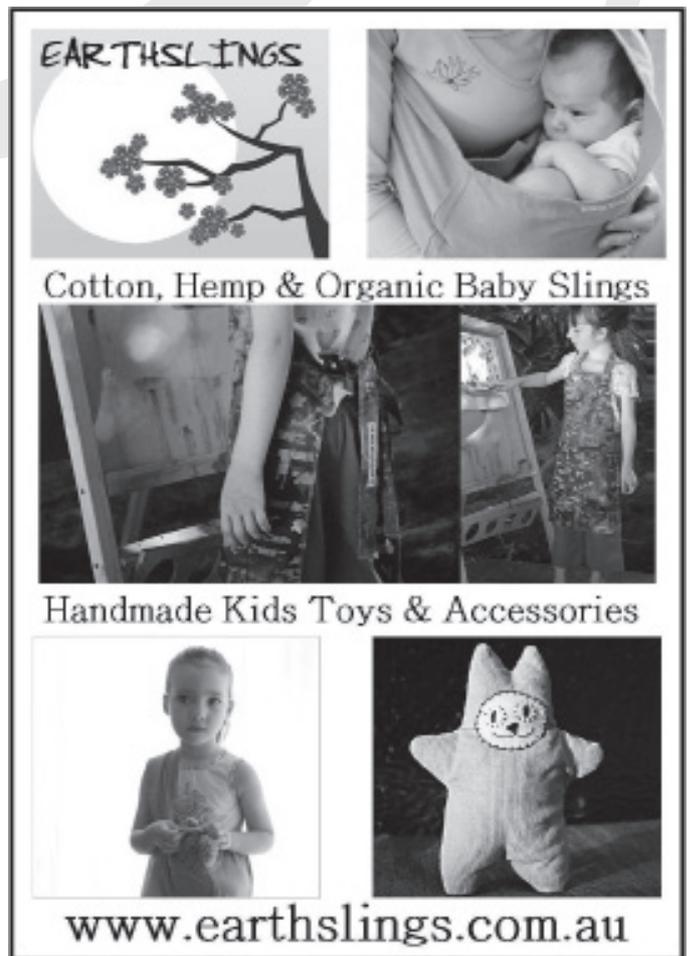
The continuity of care was one of the highlights of the home birth experience for me. To get to know and trust Jo over months before the birth, have her attend the birth, and then do the post natal care in our home, just felt like such a comfort.

It was nice to not have to cart a new baby around in a car to and from doctors or early childhood nurses in those first few weeks. We just got to stay at home and get to know each other. I feel like it was much easier for me to bond with Paddy than with Joey. Maybe it was because he felt like an instant member of the family, having been born in the home, or maybe because I got to catch him and look after him straight away without any strangers interfering. Also possibly it was because his birth did not have the feeling of an emergency. I was at no point really afraid for his or Evie's life, like I had been during Joey's birth.

It's like we had the best of both worlds, a new baby without having to leave the comfort of our home. We could shower, use the toilet, and eat whatever and whenever we wanted in those first few days, in contrast to the hospital stay with Joey. It seems silly, but those little things mean a lot.

My attitude towards birth has been radically changed. I realise now that birth is (usually) a normal event that has become way too medicalised. As someone who has experienced anxiety about medical issues for years, I had never wanted to get pregnant myself. I didn't want to not be in control of my body, to have to go to hospital, to maybe die - all things I associated with birth before the homebirth. Birth just seems so normal now. It feels like something I could do, which is a new feeling for me. If I do now decide to give birth, I know I would want a homebirth.

KAT HAND



The advertisement for Earthslings is enclosed in a black border. At the top left, the text "EARTHSLINGS" is written in a simple, sans-serif font above a stylized tree logo. To the right is a black and white photograph of a baby in a sling. Below these are two more black and white photographs: one showing a person's hands working on a piece of fabric, and another showing a young child standing next to a wooden toy structure. Underneath the photographs, the text "Cotton, Hemp & Organic Baby Slings" is centered. Below that, the text "Handmade Kids Toys & Accessories" is centered. At the bottom left of the ad is a small black and white photo of a young girl, and at the bottom right is a black and white photo of a star-shaped stuffed toy with a face. At the very bottom, the website address "www.earthslings.com.au" is centered in a bold, sans-serif font.

The Birthing Zone

The following story comes out of a presentation that I gave at the 27th Home-Birth Australia Conference in 2011 in front of about four hundred women: midwives, midwifery students, doulas, childbirth educators and home-birthing mothers. Throughout the conference I found myself in awe again; women's knowledge of pregnancy and birth has been handed down from mother to daughter, from midwife to midwife, through countless generations spanning all cultures across millennia. Vital skills that have ensured the continuity of humanity no less. Only in the last century has this knowledge been eroded. Pregnancy and birth are now standardised in our modern medical system, run by men who don't have a clue about what a natural birth is, let alone looks like. The home-birth conference seemed to be a place for keeping the vital knowledge alive and flowing.

Along with this positive feeling within the conference, I was also feeling challenged. Counting only three men in the conference audience I felt slightly intimidated by so many women with so much birthing experience. I began questioning myself about why I was there. My original urge to present had vanished and I felt inadequate. I was now very much embarrassed by my synopsis in the conference programme, which I so cleverly wrote nine months before. It read: Born in a Bucket!!!!

"Musings on why and how we birthed our two children at home and my part in it (after copulation) as a man, husband and father." Men are not famous for being very helpful when it comes to birthing babies, however Gary will tear apart the stereotype and take you out of your medicalised, comatose comfort zone into the organic, dynamic world of home-birthing, as seen from his perspective...and that of a bright orange bucket.

With home-birthing legends like Ina May Gaskin, Robbie Davis-Floyd and Dr. Sarah J. Buckley in the audience, my stomach turned. No way did I feel up to the Anthony Robins style presentation I had envisaged. What the hell did I know about birthing compared to these women? How the hell did I rev myself up into thinking that I could talk to them on a subject in which they are so expert?

I was scheduled to talk late Sunday morning, so I had a whole day and a half at the conference to stew in my thoughts and feelings before I exposed myself as a fraud and they sacrificed me on the alter to the Great Mother goddess.

When I finally took the stage and nervously set up the presentation, my notes slipped off the lectern and onto the floor. When I picked them up I became aware that I didn't need them. With spot lights blaring in my eyes, I focused. Then I began telling the audience something that had been on my mind all day. Where I live, not two hundred metres from my door, is some bushland where we

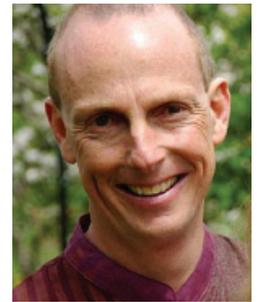
walk with the kids. Sometimes we picnic there and play in the creek. Part of this bushland is a sacred women's birthing site used by the Gundungarra and Darug women for aeons. On a recent walk through the area I spied markings on two very old gum trees. They each had deep cuttings in the bark in the shape of female genitalia. Weeks later I had the opportunity to ask the local Aboriginal elder women about the markings and they exclaimed the markings were there to warn the men to stay away. This is a secret women's-business site. "When I walked into the conference centre the day before," I told the 400 women, "I felt like I had passed those boundary markers and wandered into the heart of sacred women's-business. Part of me felt like a very naughty boy."

However, the reality was I had been invited into the 'circle' to present my story of how I supported my beloved in her right-of-passage into motherhood, bringing our first-born earthside. And the nine month process of this support was my own right-of-passage as a man into fatherhood. "In this day and age we are now seeing where sacred women's-business meets sacred men's-business," and that's really what I wanted to talk about that day at the conference. Giving birth is no longer a secret yet the knowledge of doing so is still sacred.

I received thunderous applause from the audience in this first minute of my presentation. From then on I spoke confidently and effortlessly. Far from being sacrificed to the goddesses, I heard much applause and laughter coming from the audience during my brief 25 minutes on stage. I even had the pleasure of seeing Ian May Gaskin out of the corner of my eye, laughing herself silly during one part. I must say, with all humility, the talk was a triumph. The feedback was fantastic. One woman said she was crying with joy through the whole talk. Another thanked me 'for speaking for the men.' Another told her friends online, "Gary was bloody brilliant." Thrilled by the response, I could see that these women had been waiting to hear something like this from a man for a long time. Not because of their professions, but because they were women of today.

My interest here now is to explore the place where sacred women's-business meets and overlaps with sacred men's-business. That place is proving to be most powerful and extraordinary in the birthing zone. With more and more men now being invited into the circle, it's time to put aside our fears and acknowledge and respect the sacredness of the process which women have been in tune with since we began to walk upright. In doing so we will discover the sacredness of our own inner process of becoming fathers that is intimately interwoven with the woman's process of becoming a mother and the child's processes of simply 'becoming.' We will discover the man's right-of-passage is as equally valid (emotionally and psychologically) as the woman's and when both are fused in the intimate vulnerability of love without fear it can become an enormous force. A force capable of moving mountains; not just in birthing but in every aspect of life and living.

" ...A force capable of moving mountains; not just in birthing but in every aspect of life and living. "



GARY CAGANOFF

Becoming a father is not seen as a 'right-of-passage' in our society so I feel I must clarify what a right-of-passage actually is in this context. A right-of-passage, for me, is simply being conscious of what is present within myself as deeply as possible as I move through a profound, even existential, process, such as grieving, getting married, or growing older.

In the process of becoming a father I am focusing on what is happening inside of me as much as what is happening 'out there' in the world. I experience the process of becoming a father not as a structured ceremony set up by community elders (like a boy's initiation into manhood) or my peers (both of which carry value). I experience the process of becoming a father simply by being as aware as I can possibly be of my reactions, thoughts and feelings. At the same time I let the process of 'becoming' unfold naturally.

'Becoming' means change and this change is fundamentally about reaching a new level of understanding of relationship. Primarily the relationship you have with yourself, which affects all other relationships. So a traditional or a contemporary right-of-passage is not something you can simply take or leave. It's a vital process

of emotional and psychological development and the continual evolution of consciousness. It's simply letting the unknown become known. If it all remains unconscious out of fear of the unknown then there is no change. No becoming. Life then becomes stagnant and stale, reactive and competitive, complex, frustrating and confusing; until a crisis of relationship manifests to shake you out of your coma.

Change can be a scary thing but we are at a time on this planet where we must change. On a global scale, in a world where our planet's ecosystems are dying and so many people are hurting, we men have been emotionally absent and out of relationship with the women, the children, the earth and ourselves for far too long.

I would love to share my journey with you (complete with Powerpoint presentation) at your next home-birth meeting (or similar). I'd also love to hear about your own pre or postnatal journey so far. Please email me at Gary@LandscapesOfTheSoul.com or call 041 99 72 427 to make a date. I can also facilitate a programme based on the talk for half a day, a full day, or a weekend for men and women.



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Becoming

Dad to Charlie



I made the conscious decision that I wanted to be a Dad when I was in my early teens. I dreamt, wondered and questioned the kind of dad that I wanted to be many times in my life, well before I finally became a dad to Charlie (at age 33). But nothing prepared me for the experience of holding my son for the very first time. It was one of the fullest moments that I have ever lived. What I realise now is that it was also the final step – the last frontier – onto my path of fatherhood.

For some reason I assumed that I was going to have a daughter. In hindsight, there was something safe in that vision: a reflection of myself that I would never have to see or examine. So as I cradled my son in my arms and laid him against my chest (feel my hairy chest and smell my hairy armpits, Son!), I felt the gravity of generations on my shoulders. My dad was an only child. I was the eldest child and my dad's first son. It seemed having a son as your first was a family rite of passage that I now found myself accepting. Time froze. Memories, love, happiness, pain, hope and wonder surged through me in an ecstatic instant. In that moment, I relived my relationship with my dad and intimately observed the relationship my dad had with my Pop. When time had started moving again, in seconds and minutes, I realised that I had made some more profound conscious decisions: to be the best dad I could possibly be to Charlie, to do it differently than my fathers before me and to love him with all of my heart. It was an awesome and powerful moment of bonding and fusing with Charlie, one that I'll never forget.

What did 'being the best Dad to Charlie' look like in the reality of day-to-day life, marriage and parenthood? I had more questions than answers. I had never had a man in my life that role-modelled the kind of dad that I wanted to be. All I had were my visions, hopes and aspirations. But I knew (even before Charlie was born) that I both wanted and needed to be around to find my own answers and to make my own discoveries; that I needed to learn from him, that I needed to step in as a man and as a dad, and that I needed to be present and available.

So I did the only practical thing within my power to do: create the space to be the dad that I wanted to be. I didn't work for a few weeks after he was born. I was just there. All day. All night. With Lucy (Charlie's Mum, my partner). For Lucy. With Charlie. For Charlie. I decided that I would only work part-time and share the

joys and challenges of raising Charlie. Our days and nights began to fill themselves with play times, walks, baths, restless nights, sleeps, feeding and nappy changing – the stuff of babies. And the more we shared of that, the more I came to love this demanding little cracker of ours.

It wasn't all peaches and cream. When Charlie was six months old, Lucy and I became a statistic; we separated in the first year of our new child's life. I was devastated for us and what it meant for Charlie and for my hopes as a dad. But I wasn't prepared to give up on our relationship or on Charlie. We lived apart for seven months. I saw Charlie every day. I worked a 35 hour week, kept my own home going – somehow! – I made space for Charlie every single day – somehow! Of course, I had moments of sinking. But I knew that I could only let myself sink so far and for so long. At the very least, I had to keep being a dad to Charlie. That was my priority, my commitment, my promise – to me and to Charlie.

I'm so grateful that I spent so much time with him in those early days and months. We didn't just survive this time in our relationship; we continued to grow closer together and our bond became stronger. I felt capable and confident to be with him anywhere, doing anything. I knew him. I knew his noises, faces, words, expressions, songs, laughs, cries, howls, chuckles and even his silences. I knew how to be with him. He knew that he was safe and loved. He knew that when it was time to be with Dadda, he would be nurtured as well as entertained, fed, changed and rested. Charlie's first word was "Dad". I felt empowered. I was being the best dad to Charlie.

When I moved back into our family home, we celebrated that we would again begin and end days together and share more of the precious little moments of life that filled those days. There's a saying that 'Kids spell love T-I-M-E.' Of course, that's oversimplifying parent-child love, but I can't help but feel that there's some truth in this for me. Creating space for Charlie and to be an active and engaged dad was the best parenting decision I have ever made.

I didn't do this alone. I'm incredibly grateful to Lucy for actively supporting and encouraging me to have the relationship I do with Charlie; she gets how special and important our time is together and what it gives to both of us. We are a team and I am an equal on our team. That means equal responsibility, but equal rewards. The best thing has been to know that by focusing on playing an active role as a dad, I also supported Lucy to be his mum and shared the load. Yes fellas, women do find men doing housework sexy!

That's my story, not my doctrine on how to be the best dad. I've been fortunate enough to be a part of groups of expectant dads preparing for the journey of fatherhood. As a facilitator, I like to get them talking and thinking about what's going to work best for them and their family. What kind of space do they want to create to be a dad? What space can they create to be a dad? What role do they want to play? What kind of relationship do they want to have with their child? What does that look like? Before the baby comes is a great time to share with their partner the hopes, dreams and expectations of fatherhood and to prepare for the adventure (and the challenges!) ahead.

Cheers to your child's birth!

DARREN MATTOCK



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In honour of women, for the love of birth

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The Things

I Saw at Birth

When I first started training as a prenatal educator I asked my mother about my birth. She told me a story about being a totally naïve maiden, of being taken to a private hospital by my Dad and being left in a waiting room with other women in early labour. Dad was sent home. At some stage during that long Midwinter's' night a midwife came in, told her she was ready and she was promptly knocked out with ether. That's all she remembers about my birth. That's how it was in 1949.

I remember as a young boy going with my father and brother to see my baby sister. We stood at a glass window and looked across at a nursery full of cots. Dad held up a sign with our families name written on it and a nurse went to one of the cots and lifted up a newborn baby. In 1955, this was how fathers and their families first met their babies.

When it was my turn for initiation into fatherhood, I knew nothing about birth. My then partner already had two babies and I assumed she knew what had to be done, but I was a complete novice.

It was a fast birth, on a full moon in a little country hospital. One hour from start to finish. Such a fast labour by its very nature is intense, but I was totally unprepared for how intense it really was. I describe it as the closest thing to an exorcism that I'd ever seen. I think that by going into that birthing room so underprepared meant that I was hit by an emotional tsunami. I went into a state of shock and wasn't much use to my partner at all.

Then suddenly my daughter was born. When she was passed to me and I held her in my arms for the first time, I had an epiphany. It finally dawned upon me the significance of what we had done. I had to have a baby in my hands before it made sense. I guess in hindsight I was not much more than a witness, but what I had witnessed was so real, so powerful that it changed my life forever.

I was totally in awe by the forces a birthing woman brings into the room when she is creating life, the deep beauty that a baby has as it takes its first breaths and pinks up, like the most exquisite dawn imaginable. And that special way that a newborn gazes deep into your very soul. A lot of guys are slow to get it, that's why it's so important for men to be there in the third stage. Birthing the placenta takes the mother's focus off the baby and it's often the father's first real chance to meet his offspring.

It was 10 years later before I was next in the birthing room, with a new partner, and a totally different labour. Over two days with a boy in a posterior position, the labour ended in a transfer, interventions and a caesarean. One thing about a caesarean is that the fathers get to stay with, and hopefully hold their baby for the first few hours. Well, that's what happened with me. It's funny that of my three children, the baby boy that I held and cared for in those first few hours of his life, is the one that I am still closest to 20 years later.

The other thing that hit me during that long relentless labour was the fact that I couldn't do any of it. I would have given my right arm to have taken some of those contractions on, to give my partner a break, but it is one thing a man cannot do. That realization was difficult for me and was an important motivation to become a childbirth educator.

When I began my training, I started attending births. I saw a lot of couples going through the hospital system, and many of them getting lost in the intensity of the labour. When birthing women get lost, the midwives and the doctors take over to get those babies out, and the cascade of intervention begins. Many of these birthing couples came out of that experience shocked, cut and traumatised. Others, and perhaps more worryingly, were those who "bought the

story" of the need for intervention, because with every caesarean section comes a rationale of why this baby couldn't have been born any other way. And by buying the story, they also take on the subtext: "My body wasn't capable..."

Then there were the labours where the mothers and the babies began to dance the rhythm of birth and the women worked with the baby and the intensity. I saw these women come out of the experience ecstatic, empowered, initiated.

I watched men at birth and I observed with empathy the ones who were gob smacked by the primal intensity and the powerlessness of not being able to share that intensity, or to fix it. I think that many men fear that their partner or baby are going to die and become ultra anxious. Some became clumsy and got in the way or got it wrong. Others tried humour to make it lighter because that's what men do. I saw men shutting down or getting stoned or drunk to numb their pain, others went into a primal state, or called for the anaesthetist's epidural.

