

BIRTHINGS

A HOMEBIRTH ACCESS SYDNEY QUARTERLY PUBLICATION



Placenta Love

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

www.homebirthsydney.org.au

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

DEADLINES FOR SUBMISSIONS

Spring 2014	No. 123	1 August 2014
Summer 2014	No. 124	1 November 2014
Autumn 2015	No. 125	1 February 2015
Winter 2015	No. 126	1 May 2015

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 editorial board members are Maggie Lecky-Thompson, Adrienne Abulhawa, Jo Hunter and Virginia Maddock. The role of the editorial board is outlined in the guidelines below.

CONTRIBUTION GUIDELINES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PICTURES We encourage you to submit some high-resolution digital images with your story, especially with birth stories. Please no more than 6-8 photos per story, otherwise they will lose impact due to reduction of size to fit them in.

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 send to Kirrilee Heartman at: editor@homebirthsydney.org.au

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

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

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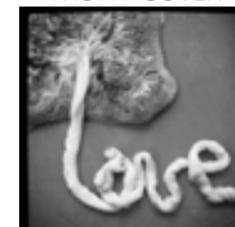
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FRONT COVER



Placenta photo by Erika Elliott.

BACK COVER



Sutherland Shire Homebirth Group 2009.

Editorial

Well, after saying my farewells and handing over the Editorship of Birthings, I find myself again writing an Editorial! Don't mistake me, I love writing these Editorials and really did not need much persuading to jump back in and help when, due to unforeseen circumstances, the new proposed Editor has been unable to take up the role.

Events have occurred in a rush, and at the last minute – so apologies for a smaller than usual magazine. It has been put together in a fraction of the usual time frame, amidst other commitments and deadlines (why does everything seem to happen at once!), but not without the help of Virginia Maddock and the HAS team, who have pulled together so magnificently to get things done in record time.

Research conducted by HAS has shown that the primary readership of Birthings are pregnant women – often expecting their first babies under the care of an independent midwife. This alone makes the magazine an essential resource – a counterpoint – to the mainstream medicalised view of birth and the horror stories that are so prevalent in our society. This magazine serves as a source of balanced information about birth and the childbearing year; information that supports healthy, empowered birth, featuring realistic yet positive accounts of birth and entry into motherhood.

Apart from the informative and inspiring articles, Birthings in an important resource – containing information relevant for engaging a midwife, as well as information about childbirth education and support, doulas, as well as our midwife listings. The birth stories are often times the first pages our readers turn to, and many women keep Birthings as a keepsake – especially if their own birth stories or announcements are contained within.

All of these functions are why you, the reader and member of the home birthing community, are so important. One of the challenges I have faced as Editor has been to

sometimes receive only a small number of submissions: birth stories, announcements, letters, articles or thoughts for each issue. I am convinced that every woman has wisdom to share, and most women I meet have strong feelings about many aspects of their pregnancy and birth experiences, so I strongly urge you all to consider sharing your experiences and wisdom, so that other women (and men), perhaps earlier in their journeys than yourself, may benefit. I promise you will get a buzz from participating more in this historic, community-building entity that is Birthings. Lastly, on this note, I would like to thank the midwives who continue to support HAS, Birthings, and the support we aim to provide.

Recently, Emily Burns published a research paper in the Journal of Perinatal Education {Volume 23, Number 1, 2014, pp. 41-49 (9)} entitled 'More Than Clinical Waste? Placenta Rituals Among Australian Home Birthing Women'. In it, she describes the results she gained from interviewing 51 women about their choices for the placenta after birth (I was one of those women). Hospitals and the mainstream medical profession view the placenta as a waste product: taken away and incinerated unless the birthing woman specifically asks for it (and even then it is placed in bags marked 'clinical waste').

In contrast, many home birthing women view the placenta as a life giving organ, rich with spiritual significance and meaning. The most common methods employed in regards to the placenta are lotus birth (where the cord is not cut after birth), planting it under a special plant, or consuming it in some way. These activities are certainly reflected in the articles contained in these pages – from my own experiences with the placenta through six births, to Yia Alias's moving account from her perspective with now-adult children. We also bring you some snippets of placenta traditions from around the world, along with some lovely placenta photographs, taken by



Virginia Maddock. These sit alongside some varied accounts from our own community members and their choices around the placenta.

I am pleased to include a beautiful artwork for our 'Heart to Heart' page – a painting by artist Tanya Torres entitled 'Placenta'. I urge you to follow the link and look at it in colour online...it is really beautiful. I personally would love to see some home grown creative expressions on this regular page – so if you write poetry, or create any kind of art and wish to share...please send it in.

Looking ahead to the Spring edition – who knows if I will again be writing the Editorial or not! But I do know that the theme – Supporting Homebirth – is one that all of us can relate to, in a myriad of ways. Whether you employed a doula, other birth support person, or whether your partner was your birth support, we would love to hear your experiences – how their support in birth made a difference, or how it changed your relationship. 'Supporting Homebirth' is a theme that may also include others means of supporting homebirth – from activism in the political arena to the example and subtle re-education we set for others by simply making the choice to homebirth. In June I will, for the second year, be speaking to second year medical students about birth and home birth. It is my own small contribution towards normalising home birth, and who doesn't love getting the opportunity to talk about their births for two hours!

If you have a particular theme you would like to see covered – please write and let us know. All letters, birth stories and other submissions are due by the 1st August to the address editor@homebirthsydney.org.au.

Kirrilee Heartman

Birth Announcements



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



Errol Karl Hoogesteger was born at home in the pool on 11th December 2013 at 0038hrs weighing 3.920kg (8lb 10oz) & 52cm long after a 42 week pregnancy and many battles to avoid induction. Proud parents Janie and Jono and big brother, Duke, couldn't be more thrilled about his liberating VBAC journey. We are extremely thankful to our great God for answered prayers; Rachele Meredith for her calm guidance and care; student midwife, Luci Lamond, for her constant friendship and encouragement; and our ever-gracious support and birth photographer, Ali Lamond. What beautiful company our son entered the world into.



We, Michael and Emma Blenman of Singleton are delighted to announce the birth of our first child, **Bentley Michael Blenman**, born on the 1st July 2013 at 820pm in the water and comfort of our home lounge room. Bentley weighed 9lb2oz (4.17kg), was 55cm long, he is everything and more than we could have hoped for. We will love you unconditionally forever Bentley! Special thanks to our wonderful midwives Megan Barker and Lisa Richards. Xx



Birth Announcement for **Abbey Maddison Yates**

Date: 20th May 2013
Time: 08:18am

Parents: Veronica Cerbelli and Peter Yates

Siblings: Leyla and Ryan

Birth Support: Sheila Vaughan

Abbey was welcomed into the world with a short but sweet water birth at home in the presence of her father Peter and my Birth Maia Sheila. It was everything I could have ever wished for it to be and perfect in every way. Thank you to my husband for his awesome support and my birth Maia for all her time and dedication and nurturing personality. You are always in my heart and part of my family.



Ella Leyna Mae Ivatt

11th February 2014 12.47pm

A beautiful home water birth witnessed by her sister, brothers and father. A wonderful family experience, such joy. Thanks to our awesome midwife Rachele and fantastic photographer Mindy.

Letters to the editor

In the absence of any letters to the editor for this issue, here are some thank you messages we received via Facebook for sending all our advertising midwives a gift on May 5 for International Midwives Day, of a HAS retro logo 3/4 Tshirt and the book 'Memoirs Of A Midwife' by Joan Brandt.

Please send us a letter for next issue so we can print some here!

Thankyou to HAS for the lovely gift that arrived this morning. It has been an honour to be a home birth midwife.

Sonja MacGregor

It has been a busy couple of weeks and I have just gone to my Post Box. Thank-you HAS for the wonderful top and book to celebrate IMD. I think you are a great organisation and I love being a part of it. Acorn Midwifery (Katie Sullivan) Thank you.

Sheryl Sidery

Thank you for the lovely gift HAS. Very much looking forward to reading that. Xxx

Jo Hunter

Thank you for my lovely gift, the shirt is my new favourite xoxo

Emma Beddall

Big shout out to Homebirth Access Sydney (HAS) for the lovely shirt and book for midwives day.

Robyn Dempsey

Thanks so much Homebirth Access Sydney.

Tanya Munten

It was a wonderful week that started with International Midwives Day... I have the best job in the world. A very big thank you to Homebirth Access Sydney for my wonderful gift that arrived in the post.

Jane Palmer

Coordinator's Report

In the last Coordinator's Report in the previous edition of Birthings I remarked how for the first time in years, we had finally filled every role in our volunteer-run committee. And I also said how I knew never to rest on my laurels because when it came to volunteers, anything can happen! Well after taking on a new editor, she seemed to go into hiding well past deadline with nothing having been done. So 2 weeks past deadline our lovely editor in retirement Kirrilee has had to step up again to save this issue. I am eternally grateful for her time, effort and patience in putting it together at short notice – especially being a mum to 5. (I struggle with 2!) So THANK YOU KIRRILEE! (I am also hoping Lauren is OK!). We hope to have a new editor secured for next issue so that Kirrilee can relax in her editor retirement! Other changes to the committee include Amantha who has stepped up to revive our long lost e-newsletter – a job which I used to do but ran out of time (as well as becoming too overwhelmed to figure out how to work out adding the emails in the Mailchimp program). Thanks heaps Amantha! We have some exciting news, that our new website revamp is almost underway. Veronica and her web designer brother are going to be working on it over the next few months. We know how busy Veronica is with her other studies so we appreciate the time she is putting in so that we can get a much more attractive and user friendly site which will cost us less money. We are also excited at the prospect of featuring our midwives in a much more comprehensive way, with a photo and profile for each midwife. Speaking of money, our cash flow is low and in danger of drying up enough that we won't be able to afford the printing of Birthings for much longer. Fortunately Veronica is putting together some fundraising

initiatives for sponsors, so we really hope to have someone on board in future so we can continue to survive. If you are a business owner and would be interested in helping to fund this magazine, be it for printing costs, or postage, then please get in contact with Veronica and request a sponsorship proposal: sales@homebirthsydney.org.au. Another way to help us continue our work is to renew your membership when it runs out as our renewal rate is much lower than we would like. If you are ever unsure as to your membership status or when it will expire, please email Serene: member@homebirthsydney.org.au. A huge thank you is in order for all our wonderful advertising midwives who continue to gift their clients with HAS memberships / Birthings subscriptions. Without you all we wouldn't be here! Our new Events and Fundraising Coordinator Janine O'Brien is organising for us to show the Microbirth film on its premier date of September 20th. So look out for details of that as soon as we have secured a venue, on the HAS Facebook page, our forthcoming e-newsletter and next issue of Birthings. We hope it will raise awareness about the impact of medicalised birth, as well as raise a few dollars for our organisation. We hope you can make it to this fantastic film. Google Microbirth for the film preview! Speaking of events, HAS had a table at the recent Homebirth Australia conference in March. Although we didn't make much cash in selling merchandise, we had a great time listening to the fantastic speakers and attending the dinner and dance. Please see the HAS In The Community page on page 39 for the pictorial review.



Virginia Maddock

Treasurer's Annual Report 2013

During 2013 Homebirth Access Sydney has continued to supply Birthings magazine to all of its subscribers and provide access to relevant resources of information for home birthing parents and birth support attendants.

In this time we have had an income of \$10,886.63 with an expenditure of \$14,349.39.

Income	
Merchandise	\$3,265.03
Subscriptions	\$5,650.00
Advertising	\$1,511.00
Postage	\$460.60
Total	\$10,886.63
Expenses	
Merchandise	\$5,280.17
Postage	\$2,380.20
Printing	\$3,639.00
Stationary	\$205.97
Computer Maintenance	\$135.00
Web Management	\$374.99
Bank Fees	\$24.55
PayPal Fees	\$252.23
Events	\$1,997.28
Graphic Designer	\$60.00
Total	\$14,349.39

HAS was one of the key sponsors of the Trust Birth Conference in September 2013, in an effort for HAS to help with promoting the event and assist HAS to a new customer base and some much needed income. Unfortunately, the event was not prosperous for HAS and it turned into a major financial loss.

We have lost all sponsors to Homebirth Access Sydney as businesses are tightening their belts due to economic changes. As a not-for-profit organisation we require crucial funding from sponsors, memberships and sales to keep the organisation alive and flowing for the public to access the much needed support and information related to Homebirth.

Unfortunately, if HAS does not receive any sponsors, donations, or enough memberships, advertisers or merchandise sales to try and regain some funds, Homebirth Access Sydney may not be able to print another Birthings Magazine for the Summer Edition of 2014.

At this stage we are asking if anyone would like to help Homebirth Access Sydney by purchasing products, membership renewals, or even by investing in sponsorships, advertising or donations. We would really appreciate it if you could please ask your friends or family, if their place of business would like to advertise or sponsor us for printing and/or postage of Birthings magazine, in return for a generous advertising package.

All contacts can be directed to Info@homebirthsydney.org.au and our team will respond to all emails accordingly.

Thank you for all of the current advertisers and members that are already helping Homebirth Access Sydney. I hope that we can find a solution as soon as possible so we can continue to support this very important organisation and its members.

Kind regards

Veronica Cerbelli
Treasurer and Merchandise Coordinator

Workshops with

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

Exploring, Honouring, Celebrating & Healing Our Sacred Feminine Path

2014 workshops

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Connecting With The Shamanic Dimensions of Pregnancy

One day workshop.

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

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

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



Moonsong

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

Pregnancy – The Inner Journey

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

Committee Member Profile



Serene Johnson: Membership Coordinator

When did you join HAS?

My midwife signed me up at the end of 2012.

Who is in your family?

Me, my wonderful husband Thomas, and our three gorgeous children: Anika (5), Nathaniel (3) and Eleanor (11 months).

What did you do before children?

I was a Communications Manager at a media communications agency in Sydney. I used to go to the pub, watch Sydney FC, go to the movies, go travelling etc. I used to read books that didn't rhyme or involve pictures, and I'm pretty sure I even used to go to the toilet alone.

What have you done since children?

I've realised what life is all about and I'm happier than I've ever been. Raising three children has taught me to stop and smell the roses (and 'look at this bug mum', and 'what's this green thing mum', and 'why is this dog poo white' mum?)

Why Homebirth?

While pregnant with my third, we finally bought a house, and as they say, have home, will birth! I believe birth is a beautiful and natural process, and a loving home environment makes for a pleasant introduction into the world for the baby and greatly increases the ability for the whole family to bond.

