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BIRTHINGS

A HOMEBIRTH ACCESS SYDNEY QUARTERLY PUBLICATION



Homebirth Siblings

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

www.homebirthsydney.org.au

HOME BIRTH ACCESS SYDNEY COMMITTEE* & OFFICE BEARERS

- HAS Coordinator*** Virginia Maddock
02 9501 0863 | info@homebirthsydney.org.au
- Assistant Coordinator** Naomi Homel
- Treasurer*** Veronica Cerbelli sales@homebirthsydney.org.au
- Secretary*** Amanda McGuinness amanthaেলা@hotmail.com
- Memberships Coordinator*** Nadine Fragosa
member@homebirthsydney.org.au
- Website** Jennifer Lorange admin@homebirthsydney.org.au
- Fundraising & Events Coordinator**
Janine O'Brien irth@outlook.com
- Advertising Coordinator** Serene Johnson
advertising@homebirthsydney.org.au
- Merchandise Coordinator** Veronica Cerbelli
0451 969 152 | merchandise@homebirthsydney.org.au
- Birthings Editor** Jacqueline Cooke
0414679234 | editor@homebirthsydney.org.au
- Birthings Assistant Editor** Virginia Maddock
- Birthings Line Editors** Nicola Judd, Lou Williamson
- Birthings Designer** Jacqui Fae jaxfae@gmail.com
- Media Watch** Naomi Homel
- Mail Officer** Naomi Homel
- Distribution Coordinator** Rebecca Perrin
rebeccaofleura@yahoo.com.au
- General Information** info@homebirthsydney.org.au

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

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

HONORARY LIFE MEMBERS
Robyn Dempsey
Jo Hunter
Akal Khalsa

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

CONTRIBUTIONS, PHOTOS, CORRESPONDENCE

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

DEADLINES FOR SUBMISSIONS

Autumn 2015	No. 125	1 February 2015
Winter 2015	No. 126	1 May 2015
Spring 2015	No. 127	1 August 2015
Summer 2015	No. 128	1 November 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 Jacqueline Cooke 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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Lachlan cuddles his new sister Lucy Grace. Photo by Holly Priddis Photography.

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BACK COVER



Natalia Baechtold's baby Coco Milou was still attached to her placenta when she was moved onto the traditional mat, woven by a Ngarrindjeri master weaver, with some other culturally significant pieces for her first symbolic connection to country. Touching the earth for her first time protected by her cultural heritage she lay surrounded and supported by all those who love her and the innate wisdom of those who have come before her. Her feet dusted with soil collected from the shores of Lake Albert where Ngarrindjeri women traditionally came to birth their babies in country. Image by Jane MacCrae www.janemaccraephoto.com

Editorial



Hello again!

It feels like hardly any time since I was writing my first editorial for Birthings, and yet here we are again. I've had a busy time since then, returning to work part time and adjusting me, my daughter Adalita and my boobs to that new schedule! But I think we're doing well. She's now spending three days a week with our fantastic family daycarer, and two of those days her big brother Sebastian is also there.

I was a little worried about how that would go; he has been settled there for over two years and now not only has a new sister invaded his home, but his Sar Sar's house, too?! Turns out it's all been fantastic. I think it's really brought them closer. She has certainly blossomed this past couple of months and has started to understand how to play with other children. Sebastian and his mates have embraced her (quite often literally), and when I go to pick them up now I frequently find her at the head of her new little posse, charging around and cackling. It's pretty adorable.

I would like to claim that this strong sibling relationship is because of a beautiful family birth scene when Adalita was born at home, but that's not the case. As I've mentioned before, Sebastian was having a nap when his sister was born. He was brought in, tousle-haired, by his dad, to meet his new sister as she and I relaxed in our bed and had her first feed. We failed spectacularly to get much of the birth on video, but we did manage to get this moment, and let me say it's not the stuff of a soft-focus Hallmark docu-drama. He became completely shy, and seemed a bit annoyed, and then mangled her name (fair enough, though, it's a hard one for a two and a half year old!). All of these reactions seem pretty fair enough, to me, actually; it's a pretty massive discovery to make after what would have seemed like a reasonably run of the mill nap.

Before Adalita's birth I think I did have a desire, perhaps even an expectation, that he would be in the room with me, pottering around the house, possibly peering over the side of the birth pool as she emerged. But that's not how it worked out. As it turned out, I went into that internal birthing headspace pretty early on, and once I knew that Alex had called our dear friend Sarah to come and be with him, I think I ticked that mental box, closed our bedroom door, and moved on to concentrate on birthing Adalita.

Which, in hindsight, is exactly where I must have needed to go. I was completely unaware of him until after she was born. I was utterly surprised to find that another dear friend had been called to look after him and that she had been sitting quietly in our lounge room, listening to me roar Adalita out while Sebastian napped in his room. We do have some video of him being in our bedroom in the early stages of Adalita's birth day. I'm having a contraction, leaning on the doorframe of our ensuite, rocking and swaying my hips while he talks

to Alex, dodging around me with absolutely no concern about my noises. After the contraction passes I talk to him about nothing very much. I touch his head affectionately and he goes on his way. I know from Sarah and Maggie that he was not worried by the noises coming from our bedroom throughout the morning.