Then there were the ones who worked with the labour, who trusted their partner's ability to birth. They served the warriors, fetched and held, and 'read' their women without asking questions. They followed without dragging their heels, and the women trusted these men and were therefore able to take that leap into the unknown whilst feeling loved, supported and safe.

This happened particularly at the home births I attended. By the very act of choosing to birth their babies in a non medical environment within their own home, meant that the couples took more responsibility for their birth experience and ownership of the outcomes too. The midwives give these couples more flexibility from medical protocols and generally encourage more involvement by the men. I saw fathers catching their babies. I remember another guy telling me about resuscitating his baby. "He was born flat and the midwife got me to resuscitate him." He told me "I was ambivalent about having this baby and in that moment I had to decide if I really wanted it." I often marvel at the courage of the home birthers and their midwives, but I'm also aware of the sense of empowerment that comes with it.

People's relationships are laid bare during a birth, and if the woman doesn't trust her partner it will be obvious, she won't have the energy to deal with him when she's outside her comfort zone. One of the hardest things I hear is "You're doing it wrong, don't touch me, you're hopeless, where's the obstetrician?"

Men usually follow their partner's choices regarding birth but whatever the choices, it's really important for men to be able to serve their labouring women effectively, to be hardworking, committed, calm and efficient. We need to ask our partners "What is the best way to support you when you're dealing with such a huge issue like bringing our baby into the world, stretched way outside your comfort zone?" or "Name the qualities you want me to bring to the birth so I can work with you best." I wish I'd asked my partners this question. Going into the experience not knowing how my partner was best supported was hard. It would have been so much better if she had said to me, "I want you to be calm" or "I want you to be focused" or "I want you..." etc.

Men need to observe how women support women. When a woman works with another woman there's often trust and empathy and a deep sense of service, hard work is involved. I also think there is a part of women's initiation going on, of "This is what women do, don't be afraid, don't run from it, work with it." "Trust that your body is capable, talk to your baby."

PETE GAILEY

I think that it's important that partners recognise the initiation aspects of birth, that it's not their job to take the intensity away but to hold the space, to maintain the fire, to allow the woman the place to find out how she's going to bring her baby through her. Men need to take a leap of faith before the birth and understand that women come from a long line of birthing women, that their bodies are designed to birth and that their babies know how to be born.

I believe that the intensity of birth is there to make women strong. Women change fundamentally during the birth experience, they go from being maidens to becoming mothers, and mothers will do anything for their babies. It is so important for partners to let that change happen, to encourage and support that journey into motherhood and to ensure the bond between mother and baby is strong and resilient.

When a new mother cares for her newborn she isn't a girl anymore, she has grown up, and the last thing she needs is a little boy wanting the other breast. We need to catch up with her, to put the computer away, see the domestic work that needs to be done without having to be asked, and to step up to the plate. In the weeks following the birth, do as much as you can to facilitate your partner's journey into motherhood. Have some time alone with the baby but don't get between the mother and the baby. Watch your partner gain confidence in her own mothering. Praise her, tell her how proud you are of her and how beautiful she is. Also watch your mother-in-law and see how she settles her grandchild. Facilitate rather than fix. Learn from the women.

Nearly everything I've learned about birth has been from the women. I've learned from the mothers and their partners who asked me to their births, from the midwives, especially Maggie Lecky Thompson, Jo Hunter and Jane McGregor, from the doulas and from my fellow educators and especially from Marie Burrows who had the courage and foresight to train a man. There are also the wonderful men who I've met. Normally men don't share their wisdom, you have to watch them, ask them questions, and get them to tell their story, because when they get past the jokes they are usually very insightful and wise!



In the Photo from L-R
Riley Johns, Phil Johns, Jo Hunter, Pete Gailey, Maggie Lecky
Thompson, Lucretia Mc Carthy, Mel Crawford.



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Men, Babies and

Those of us who enjoy history often look with bemusement at the British, stiff upper lip parenting school where a handshake between father and son, or a quick hug and a pat for a daughter, were the most a child could expect on parting the family home. How could such a hands-off parenting style evolved? Why didn't the father just want to bundle the child up and throw them on the bed in a tangle of arms, legs and giggles that men so often enjoy today?

No doubt there are many elements to answering this question, but surely one of them must be the early deprivation of both father and child of the hormone oxytocin. Women's relationship with oxytocin is well known — oxytocin is the hormone that makes a woman fall in love with her partner all over again after the intensity of the birth (and despite the fact that she probably shouts unspeakable things at him during labour); helps the woman to breastfeed; make the woman's labour contractions stronger and more effective; speeds up her labour, reduces anxiety levels and helps her see her new born baby as the most beautiful baby in the world (regardless of the reality).

But what of men and oxytocin? How do they get their fair share of this wonder hormone and does it do anything for them? The good news is that men can get wonderful doses of oxytocin and while it doesn't do much for the birth process, it does wonders for bonding with their partner and their baby. But before we consider its specific role in males, let's look at it more generally.

The hormone's name derives from ancient Greek with *oxys* meaning 'quick' and *tokos* meaning 'birth'. But its role in the body is not simply to assist birth. Its uses within the body are so varied that the American obstetrician and researcher, Dr Niles Newton in some of the earliest research into the drug in the 1950s, described it as the "Hormone of Love."

OXYTOCIN — PRODUCED BY THE BRAIN

Oxytocin is produced in the hypothalamus, which is a small gland about the size of an almond found just above the brain stem. Once released into the blood supply by the pituitary gland, oxytocin circulates in the body until it finds an 'oxytocin receptor.' Oxytocin receptors are found in the uterus and the mammary glands in the breasts of women, and also in the brains of both women and men. On finding an oxytocin receptor, the oxytocin causes both physical and emotional changes in the body.

REPRODUCTION AND OXYTOCIN

Reproduction is directly assisted by oxytocin. Male orgasm causes the immediate release of oxytocin that then stimulates contractions within the seminal vesicles causing the semen to be ejaculated from the penis. Female orgasm also causes the release of oxytocin. The oxytocin leads the uterus to rhythmically contract and assist in propelling the sperm towards the fallopian tubes.

OXYTOCIN, BIRTH AND BREASTFEEDING

Nine months after creating a new life, oxytocin has a different role in a woman's body and brain. During labour, oxytocin causes the uterus to contract and encourages opening of the cervix to allow a baby to enter the vagina. Nerves in the vaginal wall provide feedback to the hypothalamus about the baby's progress. If progress is not as fast as it should be, more oxytocin is released, encouraging stronger contractions from the uterus.

The oxytocin sloshing around in the body, even after the baby is born, is not wasted. Oxytocin receptors in the breasts encourage the milk letdown reflex to allow the newborn baby to suckle. The link between oxytocin and milk has been known since at least the 2nd Century when the Greek doctor, Galen wrote about how herdsman would stimulate the vagina of mares to improve the quantity of milk available. Vaginal stimulation released oxytocin and that increased milk output. This is why women who have had a caesarean section may have trouble commencing breastfeeding — the absence of oxytocin. However, stimulating the nipples can encourage oxytocin production and thus increase milk output. When a baby suckles, oxytocin is released which further helps the let down of milk. New mothers will also notice that the suckling can also cause mildly painful contractions as the oxytocin encourages the uterus to return to its pre-pregnant size.

Some couples make use of oxytocin as a way of stimulating the onset of labour when the baby is considered 'overdue.' Sex, with or without orgasm can release oxytocin, but if being in the late stages of pregnancy, penetrative sex doesn't feel comfortable, then simply kissing, hugging and intimacy can promote oxytocin release. Emotional changes and fear

Some of the emotional effects of oxytocin are quite stunning. Oxytocin surging through the body helps the woman who has just given birth to bond with her baby. That first glance at the baby that makes the intensity of labour immediately fade and a flood of love for the baby suffuse throughout the woman's mind and body, is caused by oxytocin. This is why women who have planned caesarean sections often report more difficulty in bonding with their baby than women who have had natural births. The oxytocin that is so much part of labour is absent. Anecdotally, midwives have known this for a long time, but it was only when researchers, like Dr Dianne Witt from Binghamton University in the USA, started blocking the release of oxytocin at birth in animals and discovered that the mothers subsequently rejected their offspring, that it became apparent that natural labouring and the benefits for mother-infant bonding had a scientific explanation.

A report in *Nature* in 2005 found that when oxytocin was given to human subjects, they were more willing to trust each other than those without the oxytocin. This provided further evidence that oxytocin is an important part in family bonding. Oxytocin has also been shown to reduce anxiety and fear in humans. This is a highly useful benefit during childbirth because the emotion of fear can lead to the excretion of adrenaline into the body. Adrenaline's role is to prepare the body for either a 'fight or flight' response and it can shut down or slow labour. Through oxytocin relaxing the woman and reducing her fear and anxiety, the likelihood of adrenaline being released is reduced.

ARTIFICIAL OXYTOCIN — SECOND BEST

Artificial oxytocin, (called 'Syntocinon®' or 'Pitocin®') is widely used in obstetrics to induce labour. Women who are considered 'overdue' are often induced by being attached to a Syntocinon drip. The Syntocinon works by stimulating the uterus to contract. Regrettably, because the Syntocinon infusion is not being regulated by the woman's brain but by a machine, the contractions precipitated by the Syntocinon are often far more painful and intense than naturally arising contractions. Syntocinon induced labour can be very difficult for the woman to handle and this can lead to the 'cascade of intervention' leading to a caesarean section. It is important to remember that overly painful contractions caused by oxytocin

Bonding



induction not only causes anguish for the mother, but the strength of the contractions can also cause distress to the baby — again leading to an increase in the likelihood of surgical interventions.

Where Syntocinon can be a life saver is if the woman has a haemorrhage after the birth, or excessive bleeding after the expelling of the placenta. In such an event, the midwife can give an injection of Syntocinon that stops the bleeding. Normally, the amount of oxytocin in the body is sufficient after a natural birth to stop a haemorrhage.

OXYTOCIN ADDICTION

Much of what we know about oxytocin comes from research on a little vole. Far from Australia, on the flat plains of America, lives a small non-descript, grey-brown mammal, about 15cm long. The prairie vole (*Microtus ochrogaster*) has a unique claim to fame. It is one of the very few mammals that is monogamous. Once the prairie vole has found a fellow vole of the opposite sex and decided to mate, it is smitten for life. Fifty percent of its short twelve-month life is spent being pressed against its mate. It cuddles its way through life, and all because of oxytocin. On mating (which goes on for twenty-four hours), oxytocin surges through the vole's brain, swamping its receptors and releasing the 'feel great' hormone, dopamine. The female's brain is now imprinted with the notion that its partner, with whom it mated, makes it feel great and thus is the vole for her; for the rest of her life, and remarkably the male feels the same. If other female voles come near him, he will growl and send them packing. His eyes are only for his first love. As well as cuddling her constantly, he will help bring up the babies and be the perfect parent — and if she should sadly die before him, he will remain single for the rest of his life. And all because of oxytocin, the hormone of love!

MEN AND OXYTOCIN

While it has been known for quite some time that men release oxytocin — in large quantities during orgasm, and lesser quantities during human-to-human contact (kisses, hugs and even hand-shaking) — its role in parenting has not been examined. However, work in 2010, by scientists in Israel and the USA have found that levels of oxytocin in men are well correlated to how much physical contact they have with their baby. The more contact, the more oxytocin in their body. This research has significant implications for men and their parenting role. As oxytocin levels both correlate and appear to be causal factors in bonding, it is clear that the more oxytocin a couple have the better bonded they are. Babies that are well bonded with their parents cry less and settle more quickly. Equally, parents that are well bonded with their baby have far less problems dealing with crying, and react more reasonably and appropriately to crying babies. Sadly the opposite is very clearly true. When babies are beaten or mistreated it is often perpetrated by the unbonded male partner (who is often not the father of the baby) — such as the boyfriend, defacto or step-father.

Women get their oxytocin from birth, breastfeeding and continual body contact with their baby. Men have to work slightly harder to get their oxytocin levels high with their baby, but it can be achieved through doing as much baby-wrangling as possible. Men should be in charge of nappy-changing and baby-bathing. And of course they should spend time just lying around with their naked baby on their bare chest. These simple activities will help ensure surging levels of oxytocin in fathers and the rapid development of close bonds after the birth of his baby.

Let us now return to the Victorian father. That's the one who stands back while all the women fuss around the children; The one who shakes hands with his son as he goes to war, never knowing whether he will see the child again; The one who thinks that kissing or cuddling a child is simply unthinkable, un-British and unmanly. These men were not present at the birth of their baby; they did not cuddle their baby; they did not change their baby's nappy; they did not bathe their baby; they did not dress their baby and playing with their baby was strictly the role of the mother, the aunts or the nanny.

Is it any wonder that these poor men were stand-offish and missed out on the joy of fatherhood? The more a man gets involved with his baby, the more fun and delight he will get from being a Dad.

For full references, please contact David: dvbooks@mac.com

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Post Natal Depression:

A Dad's Guide



LUCY PERRY

KNOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE BABY BLUES AND POSTNATAL DEPRESSION

On about the third day after the birth about 80% of women experience unexplained tearfulness, often referred to as the "baby blues". This is just the hormonal adjustment to breastfeeding and no longer being pregnant and it's okay for her to cry and be a sorry-sack for a day or two. Don't try to be a bloke and solve her problems. Just let her be sad and tell her you love her. Tell her she's the most gorgeous woman on the planet and that she's even more beautiful with your baby in her arms. Give her a cuddle.

TAKE THE NEXT STEP IF YOUR PARTNER'S SADNESS AFTER GIVING BIRTH CONTINUES FOR MORE THAN A FEW DAYS

You need to go and see your GP together if your partner's sadness goes on for more than a few days after birth to make sure she's not suffering from postnatal depression (PND).

According to Beyond Blue, PND affects almost 16% of new mothers. There are a number of factors that can contribute to the onset of PND including a history of depression, a stressful pregnancy, prolonged labour or difficult birth, lack of practical, financial or emotional support, difficulties with breastfeeding, sleep deprivation and having unrealistic expectations of motherhood.

Women who suffer from PND need to see a doctor and consider psychological treatment and/or medication. PND is a treatable condition but can sometimes be a serious issue for you and your family. Don't brush this off as something that might just pass or that might be considered a weakness. You need to take your partner to see your GP.

Make sure that your partner is well supported in the first days, weeks and months after your baby is born and take time to nurture your relationship. A new mother is less likely to suffer from PND if she feels well supported by her partner. Help her find time to do things she enjoys other than caring for your new baby and spend time listening to your partner without feeling the need to solve all her problems and offer solutions. Don't take your partner's moodiness or irritability personally. It's not about you.

HELP HER GET SOME EXERCISE

Exercise will certainly help your partner and the easiest way to fit exercise into your life is to put your baby in the pram and go for walks together. Start with a 30-minute walk a few times a week and then build up to a 45-minute walk every day. Your energy levels will increase and so will your partner's self esteem. Most babies love a walk in the pram too and it gives you time to talk to each other.

STEADY ON IN THE BOOZE DEPARTMENT

You're a new dad, you have new and demanding responsibilities. If you're a regular drinker, lay off the booze for a while so that you can be emotionally available and practically useful to your partner rather than parked in front of the box with a beer in each hand. It's not permanent and you will survive. You may even notice some sudden health benefits!

LOOK AFTER YOURSELF TOO

Sleep deprivation can be really tough on both of you in those first weeks. Make sure that you and your partner are each getting a total of eight hours sleep every 24 hours. This might be four sleeps of two hours at a time but aim for a total of eight hours in a day. You'll soon get used to napping whenever you can.

Between three and 10 percent of new fathers suffer from postnatal depression. According to the Raising Children Network, "Depression in new fathers has been found to begin before the birth of their child with minimal recovery by the end of the first year. There's also evidence to suggest that men's depression increases between six weeks and six months after childbirth. For example, one study found that three out of 10 men were depressed at six weeks, and that their depression got worse during the next six months. There is also growing evidence that anxiety might be a problem for some men during the antenatal and postnatal period."

Men are notorious for not seeking medical help when they need it and PND is often thought of as something that only women suffer with. So stop with the Superman Act and get yourself off to your GP for an assessment if you feel persistently unhappy in the weeks and months after your baby is born. You're not equipped to support your partner if you are suffering from PND yourself.

EAT PROPERLY. REAL FOOD.

Remember: this life stage is not permanent but PND can be serious. You may feel neglected during this stage in your life but it's not permanent. Don't assume there is something wrong with your relationship and don't hold it against your partner that she is so focussed on your newborn baby. She's hormonally programmed to do what she's doing. When I interviewed Dr Charlie Teo, a well-known Australian neurosurgeon, about his experiences when his babies were born, he emphasised how hard he found that stage after his first daughter was born. He said he received no attention whatsoever from his partner for about six months. He was sad and lonely and wished someone had told him that this stage was not permanent, that his wife would notice him again and that their sex life would kick off again (they went on to have three more daughters so it clearly did!).

Most importantly, remember that YOU are your partner's sidekick, her most important support and her beloved partner. Take PND seriously, have it treated professionally and stay by your partner's side as you navigate these early weeks, months and years.

How Does Your



KIM
RYDER

Many months ago now, when Treya was only small, Karl and I revisited our old pre-bubba life, and snuggled down in the spare room to watch a video, just like old times. It felt so nice to do something seemingly normal, and it was the first time we had done it in many many months.

The funny thing was, as we got ourselves comfy, I looked over to my bedside table, only to find a soft toy rattle and one of Treya's books where my sex toy and erotica would have once been, and I couldn't help but laugh silently to myself! Ok, so if I am totally truthful, I was always much more discreet with my "toys" and I was never much into erotica, but you get my point, right?

The arrival of a new bundle of joy, especially if it is your first, can be a joyous and yet shocking event, and can test the best of relationships. Karl and I were fortunate enough to spend much of our pregnancy travelling around Australia, just the two of us, going where we pleased, when we pleased, and for however long we pleased. It must be said that Treya was already the centre of our Universe as she grew in utero day by day, but still, our lives were our own, we were each other's... "two" waiting to become "three". Now that Treya is here, I realise just how lucky we were to have those times travelling and enjoying one another, because as soon as she arrived, our relationship... "us"... faded into the background somewhat: sleep took precedence over sex and intimacy (in fact we stopped sleeping in the same bed) and energy previously feeding our relationship was diverted to our baby girl. Needless to say, minor cracks began to appear in our previously peaceful and argument-free relationship.

How to prevent minor cracks becoming crumbling walls became a topic of conversation in our house, and the timing of an email from an old friend was impeccable. He talked openly of his recent divorce. His tone was reflective, tinged with a little regret perhaps, but with a definite overtone of wisdom and insight. He talked of me appearing happy, from what he could tell by my Facebook photos of my gorgeous new bubba and family, and suggested that I be sure to tend my metaphorical garden "as the garden does not grow by itself: it needs to be consistently nurtured."