New and Renewed Members

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

Rebecca Movessian
Jessica Curran
Anne McDonnell
Karen Gallagher
Melissa Hanson
Lana Sussman-Davis
Michelle Tarlinton
Bronwyn Hall
Lucy Gibbon
Doaa Alsaidi
Agnieszka Makscheff
Holly Lynch
Georgina Dowdon
Erica French
Victoria Crispus
Dani Ralph
Jessica Fryett-Tigges
Sarah Sheehan
Marcela Penevova
Alison Christie
Caroline Dale
Demi Harrison
Devie Rabadi
Stephanie Cox
Sarah Meisner
Helena Atessis
Angie Jacouvou
Louise Williamson
Melody Cook-Williams
Bonnie Pearl
Phiona Voyazris
Tyare Hampton
Anna Fallah
Kate Corbett
Romy Farmer Hoang
Daniella Santos
Karen Veselinovic
Meghan Phillips
Kristie Atoui
Nadine Stow
Betty Vella (midwife)
Sophia Bryskine
Rach Cracoft
Olivia Hubbard
Fiona Schonstein
Juliani Cardoso
Erin Napper
Lucy Johnston
Elizabeth Graves
Hannah Borck
Jenna King
Josephine Pignataro
Kaylan Rha
Niki Read
Megan McMillan-Wise
Heather Grima
Alison Bradford
Kylie Salha
Elise Kershaw
Ana Fabian
Shirin Town

Membership

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

Heart To Heart



Tanya Torres is an artist and writer living and working in New York City, who also spends her time in Puerto Rico and New Mexico. She was born in New York City of Puerto Rican parents and grew up in Puerto Rico. She came back to live in New York City at age 15. After completing a B.A. in Art Education at the City College of New York, she was offered a scholarship to pursue and M.F.A. (Printmaking with a minor in Painting) at the same institution. Tanya currently works from her studio in the same neighborhood where she lives and travels with her art wherever she is invited. Her work celebrates life and nature. www.tanyatorres.com

Placenta
by Tanya Torres
Oil on canvas board, 20" x 16",
2002

Freya and Aurora's Placentas



Aurore's Placenta (above)

My partner Zenia and I met in Kangaroo Valley at a yoga workshop. When our first daughter, Aurore, was three months old, we were there again for a week. One afternoon we went up a hill on the other side of the valley with my aunt Teresa and yoga friend Betty, and we planted Aurore's placenta. She was born in hospital and it was our first chance to have a look really. What an incredible organ!



Freya's Placenta (below)

Our second daughter Freya was born seven months after Aurore. As she was born at home we were shown her placenta in all its glory, before Robyn took it home to make placenta medicines. A few months later we were going up the same hill, this time with my mother, grandmother, aunt, cousins, cousins' children, friends and a dog. Everyone dug, and we buried the membranes and cord.



Bonnie lives with her partner Zenia and two children Aurora and Freya in Sydney.



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

Placenta Love and Learning

Like birthing a baby, I feel like I have learnt an awful lot through birthing my placentas and subsequently what happened to them afterwards.

I birthed my first baby at KGV Birth Centre almost 18 years ago. I had a lovely water birth 4 hours after I arrived at the Birth Centre. I had requested a physiological 3rd stage. Unfortunately the midwife seemed to think that a physiological 3rd stage is still 'managed' in the same way as active management of 3rd stage, just without the jab of syntocinon. To cut a long story short she commenced cord traction (I was not a midwife then and didn't know that this was dangerous without syntocinon) and to my horror, she pulled the umbilical cord off and left the placenta inside me. I started to haemorrhage (no doubt she had created a partial separation of the placenta) and I was rushed off to theatre. I lost 2 litres of blood, required a blood transfusion and a stay in ICU overnight. The following morning the third bag of blood I was given I had an allergic reaction to and my entire body broke out in hive like welts. I signed myself out against hospital advice (I'll add here that I could hardly stand without fainting and the staff were horrified that I wouldn't be talked in to staying, they tried all the best fear tactics, fortunately none of them worked) and I vowed to never go back.....silver linings!

My second baby was born in water at home. My midwife Maggie knew that I had some fear around third stage and haemorrhaging. After Bronte was born and there were signs of placental separation, Maggie encouraged me to wrap the cord around my own hand and very gently guide the placenta out myself. I recall lifting it out of the water in triumph, it was strangely empowering after such a botch up the first time around.

My third baby was also born at home and in water. We had moved from Sydney to the Blue Mountains. With the further distance and a fast labour, Riley was born before Maggie arrived. However, she did arrive in time for the placenta!

My fourth baby was another home water birth. Placenta encapsulation was not really a 'thing' back then and each of my babies placentas were buried in the ground under a tree. I knew this fourth baby was going to be our last and I had wanted to have some sort of ceremony and ritual with people who were close to us, something around giving this last placenta to the earth. Until I decided exactly how I wanted to do this, the placenta was going to be stored in the freezer. Of course two days after my fourth baby was born I hadn't actually told anyone that this was my plan. I remember looking out of my kitchen window into our back garden and seeing my mother in law (who was visiting from the UK) walking up the garden carrying a white plastic shopping bag that looked as though it had blood inside it. I scanned down the garden and saw my father in law with spade in hand placing the last bit of dirt on a newly planted shrub. I soon realised that in their attempt to 'help' they had buried my last baby's placenta under a shrub that they had bought, in a part of the garden that they had chosen and had not even asked, told or involved me in the process at all.....am I the only person who thinks this behaviour is bizarre????

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I had dripping boobs that looked like Pamela Andersons, day 3 had come early on day 2, 4 children under 5 to care for and my first reaction was to burst into tears. I promptly rang Maggie and cried down the phone to her as well. She always had such wise words, I don't actually recall what those words were but whatever she said did calm me down. The rational part of my brain was telling me to stop it, that they were only trying to help, and the irrational part was cursing them for ruining the ceremony that I had planned in my head. I exclaimed through gritted teeth as quietly as I could to my husband that "we would talk about it later"! They eventually left to go back to the holiday house that they were renting while in Australia and in my irrational state I made Phil go outside, with spade and dig up that bloody placenta! Poor guy managed to dig it up, wash off the dirt that was stuck all over it and put it in a container and put it in the freezer until such time as I was ready to have a ceremony.

It stayed there for a year!

On Maya's 1st birthday we did have the loveliest ceremony with our close birthy people, we planted a different shrub, in a different part of the garden, shared some words that were important to us, drank some champagne and marked the end of our reproductive years.

Jo Hunter is an independent midwife who lives in the Blue Mountains.

Are you interested in any of the following?

- Natural birth
- Breastfeeding
- Babywearing
- Co-sleeping or gentle sleep methods
- Cloth nappies or elimination communication
- Connected parenting of toddlers and older children
- Natural parenting or attachment parenting

Then here's a group for you with local meet-ups and playdates, an online support forum, recommendations for books and resources, and much more!

Sydney Attachment Parenting

Local meetups and online support
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Sydneyattachmentparenting/>
 Information and resources
www.attachmentparentingaustralia.com
 Also find us on Facebook
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Placenta, Ceremony

A breath taking view taking in the pretty coastline of Stanwell Tops, dotted with sea side villages and Wollongong in the distance, on the far oceanic horizon where the sky meets the water float cargo ships waiting patiently.

This is the vista where I have buried both my children's placentas, nestled in the earth between two large rocks at the top of a cliff. The opportunity to write this piece has opened up a memory trail, and begged the question 'At what point did I learn about the burying of the placenta?'

My oldest child and daughter is now twenty four and born in the bath at home with no attending midwife or doctor, not that it was planned that way, but that is a story for another time.....

I remember visiting my midwife in her little cottage in the inner west and her showing me a placenta, she was quite delighted to show me what she described as "The Tree of Life" of the tiny veins that patterned its surface. This was such a visceral experience made more intense by her telling me how well her tomatoes did with the unwanted placentas planted in her garden!

When my daughter was born, her placenta 'birthed' very quickly after I puther on the breast. It was caught in a salad bowl whisked just in time off the kitchen shelf. I was guided by another wise woman midwife to keep the placenta near my newly born daughter. With the dusty passage of time I am not sure how long this was until it was popped (reverently) into the freezer. But, what is still very clear, is that whenever anyone of my visitors went near to it she would start crying. It is interesting to watch her development over the years as she is very territorial of her personal creative space and has no hesitation to express her boundaries when working on a project.

During my pregnancy I had gone on regular bush walks to the Royal National Park. I felt very connected to this part of the world as it was my closest access point to a nature that was still preserved. The decision to plant her placenta off one of the walking tracks resonated perfectly for me, and after a few weeks I took a drive with my new born, her father and a defrosting placenta.

I am so grateful for the guidance of the above mentioned wise midwives who reconnected me to my own personal knowing, activated an earth based connection and restored my access to my lineage as my grandmother was a midwife and birthed 15 children of which 10 survived.

This spoke to me of the strong and powerful connection of birth, earth, the placenta and the human experience, and laid the foundation for a yet to unfold future of connecting to indigenous women's business and my work as a Ceremonial Facilitator and Women's Mystery Teacher.

Now, journeying back to a more recent past, thirteen years ago my women's group had the honour of inviting Minmia, Aboriginal senior woman and carrier of women's traditional law/lore of the Wirradjiri people, to share her teachings with us. One of her core teachings

is the importance of the birthing ceremonies. Burying of the nutrient rich placenta into the earth has been done by women pre modern birthing practices the world over. Minmia's teachings speak of ceremonies that honour the earth and all life. The unique Miwi print that each individual is born with holds the coded instructions for the life journey and that "the prints are like thin films of plastic on top of the placentas. Our journey and the instructions are already written upon these, they are sacred, and the one who guides us is Nungeena-tya" (The Earth). When the placenta is buried, it not only nourishes the earth but a connection is made to the individual, an anchoring so to speak, so that when a person passes through puberty "spills seed" a resonant connection becomes locked in to Nungeena-tya, and guides the young person through the challenges that that age brings. This process Minmia says acts as a "spiritual map" enabling resilience to move

through this life stage more responsibly, they can pick themselves up and move forward without "the spiritual lostness" that we see so much of in this modern world.

In her book *Under the Quandong Tree*, Minmia generously shares the instructions for this age old birthing ceremony, guidance about what trees, and their significance to plant for these ceremonies. And for people who resonate with this and feel they would have liked this process for themselves, she also has instructions for a Rebirthing Ceremony. When I heard about this traditional Birthing ceremony and the placenta burial I could feel a resounding YES within my core, it made sense, it felt right, gave a context to my personal experience and inspired a deepening within me.

In my present work as a counsellor and ceremonial facilitator I am often asked to



and the Human Experience

facilitate ritual for placental burial. It is an act that I find deeply reverent, the process of which, by its very nature speaks of the sacredness of life and creates within me a permanent connection to the journey of these children. I found that the honouring of the sacred beginnings of life allows for the continued honouring of all the threshold moments through the life journey, the next one being the puberty threshold. As my experience has been mainly women and girls, I have found the honouring of a girl's menarche (first period) so very validating and offers a stepping stone into the unfolding journey of womanhood. Minmia teaches that girls who enter menarche are called Wanais and there is lovely ceremony which honours this. But as this article is about the Placenta, sol will leave that thread for now. The rebirthing ceremony uses a stone and other elements that have the same effect as burying the placenta. I have found that it offers hope for a renewed engagement with life and it is a process I sometimes offer clients in my counselling work as part of healing disconnection and confusion.

The honouring of the threshold moments of the human experience allows for a more meaningful and conscious engagement with the life journey. Though we can not return to some utopian past we can draw from the teachings of our Original people as a point of guidance which inspires a renewed connection with all life and our relationship to our Earth.

This journey through the memory trails has had me revisit old photo albums looking for recorded evidence of my children's placenta burials and reaffirms my desire to return to this sacred site with its breath taking view, to reconnect them to the vista of possibilities that life has to offer and to inspire a freedom to make choices that can have far reaching impact.

Yia Alias

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Editor's Note: Yia has just purchased a beautiful piece of land in the North West outskirts of Sydney as a sacred women's site for rites of passage, placenta burial and a place to renew and restore mind body and soul.

Yia Alias is a Transpersonal Counsellor, Artist, Writer, Ceremonial Facilitator and Women's Mystery Mentor specialising in healing through ritual.

Yia is passionate about healing the earth by supporting the consciously evolving woman to make Positive, Conscious and Creative Choices.

Yia works from an old rural cottage nestled in the Hills District of Sydney.

The old fruit picking shed has been converted to a woman's sacred space which has birthed:

The Hestia Heart Flowers Women's Group. A weekly women's circle spanning 13 years.

Journey with the Seven Greek Goddesses – ancient archetypes modern perspectives, a deep exploratory journey into feminine psychology, spirituality and women's mysteries.

GirlStory - offering guidance and support for girls through the passage of puberty.

the sacRED tent - a monthly women's circle.

CosMATrika cafe – a crafting and ceremonial space which supports women's creativity and offers ceremony to honour life's threshold moments.

Her deepest learnings have been gathered from sitting in circle and bearing witness to the rich wisdom and stories of the many women she has shared space with.

Her vision is of a new global community where all life is held sacred and reverence is recognised and restored.



^The View from the Placenta Burial site of my children

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

As babies and children we watched our mothers and the women of our tribe facilitate transformation daily within community life – holding space for each other in Moonlodge, birthing their babies with instinct and knowing, honouring their Elders, attending to their rich spiritual practice and walking a way of wisdom, sovereignty and beauty in their expression of being a Woman.

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

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

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

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A Tree of life

When I gave birth two years ago here at home, there had already been long held plans of what I was going to do with the placenta. I wanted to plant it, to honour it and give it the respect it deserved by planting a tree over it. My only slight problem was that I didn't have access to dirt. Real, in the ground kind of dirt. My images of planting a tree, that would one day be metres and metres tall, providing shade and perhaps some sort of food that my grown up children could eat from, would have to be slightly deviated from.



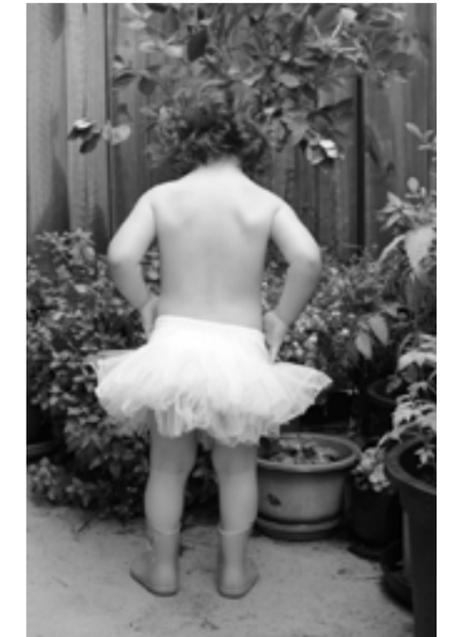
We lived in a rented apartment, with a small shared courtyard. There were no substitute backyards to choose from and I wasn't convinced that some guerrilla gardening, placenta style, in our local park would work with long-term results. So, with that in mind, we kept it frozen in an ice cream container until the right day came along. Finally the time felt right. A year after the birth, a large gardening pot was bought and filled, ready to take in the precious cargo.

At this stage I still hadn't quite decided on what plant was going to go in, but I was ready to make that first step in honouring our placenta. After some whispered personal words, and a few fascinated pokes, prods and careful watching from the little people, I covered it with soil. I then loosely covered the top of the pot with another pot, so no neighbouring dogs would try to investigate.

Now I could let the placenta gently break down before having something planted over it. One month went by and it had completely broken down; every little part of it. You would never have known what was once there. Magic, placenta pot magic. Now I just had to decide what to go over the top?

After endless researching, an Australian Cumquat was decided on. With the sign in the nursery saying "Hardy" and "Well suited to pots". This was definitely our plant. During that time I had a few strange looks from people when I mentioned what we did. However the idea of just tossing the placenta in a bin or incinerator sounds far more ridiculous and less than respectful to me. Our Australian Cumquat had been planted as well as some companion plants along side it. Another year later, almost exactly to her birthday, and our cumquat tree looks quite happy. The tree is flowering and little fruiting buds have appeared. The joy of seeing these tiny green buds is deliciously exciting. Not just for the fact that I've converted a small, once bare concrete corner courtyard, but also for the fact that I know that in that small potted garden space, our little cumquat tree is doing what that precious placenta first set out to do, bringing life. A tree of life.