We haven't really discussed the birth since then, and to be honest I'm not sure whether he would really even remember it for what it was. I get the sense that his ability to remember past events has really only developed in the last six months or so. I'm a bit sad about that, but I do know that he is at least peripherally aware that Adalita was born, that it was here at home, and he still loves *Hello Baby*.

That book, and books like it, as a way to prepare siblings for the arrival of a new baby at home is a recurring theme in the many wonderful stories in this issue of Birthings. I love that this community is so committed to treating their children, no matter what their ages, as fully participating and cognitively engaged people in their family's lives. And that runs the gamut from siblings eagerly leaning over the birth pool, to conscious decisions by parents to keep birth separate from them. I love that this community understands that we all think deeply on these things, and make rational, reasoned decisions. And I love that each decision will be right for each family.

But mostly I love that we, all of us, understand that birth is a completely natural part of life, and we respect that. We want our children to understand that, too. And because we are so open about and so open to birth, we are creating a generation that will most likely feel the same way, who will feel confident to make their own choices about birth, whether that be at home, or in hospital, or any of the other myriad variations of birth that exist.

I hope you enjoy this issue as much as I have; it's filled with ovary-stimulating stories to make you want to add another sibling to your brood! We're also very lucky to have two incredible Heart to Heart contributions which beautifully (and literally) illustrate the positive impact that being present for their siblings' birth has had on the older children of two of our readers. These are pictures to cherish.

Next issue, we'll explore the wide world of 'Cultural homebirth'. We'd love to hear from you! I am about the most boring, uncultured person around, but I know our members are very diverse, so I'm super excited to read about everyone's ethnic, religious and societal backgrounds and how they influenced your homebirths. And as always, we welcome your thoughts, comments and feedback to editor@homebirthsydney.org.au.

Wishing you all the best for the festive season, and for a brilliant 2015. Happy birthing!

~ Jacqueline Cooke

Coordinator's Report



First up I would like to say a sad farewell to Naomi Homel, who has recently moved to Brisbane. Naomi has been our committee meeting host for about the past two years, she has diligently compiled our Media Watch and also had a brief stint at being my Assistant Coordinator. Naomi will be sorely missed at our meetings every month. If anyone wants to step in her shoes as Assistant Coordinator then please get in contact. We hope she will continue to fulfil the Media Watch role in future editions.

From hereon in, our meetings will be conducted at various committee members' houses. The next one for next year will be held at my place in Caringbah on Wednesday February 11th (subject to change), unless we find a permanent venue before then. Email me at info@homebirthsydney.org.au for more details, if you would like to come along.

In the meantime, we are going to have our annual picnic double as a Christmas get together, midweek in December, as we have found in the past that it's a struggle to get families to commit their weekends. We hope you will join us at 10.30am - 1.30pm on Tuesday 9 December. Another event that we are very excited about hosting is a men's only homebirth group. We hear many stories of women wanting a homebirth but their fiercely protective other half either flatly refuses to support their choice to birth outside of hospital walls, or they are fearful or unsure and have many questions. So we have invited Darren Mattock of the hugely popular 'Becoming Dad' organisation (www.becomingdad.com.au, or look them up on Facebook!) to come and

facilitate the gathering on Saturday 28th February at Harlequin Inn, Pyrmont at 7pm. We would love it for dads-to-be who are yet to walk that journey and would like some more information to come along and for dads who have experienced the homebirth of their child/ren, to tell their stories. We will also have a couple of doulas who have been on both sides of the homebirth experience, and some private midwives to answer any burning questions that the men need to ask. All this in the relaxed and familiar surroundings of the pub, where they can enjoy a meal and/or a drink. To RSVP, please contact us at: info@homebirthsydney.org.au.

Speaking of events, our premier of the Microbirth film was a massive success. We raised \$1900 from ticket sales and sales from raffle tickets. That much needed money will go towards us building our new website in early 2015. Thanks so much to those companies who donated, and to everyone who came along to watch the movie, eat dinner and buy raffle tickets. We also want to say thanks to Assoc. Prof. Hannah Dahlen who came along to talk about the film afterwards. And finally, a huge thanks to our wonderful Events Coordinator Janine O'Brien who spent many hours organising it for us - without whom it would never have gone ahead, or been the success that it was. We hope to offer more movies in the future. (See the full review on the HAS In The Community page on page 50.) Wishing you all a Happy Christmas, Hanukah, Milad un Nabi, Bodhi Day, Yule, Summer Solstice or whatever you celebrate over the Summer holidays.

~ Virginia Maddock

Letters to the editor

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

This issue, our prize goes to Lou Williamson and Daniel Bartley! Lou and Daniel have won a one year subscription to the Birthings Magazine!