Those are wise words from a man who knows how easily love is lost...but they are also words from a childless man! It begs the question though: how DO you find time, as a new parent, to invest the time, energy and love into your relationship when you have this small but demanding creature to take care of 24/7?

I have pondered this question... OFTEN! The conclusion that I have come to is that you need a lot of cow shit to create a great garden....right? Just kidding!!! Given that time and energy are no longer abundant resources, it would seem that grand gestures are OUT and incy wincy small but special gestures are IN! Well, that and scheduling romance and intimacy perhaps!?

What do I mean by small gestures? Well, lets face it: the candle lit dinners at fancy restaurants with your sexy lingerie secretly hidden beneath your gorgeous outfit, ready for "afters" just aint gonna happen for a while, right? (Well at least not in my relationship! If they happen in yours, maybe YOU should be writing this article. LOL). "Afternoon delight" will also no doubt cease to be a regular fixture on the weekend calendar, as may hours spent kicking back chatting over a bottle of wine. But unless you don't mind those nasty weeds taking over and potentially ruining your previously lush and blossoming garden, you have to do SOMETHING!

When I posed the question to another wise friend, she raised the concept of one's relationship being a "system", suggesting that how full-up (or empty) each person in that relationship is, will affect their ability to give to the other. So her question to me was "How can you bring more energy into the system?" The answer will be different for each person, but often it will involve filling up one's own individual system, thus enabling them to give to the relationship system. For me it's a massage... time to read a novel... a quiet bath... time to create... time out from Bubby. For Karl it would be fishing... bushwalking... time with mates... 4Wding. And once we refuel via such self-nurturing pursuits, it's then easier to give to the other and tend our common garden.

I have to say, however, that sometimes even these small self-fuelling activities that are now "treats" rather than the regular occurrences that they once were, are difficult to achieve in our household, and we are required to give from a somewhat depleted tank on a fairly regular basis. That's when the "incy wincy" gestures magically seem to be great big special ones! I'm talking sneaking a quick kiss as one of you hangs out the washing while the other prevents the Bubba from eating the dog's bone (again!)... little notes of love and gratitude snuck into a lunch box... a "thank you" for doing (insert mundane chore)... a "why don't you go and have a nice warm bath?"... and a "here, I bought you a beer/chocolate/bottle of wine."

Garden Grow?

It's the "you're doing a great job" and the "what can I do to help you?"... and even the "I'm tired, and our relationship means a lot to me, so can we talk about this tomorrow when I can be more attentive?"

I want to say that the challenges of parenting are different for Mamma's than they are for Dad's, and thus the solutions are different too, but I don't know that that is true. I think it's more a personal thing. I have to say though, that I reckon the book *The Five Love Languages* could convert even the worst gardener into a green thumb!! It talks of there being 5 languages of love: acts of service; words of affirmation; physical touch; receiving gifts; and quality time. Each person has a primary and secondary love language e.g. mine are physical touch and words of affirmation.

How does knowing that help? Well, it helps your partner know what sort of fertiliser and tools to use on your garden! For example,

when I am struggling, if Karl were to give me a gift, it would not have as great an impact as it would if he came and gave me a big hug (physical touch) and said "you are doing a great job, I love you" (words of affirmation), as these two modes are my love languages. Of course many a relationship has survived parenthood without knowing what each person's love languages are, but when time and energy is scarce, this sort of wisdom can be really helpful. It sort of allows you to use your energy wisely.

It must be said, however, that love languages and gratitude and all the other approaches to gardening sometimes get lost amongst the rubble of sleeplessness, frustration, and never-ending demands, and pesky weeds of varying types and sizes will inevitably appear at some point. I guess the trick is to pull those weeds regularly, while they are still small, in comparison to the gorgeous in-full-bloom roses that smell oh-so-sweet, and to pull them "together."



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Book Reviews



Becoming Us By Elly Taylor



The Yoga Of Birth: Sacred Wisdom For Conception, Birthing And Beyond By Katie Manitsas

I have to say that this book was very easy to read, and us “baby-brainers” need “easy”, right?! Elly does not use fancy jargon, her style is not too wordy, she just gets in there and tells it like it is, with a good dose of appropriate humour thrown in for good measure. At one stage, when she talked about “...a new mum with leaking breasts, tangled hair, wearing pyjamas in need of retirement”, besides thinking “OMG this woman must have been spying on me back in Treya’s newborn days!”, I knew she’d been there before.

In Part One: Loving, Learning, Growing, she spends time laying some really good foundations, providing an understanding of the different types of love and also the life cycle of love. She then moves on to explore five important lessons of parenthood stages of learning and growth, and tips for intimate communication.

In Part Two: The transformations, Elly unpacks the numerous challenges we might face whilst adapting to simply being pregnant, and then moves on to some of the bumps in the road that we may encounter further along the way. All the while, she highlights key points for consideration, which she calls “invitations” and offers suggestions – “what to do” - for working through and resolving the issues. The format she presents this section in is really helpful, because if the topic and related scenario that she is discussing doesn’t relate to your situation, you can just skip on past it

Right throughout the book, Elly continues to impart helpful knowledge by providing snippets of summarised information, ranging from “signs of stress” to “love languages”. These little summaries are great for us busy parents who don’t have time to read up on all of this sort of stuff, and whose ability to retain lots of information is somewhat limited! Her approach is solution-focused, she encourages taking responsibility for oneself and discourages blaming, and explores issues and solutions appropriate to both men and women. She is big on self-care, small on guilt, doesn’t sugar-coat the challenges of parenthood, and she also validates the uncomfortable feelings us parents can experience.

Upon finishing the book I found myself wondering if I would I have gotten PND had I read it before Treya’s arrival? I know that’s a hard question to answer, but I just found it such a realistic portrayal of parenthood which would have prepared me so much better, which is more than I can say for the many birthing/parenting books I managed to devour whilst pregnant! If, as Elly claims, it’s unmet and unrealistic expectations about parenting that cause us to experience challenges after the event, then I would suggest that all parents-to-be read this book before even becoming pregnant as it would offer the opportunity to wonder, explore and ‘suppose’ about how they would survive and also celebrate the challenges and the joys of parenthood. So, in closing, to those of you who are experiencing a few hiccups since becoming parents, and those of you who are contemplating or about to become parents, I would say have a read of this book. I doubt anyone could read it without learning a few tips and tricks to prepare for and/or help brighten and smooth out the sometimes blue and rocky road that is parenthood.

KIM RYDER

This is the third book by yoga teacher and Sydney studio director, Katie Manitsas. She is a mother of two boys, was the first certified Advanced Jivamukti yoga teacher in Australia and has studied Ayurveda (a traditional system of Indian medicine) extensively. It is from these perspectives that Manitsas writes about conception, birth and early parenting.

There are four sections in the book: Pregnancy, Labour, The Sacred 40 Days From Birth and a final section titled And Beyond. Manitsas describes how yoga asana (poses) and pranayama (breathing techniques) and chanting can assist women during this time of their life. She also includes a section on food and In the section on Labour she cites the ancient yogic text, the Bhagavad Gita, and says: “to be given life in human form is a great blessing and an opportunity not to be wasted.” She says labour can be a joyful reminder of what a privilege it is to give birth if we can stay focused and mindful. This section includes a useful chapter on creating sacred space for birth, which goes beyond preparing the physical birthing space. She also quotes French obstetrician Frederick Leboyer, author of Birth Without Violence, in the chapter with the same title.

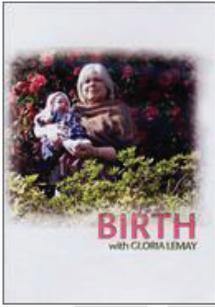
In the section The Sacred 40 Days After Birth, Manitsas encourages gentle, aware parenting techniques and suggests trying to aim for “ritual not routine.” There is a short section on vaccination, massage and baby’s health and wellbeing.

In the final section, Manitsas writes about introducing solids and her stance as a vegetarian and animal rights advocate is evident. She also provides Top Tips for Raising a Baby the Eco Way with plenty of links to follow up on. The end of the book includes diagrams of useful yoga poses and an extensive resources list.

Readers without a deep knowledge of yoga may find some of the terms and concepts unfamiliar but this book is a good resource for any mother or birth attendant interested in holistic health, conscious birth and aware parenting. Manitsas is also a strong advocate of doula’s and 5% of the proceeds from the book go to The Doula Heart Network.

AMANDA VELLA





Birth with Gloria May



The Face Of Birth

I have seen numerous birth DVDs, with both hospital births and homebirths. What never fails to bug me is the fluffy emotional music which seems to come with every single one and drowns out all sounds of the natural labouring woman. After gaining my birth and doula education from a teacher that did such a great job of mimicking the real sounds of labour and birth, I always thought it did women and their partners a grave disservice to try and shield these primal sounds, and I often heard of men being quite shocked at hearing these powerful sounds coming from deep within their women in labour. So when I heard that Gloria Lemay had done a film that featured women that you could hear in all their birthing glory, without the fluffy music, I was very keen to see it.

What Gloria has produced is a great film with a series of clips of 9 homebirths, all in water. However despite being able to hear the women, unfortunately there is still an overplay of music - not fluffy music but eery sounding Japanese flute and drums that to me sounds sombre and melancholic, so this was my only disappointment. (I would prefer it raw and without music at all, unless it was actually in the background in the birthing room at that time, as I just don't see the necessity to try and create a 'mood'.)

What is really great about this DVD is that there are four parts - the first part being just the births; the second part is the same footage, but with Gloria commentating with background information on the women and their families, and what was going on in their labour/birth, as well as some explanations of what she does (or doesn't) do in her role as midwife. The birthing women all have a variety of different experiences - first time mums; older siblings present; an overweight mum; VBACs; partners in the pool; a baby with the cord wrapped around its neck twice; and the loud birth of a big baby that is a long, challenging push to get out.

Parts 3 and 4 are specifically on circumcision and the many reasons not to do this abhorrent practice. Part 3 is information by a Dr and a paediatrician with sped up footage of the procedure (thank God, as I could barely stand watching the short version, let alone the full 6 minutes of the (un)cut version (pardon the pun), as well as myth busting the common reasons people use to circumcise their boys. Part 4 goes into detail about the anatomy, physiology and sexual function of the foreskin (or 'prepuce').

I love how Gloria lists these parts as extras on the menu with no other titles, as I am sure if people who were intending to circumcise and did not want to be challenged, would likely just skip those parts, but instead they may inadvertently watch it and change their mind. I would be very surprised if parents could still bring themselves to circumcise after getting this vital education!

This DVD is suitable for women and their families who would like to see birth in all its rawness, as well as a teaching tool for birth professionals.

The Face of Birth is a brand new feature length documentary by Kate Gorman which I would describe as being kind of similar to The Business Of Being Born in highlighting the reasons why women would choose homebirth over hospital birth, but more specific to the maternity system and birth politics in Australia (and without actual birth footage).

The film opens with the homebirth protest of 2009 in Canberra with speeches from maternity activist and lobbyist Justine Caines and Dr Sarah Buckley, followed by a clip of Dr Andrew Foote saying that RANZCOG's position on homebirth is that it is best avoided and RANZCOG president Dr Rupert Sherwood saying "The only issue at the front of my organisation is the safety of women and their babies" (like that isn't at the forefront of any mother's mind!). There is a very impressive array of birth professionals interviewed which include Professors of Midwifery Hannah Dahlen and Sally Tracey, Obstetricians Dr Michel Odent (from France) and Dr Andrew Bisits (from Royal Hospital for Women in Sydney), author and social anthropologist of birth Sheila Kitzinger, author and cultural anthropologist Robbie Davis Floyd, and author and midwife Ina May Gaskin. I wrote down so many good quotes from many of these but risked writing a novel, so I decided to leave those for you to see for yourselves!

It becomes so apparent how backwards our maternity system is in Australia as we compare unfavourably with the UK where homebirth is supported and seen as a normal choice, and obstetricians have no interest in looking after women who are not high risk; and New Zealand which is shown to be the best midwifery model in the world because women choose their own Lead Maternity Carer.

Interspersed between these interviews of birth professionals are interviews with some homebirth mothers including actor Noni Hazelhurst (who described the moment that her first son was born at home in the Blue Mountains where "... an amazing mist descended all around the house, 150,000 white butterflies came to the windows and there was an almighty clap of thunder" which gave me goosebumps).

Remote Australian GP Sarah Renwick Lam talks about her first birth which was an 'unnecessarean' and why she chose homebirth for her second baby.

Kate Gorman talks about her disillusionment with having an obstetrician and that she was laughed at when she wanted no pain relief in her birth plan. When she describes the birth of her baby at home, it brought tears to my eyes as she says that when she blew into her new baby's face, it was like giving life twice!

We also have the privilege of seeing an aboriginal smoking and healing ceremony for the baby and mother after birth, and learn how that aboriginal women are flown off country at 36 weeks pregnant to wait for at least 4 weeks to give birth in a hospital with no family support whatsoever.

This film is chock full of good information for any woman wanting to explore her birth place options (and is a very good argument why homebirth is safe and the best choice for natural birth), as it comes from the very best experts in the field as well as personal stories from women who have birthed in the medical model as well as the homebirth midwifery model and are in the best position to compare.

It is without a doubt the best film I have seen on the subject and I would highly recommend going to see it! I just hope that the women in government who have the power to offer better birth choices in this country would also go to see it (if that would make any difference!)

The Face of Birth opens around the country this month, with numerous screenings in Sydney and NSW, and I urge you to go and check it out for yourself. Dates and venues can be found here: <http://www.faceofbirth.com/screenings.htm#nsw>

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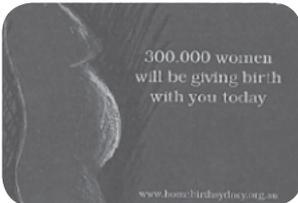


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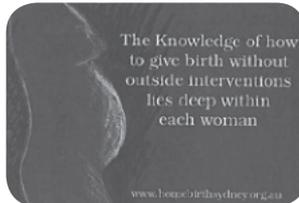


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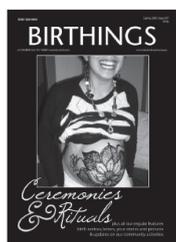


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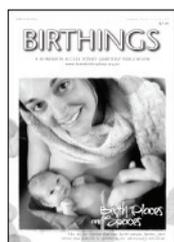
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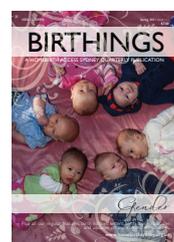
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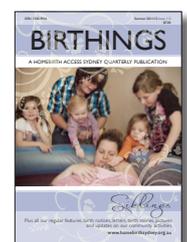
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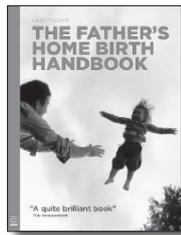
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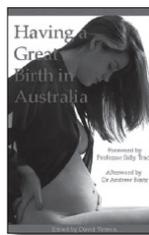
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Fine art print by Chrissy Butler

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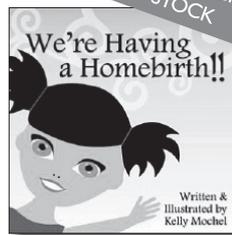
THE FATHER'S HOME BIRTH HANDBOOK
Leah Hazard

As hospital-based maternity services become increasingly medicalised, more and more parents are deciding that birth belongs in the home. For many women, this choice may be an easy one, but for their partners, home birth raises some serious questions. For the first time, The Father's Home Birth Handbook provides a resource aimed specifically at exploring men's hopes and fears around home birth. \$22.00



HAVING A GREAT BIRTH IN AUSTRALIA
David Vernon

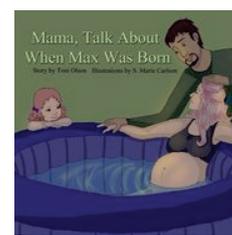
This is a collection of candid stories from 20 Australian women who have recently given birth. These stories tell, with honesty and insight, about the challenges and joys of childbirth. Each of these women discovered the value of being able to make informed decisions about their maternity care and with the right care, had positive and empowering birth experiences. Aust 2005 012BK \$24.95



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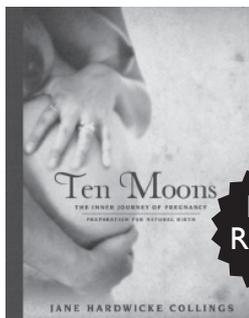
WE'RE HAVING A HOME-BIRTH
Kelly Mochel

Children will love this colorful, contemporary book about their family's special upcoming homebirth event. A great tool for discussion about what to expect when the baby arrives, this affordable book covers important issues such as the role of a midwife, being good labour support, noises to expect mom to make, cord cutting, placenta delivery and breastfeeding. Combined with healthy conversation about pregnancy and homebirth, this book will help teach children that birth is a natural occurrence, not a medical emergency. SKU: KMBK \$12.00



MAMA, TALK ABOUT WHEN MAX WAS BORN
Toni Olson

This tells the story of Max's birth, which takes place at home in water. Max's older sister likes to hear about when Mama first learned that she was pregnant; about seeing the midwives; about preparing for Max's arrival and finally his water birth in their living room. \$25.00



New Reprint

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A unique guide to pregnancy and birth. This book offers practical tools and suggestions to help women reconnect with the spiritual side of birth. The spiritual journey of pregnancy and natural childbirth are acknowledged in relationship to the earth's natural rhythms. Subjects covered include, letting go of fear, connection with the baby inside you, yoga and meditation. \$25.00



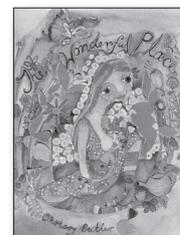
MY BROTHER JIMI JAZZ
Chrissy Butler

A beautifully illustrated children's book, written from the perspective of a young girl about the homebirth of her brother Jimi Jazz. This book embraces natural active homebirth, breastfeeding, co-sleeping, cloth nappies and siblings at birth. Aust 2006. 013BK \$20.00



3 HOMEBIRTH ICONS
DVD

Maggie Lecky Thompson honours the lives and work of Henny Ligermoet, Joan Donley and Jeannine Parvati Baker, who were passionate and fearless about maintaining a stand against ignorance and oppression regarding childbirth and early parenting. Aust 017DV \$20.00



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Ayesha's Birth Story



WEDNESDAY 25TH JANUARY 2012

Tara starts pre-labour in the mid-afternoon after a long morning walk to bring it on. We are both thinking: Great this is it. Within the next few hours we are going to have a baby.

Then I remembered that we have not taken any photos. All of the photos I have ever taken of pregnant women, including my wife, were always nude and I wanted to address that for my portrait work. We start shooting and Tara pauses for the contractions, which seem brief but uncomfortable.