Brydie Piaf is mama to three spirited small people. She has an obsession for baking sourdough, a passion for homebirth and dreams of having a big veggie patch one day. She writes at cityhippyfarmgirl.com, a simply living- city style blog and thinks working as a doula really would be the bees' knees.



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The Placenta and

Me: Six Births.

I very definitely did not want children until I met my future husband at age 22, and then suddenly I very definitely did. My interest in Women's Studies and natural health had exposed me to writers such as Jeannine Parvarti, and I loved the effortless way she described the synthesis of herb lore, women's cycles and aspects of women's business in her book *Hygeia*. As a newly pregnant 23 year old woman, I was excited to have the chance to experience some of the practices Parvarti writes of, especially in relation to the placenta.

We did plan a homebirth but changed our plans to birth in a birth centre, so that I could leave full time work and have time to 'be' with the pregnancy. I prepared for the upcoming birth the best way I knew how: by reading. I read everything I could get my hands on around birth and birth practices, especially alternative and spiritual ways of honouring the process. I planned to keep the placenta, even taking my own container to the birth centre to bring it home in.

I had read stories of women who ate the placenta, as a way of 'giving back' to themselves some of what was lost during birth, both physically and spiritually, and also that eating placenta was proven to lower the risk of excessive bleeding after birth. This information struck a deep cord with me as I adjusted for the first time to surrendering my body to the growing baby inside me, and as I contemplated surrendering more of myself in the transition to motherhood.

My first birth was a fairly long labour followed by an intense second stage where I pushed the baby out rather quickly. My birth plan included a natural delivery of the placenta, and I remember resting in the birth pool moments after birth, deeply relieved that the baby was finally here. The midwife reached her hand down to tug on the cord, but something primal in me was roused and I

warned: "Don't you dare touch that cord!"

The placenta came of its own accord once I had moved out of the pool. As the midwife examined it, so did I. It was beautiful, so juicy and healthy - the often overlooked part of birth. She placed it in our container and once she left, Sol, my husband, cut a piece off for me to eat raw. As I ate, I visualised some energy returning to me, healing me (as we had since discovered I had torn badly from pushing the baby out so fast). Once piece was enough, and we took the rest home to freeze.

My first baby came to live with my mother and us in my childhood home. When we moved to QLD two years later we buried the placenta in the veggie garden there before we left. Our son helped to bury it, and it was a poignant experience as we explained what its role had been.

My second baby was born in QLD in 2003, in a small hospital on the outskirts of Brisbane. I had no birth plan this time but directed my own birth: telling the midwife to coach me as the baby was crowning so I did not tear (I didn't), and then again telling her I would deliver the placenta naturally. There were two midwives in the room and as I gazed lovingly at my newborn son I became aware

that they were standing at the end of the bed, looking at me expectantly. It dawned on me that they were waiting for the placenta, and with that realisation, out it plopped.

Once we were left alone, Sol grabbed the sharp knife I had thoughtfully packed in my bag and cut off a piece of placenta. I don't remember viewing the placenta that time, or taking it home, though I

know we did as it sat in our freezer for two years, until we eventually moved back to Sydney. I deeply regret that I did not plant this placenta, or do anything special with it, as I didn't feel we had a place special enough for it at the time, and I was in a space personally that was a bit disconnected.

Once in Sydney again, I conceived a baby unexpectedly, at a time that was difficult in my marriage. We struggled to accept this baby. When I went for an 18 week ultrasound, there was no heartbeat. Suddenly this baby I had not really embraced instantly became a baby I desperately wanted. Because the pregnancy was almost halfway along, I had to birth this baby. I will never forget negotiating with the Ob about wanting as natural a birth as possible while tears streamed down my face. The placenta was a huge concern this time, as it and the cord would be so fragile that they could break or tear easily, causing infection to me.

In the end Sol and I birthed that baby alone in hospital, and the cord did break but the placenta came out in one piece, as I had known it would. I believe deeply in the power of visualisation and in the 24 hours between the ultrasound and the birth, had done lots of work to visualise the gentlest experience possible. After that night I never saw my third son or the placenta again: they



went away for testing, then to the memorial garden at Westmead Children's Hospital.

As soon as the would-be due date for that baby passed, we conceived again, on purpose. This pregnancy was full of joy but also lots of fear. I turned to homebirth to avoid the procedures they had insisted I would have to have in the hospital system now that I had a 'record', and for emotional support. The birth was a fast intense one this time, with an almost 11lb baby at the end of it. I know the placenta took about fifteen minutes to come, but I cannot remember it's entrance. I do remember that it was big! Again I ate one piece as a symbolic gesture to myself, and for insurance against blood loss. Placenta encapsulation was just becoming widespread and my midwife happened to have a student midwife with her from Canada who had the skills. So I did it, and despite the rigours of birthing a huge baby my recovery from this birth was super quick.

Another couple of years went by, and another baby was on the way! This pregnancy was shadowed by some difficult life circumstances, and once again we were living with my mother. At a baby shower I received a custom made placenta bowl, arranged and paid for by my friends. The birth, which took place in the deep of night, was peaceful yet a little sorrowful for me. I had wanted so deeply to be birthing in my own home. I was deeply

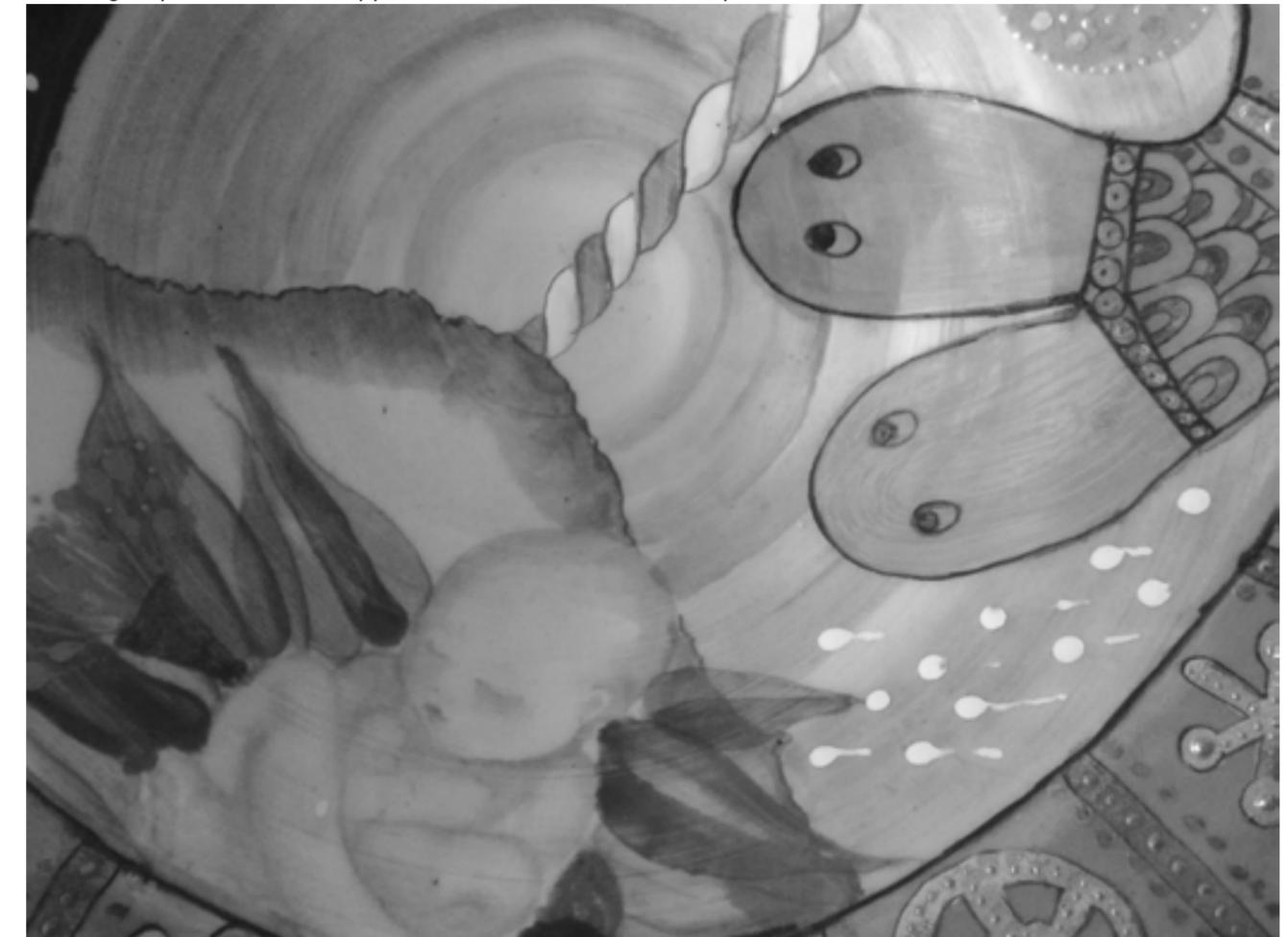
disconnected from the baby once she was born, and didn't bother to eat any placenta. Ironically this birth is the only one where we actually took photos of the placenta!

We sent the placenta home with the midwife for capsules, but suddenly the next day I was overcome by the urge to keep it and plant it instead. I quickly rang the midwife, asking if she had put it in the oven to dry out yet! She hadn't, and it was returned to us to be planted. This daughter is now almost five and the placenta is still in our freezer! I have plans to plant it at my mother's house, where she was born. I find it interesting that this was the only birth where I had not consumed the placenta in some way, and the only birth where I experienced a severe case of PPD.

My last baby was born in 2012, in our new home. The placenta came efficiently ten minutes after birth, and was duly plopped into the special placenta bowl again. This time the midwife cut off a piece for

me to eat raw, and insisted on placenta encapsulation as an added boost against another episode of PPD. Happily, my recovery from this birth was quick and joyful.

Kirilee Heartman is a mother of five children, fibre artist and craft teacher. She blogs on creativity, parenting and self growth at www.kirileeheartman.wordpress.com



Q & A: Lotus Birth?



Peaceful & glowing Mama-Baby 4 hours after birth, Lotus Birth style.

You can see the herbal powder coated placenta drying in a bamboo strainer placed in a bowl, the cord attached to the nursing baby.

Q: What is Lotus Birth exactly?

A: The practice of maintaining umbilical integrity and neonatal intactness - nonseverance of the umbilical cord - and absence of any potential portal of navel infection. The baby, cord, and placenta are treated as one unit, as they are all originate from the same cellular source (egg and sperm) and are a molecular unit. Short lotus birth (severance of the fully internally sealed and shrunken cord 4-6 hours after birth) is a common practice in traditional midwifery and indigenous culture in all regions of the earth, and full lotus birth (nonseverance, allowing the cord to dry to sinew and naturally detach) was a practice mentioned in diaries of the early American West european settlers who produced some of the hardest children known in American history... and valued everything they had. Navel integrity practice is a common protocol in the Balinese Bumi Sehat Yayasan birth centers today, and is an informed choice option for women throughout the world, regardless of where the birth occurs (birth center, home, or hospital). According to Rachana Shivam, editor of the text entitled "Lotus Birth," lotus births have occurred at several teaching hospitals in Australia, and medical professional continuing education on the subject is occurring.

This informed choice practice requests healthcare providers to follow the protocols of "Passive Management" of Third Stage Labor, and also forego invasive cord clamping. The baby is born and remains attached to its cord while the placenta is birthed. The baby's placenta-cord is kept in-situ with the baby, gently wrapped in cloth or kept in an uncovered bowl near the mother, and the cord is sometimes wrapped in silk ribbon up to the baby's belly. The cord quickly dries and shrinks in diameter, similar to sinew, and detaches often by the 3rd Postpartum day (but up to a week in certain humid indoor air conditions) leaving a perfect navel. Interestingly, extended-delayed cord clamping & severing (just waiting more than an hour after the baby's birth), results in quicker cord stump healing, with an average of only one week for detachment of the stump, which makes a big difference for diaper changing!)

Q: Why bother to question cord-cutting protocols? Why change family traditions?

A: Care providers and parents who have experienced Lotus Birth babies observe that they are **demonstrably more relaxed and peaceful babies** who do not manifest the common (and stressful to baby and mother) 1 lb. newborn weight loss and breastfeeding jaundice that is associated with the first week of life after "normal" birth's cord cutting, particularly cord cutting within an hour of birth. These observations have yet to be studied by university hospital pediatricians, though hospital lotus births have taken place in Australia. Needless to say, a beneficial impact on child and family development is what motivates the exploration of non-severance options.

These intact Lotus babies lose no energy just trying to stabilize their systems in the early postpartum hours and this shows on all levels (relaxation, bountiful healthy weight gain, core muscle strength, fine & gross motor skills, and alert observation of the world around

them). This could be called 'accelerated development' but that would be a misnomer: Lotus babies are simply undiminished by stress in a very stressful culture. Their greater capacity for relaxation, compared to nurslings who had early cord severance and placenta loss, is apparently a metabolic foundation for life, and makes teething and other developmental stages much less distressful. It could be concluded that Lotus birth gives babies lifelong coping skills.

Q: What is the connection between Lotus Birth and Yoga principles? **A:** The practice of "Non-severance" was revived by modern Yoga practitioner parents who were exploring natural birth in the 1980s and thus began to be called "Lotus Birth", connecting the esteem held in the east for the Lotus to the esteem held for the intact baby as a holy child, with a great esteem for practices that support birth without violence (See the book Birth Without Violence by French obstetrician Frederick Leboyer).

Ahimsa, (non-violence in action and thought within one's self and towards others), is a fruit of Yoga practice and a core value of the yogic lifestyle. It is from the writings and leadership by Gandhi in Ahimsa that India was freed from British colonialism, and Martin Luther King, Jr.'s civil rights inspired marches followed soon after. Approaching birth options with Ahimsa in mind is something that can create a tremendous liberation of creative energies, freeing the potential of birth & early parenting to be a peaceful experience for the human family at large.

The fully aware, intact human child carries an inner universe of potential, just like the Lotus flower whose seeds are actually plantlet embryos, containing everything needed to "Bloom and Continue to Bloom." The umbilical cord stalk that rises out of the placenta has various unique similarities with the Lotus leaf pad and stem! The fresh Lotus stem is very strong, yet flexible, like the umbilical cord. The Lotus leaf has similar lacy vein patterns to the fetal side of the placenta. And of course the Lotus seeds and root are a very potent, rejuvenative medicine in the east.

A core principle of Yogic self-mastery philosophy is that "all attachment will fall away," a lesson most modern adults spend years struggling with, but perfectly experienced in the gentle 'breaking forth' of the dried cord. Another Yogic principle is the sacredness of the first 40 Days (six weeks) postpartum as a meditative journey of mother-baby home seclusion with lots of domestic support. The postpartum time is generally taken more slowly and consciously when there has been a Lotus Birth.



Very aware lotus baby with Poppa, 2 hours postpartum, flowers adorning placenta in bowl (routine protocol).

Bumi Sehat, Bali.

Lotus Birth?

Q: How is a Lotus Birth actually practiced?