By late evening the contractions have eased in intensity, and then subside completely. I start to think "Shit. It's not going to happen." Tara at this point was at least nine days overdue. We were both holding down a great deal of stress related to other factors including the birth being overdue. That night there was to be no baby.

THURSDAY 26TH JANUARY 2012

The disappointment in Tara's posture and persona was evident. She has a little cry saying "When is this baby going to come?" I reassure her by reaffirming the fact that all of our babies were late.

The whole day is spent with us trying our best to continue our normal daily routines, with me punctuating every now and then with "Is anything, as in ANYTHING, happening?" Tara replies lazily "Naaaah!"

FRIDAY 27TH JANUARY 2012

The morning is slow. A few twinges here and there. By mid-afternoon though, things really start to move in the right direction. The contractions start as they did on Wednesday but Tara can sense that things are going to proceed this time. She is still a little emotional. The waiting, the stop-starting, has given her the absolute shits.

By late afternoon things are indeed moving along. I tell the kids that we are going to have a baby tonight. This sends them all into a crazy, joyous frenzy. I put a movie on to slow them down. Beverly, Tara's mother has been with us for the last couple of days helping us with the kids. I can see her spirits also lifting with this announcement. Early evening, I start to prepare. Bucket, thick rubber gloves, cloth nappies, candles in the toilet ready. Bev starts reading bedtime stories to the children, while I attend to Tara. Though in some pain and discomfort with the contractions, I can see Tara is happy at last that things are on their way.

Bedtime stories over, yet no one is settling down. Ayane, the just turned four year old, comes into the bedroom and sits as close as possible to Tara so as to observe the action with great intensity. Tara, bending over near the bed – swaying her hips from side to side, breathing into the pain – observes her with slight amusement, as do I, for after the now frequent contractions subside she eloquently breaks into chatter about the past event. The others suggest that the telly be put back on. A movie perhaps?

By 8.30pm things are getting intense. At 9pm Tara instructs me to call Jo our midwife, who she has been keeping posted. When I return the decibel level had indeed risen. I said "It will take 15 minutes for her to get her stuff and 45 minutes to drive from the Blue Mountains, so say 10.15 arrival" at which she concurs.

Around 9.30pm I open the door for Jo. I say "Man that was quick!" She replies calmly "I was in Penrith", as she makes her way in, laden down with her equipment. In the back of my mind I am thinking "Thank F.K" because things had rapidly reached DefCon 1 man! The contractions are now full on. Tara says to me that they aren't coming on in waves. It's just BANG hold, hold, hold, hold, hold, gone. Jo gets her stuff set up, while talking to Tara about the contractions and how she's doing. We listen to the baby. All's good. Back to the action again, a few tight grips on the hands, many kisses and back rubs and "Come on you can do it!". The bucket and other paraphernalia long forgotten, we are way, way too deep in the trenches to worry about other pain relief now.

9.55pm or so...

Tara: "It feels like it's coming. It can't be. That's too quick!"

Jo: "The head's coming out, breathe..." Tara yells.

Jo: "The head's out love, just one little push to get the shoulder out. Hold it there. The cord's around its neck." Joe unwinds. Then the command to push. Baby out.

Jo: "What's the time?"

"9.57" I reply.

The baby starts making her presence felt for about ten minutes with some very loud crying. Then she tries to latch on. I call the kids up from downstairs. The thunder fills the house as they make their way up to the bedroom. They arrive at the door in one big mass and pause, to soak up the moment they swarm. They marvel at the baby for the rest of the night, no one wanting to go to sleep. Aasha, the six year old who had expressed some concern for Tara, finally has a little cry that lasts but a moment. I give him a cuddle and a kiss and tell him it is OK. A little Rescue Remedy and he is OK.

For me, it doesn't matter how many times you do it. The miracle of birth is still a great wonder to behold. I believe Aasha's tear was an expression of that.

I congratulate Tara for yet another fantastic job and what beautiful kids she makes.

2am kids to bed.



GARFIELD
DARLINGTON

On the

6th of October

CATHLIN DUGGAN



The last thing I remember the midwife saying at my first birth was "Next time have a homebirth!". So when I fell pregnant with my second child, that's exactly what I did.

Dan and I had only been in Maitland for a year and not knowing the reputation of the hospital, we didn't feel comfortable with going to a place for 24 hours and then returning home again. I had previously done all my labouring with my first son Dylan at home, and then driven 45 minutes to the only natural birth clinic, to give birth after 45 minutes and be sent home less than 24 hours later. I felt quite unsettled once home and found it hard having 3 midwives over the next 3 days telling me conflicting ways to breastfeed etc.

My labour with Dylan had been pretty stock standard (I guess). 9 hours all up, contractions starting at 5 minutes to 2 minutes, transition and pushing for 45mins. That's the summary, but really it felt longer and I was vomiting with intense contractions but my body knew exactly what it was doing and I just went with it.

My mother birthed all four kids at home so I was accustomed to the ins and outs of birthing at home. Watching my two sisters and brother coming into the world, I had a perspective of what it might be like for Dylan if he were there for the birth. I had also been to all three of my dear friends' births and had supported her beautiful daughters while their mum was in the zone.

Now that Dan and I had made the decision of a homebirth, the only problem was, I had no idea who would help us out. Luckily I knew a friend of a friend who is a homebirth midwife and although she currently didn't know who was in the area, she pointed me in the right direction to useful websites.

That's how I met the wonderful midwife Lisa Richards. From day one I felt we shared similar views and values, and our relationship kind of organically grew into something special. I loved our chats and check ups over tea and various yummy foods. Later on in my pregnancy Jules Cook joined the team as student midwife. Lisa had mentioned her and after meeting Jules I thought 'Why not, she's awesome. I've already got my mum Elizabeth, my bestie Helen, My sister Elly, Dylan, Dan and Lisa, why not another'. My birthing team was complete!!!

I knew I was going into labour the night before it happened. I guess the give away was buying buckets (the last items on my list) at 11pm in K-Mart. At around 4am the contractions became more intense so I gave Lisa and Jules a call. They were everywhere and they stayed that way even to the end. Unfortunately it fizzled out a little so everyone went back on stand by. Lisa and Jules left, Helen and Elly played with Dylan, Dan did some gardening and my dear mum went out to find me some banana bread.

After a couple of walks and a late night semi watching movies and sleeping (well kind of), Lisa and Jules received another phone call in the wee hours the next morning. The babe's favourite position in my belly had been posterior, so it was no surprise when Lisa found her there once again. After a period of Rebozo technique care of Lisa and Jules, she moved into a better position. I was so blessed to have people care for me - an ongoing massage from Lisa or Jules, Mum putting on pots of water for the birthing pool, Helen and Elly doing shop runs for more ice and Gatorade, and Dan supporting me and Dylan.

At about lunchtime I decided to submerge my body in water. Lisa had brought around a birthing pool a couple of weeks beforehand. I hadn't planned a water birth as such but had not ruled it out either. The warm water after a while started to slow down my contractions. By this time I'd had enough so I went for a walk with Lisa (who was secretly counting my contractions) and Dan and Helen as my resting poles. Every few minutes we'd stop for a contraction and then move on. Luckily I have a lane way at the back of my property but I still wonder if the neighbours freaked out a little at the sounds coming from the back fence.





Lisa knowing it was on sent me to bed so I could relax and concentrate on me and not my surroundings. I wasn't there for long until I climbed back into the bath. My labour with Dylan had been intuitive; this time around it was not. I had no rest from the pain so I found it really hard to ride the wave. I also didn't experience the transition from contractions to pushing. I'm glad my team took turns in holding my hand feeding me honey water, or changing my thought process with a touch or word or the occasional rescue remedy. I noticed at the end of my contraction there seemed to be a little window open to push and although it was ever so small I took this opportunity.

I'd had enough! This was it so I pushed and made some very earthy sounds. At this point Dylan had heard me from the lounge room. Mum hugged him and explained to him the baby was nearly here and that's why I was making full on noises. A couple of pushes and a pop of my water breaking, I naturally reached down and felt her head and back of neck. I knew at this point it was only the shoulders to go. She shot out and Lisa automatically pushed her towards me so I could pick her up. With a little help from Lisa she started breathing and I noticed her colour change starting from the heart to the tips of her fingers and toes. Dylan and Dan were right behind looking at her from above while the rest of the team were in tears. At this

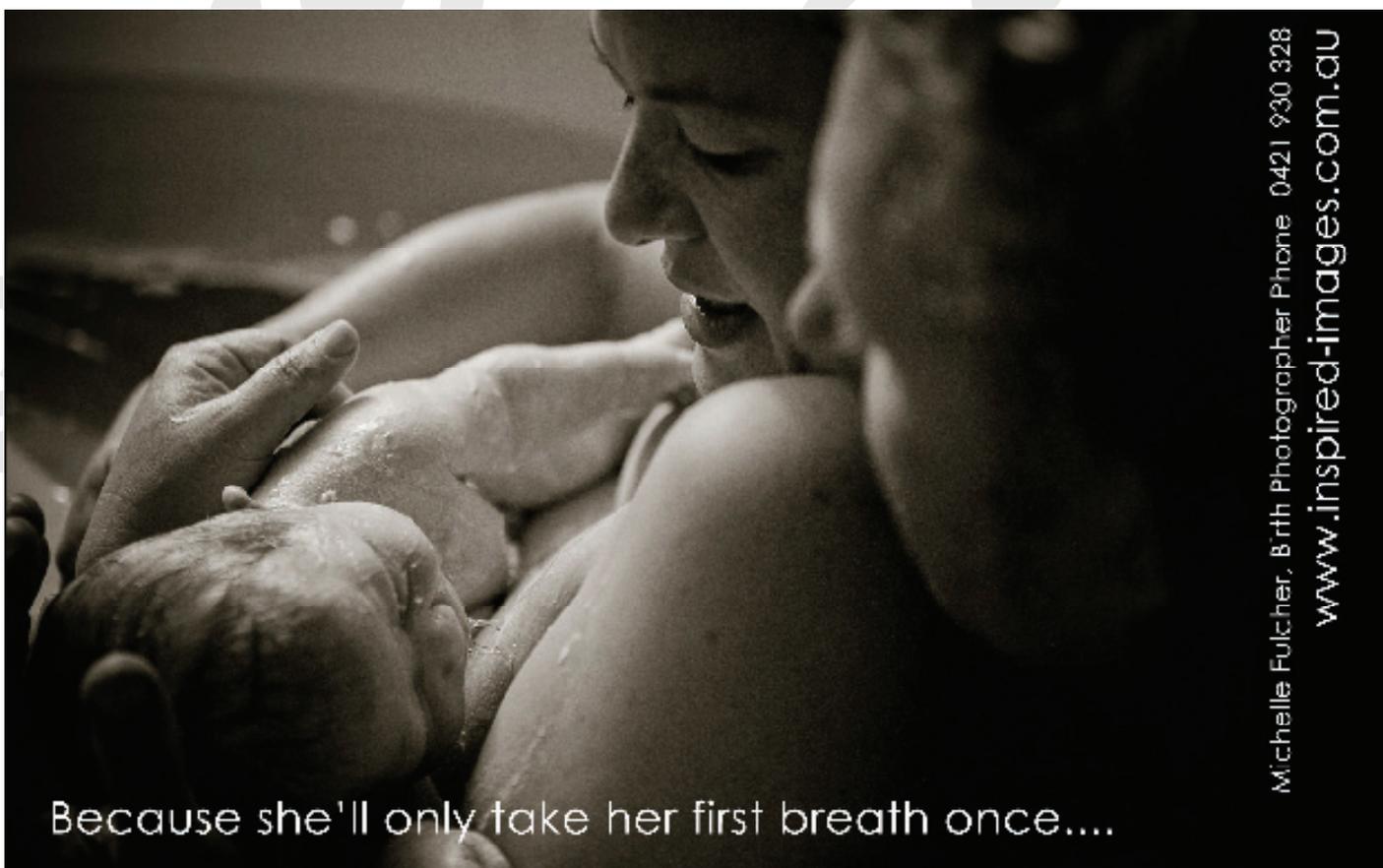
point we still didn't know her sex so once our baby was nice and warm with her body under the water I felt down and noticed the absence of a wee little part.

I stayed in the pool for a while until I decided it was getting a little cold. I stood up and my placenta just fell out. I was glad as I was over having to push any more. With it still being attached to her we relaxed on the couch and breast-fed while Dan did the honours of cutting the cord.

Deep down Dan and I must have known she was a girl. We had agreed on a girl's name and not even really looked at boys. We called her Lilian (a family name on both sides of my family) and Daphne after Dan's beautiful mother's middle name.

After a shower and weighing Lily, it was time to chill back and embrace my family and our new bundle.

I'm so happy that I chose to birth at home with midwives I had full trust and confidence in. I loved having my mum, Helen and Elly who were fantastic and wouldn't have been able to be there if I had been in a hospital. And all my love to Dan and Dylan for being my awesome little family +1.



Michelle Fulcher, Birth Photographer Phone 0421 930 328
www.inspired-images.com.au

Because she'll only take her first breath once....

Torah McNamara's



We then travelled to Byron Bay in March and conceived our little girl on 19 March 2011. Once we had confirmed that the conception plan had been successful on the first attempt a month later, I was then off the hook with the stringent dietary plan and I passed the baton to my very gallant wife, Jacqui. The first three months of her pregnancy was not so much highlighted by morning sickness but by all day and slightly worse at night sickness. She managed to get through this phase in good spirits and I think she enjoyed her second trimester a lot more as well as the third trimester and the countdown to the birth of our little girl.

Preparation for our pretty little girl was extensive and as stated, had indeed begun almost two years prior to her birth. We had decided that we wanted a drug free home birth and everything we did was aimed at achieving this. We enlisted a midwife and a doula and set about preparing the birthing area. We were lucky enough to have a good open area for the setup of the birth pool with quick and convenient access to a toilet and very large shower area. I setup fairy lights in the birthing area and ran hot and cold water from the bathroom to the pool so that I could flow clean water to the pool while emptying it with another pump throughout the labour.

To tell our birth story I really have to start about two years before the birth of our first little girl Torah McNamara. The reason for this is that it was about two years prior to her birth that my wife Jacqueline and I walked into Francesca Naish's office and told her we would like to take a healthy and completely natural path to having children. What then started were a number of lifestyle and diet changes which I believe will echo throughout our lives. While we were never found to have any significant issues, there were some chemical imbalances in our bodies that required changes to our diets. Although this was done quickly, most of the two years were spent with Jacqui and I arranging a date to conceive and then cancelling one after another until finally in December of 2010 we booked a trip to Byron Bay in March the following year. We then implemented our stringent lifestyle changes in preparing for conception. This involved cutting all alcohol, toxins, electro-magnetic radiation and eating only organic food for the three months prior to conception.

We had our first signs of labour around the 2nd of December 2011. I am not entirely certain of this date as despite taking two days off work, the labour stalled and we went into two weeks of practice contractions and false starts. Eventually Jacqui called me at about 9:30 am on December 16th and it appeared at last we were finally on. I arrived home at 10:30am and at that stage Jacqui was having some discomfort and could only talk through contractions with effort. I called the midwife and the doula who both agreed they should get to our house as soon as possible.

Jacqui and I then decided to take a walk along the beach near our house in Freshwater and hopefully Jacqui could relax and allow the hormones to take over. I can only describe what then started, as a 'Hormone Super-Highway' as my wife went through a number of different phases throughout the day. During the walk along the beach she was relaxed and talking easily. Due to the amount of physical activity she had continued with throughout the pregnancy,

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Birth Story

CRAIG WILLIAM
MCNAMARA

she was still not waddling. The doula, Brooke arrived at Freshwater beach around 11:30am and we then returned to the house where the midwife, Melanie arrived around 12:30pm. By this time the oxytocin was really starting to affect Jacqui and she retreated largely within herself. Jacqui and I spent a lot of time in the birthing area by ourselves during this time and I think this is where my biggest job came to the fore. I needed to care for Jacqui and ensure there were no unnecessary interruptions. This was made a lot easier by the fact we were at home and both Melanie and Brooke were very happy to wait downstairs while Jacqui laboured away. I also ensured during this time that Jacqui had food and water to keep her going and made sure that I only spoke to her when she was not having contractions. Probably the funniest part of this was when Jacqui decided she had to be completely alone and locked herself in the bathroom for twenty minutes. Jacqui then transitioned around 4:30 pm and I let Brooke and Melanie know that there was no going back and Jacqui appeared to be in established labour. The thing in my mind that stands out in having helped Jacqui cross this transition was some time that we spent in the shower cuddling and kissing. Her oxytocin levels went through the roof and she really appeared to be having an intense albeit enjoyable time. The next three hours were very intense; Jacqui was breathing hard and was building the energy to really push. She spent some time in the birthing pool although in her state of mind, she found this a little confining and as she had an intense fear of excrement, she moved to the toilet. She then spent about 55 minutes on the toilet and this is when she was truly pushing. Key moments during this hour occurred when I realised that Jacqui's hips were getting much wider as Torah pushed down the birth canal and the look on Jacqui's face when she felt a curl of Torah's hair.

At about 8:10pm Jacqui moved from the toilet to the shower and it was the first and only time during her pregnancy that I saw Jacqui waddle. Jacqui then leaned against a chair in the shower, one of the midwives held the chair down and I squatted in front of Jacqui with my arms out ready to catch our little girl. My last thought at this moment was 'I cannot believe Melanie is making me hold my arms out when I can only see a little bit of head and hair sticking out'. Of course my wife, who is a perennial over-achiever, decided that she only wanted one push to get our child out into the world and what occurred then completely surprised me. Torah McNamara came flying out into my arms followed by the amniotic fluid that was built up behind her at 8:15pm on Friday 16 December 2011. As a result, I was covered head-to-toe in amniotic fluid. Due to Melanie's warning I caught Torah and despite what I had heard did not find her to be that slippery although holding her in one hand while unwrapping the umbilical cord from around her leg was a bridge too far. I handed Torah to Jacqui and then unwrapped the cord from her leg and we started the process of birthing the placenta.

This is very likely the only area we made a mistake in and we will change what we did during future births. We were so happy that Torah had arrived naturally that we were not focussed on birthing the placenta. As a result, there was a little too much frivolity and Jacqui lost just over a litre of blood and started to get thirsty, which is the first sign of blood loss. It took almost two hours to birth the placenta and this would have a direct impact on Jacqui's health over the next three to four weeks. Fortunately we were able to avoid the Syntocinon injection and Jacqui birthed the placenta before her blood pressure dropped at around 11:15pm.

Overall the entire birthing process was an extremely enjoyable experience for me. The preparation we had done, from reading to diet alterations meant that everything went smoothly and largely to plan. The homebirth also meant that I was more in control of proceedings and able to meet Jacqui's needs with the support of the birthing group of Brooke, Melanie and Emma.