A: After the baby is born, the cord is not clamped and after the placenta is born, the baby and its cord/placenta are kept intact - i.e., the cord is not cut.

In Lotus Birth, the fact that the baby's previous months contained the constant pulsing companionship of the cord in the womb, and the protective, pulsing placenta pillow, is highly valued, along with the significantly reduced risk of infection at the tender navel site. (Infected cord stumps are sadly an unnecessary but very real danger for infants in unhygienic conditions).

When the placenta is born, it is kept at the same level as the baby to allow for full transfusion of nutrient rich blood & hormones and full expansion and function of the baby's new breathing apparatus, optimized on a deep internal level when there is no additional stress on their system. There is no rush to do anything with the placenta - it is often just wrapped in a soft cloth near the mother during the precious first hours of bonding after the completed birth.

Then, at some point the placenta is placed in a special bowl or wrapped in a ceremonial cloth (it is helpful to rinse it first, and remove clots). Powdered herbs such as Lavender, Goldenseal, Rosemary or Tulsi may applied for preservation during the drying process, and re-applied daily. Sea salt is also applied generously on both sides to aid drying and minimize scent. This small pillow and its cord are easily kept with the baby, and some women even use the Lotus pillow as an elbow prop during nursing. Some mothers prefer to leave the placenta in a special bowl, near them in the bed, with the sturdy, flexible cord mostly dried just a few hours after birth.

Q: Don't all cultures in the world clamp and cut the cord within minutes of birth?

A: Cultural anthropology is a realm rich with birth & postpartum traditions different from western medicine's immediate severance rituals. For example, the modern islanders of peaceful Bali, a beautiful culture that esteems beauty in all things, still continue the ancient practice of extended-delayed cord clamping-severance (typically 2-5 hours after the birth) and have many full Lotus Births at home and in birth centers. Several hours after the baby is born, the parents collect as much of these materials as possible, placing them in a coconut shell and burying it by the front door of the family's house. According to the Balinese, this is the holy resting place of the four brothers, and that spot is tended forever, like a shrine. Other items are placed with the placenta - items that are believed to affect the child's future so much thought is put into choosing them. The placenta is thought to be the twin of the child so items of the baby's clothing may also be included to "dress" the placenta. A few drops of the mother's breastmilk may also be placed on the placenta. The container is then wrapped and buried by the father beside the front door of their home - to the right for a boy and the left for a girl. If the family ever move, the placenta is dug up and buried at their new house. Yoga families often keep the dried silk-wrapped cord and Lotus-pillow in the vicinity of the home the first six weeks before burying it, being aware of the subtle impact of gratitude & honor the first 40 Days (the placenta was called "grandmother" in many native tribes). In fact, in Chinese Medicine culture, the placenta is eventually dried, powdered, and encapsulated - to be taken by the recovering mother, as it has potent hormones which are now known by even by western science to be beneficial and specific to that particular woman's metabolism.

Q: I've seen cats and horses give birth freely and they just eat their placentas like all mammals. Isn't it unnatural for a human mammal to have a Lotus Birth?

A: Actually not all mammals sever the cord and eat or bury the placenta! In fact, the mammals considered to be of the highest animal intelligence, the primate chimpanzees (who are also monogamous and socially supportive of each other), when in their native wild habitat, generally do not sever the cord, as reported by primatologists in the 1970s. The same goes for many different kinds of monkeys. The new mothers sit with the baby-placenta in their arms when they slowly move around a little in their retreat spot in the first day or two after the birth, and when the cord then detaches, the cord & placenta are left on the earth and become meat for the forest floor, and the new family swings from the trees!



Moments with the amazing intact newborn,

Short Lotus Birth at clinical birth center, Austin, 2007.

Q: Why would a healthcare provider find Lotus Birth or delayed non-severance appealing?

A: The benefits of this practice are not explored in western medical school, lost in the usual divide between Obstetrics and Pediatrics, and the value system of disposable medicine. All physicians in North America and the E.U. are only trained to actively manage third stage, and it is often through client requests that they begin to practice more passively. Some physicians, such as Christiane Northrup MD and Sarah Buckley MD, upon having had their own natural birth and bonding experiences, have had their intuitions confirmed and their obstetrical understanding transformed, and written wonderful educational books on women's health wisdom. Though more medical midwives are practicing "extended-delayed cord severance", and more doulas are seeking to facilitate gentler birth practices, questioning the very practice of severance itself is new for them as well. However, non-severance, once witnessed in an informed, beautiful postpartum scenario, provokes further inquiry, and can inspire paradigm shifts in care provider skills set. As Gloria LeMay has pointed out, Non-severance causes care providers to slow down and honor the sanctity of the family unity, rather than divert the group energy into separation rituals.

Q: How does Non-severance protect newborn health?

A: It ensures that an average of 100mL of precious red blood cells will transfer gently to the baby at its most critical time of need, to contribute towards the amazing exponential brain development of the first year, and not be disposed of or harvested due to adult well-intentioned mistrust of the infant's physiological integrity. Emotional health of the newborn and family is facilitated by focusing on the phenomenal baby as a whole, with no attention diverted away through adult traditions of separation. Rather than focus on cutting the cord, fathers are able to support an uninterrupted, quality bonding with the child who is still transitioning from 9 months of gestation and gain trust in the organic rhythms of their child. For full nonseverance families, the early days postpartum are spent simply resting and grounding, as the mother & father and Lotus babe experience the fullness of relationship, secluded and secure at home, in fact rarely leaving the bedroom. Cord severance is a primarily a cosmetic surgery to suit adult convenience out of habit and often ignorance, and is rarely medically necessary (exceptions being placenta accreta or a significantly compromised mother or baby). Though this ritual has been handed over to fathers or birth partners to carry out amidst much hoopla, it is still an unconscious ritual that disrupts the primal family bonding focus and the unity principle of natural design. Even babies born via cesarean, or babies who may have special needs, can be cared for with the cord & placenta intact for an extended time in many instances, provided that parents find an open-minded OB & Neonatologist who is willing to explore nonseverance protocols. Non-severance can support the adaptation of cesarean babies, as well as further infant massage. Our babies basically have Stone Age needs for undisturbed bonding the first hour or more after birth.



Lotus baby Isaiah, in sync with his cord in a way common to lotus babies. Just before natural detachment, day 3 postpartum.

the size of a lotus leaf! Some mothers prepare special cloth for their Lotus Birth, choosing something that has special meaning to them, like a remnant from a favorite garment, an altar cloth, a family heirloom baby blanket, or even a husband's soft flannel shirt! Some people make part of a baby shower or blessing ceremony about decorating and blessing the Lotus cloth. Others may just use a handy cloth diaper or cotton pillowcase. Wrapping the placenta can be done however you like, knotting or pinning the cloth. Well-informed parents can intuitively manage to do this themselves, or their experienced doula or midwife can help. The post-birth cord is a slippery, silvery ribbon, 2-3 feet long. It can be wrapped, or not. What works well for wrapping the cord is lightweight silk or satin ribbon (pre-washed before use). The cover ribbon is secured to the Lotus cloth by incorporating it under the heavy placenta before wrapping, or by attaching it outside the packet by knotting it onto the Lotus wrap. Near the navel, the ribbon is simply finished with an easy wrap knot done by the mother. The wrapped placenta and cord look like a little pillow with a decorative string to the baby. In the two days after the birth, the wrapped cord can conveniently be slung up over the baby's shoulder, where newborns are used to it being, and will gracefully wrap their little arms around it as they did in the womb.

Q: What does the placenta look like at birth?

A: There's nothing else like it. You may have the false impression that it looks like a smooth slab of liver, but it's quite different. It's extremely complex - so much so that native people believed it explained the Tree of Life principle of the whole world. Indeed, the way the umbilical cord rises out of the roots of arteries and veins on one side, like a tree trunk, is quite remarkable. Plus, each baby's placenta has a distinct calibration of hormones and proteins that is perfectly suited to that particular mother-baby's needs. The various veils of clear membranes lend it an other-worldly beauty. **Q:** What if a baby's cord is considered "short" during a natural birth? What happens while waiting for the placenta to be born, during the important time of keeping baby at the breast? **A:** All mothers during the Third Stage of labor should be reminded by their partner or care providers to continue focusing on completing the birth of the placenta - and in a way, a "short" cord enhances that focus! It is not necessary for the baby to actually be on the nipple in the first 30 minutes after birth - mothers can hold their babies skin-to-skin lower on the bare bosom or belly, stroking them and talking to them while focusing with the contractions that birth the placenta.

The key practices are "skin-to-skin" touching and physiological orchestration (well-documented in recent medical journals) and maternal "focus" on the placenta to facilitate passive Third Stage. Though many midwives are facilitators of the ancient practice of "skin-to-skin" mother-baby contact, just as many are not, and may have been trained to swaddle the baby in cloth. This is an informed-choice issue for parents, and important to discuss in detail with your care provider before the birth. Nipple stimulation to induce Third Stage contractions can be an additional support with a baby at the breast, however, perinatal professionals who are experienced with drug-free babies know that they often do not fully latch-on or suckle for at least 10-15 minutes or longer after being born, as they go through their own post-birth adaptation and are still "landing." In such a case, if nipple stimulation to reduce bleeding is desired, a woman's partner or caregiver can do it manually, while the mother focuses on touching her baby and experiencing the birth of the placenta.

Q: Can I bathe my baby with the cord and placenta still attached?

A: Yes. Bathe your baby as you normally would, simply keep the placenta nearby. It is best to have somebody hold the placenta as you bathe your baby. It's okay if the cord gets wet, it can be patted dry and will thoroughly be dry again soon.

Q: Leaving the cord intact means that cord blood banking is not an option, isn't that irresponsible in this day and age, for those who can afford this expense?

A: At first glance, the notion of saving some cord blood after delaying cord severance sounds smart, and technologically astute - appealing to those who are planning a scheduled cesarean as well as parents who wish to delay any medical intervention as long as possible. However, further investigation reveals much for discerning parents-to-be to be concerned about. 'Banking' cord blood involves immediate, very early cord clamping to take a significant amount of blood (100mL on average) from the newborn who is greatly in need of it at that exact time. Cord blood banks receive from 80 ml to 180 ml of blood on the average amount of blood taken for CBC harvesting. The blood bank interests do acknowledge more blood is received if the cord is

From a Pre & Perinatal Psychology perspective, early cord severance is not something we are hardwired to cope with, and indeed, early cord severance elevates infant adrenaline levels. Early cord severance was prehistorically something probably only practiced in dire circumstances of maternal death! Virtually all undrugged babies cry out when their cords are cut in the early postpartum time.

Q: What is the sacredness associated with Lotus Birth?

A: The word 'sacred' comes from the Latin 'sacrare' - to regard with reverence, to secure against violation, to be entitled to respect by association with divine things, holy. There are many correlations between Lotus and Sacred Birth in the mythology, poetry, language, and art of Asia. In Tibetan and Zen Buddhism, the name "Lotus-Birth" was what described spiritual teachers such as Guatama-Buddha and Padmasambhava (Lien-hua Sen), emphasizing their entering the world as a divine child. Throughout the world, non-severance of the cord has been practiced by various peoples in various situations, and it could easily have been the way the Christ child was welcomed: why interfere with a radiant mother & child? Why introduce possible risk of infection at the navel site? Why even think of separation rituals when the recovering mother and her nursing just need to bond and rest the first few days after the birth. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, there is a reference to non-cutting of the navel in the book of the prophet Ezekiel, who was quite a prophet.

Q: What is the current obstetrical & paramedic practice for late 2nd stage labor (baby's emergence through the birth passage) and 3rd stage labor (birth of the placenta - often within 30 minutes after the baby's birth)?

A: World Health Organization protocols and all modern global obstetricians, nurse-midwives, and medics are taught "active management" of this phase of birth, even in drug-free, totally natural, healthy births that have had no previous medical interference. This protocol, which began when medicated hospital births became the norm in the 1950s, is to inject oxytocic drugs (such as methergine) in the mother's thigh soon after the head is born (to increase contractions), then clamp the cord within 1-5 minutes of the baby's birth if not immediately, and then pull out the placenta by tugging on the cord rather than passively support the healthy mother-baby innate and spontaneous process of "Third Stage" labor. The "active management" of this part of labor actually increases stress rather than reduces it (all non-drugged babies cry when the cord is severed, even in more passively managed midwifery births) and physiologically compromises the baby in a very sensitive time of transition of the "primal-adaptive" period along with introducing further risk of uterine prolapse or retained placenta in the mother.

Q: What does the wrapped Lotus Birth placenta and cord look like after the Lotus Birth has been completed?

A: The placenta is a hearty (1-2 pounds right after birth), complex, and dense cake which wraps up into a small packet about 7 x 7 - 20 | BIRTHINGS MAGAZINE 122

clamped "quickly", meaning in 30-seconds, or less. Early cord clamping protocols are part of the ACOG's 'active management' practices of anesthetized delivery popularized in the 1950s and continuing to dictate medical training today. These practices are heavily criticized by many maternal & child health reformers, including physician-authors such as Christiane Northrup MD, Michel Odent MD and Sarah Buckley MD, as well as the Boston Women's Health Collective. Neonatal physiology is innately magnificent: is not uncommon for a drugged baby's cord to pulsate, if given the chance, up to 20 minutes or a child recovering from a compressed cord to pulsate that long. In the very least, a normal pulsation can be 5 minutes and longer if in a warm waterbirth tub. The amount of blood deprived the newborn child by early cord clamping can be understood by the fact that a 9- pound baby only creates 10 ounces of blood (300 ml). Therefore 180 ml is actually more than half this baby's blood supply and taking half of one's blood supply will weaken any child, or any adult that loses blood. And child advocates point out that the neonate has a right to their own blood when they most need it: in the vulnerable hours and days of the first 4-6 weeks of neonatal life, from which we measure infant mortality. Many well-intentioned parents-to-be, misled by aggressive banking business marketing, do not realize that the blood 'harvesting' creates an extreme systemic deprivation for their little one, as well as the shock and trauma that goes with it - because at birth, a child is considered anemic if deprived of even 20 to 50 percent of blood, and only 20 percent blood loss can cause shock. The U.N places the United States as 29th best in infant mortality, with 28 other nations that do better. Anemia is the reason our babies are so sickly, this can last until they are school age, which can result in developmental delays. Other disorders associated with low blood volume are autism, cancers, brain tumors, leukemias, liver, kidney, holes in the heart, hormone deficiencies, imbalance of enzymes...all are associated with blood deprivation at the child's birth. Cord blood banking is a new NASDAQ business niche, aggressively marketing to parents, healthcare providers, and hospitals. The cord blood banking business relies on savvy, if not insidious PR strategies which prey upon our shared social value to protect a newborn's longterm health. This PR includes dramatic ad placements in online pregnancy magazines, fake 'articles' which cut and paste their ad verbage with cord cutting options information (to project the illusion that cord blood harvesting is a healthy part of the care spectrum), plaintive Google banner ads on senior citizen (i.e., grandparents) online directories, and brochure placement deals for OB/GYN practices to entice naive parents-to-be to trust the cord blood bank business for their child's wellbeing. Parents are often told "the cord blood is going to be discarded anyway by the hospital, so why not store it for possible needs of the child." However parents are not informed that no clamping or cutting the cord is necessary at all.