We decided to not cut the umbilical cord and allow it to drop off naturally after a few days. This occurred easily and we now have a healthy, bright, contented little girl, who sleeps, rarely cries and feeds easily and frequently. Overall the condition of our pretty little girl absolutely vindicates the process we went through to conceive her and bring her into this world.

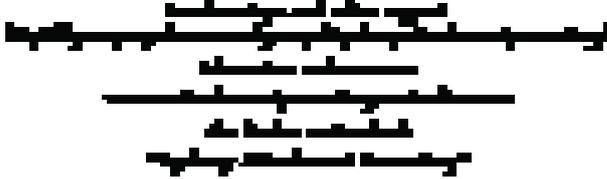




- Medical care
- Birth plan
- Birth setting
- Choosing to give deep breaths
- Child support, or alternative arrangements
- Emotional preparation of the mother and father
- Medical preparation or alternative preparation

Don't forget to give the baby a lovey and a blanket, or other special items, immediately after the birth and ensure you're both well

Sydney & Nicole's Parenting



The Birth of



Eight months on and life couldn't be more different. Nothing could have prepared me for the speed-of-light change. Life before Elvy was pretty simple; just Rache and I free to do whatever, whenever. The decision to have a baby was something of an urge, a desire to utilise our creative powers and begin the next chapter in our lives. It was as though we whispered baby in our secret moments together and there it was, a new life implanted in Rache's womb.

It has been a challenging time for me as an individual and for Rache and I as a team. As Rachel and I get to know each other again as a family, I am faced with new demands. It has also been a time where I have needed to love myself as I change from man into father and learn how to be the best father I can be. Overall it's been a time of great learning and together we have overcome the challenges of being first time parents.

It was very important to me as a father to connect with our baby before it was born. I wanted he or she to know and respond to my voice and be comforted by my presence. Talking to and touching Rachel's growing belly became a daily practice. We gave our baby a womb name (Sunni) and every day I chatted away to it. I told stories about how mum and I met, about our plans for a homebirth, what I'd done each day and what we imagined for them. I also felt able to speak to our child without words, feeling its energy and presence with some deeper part of myself and one special night I met Sunni in my dreams.

The pregnancy from my perspective was a time of appreciation and bonding between Rache and I. Her body seemed to change so rapidly and I tried to support her by showing my affection for her growing belly. As her belly grew so did my love for her. Although I had always imagined our child growing inside her, to see it really happening was nothing less than awesome, especially because I had spent half my life loving Rache. I felt much gratitude for our combined creative power and the opportunity to share such a gift with Rache. These feelings really united us and her pregnancy was a memorable time for us together.

There were some challenges though, particularly in the early months as Rachel suffered terribly with morning sickness. I had never seen her so unwell and unwell. Nearly everyday of the first five months was spent between our lounge and bed because of the constant nausea and vomiting. Rache lost about 10 kilos over this time.

Occasionally we'd leave the mud brick walls of our home and take a walk along our favourite beach but Rachel couldn't make it very far. In my private moments I sometimes felt guilty that Rachel was so burdened by the life growing inside her. It didn't seem fair that she had to carry it all by herself. I wanted to share the load and felt a little hopeless at times because I couldn't. I tried to overcome these

difficult emotions by being a constant support to my beautiful pixie. In the last trimester we found our groove again and made some trips to places we loved. Rachel prepared herself for the job ahead by doing yoga and relaxation each day. We also went for walks most days and tried to prepare Sunni by explaining how many days there were to go before his or her arrival. This really worked as our baby was born on its due date- Day 0. I didn't feel like I could do much to prepare myself. I knew that when Rache went into labour I would instinctively know what to do. During her long labour this proved to be true as nothing could have prepared me for the physical and mental task of assisting Rachel to give birth.

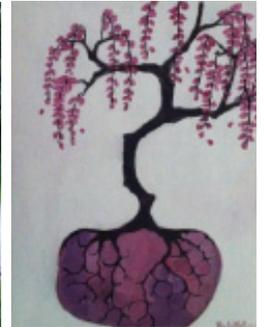
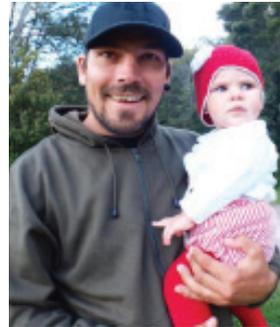
A homebirth was the only option for us even before we decided to have a baby together. Rachel always knew she wanted to have her babies at home as her mother Aileen had birthed two of her three children at home. This influenced Rachel's strong beliefs about a natural homebirth being the safest and most comfortable place for her to give birth. I was completely supportive of the idea and agreed it would be the best start for our child due to the holistic nature of midwifery care at home and the high possibility of intervention if we went to hospital.

Rachel's labour was long and intense. The 28 hours seemed like a very long time to me. It spanned three days and was much longer than we had planned and talked to Sunni about. When Rachel's labour began I was super excited as I knew we were going to experience something life changing. "Andrew, can you come here please?" I walked into the bathroom and Rachel was standing in disbelief over a puddle of water. She looked up at me and said, "I just dried myself so it can't be water from the shower. Can you smell it, please?" Rachel decided to bend down and concluded it was definitely her waters. "Wow, we are going to meet our Sunni very soon." And so Rache's labour of love began.

After a few hours sleep we woke in the early morning and I made Rache a massive feed of poached eggs from our chooks with mushrooms, tomatoes and avocado, a couple of pieces of sourdough and a banana and blueberry smoothie. This proved to be an invaluable source of sustenance for Rache who didn't eat for at least 24 hours. I quickly realised that my job would be to remind Rachel of her birth plan as she had other things to concentrate on.

Our next task on the agenda was a walk. We headed down to the beach and a short walk soon became a very long one as she had to stop every couple of minutes. Walking really got the swell up and by the time we returned home her contractions were much closer. We tried to manage on our own for a few hours as Rachel had dreamed of it just being her and I when Sunni was born. But labour is such an unknown and Rachel needed more than just my help and reassurance so we called in the support crew about 12 hours in.

Elvy Skoczen



Rachel's mum Aileen, sister Vanessa and our midwife Sonja MacGregor made their way over. Aileen's presence gave Rachel the reassurance that I couldn't provide her with as I'd never had a baby. At this point all I could do was be present but it was difficult. I felt so helpless when the woman I loved was exhausted, in pain and unsure. As she had asked me to, I kept reminding her of her yoga, her breathing and meditation. I placed my forehead on hers and breathed with her. We did this for many, many hours and it helped Rache be calm and gave her more energy.

Another 12 hours passed and still no Sunni. By this time the mood had become more sombre as everyone was exhausted. I can't imagine how Rache must have felt to look around the room and see everyone flaked out on the lounge. The helplessness grew inside me as I watched her struggle with this.

We had talked before about letting go and I reminded her of this; not an easy task when you are in pain. Rachel knew she would find this hard. I repeated these words often to her but for a long time she didn't know how to just let her body do its work. It was about 25 hours in when she finally worked it out. Then her cervix opened and Sunni began to descend.

The second stage was the quickest part of Rachel's labour and the most memorable for us. Rachel's body did all the work and with each contraction our baby moved a little closer to us. To see how her body was able to open, stretch and push out little Sunni was miraculous. I feel so privileged to have been so involved and for Rachel to have been so open to sharing every part of the experience with me.

At 2.09 am, after around three hours in the birth canal, our beautiful daughter glided into my hands just as we had planned. I feel so honoured by the two women in my life to have been the first person to hold our child. Thanks girls, it has changed me forever as now I am a father. Our little star Elvy Frances Czecia Skoczen was born in our lounge room, on the floor beside the birthing pool, on Wednesday 25th of May 2011. I was beaming with pride, joy and admiration.

Having a homebirth was everything I hoped it would be and definitely the best option for our family. It allowed me to be by Rachel's side throughout the whole experience and allowed Rachel and I to be as comfortable and relaxed as possible in such unfamiliar circumstances.

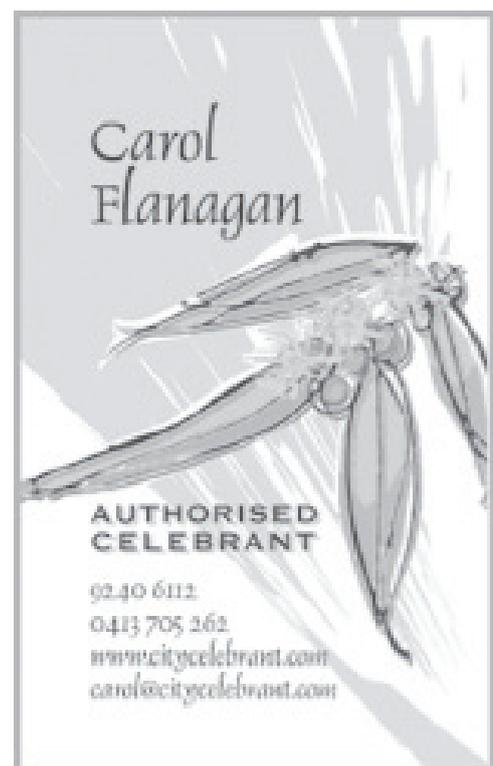
Fatherhood...where do I start? The first thought that comes to mind is that it's not as easy as I thought it was going to be. I was prepared for all the wonderful, warm and fuzzy things you hear about being a parent but not so much about the reality. Sleep deprivation being the

stand out for us and having to accommodate the demands of a high needs baby. Functioning on broken sleep has been very difficult for Rache and I and has put a huge strain on our relationship.

As a person who likes to fix things I've had to learn I can't solve every problem that arises. Many situations are out of my control and depend entirely on Elvy. Also my enthusiasm for being involved with Elvy has at times made life a little confusing for our family and I've had to realise that, nine times out of 10, Mum knows what's best for our child.

Being given a daughter is such a gift. I absolutely adore our amazing Elvy. Watching her grow, develop and learn has been like seeing the world anew. It is so wondrous to see how in Elvy, Rachel and I have been melded together by nature; a flower of our love for each other.

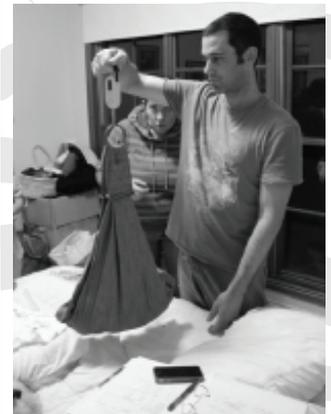
ANDREW SKOCZEN



The Birth of

Suzannah

BRAYDEN GIFFORD



On Thursday the first of December, 2011, I woke at 3am to my wife Nic calling me from the toilet. I bounced out of bed still half asleep to find Nic looking at the puddle of thick cloudy liquid at her feet. "I think my waters have just broken." she said. "I'd say they definitely have." I replied as I soaked it up with toilet paper. "I think we may meet our little girl today."

We knew we had many hours, and possibly days, ahead of active labor so we tried to get back to sleep; of course, neither of us could so I got up and made a coffee and checked my emails. Nic followed me soon after and we packed our clothes. We had always planned to spend a few weeks after the birth at Nic's parents', but we also needed to pack up all the perishable food and do a bit of cleaning as we were sub-leasing our unit. We went about these tasks quite relaxed and finally hit the road for the 90 minute drive at about 7:30am. We got a call from Nic's friendly GP as we were on the freeway. She had just heard Nic had had an epileptic seizure the day before and wanted to check everything was okay. Nic told her waters had broken that morning and she suggested we stop in at Gosford hospital for another check-up. We rang Lisa who arranged to meet us at the hospital, mainly so they wouldn't pressure Nic to stay and birth there.

The baby's heart was fine so we left the hospital. Lisa went home to wait for our updates and we headed to Nic's parents' place. We decided not to warn them we were coming as we wanted to see their response when we told them that they may meet their first grandchild that day. Of course, they were out on their weekly shopping trip and I had to break in. Once in, I began setting up the front room that was to become the birth suite. I laid down a tarp for the pool and pumped up exercise balls while Nic got to the nesting she thought she'd have weeks to complete.

Around 11:45am Nic progressed from tightenings to actual contractions. We texted our midwife Lisa to let her know that labour had begun. She told us to keep her informed on the timing of the contractions and that she would be over when the contractions progressed. Nic ran a bath with the water flowing over her back while I timed the contractions and thought of how my friend had given birth in the back seat of the car on her way to hospital just six weeks earlier.

The contractions became erratic, some being four minutes apart but others only one minute. At this point, Lisa came over. Nic still had hours to go, but I was happy to be able to get busier than just timing contractions and I started inflating the pool. Nic had used all the

hot water in the bath so I had to bucket the water from there into the pool. Her parents began boiling water on the stove too. Whilst waiting for the pool water to reach 36 degrees (If the water is too cold it can stall the labour), Nic continued to labour on the bed, kneeling and leaning forward on a pile of pillows. This is when Lisa suspected the baby was posterior but she wisely kept this to herself so Nic and the rest of us wouldn't worry unnecessarily.

As soon as the pool reached 35 degrees, Nic climbed in. The warm water eased her back pain a little, but not as much as many other water birthing women had said. Nic was determined to not even have so much as a Panadol in the way of drugs so any ease of pain was welcome. It probably helped that I was able to also fit into the pool and support her to get into any position she felt comfortable.

A water birth is great for a few reasons; not only for the mother's comfort, but skin soaking in water for hours softens and becomes stretchy, reducing tearing. The transition from inside the mother's 36 degree body into 36 degree water is much less of a shock for the baby who is still receiving oxygen from the umbilical cord and instinctively takes its first breath only after surfacing.

Nic laboured in the pool for a few hours and, as many women do, she zoned out to that 'other place'. During her contractions Nic got into a rhythm of deep breathing which sounded a bit like Indian throat singing. During the quiet breaks, the candle was the only thing moving in the dark room. Once labour had progressed to the transition phase, Nic came back to the world the rest of us were occupying. She became a lot more vocal during the contractions and was by now so tired she was falling asleep between contractions. Around 7pm Nic felt like a change and moved to the bathroom for about an hour where she stood leaning against me for the contractions and sat on the toilet for the rest period with the occasional vomit. By 8pm she was ready for the pool again as the urge to push had come. By this stage Nic was well and truly sick of giving birth and kept asking Lisa, "how many more contractions?" to which Lisa answered "One less, it's just a number", not wanting to disappoint with a large estimate.

Wanting to know her progress, Nic tried to feel for the baby's head. "I think the cervix is in the way, it's all soft." Lisa was pretty sure Nic was feeling the head but couldn't convince her of this for the next 20 minutes of contractions. Only when Lisa said she could see the hairy little head did Nic believe her. As the head crowned, Lisa positioned a mirror and torch in the pool so Nic and I could see. Several contractions later there was still little progress. "It

Elizabeth Gifford



won't fit! My fanny's too small!" Nic cried. She was like an Olympic weightlifter roaring as she lifted a cement truck. The pain looked tremendous and her exhaustion was obvious, but at no stage did she mention drugs, just pleading for her baby to hurry up and come. About 20 minutes after the head first crowned, the contractions started making more visible progress and Nic's mum, Jill, was telling her she just had to get past the point of the nose and the baby would come. Two almighty heaving sessions later, the little nose appeared and in another two more contractions the baby slithered out into Lisa's hands. I was passed the baby underwater as Lisa unwrapped the umbilical cord from around our daughter's neck. I slowly lifted her out of the water and placed her on Nic's chest. Nic was so relieved to have her out that she hardly noticed Lisa calmly breathe into our baby's mouth. Little 30-second-old Suzannah's breathing reflex kicked in and she made her first little cry. I kissed Nic and Suzannah then stared into those tiny blinking eyes. Lisa then held an oxygen mask on Suzannah while we waited for Nic to birth the placenta. Nic's dad, David, put away the video camera and invited her siblings, who had arrived about 10 minutes earlier, in.

The placenta came in about 10 minutes which I was very happy about. I was twisted up and very uncomfortable underneath my reclining wife, even having cramping in my chest but there was no way I was going to whinge about pain considering what Nic had just been through. With the placenta delivered, Nic handed me Suzannah, keeping her on my chest in the pool for the next 20 minutes while Lisa showered Nic and helped her into bed where she checked her over.

David cracked a bottle of champagne and Nic's brother, Greg got snapping with the camera. Lisa clamped the umbilical cord and handed me a pair of scissors. I had heard it was extremely hard to cut but I guess the scissors must have been sharp as I found it to be a bit like slicing through beef. Suzannah was then passed around and I could drink my champagne and ring my parents and siblings who were still unaware Nic had gone into labor. They forgave me for waking them. It's funny how everybody wants to know how much a baby weighs the second after it's born, so I gave mum an estimate of six pounds. Shortly after the phone calls, we actually did weigh Suzannah and she turned out to be seven pounds despite her gangly appearance. Over the next hour, Nic gave Suzannah her first feed. Lisa started packing her gear up and I bucketed out the birthing pool, finally resting with my new, exhausted family at around 12:30 and 22 hours after Nic's waters broke. The birth was the most surreal, yet natural experience and I feel very fortunate to have played such a hands-on role in bringing my daughter into the world.



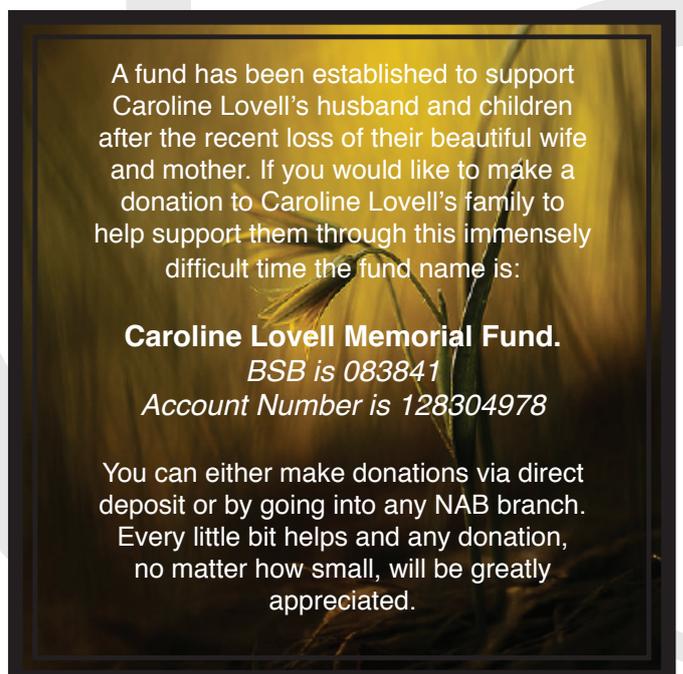
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A fund has been established to support Caroline Lovell's husband and children after the recent loss of their beautiful wife and mother. If you would like to make a donation to Caroline Lovell's family to help support them through this immensely difficult time the fund name is:

Caroline Lovell Memorial Fund.
BSB is 083841
Account Number is 128304978

You can either make donations via direct deposit or by going into any NAB branch. Every little bit helps and any donation, no matter how small, will be greatly appreciated.