Q: How can I prepare for Non-Severance in a planned or unexpected hospital birth?

A: You have the legal right to make informed choices at all junctures, politely refusing non-urgent institutional protocols that are against your beliefs by signing papers that document that choice. Citing "religious reasons" is often a very helpful way to garner attention and even compassion from staff without getting into protocol debates. Umbilical non-severance is something to discuss



The amazing placenta & the many roots of the umbilical cord - 3 hours after the birth.

Rinsed in warm water at bathroom sink, by assistant. 5 minutes at sink, then back to the babymoon bed!



beforehand with your care providers. It is also important that you clearly state your wishes on any "Birth Intentions" paperwork.

Q: What happens if my baby's cord is around their neck at birth?

A: As the average cord is 2-3 feet long, it is quite normal for it to be loosely wrapped around the neck, once or twice - in at least third of babies! In the vast majority of healthy women this is not a problem. The 'give' in the loose cord is guarded by the attendant or the slippery cord is deftly flicked out and over the baby's head by the attendant's quick hand, and sometimes mothers do this themselves in freebirth scenarios. (In distressed/dissociated mother-babies or in other cases of medicated labor/immobility pathology, the cord may be tight and compressed by shoulder dystocia requiring quick hand maneuvers on the part of the attendant and perinatal cord clamping and cutting before the baby's body is fully born. However, this is not the case in well-prepared mothers who have emotionally supported births).

Mary Ceallaigh B.A. Human Development, Certified Yoga Teacher Midwifery Consultant Mary's consulting work is the fruit of her own path of personal and professional experiences, including a long apprenticeship with midwife Jeannine Parvati, mother of the modern yogini-midwife lineage. This reclaimed tradition cultivates reverence for the natural feminine embodiment of the Life Cycle, and its biodynamic relation to the earth and cosmos. After her Grandmother Treva (the daughter of a midwife) introduced her to the medicine of aloe vera over twenty years ago, Mary continued to study healing foods, herbs, and spices as allies for restoring harmony and health to her own cycle, psyche, and body. Her personal path has been one of compassionately attuning to the body's symptoms & sensations, as a reverent practice that restores balance on all levels - rather than automatic suppression or surgical "curing" of the body's multifarious, ever-changing, and unique expressions of inner realities and environmental impacts. Mary's Yoga study began with her first asana class in 1988, which soon expanded into studying ayurveda for women, and the principles of Shakti. She has been teaching as a certified yoga teacher since 2003. A daily Yoga & Vipassana meditation practitioner, Mary is also an avid Ving Tsun kung fu student. Previously, she studied Tai Chi & Chi Gong from 1997-1999 with Chou Li at the Pacific-Asian Museum Garden in Pasadena, California. Mary attended her first birth in 1989 and later obtained a BA in Human Development from Pacific Oaks College, a Quaker-founded school and leader in the study of social & political contexts of human development and emergent learning.

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For centuries the placenta has received ceremonial handling by many cultures around the world. In western medicine the human placenta is usually regarded as nothing more than human waste.

Revered for its symbolism of life, spirit and individuality, it is often buried outside. Some people even promote cooking and eating it as a celebration of birth and a source of rich nutrients.

Here are some cultural traditions from the different continents:

Africa

The Ibo of Nigeria and Ghana treat the placenta as the dead twin of the live child and give it full burial rites. In many African cultures, "zan boku" means "the place where the placenta is buried," and bury the placenta under a tree.

The Kikuyu of Kenya place it in an uncultivated field and cover it with grains and grasses, while other cultures bury it in the dirt floor of the family's house.

Some African nations swaddle the placenta in blankets and bury it beneath a tree as a tree symbolizes ongoing life.

In Mali, it is thought that the placenta can affect the baby's mood or even make the baby ill. The placenta is washed, dried, placed in a basket and buried by the father.

A belief held by many Arabs is the future fertility of a woman is connected to the disposition of the placenta. Should something unpleasant happen to it the woman might be rendered sterile.

Asia

In some cultures such as Vietnam and China the placenta is viewed as a life-giving force. Therefore, it is dried and added to certain placenta recipes in order to increase a person's energy and vitality.

In Indonesia, the placenta is seen as the baby's twin or elder sibling and is perceived as the baby's guardian throughout life. It is the father's responsibility to clean, wrap, and bury the placenta on the day of the birth.

Filipina mothers are known to bury the placenta with books, in hopes of a smart child.

In Korea the placenta is often burned and the ashes kept. During periods of illness the ash powder is given in a liquid to help heal the child.

Among the Hmong culture, the word for placenta can be translated as "jacket," as it's considered an infant's first and finest clothing. The Hmong bury the placenta outside as they believe that after death, the soul must journey back through the past until it reaches the burial place of the placenta and await rebirth.

In Cambodia, the placenta is carefully wrapped in a banana tree leaf, placed beside the newborn baby for three days and then buried.

In Thai culture the placenta is often salted and placed in an earthen jar. On a day deemed auspicious for burying this clay pot, a site is prepared and the placenta is laid to rest. The jar is buried under a tree that corresponds to the symbol of the Asian year of the child's birth and depending on what month the child was born dictates which bearing the pot faces.

Europe

The indigenous Bolivian Aymara and Quecha people believe the placenta has its own spirit. It is to be washed and buried by the husband in a secret and shady place. If this ritual is not performed correctly, they believe, the mother or baby may become very sick or even die.

The commercial use of "placenta extract" found in some cosmetics, such as facial cream, is sold in France. In 1994, Britain banned the practice of collecting placentas in hospitals from unsuspecting mothers, after it was learned that 360 tons of it were annually being bought and shipped by French pharmaceutical firms. They used it to make a protein, albumin, for burns and to make enzymes to treat rare genetic disorders.

Placenta Traditions from Around the World

North America

For Navajo Indians, it is customary to bury a child's placenta within the sacred four corners of the tribe's reservation as a binder to ancestral land and people. The Navajos also bury objects with it to signify the profession they hope the child will pursue.

In Hawaii the placenta is brought home and washed, then buried following a religious ritual with a tree planted on it. It is believed this binds the child to his or her homeland. The "iewe" (placenta) of the newborn child is sacred and must be handled in a sacred manner in order to provide for the physical health of the child.

South America

In some regions of South America the placenta is burned after birth to neutralize it and planted in the ground to protect it from evil spirits.

Oceania

New Zealand Maori gift the Placenta or Whenua as a gift to Papa Tua Nuku or Mother Earth. In Maori, the word for land and placenta are the same - whenua, and illustrates the connection between them and it is usually planted with a tree on family land.

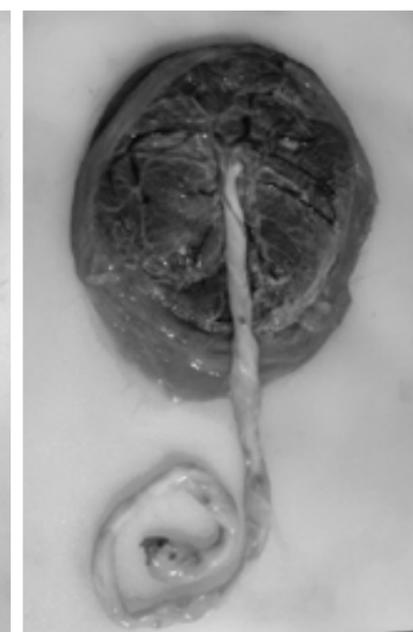
Some Aboriginal tribes bury the placenta either under the tree where they birthed or under an ant pit for the green ants. Many believe that when the green ants eat the placenta no more babies will come or at least not for a while.

In Samoa the placenta must be totally burned or buried so it will not be found by evil spirits. Burying or burning it at home also ensures the child will remain close to home as it moves through life. If buried under a fruit tree, the placenta provides nutrition for the tree that in turn will provide years of nutrition for the child.

Article by **Liesje and Michelle from 'Birth to Earth'**: At Birth to Earth, we are passionate about our earth and want you to be too. As parents to 7 children between us we believe that the Placenta which has ensure the wellbeing of your child in utero should be honored and celebrated by planting it under a tree. We hope that this will connect our children to nature and give them a greater respect for Mother Earth. The Birth to Earth Placenta Planting Pack is the simple, no mess, no fuss way of taking home your placenta to plant. Packed at birth, the capsule goes directly from your freezer into the ground, all components breaking down to a natural humus with no toxic residue.

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Liesje and Michelle have generously donated two Placenta Planting Kits, valued at \$39.99 each. The first two people to email info@homebirthsydney.org.au will be the lucky recipients! www.birthtoearth.com



[top left photo by Erika Elliott. The rest by Virginia Maddock]

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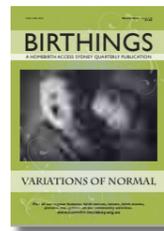
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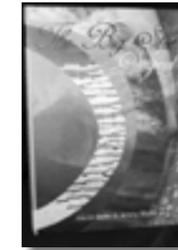
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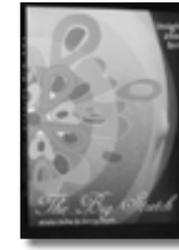
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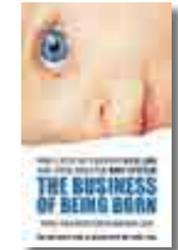
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Hathor the Cow Goddess... "Placenta"

Book Review:



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

Under the Quandong Tree by Minmia.

Minmia is an Aboriginal Elder who until recently was still conducting traditional ceremonies for women. Her book, published in 2007, retains her no-nonsense style of communicating on the different stages of life as seen from her perspective. She writes of 'The Dreaming' (energetic pathways over the land) and 'Songlines' (what we inherit from generations past) and how they manifest energetically and physically, affecting an individual's life. Also outlined are the main themes that we work through at different stages of life. Her explanations of Aboriginal culture and beliefs around gender and relationships are fascinating and thought provoking.

Minmia has much to say about birth and the placenta. She writes how the placenta is a deeply significant aspect of a baby's life – how the exchange of blood in the first few minutes of life is really an exchange of vital information. According to Minmia, the placenta should be buried cord down, in an act of giving the blueprint for a child's life to the earth. When the child reaches puberty, the earth recognises his or her essence and can take part in guiding the child in their life (keeping them 'grounded').

She asks us to notice the temperaments of homebirthed children whose placentas are buried, against those whose placentas are disposed of in hospital. She believes that the former are more calm and focused in life, whereas the latter are somehow 'lost' and without direction or connection to the land.

There are rebirthing ceremonies that seek to remedy this, and instructions for these are included. Placenta planting ceremonies are also outlined, including a description of different Australian trees and their qualities: choosing a tree to be planted over the placenta is a deeply symbolic act.

What I loved the most from this book, apart from Minmia's very unique style of communicating, was the sense of how the earth and landscape are so intrinsically a part of the journey of life, and indeed a part of us.

www.minmia.com.au

Kirilee Heartman is a mother of five children, fibre artist and blogger at www.kirileeheartman.wordpress.com.



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Birthing Our Rainbow Baby, Willow Hope:

Just after Christmas, 2012, we found out we were given the best Christmas gift we could have wished for - we were pregnant! Sadly, we had lost a baby earlier in the year and, while our miscarriage had taken the innocence out of pregnancy for us, it had also led us to homebirth and the perfect midwife for our family.

Despite on and off spotting, the diagnosis of a subchorionic hematoma at nine weeks and a very anxious mum-to-be, our pregnancy was a blissful, enjoyable and extremely exciting experience. I had a really easy and, generally, complaint free pregnancy which I attribute to regular visits with a chiropractor, herbalist and acupuncturist, as well as biweekly yoga and a fantastic support system.

At 35+5 weeks pregnant, after swimming 2km on my first day of maternity leave, I began feeling ill and started getting tightenings every 10 minutes. These continued until 36 weeks, when the tightenings became more regular and frequent. I lost my mucous plug and I noticed our baby had changed position. I went to acupuncture to try to 'keep baby in', relaxed and spent as much time horizontal as possible. While my husband washed baby clothes, I wrote out my birth plan and watched birth videos (bliss!).

At 36+3 weeks I woke at 2am to a gush of bright red, dripping blood and clots. I noticed I couldn't feel our baby moving, rang my midwife who encouraged me to listen to my body and intuition and then decided we should head to hospital. The drive into hospital felt like forever. I was staying horizontal while trying to get our baby to move and trying not to panic.

By 3am a CTG monitor confirmed that baby was still okay. What a relief! But our baby really hated that monitor! Just as I was taking the monitor off (yes, I'm one of 'those difficult patients') the OB walked in. Within a minute of beginning an ultrasound the OB turned very pale, his hands began shaking and he explained that the placenta was coming away to which I asked "So, I'm having a placental abruption?".

He seemed shocked I knew what that was but nevertheless said yes, that my placenta



had come away and was sitting between my cervix and the baby's head, that it could possibly be vasa previa and that we needed to get baby out ASAP. He also made sure to say "If you'd tried to have this baby at home your baby, and possibly you, would be dead" (thanks buddy... this is why I avoided the hospital in the first place!).

While the midwife prepped me for surgery (those stupid stockings...) the OB arranged for an anaesthetist and four (four!?) other OBs to come in. I rang my midwife who was on her way, rang my mum and then explained to the midwife what we wanted for our baby (thank goodness I'd revised my birth plan) before signing the consent forms.

I then cried: with relief that the baby was okay, fear that everything might not be, and for the birth we'd lost, the birth I couldn't give my baby, my husband or myself. I'd looked forward to labour and birth for my entire pregnancy but our dream birth was ripped away very quickly. I felt like we were trapped in a bit of a whirlwind.

By the time we were wheeled into theatre my tightenings were one and a half minutes

apart and around 40 seconds long. My body knew that this baby had to be born, and quickly! My husband met me in theatre all gowned up (although his feet didn't fit in the shoe covers, haha) and I introduced myself to the parade of people that would witness our daughter's birth: four OBs, an anaesthetist, a student OB, two nurses and a midwife.

I was given a spinal while being instructed to hug a nurse and I used my birth breathing which surprisingly worked a treat! I then lay on the table with my husband holding my hand while I questioned the anaesthetist about every little thing that I felt and he talked me through the procedure. My husband reflects on this time as quite bizarre, the OBs were having an everyday discussion yet they were performing an operation. It made it clear just how 'normal' this surgery was in their eyes. At some stage during the operation the student OB fainted, which spurred a discussion about how all the other OBs carried snakes (the lolly kind) in their car to eat during early morning starts.

I'd asked to be able to see my baby born. This wish the theatre staff wouldn't allow, but I felt when my baby was taken from my body and I told my husband "Hope's just been born" (Hope was our baby's nickname). They held our baby girl over the screen while cutting her cord, she cried, my husband exclaimed "It's a little girl!" to which I replied "I know, I've been telling you that for the last eight months!". They weighed and measured her (despite the midwife agreeing to IMMEDIATE skin-to-skin), wrapped her in a blanket, handed her to my husband and he brought her to me.

I was shaking and got frustrated that I couldn't stop the shaking to unwrap my baby. I said to my husband "Get that blanket off, get her on my skin!" and he quickly did that while I met my baby girl, touched her gorgeous nose, told her through tears that it was okay, that she was the most perfect thing I'd ever seen and I'd never let her go again.

I told my husband she looked like a 'Willow', slender (2.72kg and 51cm long), resilient (survived an abruption and subchorionic haematoma), flexible (a

A Story of Placental Abruption



less than ideal birth taken in her stride, determined (you should see her fight sleep!) and healing (a rainbow baby).