Erin's Birth Story



I birthed my second baby through the St George Hospital homebirth program and it was a wonderful experience. My midwife Nicole Greig was a wonderful support and helped me to achieve the birth I wanted. So when I found out that I was pregnant for the third time, I knew that I wanted Nicole to be my midwife again, so I sent her a text and she booked me in. I looked forward to our pregnancy check-ups at the birth centre.

In the final weeks of my pregnancy I began to REALLY look forward to it being over. So when my due date came and went, I found it very hard. My original EDD had been 11 May. This was changed to 19th May after my ultrasound at 20 weeks. I began getting strong Braxton Hicks from 36 weeks, so I felt my baby may come earlier than my first EDD, and certainly not as late as my second EDD.

I struggled through those final weeks. Two beautiful friends organised a wonderful Blessingway for me. This helped me rejoice and enjoy my pregnancy, and gave me the strength to get through the final weeks and prepare to be a mother of three.

Having photos done and making a belly cast also helped me to celebrate in my final days of my final pregnancy. I hadn't done these things with my boys as I felt too exhausted, a small regret once I was no longer pregnant with them.

My boys had been ill with colds on and off for weeks and I was more tired than usual from attending to them overnight. I was worried about having a newborn around while they were sick. On the Sunday night I began having regular, mild tightenings around 10 minutes apart. This lasted for 6 hours and then fizzled out.

On the Monday we wondered if Archie may have whooping cough. After a visit to the doctor he was put on antibiotics and sent with his brother to stay at Nanna's for 2 days while these took effect. We all decided this was the easiest course of action to avoid the difficulties in testing a two year old for whooping cough.

I surrendered to my pregnancy that day. I felt very able to hand over control to nature. I had planned to have my children at the birth and had support people and contingency plans organised for them. Nick was still not entirely comfortable with the boys being there as he was worried they would demand his attention and he wouldn't be able to support me as well. Now they weren't going to be home for two days. I decided if the baby came in that time, then they weren't meant to be there. If she waited, then it meant she wanted them there. It was a great relief to finally let go.

We spent the day watching the series Summer Heights High, which I'd had on DVD for about a year but hadn't watched. I also went for a nice peaceful walk by myself in the national park.

Contractions became regular again around 4 pm and were about 10 minutes apart until 10 pm that night, when they fizzled out again. We had some lovely take-away Indian for dinner, watched TV while I timed contractions, and finally went to bed to sleep all night uninterrupted(!)

Tuesday rolled around and I had a reflexology appointment followed by a trip to the hospital for a check up with Nicole. We had a lovely relaxing day, stopping in at an antique store, where we wandered for a few hours, followed by lunch in the cafe. We were able to chat and finish conversations! It was such a lovely day and we talked about some important things that felt good to have resolved.

Nicole did a stretch and sweep for me and the reflexologist worked on getting the labour to ramp up and the baby to move down. Contractions started as soon as we left the hospital and were the usual 10 minutes apart, lasting 40 seconds or so. We settled in for the night to watch the final episodes of Survivor. I ate nearly a whole pineapple for dinner and timed my contractions. Around 9 pm they were getting closer together: 5-7 mins apart but some still 10-15 minutes apart. They were still lasting less than a minute but felt like they were getting stronger. We went to bed at 11.30 pm, but after 3 contractions in bed I got back up.

I came upstairs to our living area where our birth pool was set up. I spent time tidying up between contractions, still wondering if this really was the beginning of proper labour. I lit some candles, put on my necklace made with beads given to me at my Blessingway, and listened to a birth meditation right through on my iPod.

I was very tired and wishing I had gone to bed earlier by this stage and decided I needed to get into a comfy position and keep my eyes closed for a while. I find kneeling over the coffee table with my head on a pillow is very good. I put on a relaxing DVD from a friend. The music was soothing and so were the peaceful images.

After a while, I moved to the couch and lay on my side with my eyes closed, trying to sleep. A few contractions later my waters broke. The contraction that did it was a doozy, just building and building and lasting longer than the others. Then POP and amniotic fluid was running down my legs and over the lounge. I got up and grabbed a pen to write the time down - 2.15 am - then stuffed a terry nappy between my legs and changed to a dry nighty. I leaned over the kitchen bench and timed a few contractions - nearly 1 minute and around 2-3 minutes apart. I thought about having a shower. I really wanted to, but I was worried about wasting the hot water.

I decided to wake Nick and start getting the birth pool filled. Then I'd have a shower with any hot water that was left. I woke him and gave him a heap of instructions then went back to the coffee table



CHARMAINE MIRIGLIANI

position. I didn't like losing focus. I wanted to stay with the rhythm I had going in the dark quiet. He finished filling the pool and came to see how I was going, and was just in time to grab me a spew bag. I panicked a bit then. In my other labours I started vomiting right before the birth so I was a bit concerned it was very close, so I told Nick to ring Nicole, he filled her in and she said she was on her way. I went to the shower and turned it on, but nothing but cold came out. So into the birth pool for me!

It was utter bliss sliding into the very hot water and just feeling my body relax. I pulled a pool noodle under me and had my head floating just above the surface but the rest of my body immersed. The rain was pounding on the tin roof. I asked Nick to open the blind so I could see the trees, but I didn't really look out of the birth pool! It was lovely with the light of my salt crystal lamp and a few candles and the sound of the rain.

Nicole and Victoria, (Nic and Vic) my midwives, arrived at 4am and we had a chat. Nic told me how well I was doing and we listened to my baby's heartbeat pounding away. For a while I felt fine between contractions and was able to chat.

For the last hour I drifted right off. I found it very comforting to make a strange gurgling sound in my throat during the contractions. Nick said it sounded like a didgeridoo. I got great relief from Nick pushing hard on my lower back. He was also very efficient with getting a spew bag to me each time I needed it.

I was so exhausted at this stage and I had to push very hard to get her out. In some contractions I pushed and pushed only to feel her slide back up a little at the end of the contraction. In my previous births, the pushing stage was very quick and I didn't need to do much work. So this experience threw me a little, I started panicking a bit and thinking why is it taking so long? I tried to speak and get my fears across but all that I was managing to get out was "I can't". Nicole was helping me, suggesting a good position and that I try directing my energy down rather than out, with my voice. This little tip really helped me and I started to feel I was making some progress. Nicole asked if I wanted a VE to see where I was at. I agreed and she stepped over to her bag to get her gloves when the next surge just built and built and suddenly I felt my baby crowning! It was amazing because I didn't feel the ring of fire so much this time. It just felt very satisfying to give a huge push down and then to feel her head pop out.

I was so relieved and started saying "Oh it's nearly over", thinking of how awful I'd felt all pregnancy and how glad I was that this was the end. The next contraction and my baby was born. We discovered why I'd had a little difficulty pushing her out - the cord was looped

around her neck! Nicole flipped it over her head and handed her straight to me.

Joy, relief, love just flood through me. I lie back against the side of the pool and relax. Soaking her in. Her little eyes staring at me (she is so alert!), her slippery pink body. She has so much black hair, all matted up with blood and vernix. I inhale her scent over and over, stare at her, soaking it in, imprinting it. I'll never forget this moment.

I get all chatty, suddenly feeling on top of the world. After half an hour I am ready to get out of the pool and rug up with our baby. I stand up and push the placenta out, after we have cut the cord. And then the hideous afterbirth pains start and the vomiting continues. While lying on the lounge with my baby on my chest, I watch her crawl to my breast, then she lifts her head opens her mouth wide and latches on, it's the most amazing thing. This of course triggers more after-pains and vomiting. It takes a while and an injection of anti nausea meds before I can hold some fluids down and then I feel much better.

The midwives head off at around 10 am and I fall asleep with my baby, who still has no name. I am woken around lunchtime by my boys and mum, looking in the back door at us and knocking. They are besotted with their sister. You can see in the photo how pleased they are.

Nick ends up choosing her name. I decide that it is his turn, and the one name I really, really want he really, really doesn't.

We name her Erin (because it means peace) Maria (for Nick's mum), born 25/5/2011 3338 grams, 50cm.

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Hannah's Birth



PREGNANCY

I was lucky enough to have a very easy and enjoyable pregnancy. After a caesarean for low lying placenta with my first daughter Lucy five years earlier, I was keen to have a homebirth from the very outset. The hospital's policies on VBAC (continuous monitoring, canula, etc.) seemed all about risk avoidance and not individual care. Both my partner Anthony and I were confident that homebirth choice was a good choice. Having an EDD of 1st January meant it was very hard to find a midwife! We met up with Melanie at 12 weeks and liked her immediately.

All the tests and scans showed no issues at 12 weeks. The risk factors of a VBAC at home were discussed with Mel, and after that put out of my mind. I read Ina May Gaskin, Sheila Kitzinger, Michel Odent and watched lots of homebirth videos (many with Lucy, to prepare her). I kept very active throughout the pregnancy, with prenatal aqua aerobics, plenty of walking, gardening and activity. I was much busier this time around, with a five year old at school and a hectic workload.

LABOUR AND BIRTH

For some reason I'd always believed my baby would come on the 3rd of January. I'd been waking up at about 3am every morning for weeks and I told my midwife that I thought I'd go into labour at this time.

I woke up at 3am on Monday 2nd January, but this time I was getting tightenings! I didn't know if they were really contractions, since they were quite low down (I'd never experienced a contraction before). I tried to get some more sleep and SMSd Mel at around 8am, asking her how I'd know if they were real. She said once they were lasting about 45 seconds and coming regularly. Since they were only lasting about 30 seconds and weren't painful, I got on with my normal day. I went to bed that night and fell asleep easily. I was quite happy to have plenty of early labour, knowing my body was getting ready.

I woke up on Wednesday 3rd January at 3am (again) and this time the contractions seemed a lot more purposeful. I was very excited to see a fair amount of mucus. I couldn't sleep through so I started monitoring them. They were 45 seconds - 1 minute long, but irregular - not painful, but requiring more concentration than the previous day's. I texted my doula Christy and Mel at 4.40am, and Christy (who'd been lying awake) arrived shortly after. I was moving on the fit ball for each contraction before the rest of the household awoke. With all the activity and then the plumber arriving, everything slowed down, despite taking a walk with Christy and my dog. Mel texted, saying to try to ignore things, rest, snack and try not to get frustrated.

I sent Christy home and napped on Lucy's bed (since the plumber was still in our ensuite). After the plumber left, I wanted to be left

alone. Anthony took Lucy to a friend's for the day and took my Mum shopping. I had a blissful nap without any noise or activity. The contractions continued, but not regularly. The baby would kick every now and then and set off another. At some point during the afternoon she moved from the left to completely anterior, head down and in perfect position. I had a deep sleep for two hours from 4pm.

After that, I couldn't rest comfortably in bed. I had a huge amount of mucus discharge. Everyone had dinner downstairs, but I didn't want anything to eat. I was starting to feel things ramping up. I knew this was really going to be it. I was using the fit ball, leaning on a pile of pillows to rest in between. For some reason, I really wanted Anthony's pillow, with his smell, on top. I found that comforting. I asked Anthony to call Mel just before 8pm and tell her to come. I texted Christy and asked her to head on over whenever she was ready. I moved downstairs to my birthing space (pool, fit ball and beanbags all set up in the dining room). Mel arrived after 9pm and I was still coping on the fit ball but dying to get into the pool! For some reason I felt like I needed permission; I was worried about slowing things down. Anthony filled the pool.

I LOVED being in the pool. I started making some noises during each contraction, really concentrating and occasionally joking that I'd like a body double or a break! I didn't feel like I couldn't cope, but I was wondering how long this would go for. Someone started saying something about the time and I called out that I didn't want to know the time. I knew I'd get past midnight and I didn't want a reference point. I had no issue with having a long labour, but I just didn't want to be aware of how long. I was determined to keep going for as long as it took, at home.

Mel checked the baby's heart rate every now and then and also checked my blood pressure and temperature initially, but that was the only monitoring. Anthony was amazing support, managing to say exactly the right things. My support team encouraged me from time to time as well.

After about half an hour in the pool, a few contractions had a lot of pressure behind them. Next contraction and I felt a small pop and looked up to tell my midwife that I thought my waters had broken. (This was at 10:30pm according to her notes). I talked to the baby during the labour, telling her we could do this together. I also prayed, asking for strength.

Mel asked me to go to the toilet to wee half an hour later. I said I didn't want to do this anymore, that it wasn't fun. I was extremely reluctant to leave the pool, but grudgingly waddled over. I had a big bloody show on the toilet. Christy says she noticed a few signs of transition, but I completely missed them and didn't feel any different. I said something about feeling sick on the toilet (I don't remember this) and then my legs were a little shaky (I thought it was just the



JENNIFER LORANCE

way I was perched). I asked Christy to apply pressure on my lower back with her hand. She was fantastic - I have no idea how she held that hunched over position!

Once the show had stopped I went back to the pool – relief! (It was around 11:45pm). Mel called our back up midwife Emma and she arrived at some stage (I barely noticed). Within a couple of contractions I noticed my noises were deeper and more intense. I realised I'd been pushing for a few contractions involuntarily. It was nothing like I expected! This was really hard work!

I got a bit impatient at how long this was taking. Christy was still applying pressure on my lower back, which was perfect. She went to massage at one point and I growled at her to leave her hand still. Poor Christy! I could feel the baby's head really low and I was sure I should be able to feel something when I reached down, but I couldn't. Mel checked the baby's heart rate a couple of times and once I pushed her hand away and said "Not now!" during a contraction. (I can't imagine how I'd have gone if I was in hospital with constant monitoring!). I gripped the handles on the outside of the pool while pushing, which really helped with bearing down. I kept reminding myself that I was made for this, that I was "wonderfully made" and I could do this. That this birth was going to be joyous. Around now Mel had Anthony wake Lucy to see her baby sister being born. I could hear her getting a bit upset at the noise I was making, but Anthony told her, with reassurance from Mel, that Mummy was doing fine. I called out to her that I was okay, it was just hard work and not to worry.

I got a little frustrated at how long it seemed to be taking to push her head out. Mel reminded me that the baby was doing the right thing and gradually stretching me. As soon as she said that I relaxed and let it happen. (Mel's notes say that baby's head was visible just after 12:30am). I felt her head start to come out and stop half way. For the first time I felt stinging and pain – at the front of my labia (from leaning forwards). Her head was half born in one contraction and I automatically blew out fast while I waited for the next contraction as she sat there. My body did everything automatically, without any need for prompting or instruction and I had no tearing to the perineum.

Her head was born in the next contraction and it was an incredible relief. Mel says that the baby was blinking and opening her mouth underwater while we were waiting. Next contraction, her body was out and I caught her!! Mel pushed the baby through into my arms. I picked her up out of the water and was amazed at how tiny and slippery she was! I held her on my chest and felt exhilaration – I had done it! I was crying and laughing at the same time – I couldn't believe I'd just given birth! It was the most joyful of births that I could have possibly imagined.

Anthony, Lucy and my Mum were behind me. Lucy had tears of delight streaming down her face as she reached in to touch her new baby sister Hannah's face. I was just in awe of my new baby girl and what we had done. She had quite a loud cry and looked at me with the most wide open eyes. Mel checked the (really fat) cord after a minute and it had already stopped pulsating. We cuddled in the pool while Lucy cut the cord – it took her three cuts to get through!

I had no further contractions, so after 45 minutes Mel suggested I get out of the pool to birth the placenta. I handed baby Hannah to Anthony and Lucy and gingerly walked to the toilet. The placenta fell out. Anthony buried it in a pot where we will plant a tree.

It was a perfect birth. We opened a bottle of champagne and toasted Hannah's birthday! I texted family and friends and posted on Facebook to announce Hannah's arrival (I was so proud of myself). After everyone left we all went to bed, at home. We slept in, although I was too excited to spend much time sleeping that day!

My recovery was fantastic and Hannah has done beautifully. We love the fact that she has not been out of mine or Anthony's sight since her birth.

Stats:
 First stage: 1 hr 27 min
 Second stage: 52 mins
 Third stage: 50 mins
 Hannah Jane - 2835 gms, 34 cm head circ, 47 cm long
 Born Wed 4 Jan 12.48am (just missing my prediction of 3rd January!)



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Paddy's Fast and



When the time to birth came around I felt very safe and supported thanks to the one-on-one care from our midwife Jo. After a few days of on-and-off pre-labour contractions and a hindwater leak, I woke up in the middle of the night feeling those pre-labour contractions again.

Not long after this my three year old, Joey, woke up. This was unusual for him and he was quite unsettled. It took a while for him to go back to sleep and while I cuddled and patted him I kept noticing these tightenings. It felt like my pelvis was opening up. Joey had a breastfeed, which was kind of rare for him, and I noticed when he fed that the intensity of the surges increased. Maybe he wanted to help things along. Because he was a bit sad I invited Joey into bed between me and Kat and he fell asleep with me cuddling him.

I spent the rest of the night drifting in and out of sleep, waking every ten minutes to breathe through the tightenings. I gazed at my little boy thinking this might be the last night with him as my 'baby' and appreciated getting to have that last special night together. I was in a good headspace now. I was very calm and peaceful, feeling my pelvis open and visualising my cervix starting to thin out and open too. I watched the room slowly get lighter and rested between the contractions.

Around 8.00am I was starting to find it a bit uncomfortable to lie down. I got up and went to the bathroom where I had some more bloody show. I had a nice shower (I still wasn't convinced this would turn out to be anything so I wasn't worried about using the hot water). I was starting to feel like I might need someone to rub my back during contractions because for the first 10-20 seconds of each one I was like, "Oh lordy!" I let my partner Kat and Jo know what was happening.

At about 10.00am these stronger waves started coming more often; three or four in a row and 3-4 minutes apart and hurting. Kat noticed and said, "I think you better call Jo". I was whinging and said, "No, I don't want to, it's probably nothing again." But at her insistence I did. Jo said she would have a shower then head down.

I remember saying to her, "I'll let you know if everything stops again." After I got off the phone it was like, bang! The contractions became two to three minutes apart and I was suddenly in full-on labour. Kat started blowing up the birth pool. I'd been telling her, "No don't blow it up, I don't want it staring me in the face taunting me about not being in labour." This then became, "Okay, maybe blow it up but don't fill it yet" to "Start filling that thing and fast!"

Joey wondered out in his PJs and Kat explained that the baby would probably come today. Joey wondered around the pool saying, "Oh yeah, baby coming out your ..gina today mum, it's gonna come out in the pool."