Time went really quickly from here. I remember asking to save my placenta (cue ice cream container), being transferred to another bed for recovery, and then I remember our beautiful midwife hammering on the doors of recovery to be let in, she looked as worried as I had felt. I was so thankful she was here! I felt safe with my husband's support, but I felt calm once our midwife arrived.

We gave Willow a chance to do the breast crawl in recovery. She had difficulty latching but was surprisingly alert for what she'd just been through, and I tried to stop shaking with my husband and midwife continually saying "Breathe!", (I forgot what they'd said as soon as I looked at our beautiful baby).

We were transferred into our own room which we later found out was used for prisoners and quarantine, complete with bullet proof glass, observation area, separate air conditioning, bars on the windows and an AWFUL shower head with no hose.

I spent the first few hours debriefing with our midwife and doula, gazing at and feeding our gorgeous baby, letting family members know she'd arrived, declining pain medication, negotiating for my husband to stay overnight (success!) and asking that the awful catheter be removed (please).

The hospital experience to this point was better than I expected, but hospital policy apparently dictated that our 'premature' baby needed to have her blood sugar levels and temperature measured every three hours and that every feed needed to be supervised by a midwife. I was new to being a mum, let alone to breastfeeding, but I knew this wasn't what my baby or I needed!

After flushing numerous cups (no bottles here, thanks!) of formula down the toilet I felt we needed to find a better way, so when my doula offered donor breastmilk I jumped and thought "Why didn't I think of that!?!". Thanks to two generous

mummas, Willow had breast milk from that point onwards, and for that I am so grateful.

After three days in hospital we really wanted to go home! I knew that the hospital environment wasn't the right place to encourage my milk supply which, ironically, was the only reason I was still there. I discharged myself against the doctor's advice and within two minutes of walking in the door at home my top was saturated!

As we'd agreed to return for 'weigh-in' in three days we knew the pressure was on to get Willow's weight up. We spoke with our midwife and a lactation consultant and after discovering that a nipple shield helped Willow to feed we stuck with that. After three days Willow had gained 40g and we were finally free of the system! Unfortunately we still haven't ditched the nipple shield, but it's a small price to pay for a beautifully healthy and successful (in my eyes) breastfeeding relationship, journey and baby.

As this is the placenta love issue I guess I should say something about my placenta. At the time my abruption certainly didn't foster a love for my placenta, I viewed it as weak, 'failed' and the reason we lost our homebirth. In hindsight I can see that our

placenta was strong; it helped resorb a subchorionic hematoma, it grew our baby for as long as it could, it supported our baby through an abruption, it literally hung in there. And once it was finished with all that it was encapsulated and nurtured both my baby and I, helping my milk come in quickly, helping me heal, increasing my energy, improving my mood, alleviating any pain I had and helping me avoid the baby blues and postpartum depression. My placenta was amazing and I most certainly am grateful (and surprised) for all it provided us with.

Despite Willow being subjected to a scalding hot blanket, blood sugar level testing, formula, having a sticky tag put on her back and being born via caesarean, and despite me being subjected to a freezing cold shower, several arguments regarding donor milk, pressure to use formula and put my baby in a plastic tub, strange looks when I kept my placenta and feeling that I was an awful patient (but a pretty good mum), I think we dealt with the hospital system surprisingly well. We wouldn't have managed this without our incredible midwife or doula.

Our doula, Jacquie Harsh, supported our wishes, went head-to-head with the midwives, delivered meals and underpants, made lactation cookies and offered advice, support, and friendship. But most importantly of all she introduced us to homebirth for which we are exceptionally thankful. In the spirit of international midwife day, which it is as I am writing this, I have to say we are eternally grateful and humbled by our beautiful midwife, Jo Hunter. You gave us the care, support and love we needed to believe in ourselves and our baby, to make the right decisions for our family, to become more knowledgeable, intuitive, loving and kind parents and, funnily enough, the nudge to write our birth story. We treasured our time with you and we hope to share a gorgeous birth with you both in the future.

Aimee Sing is a 25 year old doctoral student and mum, living with her loving, supportive husband and beautiful daughter in the Blue Mountains. She is passionate about informed decision making and consent, natural birth, conscious parenting and the environment.





My HBA3C Story

I had a healthy pregnancy, and kept busy working as an Endorsed Enrolled Nurse, attending UNI, being a mum to three boys, being a wife, mustering cattle, shooting and camping until I was full term. I started to become very anxious as my due date came and went, I felt like I was never going to have this baby, the numerous phone calls and comments on a daily basis did not help. At 40+3 I had a big D&M with my doula, she encouraged me to let go of the anxieties, give it up to God, and rest in faith that my body will work! I had acupuncture and spent time praying and calming myself. The next day I had my weekly visit with Lisa, I expressed my

fears associated with not going into labour. We had a big chat and made a game plan, I chose to have an ultrasound at 40+10 and if that was all clear then at 40+15 I would present at JHH for balloon catheter induction. I felt so at ease after that! No matter what happened I knew that I would meet our baby by Monday the 17th.

I asked Lisa for a stretch and sweep, and found my cervix was 50% effaced and about 1cm dilated. I was so happy! For the next two mornings I would wake early with cramping, but it would all go away by 9am. On Sunday however, it felt a bit different and I messaged Lisa and Emma. They encouraged me to not give the contractions more effort than the needed, to go about my day as normal. So off we went to church then lunch, all the while having cramps/tightenings every 6-15min. I had a nap with our youngest son at about 2.30pm and woke up to everything all gone. Emma said she had a feeling it would all ramp up again that night, but I was doubtful.

Sure enough by dinner the contractions were coming every 5 minutes! I kept in contact with Lisa and Emma but didn't accept it was labour yet. By chance a close friend dropped by at dinner time to drop over some shopping for bub, and stayed to give a hand with the kids. At 8pm Emma said she was coming up, with a 3hour dive I was worried it would be for nothing, but by 9pm I was ready for the girls to be here! I was so thankful Ang was still around, she was a wonderful support, as the kids were very unsettled and hubby needed to spend some time settling them. Ang set up my room with my birthing candles and labour music and the birth pool went up at 10, it was wonderful to get in. The Contractions were coming very close together and only allowing me to rest for about 30sec-1min. All the pain was in my



My story starts nine years ago when I was only 20 years old: I was 39 weeks pregnant and had been having regular Braxton Hicks contractions. My husband (Tim) and I went in for our weekly check up with our private OB, as we were going through a private hospital. He expressed grave concerns of my ability to birth naturally as bub was posterior and was measuring "big" at an estimated 4kg. My husband and I were very shaken and agreed to an elective caesarean for 6am the next morning.

Our first son Eadon was a healthy 3755g. But I had an adverse reaction from the morphine and barely remember the first 24hours of his life. I struggled with my recovery, mainly emotionally and mentally.

Close to 5 years later after fertility treatment and IVF we were getting ready for the arrival of our 2nd son. I wanted a VBAC and attended a Calmbirth course and changed Ob's, but after dislocating my ankle at six months pregnant and developing pitting oedema, I didn't remain firm in my choices and after several false labour incidents where I naively rushed to hospital, I agreed to my second caesarean. It was a positive birth and I had skin to skin in theatre and breastfed in recovery. Jaxon was a healthy 4165g.

Only a short five months later we fell pregnant with our 3rd son, although we wouldn't know for another three months. I was struggling with postnatal depression and was seeing a councillor weekly, and I felt defeated and had no idea I had choices available to me. My Ob conveyed his grave concerns for mine and baby's safety and I agreed to have a scheduled caesarean at 37 weeks gestation. I had to have a series of steroid injections to ensure bub's lungs were developed. The operation was by far the worst experience of my life: I thought I was going to die, as a result of the high placement of the spinal block I lost feeling from my cheeks down. Logan was 3820g. My post natal depression continued but as I was breastfeeding I opted for counselling instead of medication.

Over the next 2 years I lost 35kgs and found myself in a really positive place. My husband and I found ourselves getting the clucky bug. However there was no way I was going to actively choose to have a scheduled caesarean again. Before I started trying to conceive I started researching VBA3C, and through findadoula.com.au I found my doula, Emma. Emma was an amazing support and wealth of knowledge. I started to feel more empowered. After a negative appointment with our Ob, I contacted an alternative Ob, and he was very positive. As I lived over three hours' drive from him he recommended I look into hiring an independent midwife. I emailed Lisa, and as it turned out Emma and Lisa often work alongside one-another. The more I researched the more the idea of homebirth played on my mind, I told Lisa and Emma about this and they were supportive, positive and comforting!



some manoeuvring off bubs shoulder, and then baby got stuck at her hips, after a tense minute or 2 Lisa and Emma each grabbed one of my legs and repositioned me and baby Grace Claire Dianne Huntington was born!

7:43am Monday 10th February 2014: I picked up my baby and sat back, in complete shock that I just did it! I birthed my baby girl out of my vagina! Emma cleaned up my bed and I got into it with my baby girl. Tim was in absolute awe. Grace needed a little bit of oxygen which Lisa gave her while we had skin to skin cuddles. Our eldest son Eadon was ready to leave for school and came in to meet his baby sister, so special for us to be able to share that with him.

About 45min after Grace's birth I birthed the placenta... what a weird sensation! We then brought Jaxon and Logan into the room, but they were more interested in the birth pool I think. I had the amazing opportunity to cut the umbilical cord, Tim said he did the last 3, I earned this one! Lisa showed me my placenta, it was amazing! I had a shower and got brand new PJ's on and snuggled up in bed with my baby girl and my husband by about 11am, Lisa and Emma said they were going to head off, Grandma was looking after the kids and I had the best sleep of my life! It was magic, sharing those first precious hours at home, with my husband, all under one roof. Magic. Emma encapsulated my placenta and had it back to me by the end of the week. I felt so healthy and good, I didn't have one "blue day". I took two capsules twice a day for the first two weeks then went to one tablet twice a day, for the first month. I still have lots in the freezer for when I need them.

back, and I needed Tim or Ang to put pressure on my back during contractions, but I was able to completely zone out in-between them.

It was getting more intense and I remember strongly expressing to Tim that I needed Emma and Lisa to be here now! He assured me they were close. The moment that my doula Emma walked into the room was a moment of complete relief for me, I remember it so vividly, Emma just got me. She prayed for me, kept me hydrated and helped centre my breathing and nerves. Lisa arrived not too long after that and I was eager to have baby checked, heartbeat was strong all was good. Lisa continued through the labour to quietly check me and bub. Lisa said it was almost as if I held my breath until I got the all clear and my body visibly relaxed. Lisa and Emma tell me I was very quiet during labour, and didn't complain about the pain, but internally I felt like I was a mess - I was scared a bit, overwhelmed a bit and still in disbelief this was happening. I even asked Lisa if she thought I was in active labour. I remember everyone laughing but I was serious.

I felt the urge to push early on and was so worried I was pushing too soon, and really wanted to be checked internally, Lisa stalled me for a while, but after a toilet visit I convinced her to check me... 5-6cm and bub was posterior... I was devastated. Ang went home about now and Tim was in and out of the room as our youngest Logan was having a very unsettled night. But I felt so supported by Lisa and Emma. On the bed Lisa and Emma had me doing these leg movements during contractions to help turn bub, I did my best to breathe though the contractions instead of pushing: Lisa said I kept apologising every contraction.

Sometime about 6am something changed. I can't describe it, but I remember yelling out "something's different!!" and with that I couldn't help but push. I went to the toilet again and pushed there clinging to Emma's leg! Still needing that pressure applied to my back every contraction. Lisa asked if I wanted to get in the pool but I couldn't move, plus I was still in denial that I was about to birth my baby. So Emma and Lisa covered my bathroom floor with towels and pillows and I went onto knees and elbows with my head in the pillow. As the baby was crowning my husband after direction from Lisa held hot compresses to my perineum to avoid tearing. When the head came out, someone yelled "heads out" - I said "are you sure"? Bub was born in her sac, and there was meconium in the waters and Lisa tore the bag open and cleared the baby's airways. The cord needed

I feel I didn't convey how much of a fight and emotional battle it was for me to achieve my homebirth. If it wasn't for my doula and midwife my birth would not be possible. Most of my family strongly objected to my choice to birth vaginally, let alone homebirth! My family would corner my husband and make comments about becoming a widow, and my own mother wouldn't talk to me. Despite my repeating all the studies and research I had done, they didn't care. My Dad and step mum along with my Nan and sisters Renee and Danni, were supportive.

I found myself on a number of occasions crying on the phone to Emma my Doula, not so much doubting myself but just so hurt that those I love the most would be so naive about my rights to birth. I had waited all my life to have a daughter, why would I do anything to risk her or my life? With the support of my amazing husband, my doula and midwife, I felt empowered to stand by my choices.

Kristen Huntington is 29 years old and has been married to my Husband Tim for 10 years. They have 4 beautiful children, Eadon (9), Jaxon (4), Logan (3) and our only daughter Grace now 3 months old. She grew up on the central coast NSW but moved to rural NSW 2 years ago. They manage a large dairy property, and have chickens, ducks and dogs. Kristen is a Nurse and is employed at the local hospital. She is currently enrolled at UNI, to further her degree, as it is her dream to be a midwife.



The Birth of Ella Leyna Mae



Just before 4.30am on Tuesday 11th February 2014 I woke up and went to the toilet, as I did a lot those days, and then went back to bed. A couple of minutes later I felt a gush of liquid and thought I was wetting myself and leapt out of bed and rushed to the bathroom. Once in the bathroom I realised it was probably my water breaking. Three previous births and my waters had never broken at this stage - it was always right before I birthed, so this was new to me. I went back to the bedroom and woke my husband Hieden to share the exciting news and we discussed for a few minutes whether it was my waters breaking or if I did indeed wet myself. We decided it probably was my waters and I called my midwife Rachele who told me to go back to bed and rest and she would call me in the morning. Not one to follow advice I didn't go back to bed, really I was far too excited to sleep, and my husband and I watched a movie and I kept an eye on the time and the so very faint surges - they were barely there - continued to come and go about every ten minutes.

This continued throughout the movie and at about 6.45am I went to the bathroom and had a bloody show, another exciting stage for me as I never experienced that with my other three. Right from the start it was like a whole new experience. Rachele rang at about 9am to check in and said she would come over in about an hour to see how things were progressing. I remember she asked how things were going and I was still in denial at that stage and told her I had no idea if I was in labour or not!



I have a lovely memory of sitting on the birthing ball gently bouncing and texting back and forth with my daughter Olivia (11) on the sofa behind me! She loves to text and was sending me the sweetest messages of love and encouragement.

The surges started becoming more intense around 10am so I texted my birth photographer Mindy to start making her way over as it was an hours drive for her and at that stage Hieden began putting the birth pool up.

Rachele arrived at 10.30am expecting to leave again after a check up but I think she quickly realised when she saw me that she wasn't going anywhere. It was odd not having to leave for the hospital or birth centre as with previous births.

Rachele was busy setting things up and helping Hieden fill the pool. Our birth photographer Mindy arrived about 11.30am and contractions were pretty intense by then, making me stop to work through them. At first I was hyper aware of having my photo taken and had to concentrate on the surges and pretend Mindy was not there, she was really good though and didn't crowd me, moving away regularly to take photos of the children and goings on around the house.