I started needing to make noise with the contractions and was on all fours yelling and groaning very loudly every two minutes. Kat was a star; setting up the hoses and filling the pool, running around changing Joey and getting him his breakfast all in the two minute spaces between the contractions. When I was having one I demanded her to return and press on my back.

Jo texted me to say she was ready to leave and asked if I wanted her to come. I rang back and said, "They're coming every two minutes now." I heard her say, "Oh shit!" before I had to put the phone down and moan through another one.

I was dangling my hands in the birth pool and looked forward to getting in. I thought, 'If something doesn't happen soon to change things, I am going to go mental!' Kat said to me, "Think of your special place (a calmbirth technique), Coogee Beach or Spoon Bay?" and I was like, "Fuck the special place!" Finally the pool was ready and in I hopped...ahhh. I was still demanding that Kat press on my back with every contraction so she ran around to quickly get her boardies on so she could hop in.

Once I got in the pool Kat suggested I try breathing through the contractions instead of yelling. I calmed down a tiny bit but everything felt very intense and I was starting to feel a bit pushy at

“Paddy's head came out while Joey and I were cuddling, my little boy giving me so much strength. I'm so proud of him.”

Beautiful Birth

EVELYN DWYER



the end of the contractions. Jo told Kat to encourage me to hold off pushing and keep breathing through them for as long as possible. She also said, "If the baby arrives before I get there it will be okay." Kat told me later she kept this text open on the phone to look at it when she got scared.

With Joey's birth I remember being taken aback at how much it hurt at first, getting a bit scared and panicky, finding my zen as the hormones kicked in, going inside myself to Labourland and completely ignoring what was happening around me until transition. With Paddy's birth that didn't happen at all. There wasn't enough time. I complained the whole time and it was probably only the fact that I couldn't go anywhere or do anything about it that got me through it!

I was saying, "I can't do it anymore" and "I want to go home" to which Kat replied: "You are home, you've done it before, you can do it again". Then I said, "I've changed my mind" and "I don't want to have a baby anymore." Joey was shocked and said, "Mum! You want to have baby. You push baby out now!". Kat told him it was okay, I was just in transition and mummies in transition say things they don't mean. It was really hurting now and I was feeling a lot of pressure.

Jo arrived and I had a huge contraction and stood up in the birth pool. Maybe I was thinking if I got out and ran away from the pool the labour wouldn't follow me? I told Jo I couldn't do it and she said, "Yes you can, you're doing beautifully." I realised that I should probably get back in the pool as things hurt heaps less there.

Now that Jo had arrived I felt more focused because I knew Kat had been worried about me birthing unassisted. Jo asked if I wanted her to check the baby's heartbeat and I said no! I knew the baby would be here soon and I couldn't handle any distractions. Next time I had a contraction I tried breathing through it and really focusing on the sensation. Then towards the end when it felt right I gave the tiniest little push. Really different to my labour with Joey where the midwife told me if I didn't push it would take longer. Because I wanted him out I had pushed like crazy and was panicked. This time my body was doing all the work on its own.

The pressure I'd been feeling was building up so much. Then with a big pop my waters exploded into the pool. What a relief! Another giant contraction and I roared so loud; right in poor Joey's face. He had been fine until then but now he burst into tears. I said, "I'm sorry Joey, I'm okay, I just really need to make a loud noise to help the baby come out." Kat and Jo explained things to him and

encouraged him to come around to their side of the birth pool so he could see the baby's head coming out but he had nestled into my neck. I felt him relax, both of us a bit teary, me reassuring him and him reassuring me. Paddy's head came out while Joey and I were cuddling, my little boy giving me so much strength. I'm so proud of him.

Behind me I could hear Jo talking Kat through what was happening. They waited and Kat watched Paddy rotate and his shoulders come through. One more contraction and then his whole body came out into Kat's hands. Kat brought him up out of the water and placed him on my back. My first thought was, 'the baby's here!' followed quickly by 'thank fuck that's over!'

Kat and Jo helped me to turn around and I got my first good look at him. Joey came around to look too. It was about 15 minutes since Jo had arrived and 1.5 hours of active labour. We got out of the pool and snuggled skin to skin on the bed.

After about an hour I got up and squatted over a Tupperware container on the bed and the placenta came out easily and all in one piece. We waited until the placenta was born before cutting the cord. Joey had to finish all the ice-cream so we could put the placenta in the container, a task he had been looking forward to for months.

The next few days were free from interruptions and so blissful compared to our experience in hospital. Our Homebirth was excellent.



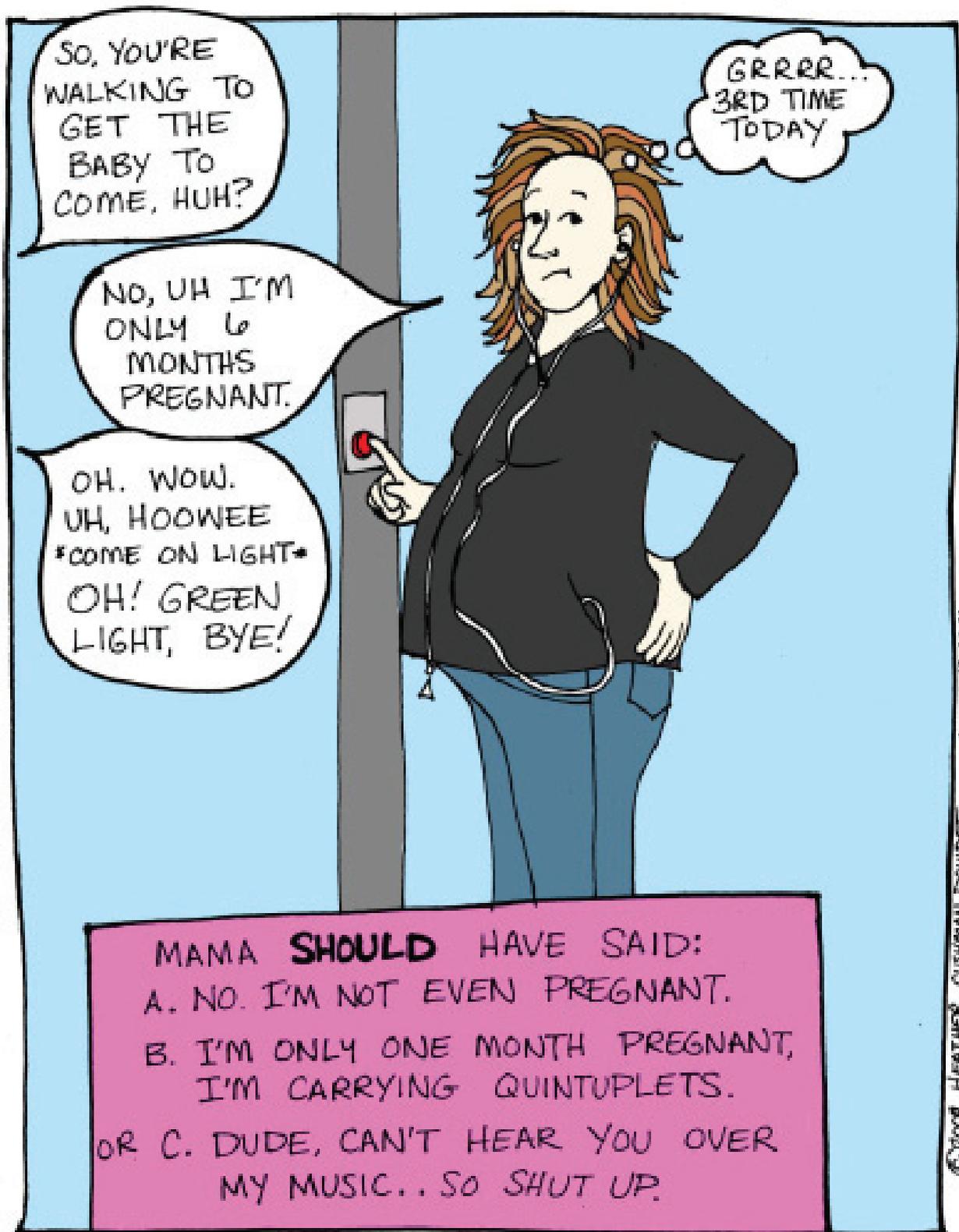
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Mama Is... Shut Up



Heather Cushman-Dowdee, long time creator of the comic "Hathor the Cowgoddess", is now creating all new comics over at www.mama-is.com. Heather is married to Kevin and is a homebirther, attachment parenter to 3 unschooled girls and a baby boy, and breastfeeding lactivist which inspires her cartoon creations.

22 November, 2011 - The Punch Birth Trauma In Hospitals Is Driving Women To Homebirth (Opinion)

<http://www.thepunch.com.au/articles/birth-trauma-in-hospital-is-driving-women-to-homebirth>

I have interviewed many women who chose a homebirth because of an adverse experience in a hospital. The anguish they experienced drove them out of the system seeking alternative forms of care. Through all the material publicising this week [during Post Natal Depression Week], I found nothing to acknowledge the mental health impacts of birth trauma.

December 13, 2011 - The Chronicle (Toowoomba) Homebirth A Winner For Keleher's

<http://www.thechronicle.com.au/story/20111213/homebirth-winner-keleher's>

THERE was plenty of excitement at Meghan and Peter Keleher's home recently as the first twinges of labour were felt. It wasn't a mad rush to jam a nightie and a few toiletries in an overnight bag for a dash to the hospital, but rather a quick phone call to let midwife Sonia Beutel know what was going on and then it was back to business as usual, albeit accompanied by the flutter of nerves, excitement and labour pains. A few close family members arrived at the home, and when labour pains were coming close enough together it was time to call the midwife in, complete with a birthing pool, foetal monitor and emergency resuscitation kit. A few hours later and Meghan was able to give birth to her own baby under the supervision of Ms Beutel, with the encouragement of her mum, husband Peter and Peter's mum.

December 14, 2011 - National Times When Push Comes To Shove, Home Births Don't Deserve To Be Demonised (Opinion)

<http://www.smh.com.au/opinion/society-and-culture/when-push-comes-to-shove-home-births-dont-deserve-to-be-demonised-20111213-1ot0e.html>

The rate of major surgery for birth has more than doubled in the past 15 years in Australia. More than 30 per cent of mothers now have a caesarean - more than 40 per cent in private hospitals. Obstetricians in NSW have been given strict new guidelines after a record 34 per cent of women having their first baby were induced in 2009 (more than 50 per cent in three hospitals), causing significantly higher numbers of emergency caesareans and other complications. First-time mothers who give birth in hospital here are now more likely to have a medical intervention than not. In 2010, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare reported that just 0.3 per cent of women in 2008 had a planned home birth.

December 17, 2011 - Scunthorpe Telegraph(UK) More Mums-To-Be Should Receive Home Birth Option

<http://www.thisscunthorpe.co.uk/mums-receive-home-birth-option/story-14165374-detail/story.html>

Mothers and midwives in Northern Lincolnshire believe more healthy mums-to-be should be offered the option of having a home birth. Claire Mathews, head of midwifery at Northern Lincolnshire and Goole Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, said: "Our midwives work closely with all of our pregnant ladies in discussing with them their birthing plan...If they choose to stay at home, they undergo a comprehensive risk assessment to ensure they are a low-risk pregnancy and that it is safe for them and their baby to stay at home for the birth...we will facilitate this wherever possible for low-risk pregnancies."

December 21, 2011 - The Age Coroner To Probe Home Birth Death

<http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/coroner-to-probe-home-birth-death-20111220-1p3zx.html>

A VICTORIAN coroner will consider whether the death of a nine-day-old boy was the result of a birth gone wrong or parental

negligence. The boy was discovered to be breech when his mother was 34 weeks pregnant and until then, his parents had planned for a home birth. The Court heard that paramedics were called by the couple's independent midwife just after 11.10pm on July 12, 2008, but that they referred care back to the midwife because they had no expertise in breech births.

Sarah Gebert, assisting the coroner, told the court that the boy was taken to Mercy Hospital, then Monash Medical Centre, but died on July 22 after life support was withdrawn. The mother was receiving advice from the Royal Women's Hospital and when the breech discovery was made, she arranged for an elective caesarean at 41 weeks. But counsel for Southern Health said there was no evidence to suggest that the parents or the midwife made arrangements for the baby to be delivered in a hospital.

December 29, 2011 - The Advertiser (Adelaide) Fearful Mums Hiding Babies From Families Sa

<http://www.adelaidenow.com.au/expectant-mums-hiding-their-babies/story-e6frea6u-1226232147311>

EXPECTANT mothers who fear their babies will be seized by authorities are hiding pregnancies to escape Families SA. Mums-to-be are having home births and planning not to register their children and some also are preparing to flee interstate to avoid the state's children's protection services, which have removed other kids from their care and placed them under the guardianship of the minister.

January 3, 2012 - Toronto Star (Canada) Home Birth After 40

<http://www.parentcentral.ca/parent/babiespregnancy/pregnancy/article/1109811--home-birth-after-40>

Forty year old Bonnie Pascal birthed her first baby at home, with three midwives and her husband in attendance. When she fell pregnant, she consulted her family doctor, who assured her a healthy pregnancy was not high risk and referred her to a midwife practice for her antenatal care. Toronto midwife Jennifer Goldberg says that her clients over forty tend to be "super healthy" — they are fit, eat well, don't take risks and are well-informed.

27 January, 2012 - Radio Praha (Czech Republic) Prague Court Delivers Landmark Ruling In Home Birth Advocate's Battle With The State

<http://www.radio.cz/en/section/coraffrs/prague-court-delivers-landmark-ruling-in-home-births-advocates-battle-with-the-state>

A ruling on Thursday by a Prague court might lead to a breakthrough in the ongoing Czech debate about home births. While state officials and health care providers have consistently opposed the practice over safety concerns, the court decided that mothers indeed have the right to choose the place of their child's delivery, and the state has to provide all necessary assistance.

28 January, 2012 - Sydney Morning Herald Home Births Gaining Popularity In The Us

<http://www.smh.com.au/world/home-births-gaining-popularity-in-the-us-20120127-1qlom.html>

Home births in the United States rose 29 per cent from 2004 to 2009, to almost three-quarters of a per cent of all US live deliveries, the highest level since 1989, according to health authorities. "Women may prefer a home birth over a hospital birth for a variety of reasons, including a desire for a low-intervention birth in a familiar environment". They may also deliver at home for religious reasons or a lack of transportation in rural areas.

30 January, 2012 - The Daily Examiner Home Birthing Under Review

<http://www.dailyexaminer.com.au/story/2012/01/30/home-birthing-under-review-northern-rivers/W>

NORTHERN Rivers women could be a step closer to accessing publicly funded home births. The Northern NSW Local Health District is considering the results of a report reviewing the merits of public home birthing.

HAS in the Community

This issue we cover all the homebirth support groups which we are affiliated with around Sydney and further afield in NSW. These groups fulfil an important role in serving to help women bond with like-minded mothers who have birthed at home and usually raise their children in similar ways that foster close bonding with natural, gentle parenting. It is very affirming to be able to meet regularly with women who understand the amazing gift to birth at home instead of having to explain that no, we are not brave, we just know what is right for our bodies and our babies!
Virginia Maddock

Inner West Homebirth Group



The Inner West Home birth Group meets at local fenced parks such as Brighton St Reserve or Marr Playground in Petersham or at The Big Brekkie Cafe in Petersham, when weather permits. During the year we welcomed 4 new home birthed babies to the group. Chrissy gave birth to Cocoa in July as did Naomi with Rowan, Petra gave birth to Lena in early August, and Virginia had Keanu in late September.

With the weather looking wet for our Christmas get together, the group gratefully took up Chrissie's offer to host the party at her place. The old renovated warehouse in Alexandria filled with the most amazing objects captured the eyes and minds of the small babies, children and adults alike. A big pot of steaming chai was waiting for us and we enjoyed some super delicious homemade snacks. About six members could make it and we even welcomed a new member to the group. We're looking forward to continue our meeting in 2012 and hope to meet lots of new Inner West homebirthers.

Magda Jansen

Sutherland Shire Homebirth Group



SSHG consists of a consistent group of about 6 women who tend to come and go, many of us have been coming since our now 3 year old toddlers were newborns. In 2011 Julie Day and her 2 boys Josh (5yo) and Caleb (1yo) moved from Griffith and joined us. We have also added 3 new generation home birthed babies to the group – Erin (sister to Archie & Oscar) was born to Charmaine Mirigliani in May through the St George Hospital homebirth program, Keanu (brother to Jetsun) was born to Virginia Maddock on 28th September with Jo Hunter as midwife, and on 12th February Sandy Bucknell gave birth to Scarlett (sister to Jayson, Sian & Ruby) with Betty Vella as midwife.

Our Christmas party was on 15th December with all but one family coming (unfortunately Charmaine couldn't make it as her 3 kids were sick on the day), and we were delighted to have a welcome visit from an old member Rochelle Hairs with daughter Phoebe, who is also pregnant with her second child, but can no longer make it to the group. She will be birthing with the St George hospital homebirth program. Everyone dressed festively, brought a plate of food to share and all the kids swapped Kris Kringle gifts and had a great time. In 2012 we hope to see some newer members join the group to add to the younger generation.

Virginia Maddock

Northern Beaches Homebirth Group



Over the years, many women expressed an interest in forming a homebirth mothers' group on the Northern Beaches. Since mid 2011 this finally came off the ground, with monthly gatherings at Dee Why beach. Every month different mums and bubs joined, having a catch up with like-minded people, sharing experiences, and just having some fun at the beach!

Unfortunately – lives with kids are very busy – so, despite the great interest, there has never been a massive turnout. I am going back to work so Jacqui Kernot is now organising it and the meetings will now be alternating between her place in Freshwater and at The Highest Intent in Forestville, kindly offered by owner Beryl Truong.

Patries Twaalfhoven

Pregnancy and Parenting Network Meeting



Our final meet up for 2011 for the Pregnancy and Parenting Network was a fitting end for the year with lots of mums, bubs and pregnant women all talking about celebrating Christmas as a family. Our network has grown. Initially started by Jane Palmer the Pregnancy and Parenting Network is now facilitated by Midwives @ Sydney and Beyond. Midwives @ Sydney and Beyond is comprised of the privately practicing midwives: Jane Palmer, Robyn Dempsey, Hannah Dahlen, Melanie Jackson, Emma Fitzpatrick and Heather Crawford. We meet fortnightly rotating between Dundas Valley and Kurmond.

The Pregnancy and Parenting Network is open to everyone who is interested in natural pregnancy, birth and gentle parenting. It is not just a homebirth group (though most who come along have had or are planning a homebirth). While there tends to be a core group of women who attend, many people come along just for the topics that interest them.

Our group has welcomed over 50 babies in 2011 year and we will welcome many more in 2012.