The pool was ready about midday and Spencer, my four year old, was very keen, he just couldn't believe his luck having a swimming pool in the living room and while stripping off all his clothes was asking if he could get in, obviously he did not really expect an answer. I climbed into the pool with Spencer and the relief was immediate, I felt great in the water and as I didn't get another surge as quickly as I had been getting



Ella Leyna Mae

them I momentarily worried things were slowing down but needn't of worried as things picked up quickly and while Spencer was diving and swimming about I was getting stronger and stronger surges. At one point my husband asked Spencer if he wanted to get out but Spencer responded with "No, I am looking after Mummy" and he swam over in front of me and gave me a kiss.

The surges were pretty intense by now and Olivia (11) & Zachary (8) were standing next to the pool watching. At one particularly intense surge I moaned very loudly and Zachary ran away and stood in the doorway still watching. Olivia went to him and cuddled him and reassured him and the next loud surge brought them both back to continue watching.

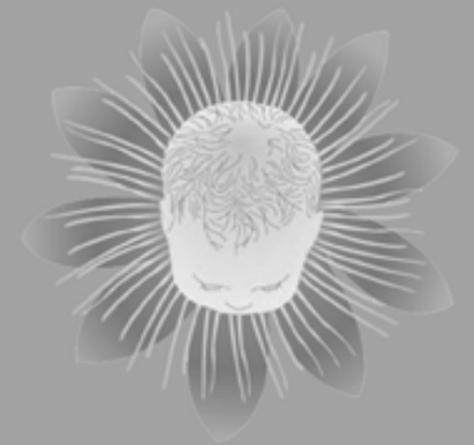
By this time baby was coming and all my concentration was focused on this last stage, I will always remember the wonderful feeling of the cold cloth's my midwife made up being put on the back of my neck, they were so wonderful and gave me strength somehow, refreshing me to keep going.

I breathed and moaned through the next surge and reached down to touch the baby's head, it was exhilarating to feel the head before it came out and I had imaged doing that so often that it just felt right and came so naturally. Another huge surge and baby progressed further, hardly time to catch my breath before the next enormous exhilarating surge. I felt the back of the head and an ear and was so happy. I thought I would have a little time before the next surge pushed the shoulders out but no, an almighty surge came, almost on top of the last one and baby slid out. I looked down and saw my baby looking up at me in the water; arms outstretched, and so I reached down to pick baby up. The intense feeling of happiness at getting that first cuddle was amazing and it was at that point that I became aware of everyone else in the room again and of Spencer by my side. Someone asked if it was a boy or a girl so I lifted a leg up and showed Spencer and he said "It's a boy", I looked and said "try again" and Spencer said "Is it a girl?" and I said yes. Spencer looked a little confused and exclaimed "but they look like testicles" which got a good laugh off everyone.

The utter relief and joy at her being born was wonderful. I sat in the water, holding her and enjoying her while Hieden and the kids looked and touched her. She showed signs of wanting to breastfeed quite quickly and she latched on and fed in the pool. After a while I stood up to get out and moved with Ella to the sofa. After about an hour the placenta hadn't detached so Rachele suggested I stand up and then when that didn't help move to the toilet to help it along. She placed a bowl in the seat to catch the placenta and I sat there holding Ella for about 10 minutes before the placenta came out easily. I then moved back to the sofa and Olivia & Zachary cut the umbilical cord.

It makes me so happy to have experienced Ella's birth, I feel I have experienced birth the way it was meant to be for me and I feel proud to of been able to show my children what normal natural birth looks like.

Korina Ivatt is a homeschooling mum of four gorgeous, happy and exuberant children who lives in the Illawarra with her husband Hieden. Because four children don't keep her busy enough she is also studying and renovating a house!



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CHC 42775-09/12

The Birth of Indigo Ocean



I loved being pregnant & did everything I could to make my body a temple for our beloved growing baby. I nourished my body with good food, yoga, body treatments, beach walks & daily dips in the ocean. I nourished my mind with meditation, positive visualisations, informative reading, plenty of love from partner & a tribe of family & friends full of love & support. Over this time I developed a trust in my ability to birth our baby at home gently into this world. At 41 weeks & 6 days I woke at midnight having contractions, I tried to sleep through them to no avail.

Mark woke to go to the bathroom & on his return I whispered "I think I'm in labour" - Mark turned on the lights & performed a happy dance. We decided to time the contractions, I was having one contraction every five minutes lasting for one minute, the pressure of the contractions was intensifying & I soon found my space of stillness & focus through a deep connection with my breath, mind & body. Smiles beamed across our faces at the potential thought of meeting our baby by mid day. With the light of the day my contractions slowed. Mark was on hand to meet all my needs, holding my hand and being there with me through our journey of child birth. At lunch things turned up & our wonderful midwives payed a visit to check up on us and monitor our progress, after some time they informed me I still had a way to go (I need be sweating) & they would return to their homes for now. I was surprised so once they left I found my self asking for every contraction to be more intense then the last - allowing me to open so I could let go of our baby. Looking back now this request took a lot of courage.

Around 10pm I hopped into the warm pool in our candle lit birthing room with sweet Indian mantras playing quietly in the background, I felt safe, supported & never once questioned my ability to birth naturally in this space.



Janine and Robyn arrived around 11pm - Janine checking baby's heart rate, assuring me she was relaxed & all was well whilst Robyn kept an eye on my progress.

At 1:45am it was time to push - with each contraction I beared down from my throat to my cervix. I remember just once asking our midwives how I was doing & them both replying "just beautifully" that's all I needed to hear & returned to my space. With one deep push my water bag popped out into the pool, next I felt my baby's head dip down the cervix - I assured her we could do this & encouraged her to move down with each contraction. She moved down & up numerous times smoothing out & numbing my cervix. Working with this powerful life force I opened & my baby's head released from my body. This was the best feeling, my heart really exploded at this moment... Then with a wiggle she rotated & slipped right out into her daddy's arms. Within seconds I was holding this new life - so pure & her face so full of joy.

I am so proud of the three of us, truly a right of passage for us to be parents & Indigo into this world. It was the hardest & biggest thing I have ever done, it has changed me, my journey from young women to mother, my heart is now half Indigo's... Indigo Ocean Blondel, born at 2:16am on the 01.4.14 All our love & gratitude to our wonderful midwives Robyn Dempsey & Janine O'Brien

Rikai Alana Blondel

Born 12/04/1986

New mum, Wife, Sales Representative, Yoga Instructor & lover of life. I grew up on a property on the far south coast of NSW with a loving family. Here I developed a great love for the ocean & respect for the land.



The Accidental Freebirth

My birth journey began eight years ago. For my first daughter Lucy my private obstetrician recommended a schedule caesarian for a low lying placenta. In hindsight, I would not have taken his advice, but as a first time mum I trusted his professional opinion.

For my second daughter Hannah's birth we researched our options thoroughly and decided a home birth was most likely to give us the best outcome. Her birth was a beautiful, euphoric experience at home, with her five year old sister attending. It was a fairly quick birth, just over three hours for the first and second stage.

Our third daughter was a surprise conception when number two was about 15 mths old. After a month of chicken pox through our household I conceived when I thought it should have been physically impossible. It took me until about 16 weeks to come to terms with the pregnancy and the idea of having three children, particularly when Hannah was still so young.

I took my best guess at my EDD as being 2 January, two days before Hannah's 2nd birthday. Ultrasound scans showed that baby was measuring a bit smaller, so I thought maybe 6-7 Jan.

Like the other pregnancies, this one was easy on me, no nausea, just tiredness and hunger first trimester, bit of physical discomfort (including my pelvic floor) in the second trimester and then a cruisy third trimester. My chiropractor and prenatal aqua aerobics helped keep everything aligned and as comfortable as possible.

My biggest consolation for the surprise pregnancy was that I'd get to give birth again. I was excited about another beautiful birth. I had the same two midwives, only this time I'd known them for three years and I felt like I was visiting with friends. I was surrounded by my community. I had my doula from Hannah's birth again and I organised to have my sister come down to video. I had very clear ideas about how I thought this birth would go,

with a wish for a much shorter second stage (it was 50 mins pushing with Hannah). I anticipated that one of my midwives probably wouldn't make it as she lived a bit further away.

I had some early labour pains New Years Eve afternoon. They got me scurrying to set up the baby's hammock and organise the a few things I hadn't gotten ready, expecting another week. I sent a message to my midwives and doula that I was getting some early labour. I went to bed that night and assumed I'd probably wake up with contractions.

Sure enough, 3:30am New Years' Day I woke up to a contraction. I dozed for a couple of hours before I got up and came downstairs. I waited until 7am to text my midwives and doula letting them know contractions had started, they seemed more effective than the day before, but still early labour. They were only coming every 10 mins or so and lasting 20-30 secs. This was exactly how Hannah's labour had started, so I assumed birth would be that night. I phoned my sister, who was booked for the next day, to see if she could get on an earlier flight. She switched to get here mid-afternoon.



managed to lie down, but needed to get up on the ball every 10 minutes for a contraction.

I sent my doula a text at 11:15am to ask her to come around 2pm. I sent Anthony (who was downstairs) a text at 11:27am to ask him to fill the birth pool, as I was not comfortable anymore. He replied saying he was getting Hannah's lunch and he'd do it after that.

About 20 mins later I suddenly felt I needed support. I sent my midwives and my doula a text at 11:54am asking them to come. I sent Anthony a text to let him know.

I felt some wetness on my pad, so got up to go to the toilet. I thought it might be my mucus plug. When I sat on the toilet, I saw it was blood and looking down got a huge shock - my baby was about to be born! My midwife rang me at that moment. I told her the baby was coming NOW! I had a contraction and tried very hard not to push, my body was doing this all by itself.

My midwife let me go so she could find a closer midwife, knowing she would not make it. Our second midwife was already at another birth, even further away.

Anthony came up to check on me (probably in response to my text, which he didn't remember receiving!). I told him the baby was coming and asked if the pool was ready. I had some idea I could still get downstairs and get my waterbirth at least. Anthony thankfully talked me out of that idea. He then ran downstairs, passed off the kids to our neighbour and ran back to me while calling the ambulance. He was completely panicked!

When he got back to me I told him to hang up the phone, that I didn't need an ambulance, the midwives were on their way. He called our second midwife. Although she was at the side of the birth pool with a labouring mumma and would not usually have answered a call from an unknown number, something made her excuse herself and take his call in the hallway. (She told us afterwards she has never, ever done



Anthony and the girls came downstairs for breakfast around 8:30am. I sat with them for a chat and a cup of tea, using the fit ball to stay comfortable. Contractions were still every 10 minutes or so. I noticed if I got up and walked around they would come more frequently. I told Anthony around 10:30am that I was going upstairs for a nap. I was getting a bit annoyed, contractions hadn't stopped but they didn't seem to be turning into anything. Walking up the stairs brought on a couple of stronger ones. I decided to stop walking!

Anthony brought the fit ball upstairs for me and left me to have a nap. I went and got a mattress protector for the bed and put on a maternity pad. I

of Charlotte

that in her whole career!). DP put her on speakerphone as I gave him instructions.

I said he needed to get me some towels. Our midwife asked if the waters had broken and I told her no. Ever so thankful I'd carefully read Ina May's instructions to midwives in Spiritual Midwifery, I asked Anthony to turn on the shower, so I could hop in (I thought the water might help me avoid tearing, which I was worried about given the speed). I asked him to pass me the towels to kneel on and turn off the water as soon as the baby's head was born. Kneeling forward on my knees and one hand, I gently pushed her head out in two pushes, checking for the cord as she came and guiding her with my other hand. All clear, nice and easy, I told Anthony to turn the shower off. She started crying as soon as I pushed her body out and I brought her straight up to my chest. Midwife (still on speakerphone) asked DP about her colour and he said she was purple, but I told him she was pinking up straight away and was just fine. She was absolutely perfect, I couldn't believe she'd arrived and it was all over! (Her estimated time of birth was 12:18pm, less than 25 mins since I had decided I needed my birth team after all!)

Our midwife congratulated us and got back to the lovely mumma who had spared her for us!

My doula arrived about a minute later (running up the stairs and leaving her car parked half way out in the street). She and Anthony helped me to bed (lucky I had put the mattress protector on) and I snuggled my new baby girl. The closer midwife arrived shortly after and had a quick look at both of us. Thanks again to our homebirth group get-togethers, I knew her.

Anthony went and retrieved Hannah and put her down for a nap, while Lucy came in to meet her new sister, before rushing back to play with the neighbour's daughter. Birth is such an everyday occurrence at our house!

My primary midwife arrived within half an hour and did all the standard checks. I had no tearing, just a couple of minor labial grazes. We toasted the New Year and the new baby with non-alcoholic wine and marveled at her speedy arrival.

The cord took about 20 mins to finish pulsating and then Anthony cut the very fat cord. The placenta was reluctant to appear, as it had been at Hannah's birth. Two hours went by and my midwife suggested blowing into a bottle (lucky we had that wine) and it fell out easily.

I was somewhat deflated at the whole experience - annoyed that I didn't get the video and photos I'd hoped for, that Lucy had missed the birth and that because of the speed, we didn't get the joy and euphoria we'd had last time. It was all over so quickly I never had the birth high I'd expected. Poor Anthony was traumatised for quite some time!

But I did get a couple of the things I'd hoped for: Hannah woke from her nap and Anthony brought her in to meet her new sister. She was entranced by the baby and their meeting was exactly as I'd imagined. I was happy that the pushing was so short and as a result I felt physically fantastic. I felt like I'd cheated at birth! I had no pain, no strain and could walk normally. I guess Charlotte gets a birth story that is quite exciting. It's funny to see the notes in her birth folder, nothing in the labour part at all!

I can't quite believe I've come all the way from an 'elective' caesarian to a freebirth, but what an amazing journey it's been.



Stats:

Charlotte born 1 January at 12:18pm. (It took us four days to choose her name - it means 'free person' and we thought it was appropriate for a child who's done everything her own way)

Weight: 2.86 Kg, length: 50 cm (my biggest baby by 3 gms and 2 cm).

Active labour: 24 mins. Second stage: about 30 secs.

Jennifer Lorange is and mum to three beautiful girls, partner to Anthony and sustainability consultant. She volunteers for Homebirth Access Sydney as its website administrator. In her very limited spare time she tries to keep fit, enjoys catching up with like-minded mummies and isn't too bad with a pair of knitting needles.



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HAS In The Community

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY VIRGINIA MADDOCK

**29th Homebirth Australia Conference:
 21st – 23rd March, 2014.**



HAS Committee members Virginia Maddock, Nadine Fragosa, Naomi Homel and Amantha McGuinness on the HAS merchandise table, selling our fantastic range of Birthings magazines, books, DVDs and clothing!
[Note: This lovely photo was taken by the talented Jerusha Sutton Photography!]



'The passing on of the knowledge ceremony'. This is where the midwives followed by the student midwives thread their beads onto the string and say a word that encompasses birth. This string of beads has been added to since the 24th Homebirth Australia conference in Geelong in 2006. Some words that have been infused into these beads include knowledge, patience, trust, breech, courage, gratitude, hope, wisdom, respect, faith, truth, blessings, connection, love, knitting, inspiration... These beads will be added to at the next conference next May in Melbourne.



3 women who chose (or had no other choice but to choose) homebirth without a midwife present. Alexandra Flynn, Nicci Armour and Eirinn Ceitt talk with MC Catherine Deveney for the Consumer Informed Choice Panel.



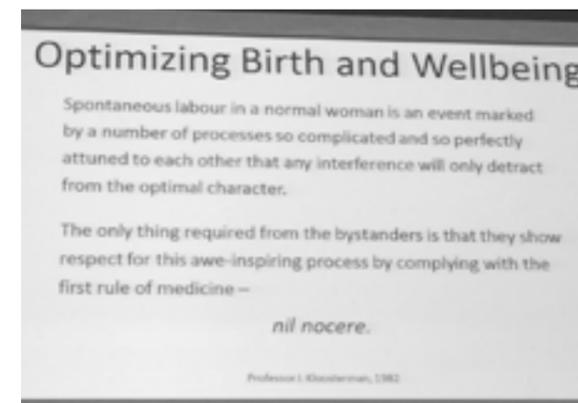
Keynote speakers: Sara Wickham, Dr Andrew Bisits and Rachel Reed answer questions from the audience for the Practitioner Informed Choice Panel. A very engaging chat with 3 very wise and engaging people in the birth world!



MC Catherine Deveney. Wise, articulate and oh so funny!



The after dinner dance, featuring many birth workers off call! Doula and Photographer Jerusha Sutton and Midwife Jo Hunter having a laugh!



One of the fantastic slides of truth!



A very grateful audience!

The next Homebirth Australia conference is in Melbourne on May 29th til 31st, 2015. Save the date. You would be crazy to miss all the fun! (Stay tuned in upcoming issues for details!)

13/2/2014
Huffington Post
Hawaii Legislators Are Hoping To Regulate Home Births, But Moms Are Pushing Back
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/02/13/home-births-regulated-hawaii_n_4769986.html

"If you have to get a license to cut hair, you should have to get a license to deliver a baby." That argument, courtesy of the Hawaii Medical Association, is one of the reasons Hawaii legislators are pursuing regulations of midwives and home births in the Aloha state. The Hawaii state senate introduced a bill earlier this week that requires midwives to be licensed and creates a board to establish rules, investigate complaints and take disciplinary action against home birth providers when necessary. It also limits home births to women with low-risk pregnancies and saddles home birth providers with record-keeping requirements. The bill was written with good intention -- to protect mothers and babies -- but the senate was caught off guard when more than 1,000 people submitted testimony and dozens of women crowded the hall to protest it, saying it was an overreach of government power.

20/2/14
Politics.HU
Court frees celebrated homebirth midwife from house arrest amid hopes for presidential pardon
<http://www.politics.hu/20140220/court-frees-celebrated-homebirth-midwife-from-house-arrest-amid-hopes-for-presidential-pardon/>

The Municipal Court has terminated the house arrest of gynaecologist and homebirth midwife Agnes Gereb, her lawyer told MTI on Thursday. Gereb, the pioneer of homebirths in Hungary, was found guilty of professional negligence. She was freed from prison and put under house arrest since December 2010. Gereb was sentenced to two years in prison in February 2012 and was banned from practicing her profession for ten years. She appealed the ruling, said Gabor Papp. In line with Thursday's ruling, the court has restricted Gereb from travelling further than the boundaries of Budapest and Pest county, Papp added. Gereb has asked for a presidential pardon. President Janos Ader decided in October 2012 that he would make a decision only after a final ruling in the case.

27/2/14
MTV.com
Katy Perry Delivers A Baby In A Living Room
<http://www.mtv.com/news/11723077/katy-perry-delivers-baby/>

'It's been a miracle of a day' Katy writes after assisting in an at-home birth. According to her Twitter account, KP just got her Doula on, assisting in a home-birth that took place.

5/3/14
OK Magazine
Thandie Newton welcomes baby boy after giving birth at home
<http://www.ok.co.uk/celebrity-news/thandie-newton-welcomes-baby-boy-after-giving-birth-at-home>

Thandie Newton and her husband Ol Parker welcomed a baby boy yesterday. Taking to Twitter to reveal the news, she wrote: "Our baby boy is finally here! Booker Jombe Parker. Born joyously at home yesterday."

11/3/14
ABC Online
Ex-midwife Lisa Barrett fined and banned over homebirth tragedies
<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-03-11/ex-midwife-lisa-barrett-fined-and-banned/5312462>

Former midwife Lisa Barrett has been found guilty of professional misconduct after several infants died during homebirths she was involved with. Ms Barrett said she wanted to save the Health Practitioners Tribunal time and money by not attending or challenging disciplinary action brought against her by the Nursing and Midwifery Board. It accused her of professional misconduct for planning and undertaking a number of unsafe homebirths, including four in which babies died. Ms Barrett surrendered her midwifery registration in January 2011 but the tribunal heard there was evidence she kept working in the field.

8/4/14
The Australian
Home birth parents Katrina and Garry Freemantle ignored hospital warnings
<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/nation/home-birth-parents-katrina-and-garry-freemantle-ignored-hospital-warnings/story-e6frg6nf-1226877592452>

The parents of a baby who died following a home birth ignored a "plethora of evidence" which indicated the delivery should occur in hospital. Victorian coroner John Olle today made his findings in the death of baby Thomas Freemantle, who died in a neonatal intensive care unit shortly after his birth in October 2010. He had suffered a loss of oxygen during the home birth. Mr Olle said Thomas' parents Katrina and Garry had been firmly told of high risks associated with a home birth given their other children's history of shoulder dystocia, where the baby's shoulder becomes lodged behind the mother's pelvic bone. Mrs Freemantle was told there was significant risk that Thomas would be too large to pass freely, and was offered a place in a midwife-led program offered by Bendigo Health.

7/05/14
The Age
Midwife struck off health practitioner register
<http://www.theage.com.au/nsw/homebirth-midwife-struck-off-health-practitioner-register-20140507-zr6g9.html>

A midwife caught trying to flee the country after she was ordered to pay \$6.6 million to a boy who developed cerebral palsy as a result of a botched home birth has been struck off the register of health practitioners. Last year the NSW Supreme Court upheld a civil claim against Akal Kaur Khalsa brought by the mother of Will Patterson, a six-year-old Sydney boy who has quadriplegic cerebral palsy as a result of his home birth in November 2006.

13/5/14
The Guardian
More women should give birth at home, advice suggests
<http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2014/may/13/pregnant-women-home-births-midwives-baby>

More women should give birth with only midwives present, including at home, because that is better for them and their babies than labour wards where doctors are in charge, the government's health advisers say on Tuesday. Midwives should advise mothers-to-be who already have at least one child and whose latest pregnancy appears straightforward to opt for a midwifery-led unit (MLU) or a home birth when deciding where to have their baby, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence is urging. The 40% of women giving birth who are first-time mothers should also be advised to choose either location, Nice is recommending in draft guidelines to the NHS in England and Wales. Both groups of women should select either location "because the rate of interventions is lower and the outcome for the baby is no different compared with an obstetric unit", Nice says.

17/5/14
The Guardian
Home Birth: Labour in the living room is the sustainable option
<http://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/home-birth-labour-sustainable-option>

Must childbirth really be "reassuringly expensive" for us to be happy? The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (Nice) has been criticised for proposing new NHS maternity advice (pdf) that low-risk second-time mothers be encouraged to have their baby at home or in a midwife-led unit. In essence, without doctors present.

20/5/14
The Newcastle Herald
Service led birth 'serene'
<http://www.theherald.com.au/story/2260963/service-led-birth-serene/?cs=12>

Serene is the word Kristie Lee Crompton chooses to describe her experience four weeks ago giving birth to her second daughter, Abigail. The 24-year-old hairdresser said while her first labour with now two-year-old Harlow was a "hospital experience" at John Hunter Hospital, her second labour at the midwifery-led Belmont Birthing Centre was a calm affair thanks to the centre's caring, relaxing environment and her close bond with midwife Kim Watkins. Midwifery unit manager Jane Crosbie said the centre's midwives had assisted almost 2800 Hunter women with low-risk pregnancies to have their babies since it opened in 2006. But she said many women were unaware of the centre and the continuity-of-care model it provided. "We also want to get the word out to let people know that homebirth is an option with this service and it's a woman's choice, if she is well and healthy and wants to have continuity of care with a known midwife then she can."

20/5/14
The Telegraph
Home Birth: Ladies, home births really are the VIP option
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/mother-tongue/10826773/Home-births-Ladies-home-births-really-are-the-VIP-labour-option.html>

Call The Midwife has officially trounced One Born Every Minute. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence has looked at all the data surrounding maternity care and basically gone: "Well ladies, we're sorry that you've suffered the indignity of 70 years of hospital births, it looks like you shoulda' stayed at home after all. You no longer have to stand the heat of the labour ward, get back to the kitchen." Or the lounge, or your bedroom, or the back garden -- or indeed, a simple midwifery-led birth centre - because, as Cathy Warwick, Head of the Royal College of Midwives says, having a baby at these locations is as "safe; indeed may be safer than hospital", and women report "higher satisfaction rates and a better birth experience than in hospitals".

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

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Virginia Maddock

Herbalist, Nutritionist & Doula

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lotusborn@y7mail.com

NATURAL BEGINNINGS

Doula, herbalist and nutritionist Virginia Maddock is now offering placenta encapsulation in the St George and Sutherland shire areas, to give back what your body has lost after birth. The placenta can be ingested in a palatable way once it is dried and encapsulated, to nourish your body and replace nutrients and hormones that will help with post natal bleeding, mood regulation, breast milk production and energy boosting.

I can also make your placenta into a tincture to be taken by you or your baby for years to come, create a beautiful tree of life artwork, have the cord dried into a heart or spiral shape keepsake, and make a placenta salve infused with herbs and essential oils for many skin conditions. Please see my website for more information and prices. Virginia Maddock 0415683047 Virginia@naturalbeginnings.com.au
www.naturalbeginnings.com.au

HOSPITAL HOMEBIRTH PROGRAMS

BELMONT MIDWIFERY GROUP PRACTICE HOMEBIRTH PROGRAM

Our service provides individualised women centred continuity of care throughout pregnancy, birth and for two weeks postnatally.

Healthy women have the choice to birth at home if they are within 30 mins to our supporting hospital, John Hunter Hospital (New Lambton Heights in the Hunter/New England area).

For further information contact Kelley Lennon: 49232291

ST GEORGE HOSPITAL HOMEBIRTH SERVICE

This public health service is available to women in the St George and Sutherland Shire area. Continuity of care is provided by two midwives throughout pregnancy, birth and the postnatal period.

For further information, call the Birth Centre on 9113 3103.

ELS VAN LUEEWAN

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

els76@hotmail.com

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

ACORN MIDWIFERY: KATIE SULLIVAN

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

BIRTH WITH GENTLE CHOICES

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

BELLA BIRTHING: LISA RICHARDS

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

THE ELLA MAY CENTRE

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

EMMA FITZPATRICK: MIDWIFE IN PRIVATE PRACTICE

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

HAZEL KEEDLE

Private midwife, antenatal, home birthing and postnatal care and placenta encapsulation covering the Central West, based near Orange, NSW
0408661503
hazelkeedle@gmail.com
www.midwifehazel.com

HOLLY PRIDDIS: BECOMING PARENTS

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

IBIRTH - INTIMATE BIRTH & BEGINNINGS

[Midwives @ Sydney & Beyond]
My name is Janine O'Brien and I have been a midwife for over 10 years, committed in women centred care and providing a continuum of care to women and their families. I am the mother of two beautiful young women and have been practicing with Midwives@Sydney & Beyond since June 2013.
Servicing Northern Beaches, Sydney & surrounding suburbs.
Janine O'Brien 0422 969 961
janine@ibirth.com.au
www.ibirth.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.
Jo Hunter (Blue Mountains, Inner west and Western Sydney)
(02) 47519840
midwifejo@bigpond.com
www.midwifejo.com.au

MEGAN BARKER

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

NEW BEGINNINGS MIDWIFERY PRACTICE

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

PREGNANCY, BIRTH & BEYOND

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

SHERYL SIDERY

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

SONJA MACGREGOR

I believe that women are empowered and this needs to be nurtured within a trusting relationship during pregnancy, labour, birth and the postnatal period. I have many years experience having been invited to support women's homebirths. All appointments are attended within the woman's home, with the inclusion of all her family if she desires. I service the Sydney area, Blue Mountains and Wollongong areas.
Sonja Macgregor 0419 149 019
sonjamac@bigpond.com
www.birthathome.com.au

TANYA MUNTEN

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

WITH WOMAN MIDWIFERY CARE

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

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

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

- Interview as many midwives as you can from different practices
 - Talk to as many of their clients as you can
- Here are some questions you might consider asking midwives you are considering for your care:

QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

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

ELIGIBILITY

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

PHILOSOPHY AND ATTITUDE

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

COLLABORATION/TEAM

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

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

PRACTICAL MATTERS

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

TIMING

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

SPECIFIC ISSUES...

...DURING PREGNANCY

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

...DURING LABOUR AND BIRTH

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

...DURING THE POSTNATAL PERIOD

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

HOME BIRTH SUPPORT GROUPS

Sydney & NSW

Eastern Suburbs Homebirth Support Group

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

Inner West Homebirth Support Group

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

Northern Beaches Homebirth Group

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

Sutherland Shire Homebirth Group

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

Pregnancy & Parenting Network meeting - Dundas Valley

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

Pregnancy & Parenting Network meeting - Hawkesbury

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

Illawarra Birth Choices Group

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

Mothers & Midwives of the South (Southern Highlands)

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

Blue Mountains Homebirth Support Group

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

Central Coast Homebirth Group

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

Hunter Home and Natural Birth Support (HHNBS)

2nd Wed of every month, 10am-12noon
Location: various indoor and outdoor locations in Newcastle
Contact: Anne 0434 941 892 or email hhnbsgroup@gmail.com with enquiries or to join our mailing list
You can also find us on Facebook - Hunter Home and Natural Birth Support Group

Armidale and District Homebirth Support Network

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

Interstate & National

Homebirth Australia

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

Homebirth Queensland Inc.

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

Alice Springs Homebirth Group

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

Darwin Homebirth Group

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

Homebirth Network of SA

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

HOME BIRTH ACCESS SYDNEY (INC)

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

HAS POLICY STATEMENT

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

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

YOU ARE WELCOME TO ATTEND

Homebirth Access Sydney (HAS) Committee Meetings

Meetings are generally held on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at Naomi's house: 9 Essex Street Marrickville, but dates are subject to late changes according to availability of attendees.

Please contact Virginia on 0415683074 or email info@homebirthsydney.org.au for submissions and agenda confirmation.

All welcome, including children!

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 Scarlett 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:

Supporting Homebirth



Birthings is your magazine, so please contribute!

The Spring 2014 Issue is on the theme Supporting Homebirth.

This issue will be dedicated to the ways we support homebirth – be it support techniques, people, services, activism – or whatever it means for you.

As always, we also welcome your birth announcements, stories, letters and creative expressions around home birth.

Submissions are due by 1st August, 2014.

Please check our submission guidelines on page 2 and don't forget a bio!

Email the Editor at editor@homebirthsydney.org.au

REMINDER: please ensure we have your current email address so you can receive membership expiry reminders, as well as our newsletter. If you have recently moved, please send us your new address: member@homebirthsydney.org.au