Jane Palmer

Central Coast Homebirth Group

The Central Coast Homebirth Group continues to meet on the first Friday of the month, however our Saturday meetings seem to have fizzled out, quite possibly just because having children is hectic, and for some, weekends are precious family time when Dad is home from work. Catch ups migrated from cafes to peoples' homes - the latter being much more comfy and practical in terms of child-friendliness, and kinder on the wallet. Numbers fluctuate (5ish seems

to be about average nowadays), and the responsibility for hosting and running the meetings is now being shared, which makes it much easier for me and Jena!

Our Facebook page has been great as new mums not yet out and about are able to access almost instant support on line, which recently has facilitated hands on support with breastfeeding and cooking meals etc.

Quite possibly our most exciting news for us homebirth mamas is the arrival of the wonderful Lisa Richards, seemingly our only independent midwife, living locally! Lisa has been a midwife for 8 years and an IM for nearly 2 of those years now, attending homebirths in Southern NSW & Canberra till June 2011, before moving back to the Central Coast. Lisa attends women in their homes for their antenatal, labour, birth and postnatal period and supports women choosing homebirth here on the Central Coast and up in the Hunter region. She practices with the philosophy that pregnancy, birth and the postnatal period are normal events in a woman's life 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. Hooray for Lisa!!!!

There are definitely a few bubbas in bellies at the moment, so Lisa and Sonja MacGregor may well find themselves busy ladies in the coming months!

Kim Ryder

Blue Mountains Homebirth Group



Blue Mountains Homebirth Group consist of a core group of ten families who regularly attend our fortnightly meetings, plus many others who come along when busy lives allow. We are an active, caring and engaged group, providing support in particular to families with newly homebirthed babes in the form of a meals roster. We regularly meet at Lawson Family Daycare Room, sometimes gathering at one of our beautiful local parks. Our end of year picnic was unfortunately a washout as we've copped the brunt of a lot of wild and wet weather here recently! Our Homebirth Awareness Week picnic was a great success, we had a big turnout and even out of area visitors coming to help us celebrate at Hazelbrook. We've had several lovely families join our group this year, bringing with them new energy and passion.

We have had a bumper year of births here in the Mountains. In February, Bronwyn, Gary and Alina welcomed home Edan. In April, Bron and Gareth welcomed their firstborn, Odin. Rebecca, Richard and family welcomed Mia. In August, Meredith, Simon and Finn welcomed another boy at home, Quillan. September saw five births over the course of two weeks! Jacquie and Micah (and their two homebirthed sons) welcomed another baby boy at home, Hayden. Rose and Richard welcomed home Joshua. Lusi, Brett and family welcomed baby Ezekiel, the first of his siblings born at home. Michelle and Brett and family added another homebirthed girl to their mob, Kelsey (baby number six, homebirth number five!) Sara and Dave and their three homebirthed boys welcomed another little boy, Rohan, at home. In October, Amie, James and Lucian (also born at home) welcomed home a little girl, River. In November, Bec, Ben and Melody welcomed Zoe at home. Imogen and Dave welcomed home their first babe, Indigo. Kylee, Simon and Charlie welcomed Penelope (glorious HBAC!) In December, Larissa, Andre and their boys welcomed a daughter and sister, Marley. Melody, Stephen and River welcomed baby Benon. There are several families planning homebirths for 2012, keep your eyes peeled for announcements to come!

Krystal de Lima

Hunter Home and Natural Birth Support Group



Hunter Home and Natural Birth Support (HHNBS) is a volunteer non profit community group, which also forms part of Maternity Coalition as the Hunter MC branch. We are a group of women (and men) who are passionate about homebirth and natural parenting. Our mission is: 'Empowering women to make decisions about and take responsibility for, the health and welfare of their bodies and babies.'

We hold daytime meetings 10am every 2nd Wednesday of the month at Carrington Community Centre, Cnr Young and Hargraves Streets, Carrington, (though we are in the process of changing venues to better suit the needs of our members). At these informal gatherings we share information, hear birth stories and have access to a lending library of birth resources. We ask for a gold coin donation to cover the cost of hall hire. Children are most welcome. Monthly topics (some with guest speakers) that HHNBS will be covering this year include; Cope with Labour – Naturally, Big brother, Big sister – Siblings at Birth, Alternative Therapies in Pregnancy & Birth, Celebrating and Honouring Pregnancy: Rituals and Blessingways, Babymoon and Third Stage.

Women in Newcastle are fortunate to have two options of care for a planned homebirth; either with the group midwifery practice (local public hospital homebirth program) or with independent homebirth midwives who are serving the area like recently re-located Lisa Richards from Bella Birthing. We also have two Aquaborn birth pools for hire to pregnant members of our community.

A new year has seen a new committee elected for HHNBS. Rachel Prest (Coordinator) together with Jo Lin, Jenni Cherry, Chrissy Grainger, Danielle Stenson, Jaia Shanti, Lindsay Hinchey, Amanda Kalldin, Jane Jenkinson, Zoe Herrmann and Tina Wilkie a great mix of new and old members, many hands making light work. We are looking forward to hosting the screening of 'Face of Birth' on March 24 and welcoming many more new babies.

Rachel Prest

Armidale and District Homebirth Support Network



What a great year it has been for our little group here in the New England of New South Wales. Armidale and District Homebirth Support Network numbers have doubled in the past year and the number of babies born at home in Armidale and surrounding areas has grown too (helped along by the arrival of a second Independent Midwife to the region based in our local area). In the past 12 months we welcomed 9 new little people into our group- 5 of these were born at home. This year we also had a stall at the inaugural Armidale Baby Expo raising awareness for home birth as a birth choice in our area. In the year ahead we plan to send letters to healthcare professionals across our area introducing the group and providing our mission statement. We will also plan to have a causal stall at our local Farmers Market. Both these activities will help raise further awareness about birth choice in our region.

Melodie Glass

PRE-NATAL SERVICES

City & Eastern Suburbs

RED TENT HEALTH CENTRE

Naomi Abeshouse – Acupuncture, Chinese herbs & Doula Rebecca Mar Young – Acupuncture & Chinese herbs
We specialize in gynaecology & obstetrics and have supported many women through conception, pregnancy, birth and post-natally. We gently and effectively treat many symptoms such as morning sickness, back and pelvic pain as well as preparing your body for birth and turning breech babies. We run workshops to teach you and your partner how to effectively use acupressure during labour. See our website for details.
61 Queen St, Woollahra, www.RedTent.com.au
Naomi 0413 690 861, naomi@redtent.com.au
Rebecca 0404 457 911, rebecca@redtent.com.au

REBECCA GOULDHURST

Doula, Naturopath, Counsellor, Pregnancy Masseur & Hypnobirthing
I am a passionate doula practicing from a naturopathic and counselling background. I have been in practice for 14 years. Being a doula allows me to support parents-to-be with my wisdom and experience of the birth process and the know how to create the birth that you want. Birth is a magical time that I am honoured to be part of. I have experience both at home and in hospitals and have different packages to suit all. All enquiries welcome.
Rebecca Gouldhurst, 93864243, 0415304369
counsellor@doula.net.au
www.rebeccagouldhurst.net.au

Inner West

AUSTRALIAN DOULA COLLEGE & THE CENTRE FOR SPIRITUAL BIRTH & DEVELOPMENT

Please see our listing on the next page under 'Birth Support Services: Doulas'. 422 Marrickville RD, Marrickville 2204 / 1300 139 507
moreinfo@australiandoulacollege.com.au
www.australiandoulacollege.com.au

BIRTHSENSE WITH JACKI MCFARLANE

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For group details and individual sessions please phone Jacki: 90433079 or 0419286619
ackichip@internode.on.net

MOTHERBIRTH – CONSCIOUSBIRTH

Erika Elliot - Birthing in Awareness
Erika is a passionate and experienced doula and birthing mentor who offers support from pre-conception awareness through to the early days of post-natal care. Facilitating calmbirth® & Birthing from Within preparation courses, Erika also offers massage, blessingway ceremonies and birth photography. Monthly group sessions or private preparations are available. Birthing services are offered to couples in the Inner West, Eastern Suburbs and the North Shore.
Erika Elliott 0425 217788 erikabirth@gmail.com
Preparation * Education * Support

North Shore / Northern Beaches

ALL ABOUT BIRTH CALMBIRTH®

calmbirth® is an enriching prenatal course for women planning a homebirth, water birth, active and natural birth. calmbirth® affirms that birth is a normal process, and you will learn relaxation skills to use during pregnancy, birth and beyond. Learn how to work with your body, partner and discover a wonderful way to have a positive birth experience. Louise is an experienced midwife and childbirth educator and courses are held in Dee Why and Neutral Bay. Contact Louise for more details and dates.
Louise Luscri / 0408 231 759
info@allaboutbirth.com.au
www.allaboutbirth.com.au

HEATHER CRAWFORD

Acupuncturist, Doula, calmbirth® classes
Please see my listing under "Birthing Services: Midwives"
Heather: 9777 7888 or 0423 171 191
heather@heathercrawford.com.au
www.heathercrawford.com.au

Sutherland / St George

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Visit: www.julieclarke.com.au see website for dates and discount. Special note: Julie's calmbirth® course is very reasonably priced.
Julie Clarke / julie@julieclarke.com.au
0401265530 / 9544 6441. 9 Worthybrook 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 a conscious conception, and I enjoyed a trouble free pregnancy, and gave birth at home to a healthy, full term baby who continues to have perfect health. You too can benefit from my experience in natural health care. I can assist you with:
~ preconception health and natural fertility
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Virginia Maddock
Herbalist, Nutritionist & Doula
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www.naturalbeginnings.com.au

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Wonderful, comprehensive courses focused on natural active birth including waterbirth, including practicalities of baby care. Participants 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, information www.julieclarke.com.au
Julie has a great sense of humour and a very gentle approach, she is supportive and flexible in her teaching approach. Good variety of courses to choose from: 6 wk course 1 night per week or 2 Saturdays condensed or 1 Sunday super condensed. Reasonably priced and discount available.
Julie Clarke / julie@julieclarke.com.au / 0401265530 9544 6441 / 9 Worthybrook Pl. Sylvania (20 mins south of airport).

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.placentaremedy.com

BIRTH SUPPORT SERVICES: DOULAS

Northern & North-Western Suburbs

JACQUI JAMES

I am passionate about supporting & encouraging families during pregnancy, labour, birth and in the early "daze". I work with both parents and assist in creating a nurturing environment for the baby to be born. The birth of a baby is a sacred experience and I feel honoured to be a part of it. I also facilitate mother/family blessing ceremonies.

I trained in 2003 at Birth Central, completing post natal doula in 2005. References available.

Mob: 0418 445 653

jacqui@people.net.au

Eastern Suburbs / City / Inner West

AUSTRALIAN DOULA COLLEGE & THE CENTRE FOR SPIRITUAL BIRTH & DEVELOPMENT

The Australian Doula College is an integrated health care centre providing education, support and continuity of care for women during pregnancy childbirth and beyond. Through our network of qualified and experienced educators, doulas and practitioners, we offer a variety of services, treatments and support. As a training facility, we provide the support of a trainee doula for only \$165; qualified doulas range from \$600-\$1500. We look forward to being of service to you in this amazing time of your life. Please visit the website for our full range of services.

422 Marrickville Road
Marrickville, NSW 2049
1300 139 507

moreinfo@australiandoulacollege.com.au
www.australiandoulacollege.com.au

Southern Suburbs

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 three years as a doula I have been witness to many natural births. I believe strongly in the women's ability to birth her own baby and in her own wisdom and instinct as a mother. I've also been teaching Prenatal Yoga for past 11 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 informed 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

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

ROYAL HOSPITAL FOR WOMEN HOMEBIRTH SERVICE (Randwick)

This public health service is available to women within 7km of the RHW and within the RHW geographical area. Continuity of care is provided by two midwives throughout pregnancy, birth and the postnatal period.

For further information contact Anne Lainchbury: 0407498197

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.

BIRTHING SERVICES: MIDWIVES

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.

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 (GyMEA) 9540 4992 bpvella@optushome.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

HAZEL KEEDLE

I have attended homebirths as a midwife and have been a practising midwife for over 3 years. I have attended the homebirth midwives retreat in 2008 and also an active birth workshop. I have qualifications in massage, aromatherapy and infant massage. I have recently obtained Cert IV Breastfeeding Education (Counselling) with the Australian Breastfeeding Association and Childbirth Education training. I am passionate about keeping birth natural and providing continued care from pregnancy through to birth and during the newborn time. I have a keen interest in women achieving vaginal births after a caesarean (VBAC) in part due to my own personal experience of VBAC. I am a local mountains mum with a family including five children.

Hazel Keedle (Blue Mountains and surrounding areas)
4787 8430 0408 661 503 hazelkeedle@gmail.com

HEATHER CRAWFORD

[Midwives @ Sydney and Beyond]

I am based on the Northern Beaches and provide pregnancy, labour & birth and postnatal care in the community, serving families in Northern Sydney, the Eastern Suburbs and Inner West. As well as providing midwifery care, I also work as an acupuncturist & herbalist specialising in fertility and pregnancy. I love being with women and their families through this transformative time and believe that every woman should be able to journey through pregnancy and birth in a supportive environment where she feels safe and loved, surrounded by people who respect and support her choices. Heather Crawford 0423 171 191 heather@heathercrawford.com.au

www.heathercrawford.com.au

INDEPENDENT MIDWIFE: JACQUI WOOD

Pregnancy and birth is a normal, healthy life experience. As natural as it is to conceive your baby in a loving, safe and intimate environment, labouing and birthing at home, in your own relaxed setting, gives you the freedom to follow your body's instinctive knowledge of birthing naturally, without restrictions. As a Midwife, I have immense passion for my career and gain great professional and personal satisfaction from it. I offer a holistic approach to midwifery care, providing care throughout your pregnancy, labour and birth (a birthing pool is available for water birth) and postnatal care up to 4 weeks after the birth of your baby. All care is provided in your home.

Jacqui Wood (Blue Mountains, Western Sydney and South West suburbs)
0430 109 400

www.independentmidwife.com.au jacqui@independentmidwife.com.au

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.

Blue Mountains, Inner west and Western Sydney (02) 475 19840

midwifejo@bigpond.com

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

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

midwiferyrobyn@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

Sheryl has been in private practice for the past 23 years. Her core belief is that pregnancy and birth are not only about producing a healthy baby but is also a period of profound transformation for the parents. Sheryl lives on the northern beaches and takes only a small caseload of women. She has Medicare eligibility that provides a rebate for antenatal and postnatal care.

Sheryl Sidery: Northern beaches through to the Eastern suburbs.

0409760548 secretwomensbiz@bigpond.com

SONJA MACGREGOR

A wholistic midwife who empowers and trusts a woman to birth her own baby in the comfort of her own home, surrounded by love. I provide a full antenatal, labour, birth and postnatal service in collaboration with the woman.

Appointments are attended in the woman's home, with the inclusion of family and support people if the woman desires. I service Sydney, Blue Mountains, Southern Highlands, Illawarra, Central Coast & Newcastle.

Sonja MacGregor 0419 149 019

sonjamac@bigpond.com www.birthathome.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

GUIDE TO CHOOSING A MIDWIFE

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 homeopaths, 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

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

3rd week of the month

Time: 10ish am

Dates / Location:

Thursday 22nd March:

The Highest Intent: Healing & Holistic Living Studio

- 23 Lady Davidson Crct Forestville

Monday 23rd April:

Jacqui's house: 12 Undercliff Rd Freshwater

Tuesday 22nd May:

The Highest Intent: Healing & Holistic Living Studio

- 23 Lady Davidson Crct Forestville

Contact: Jacqui Kernot 0488 999 850 jacqui.kernot@gmail.com

Please bring a plate of food to share!

Sutherland Shire Homebirth Group

Every Thursday

Time: 10.30am weekly

Location: 5 Balfour Ave Caringbah.

Contact: Virginia 0415683074 or maddvirg@yahoo.com.au

Whether 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 house, 27 Hart St, Dundas Valley.

Contact: Jane Palmer 1300 MIDWYF (1300 643 993) or email

jane@pregnancy.com.au

Dates / Topics: 29th March - Waterbirth

26th April - Introducing solids and baby led weaning

24th May - Self care during preconception, pregnancy, birth and in early parenting

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

Emma Fitzpatrick's home

Location: 5 Rowland Ave Kurmond

Time: 10am -12 noon

Contact: Melanie: 0425 280 682 mkjackson@live.com.au

Dates / Topics: 3rd April - Waterbirth

8th May - Self care during preconception, pregnancy, birth and in early parenting

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!

Blue Mountains Homebirth Support Group

Every 2nd Thursday

Time: 10am-12pm.

Location: We meet in alternating homes & local parks in the Blue Mountains.

Cost: A donation of \$2-5 is appreciated to help with group running costs.

Contacts: email Krystal: bmhomebirthgroup@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.

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.

Dates / Topics: 19th March - Birth Stories

16th April - Birthing Options in the Illawarra

21st May - Book Reviews by members

Contact: Please call Sonia on 0424 051 246 or find out more at: <http://www.illawarra.birthchoices.info/index.html>

Mothers & Midwives of the South (Southern Highlands)

Every month

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

Central Coast Homebirth Group

First Friday and third Saturday of each month.

Time: from 10.30 till noon.

Contact: Kim 0406 502 715 p4pandora@gmail.com or Jena 0404 712 392 morrisjenar@gmail.com

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: New Lambton Uniting Church Hall. 10-14 Grinsell St Kotara (off Orchardtown Rd).

Contact: Rachel 0415 435 045 or email hbnbsgroup@gmail.com

Armidale and District Homebirth Support Network

First 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

Queensland Home Midwifery Association

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 dhbinfo@gmail.com
www.darwinhomebirthgroup.org.au

- 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**

From 10.30am. Second Tuesday of every month

AUSTRALIAN DOULA COLLEGE
422 Marrickville Rd Marrickville
Bring a plate or something to nibble.
Children welcome.

Please call to confirm
Virginia Maddock 0415 683 074

NEXT MEETINGS:
13th March [AGM], 10th April, 8th May, 12th June

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:

Where Are They Now?



Birthings is your magazine. Please contribute!

Submissions are welcome on the 'herstory' of HAS, birth stories of inter-generational homebirthers and/or the midwives who have attended them, or if you have any other ideas on something to write about, we would love to have your submission. As always, we also welcome your birth announcements, birth stories, photos, letters, art and poetry.

Submissions are due by May 1st 2012.

Please check word count before sending and don't forget your bio for the contributor's page!
Email the editor at: editor@homebirthsydney.org.au

Reminder: Please ensure we have your current email address so you can receive your membership expiry reminder, as well as all the important homebirth updates in our e-newsletter. And if you've recently moved, send us your new address so you don't miss out on the next issue of Birthings!

Email: member@homebirthsydney.org.au