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



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

Congratulations on your first issue as editor, it was an extremely good read!

I'd really like to thank you for the article regarding the father's perspective. This article actually sparked my dad's interest and I was really pleased and happy about that. I would never have expected my dad to read this magazine, but I am glad he did!

At first, I know that my parents were quite scared about my impeding homebirth as it was a HBAC. After our baby Daisy was born, I know my parents totally changed their mind and saw how helpful my midwife Jo was and how healing the birth was. Just what I needed to tackle motherhood the second time around!

I wonder whether a future issue could contain the father's perspective and even the grandparent's perspective as I believe a homebirth is a very special family event, no matter what the family looks like!

Thanks once again for your lovely articles on homebirth support. Lou Williamson and Daniel Bartley

Thank you, Lou and Daniel! It's absolutely fantastic to know that you're enjoying Birthings, and especially great to know that the stories that our readers share can have such an impact. Thank you for writing in - we'll extend your membership by a year!

Remember, we love to hear your feedback and your thoughts on the homebirthing world. Each issue we'll have a prize for the best letter. Looking forward to hearing from you all.

STOP THE PRESS

Rumour has it that the office of the Federal Health Minister Peter Dutton has confirmed that the exemption for the requirement for Privately Practising Midwives to hold Professional Indemnity Insurance for supporting women to birth at home has been extended from July 1st to December 31, 2015. This means that homebirth with a midwife in attendance will remain legal until the end of next year, instead of becoming illegal half way through the year. This is a huge relief for women who are newly pregnant and due after July and planning on a homebirth, and for the midwives who attend them. Up till now it has been a big question mark, as no insurance product has been made available. No official media release by Peter Dutton's office has thus far been forthcoming but it was announced in an article from the Sydney Morning Herald in regards to the new NICE guidelines from the UK, advising low risk pregnant women to birth at home because the largest studies show that it is safe. It seems like a snap decision was made to avoid embarrassment for the media, but is a welcome reprieve, albeit for only 6 months. The best that we can hope for is an indefinite extension to the exemption, rather than a restrictive insurance product which will likely see women of any risk factors, including VBACs, excluded from being attended by midwives at home.

~Virginia Maddock
HAS Coordinator

Alice Reddick is three-and-a-half, and the home-birther daughter of birth nerd and trainee childbirth educator, Sarah Davies. She witnessed the birth of her brother, Leo, when she was 22 months old. Alice enjoys art, counting, music, dancing, playing with Leo, and watching Peppa Pig.

Her favourite online birth video is called "Our Easy Homebirth", but she calls it "the purple baby" (unlike most people, she is perfectly comfortable with the colour of a seconds-old newborn). Sometimes she says "placenta" loudly and clearly in public places.

Heart to Heart

Caitlin Bruce is in Prep and is a naturally curious child who loves make believe stories about fairies, family history, drawing and her new little sister; not necessarily in that order.

Caitlin's mum **Sarah Bruce** is married to Glenn and is mum to Caitlin (5.5 years) and Matilda (8 weeks). She has always been interested in how things work so studied science at university and eventually became a science teacher. She is passionate about choices for women in pregnancy and child birth.



This is mummy, and next to her is baby Leo's placenta and cord.



Caitlin has drawn a beautiful picture of her sister Matilda being born.

Birth Announcements



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Homebirth Access Sydney.

Contact us for more information
on advertising:

advertising@homebirthsydney.org.au



River Lily Hanepen

River Lily Hanepen came earthside 6:26am on **23rd July 2014**. She was born at home in Kuringai National Park Cottage Point. Big thanks to our midwife Sheryl Sidery for her amazing rock solid support. We are forever grateful for this amazing experience of River's birth. You are a beautiful light in this world River and we are blessed to have you as our daughter!



Lucy Grace Stasinowsky

Introducing Miss Lucy Grace Stasinowsky born into the water at home on **28 July 2014** at 11:33pm, all witnessed by her very proud big brother. Our tiny babe was 2.45kg and 52cm. What an amazing experience! Many thanks to our amazing midwives Hannah Dahlen and Melanie Jackson for going on this journey with us again. (Photo by Holly Priddis Photography)



Leo John Sassine

On **August 3rd 2014**, Leo John Sassine was roared through the water and into this world weighing 3910g and 54cm long. It was not calm and peaceful (as 'waterbirth' might imply) but raw and real and miraculous. Unending gratitude to our phenomenal midwife, Jo Hunter for her wise presence and loving support, especially through our numerous postnatal challenges. Thank you also to the wonderful mothers who donated breastmilk. Your generosity didn't just nourish my son's belly, but also warmed my heart through a really rough time. He is now fully breastfed, healthy and thriving.



Inara Sage and Luna Saffron

Welcome Inara Sage and Luna Saffron. At almost 3 months early, you arrived on the **8th of August** after a massive journey for you, your mums, and both of your sisters. You are amazing! A big thank you to Robyn and Jane for your support during pregnancy and taking care of us all during birth and for a long time afterwards!



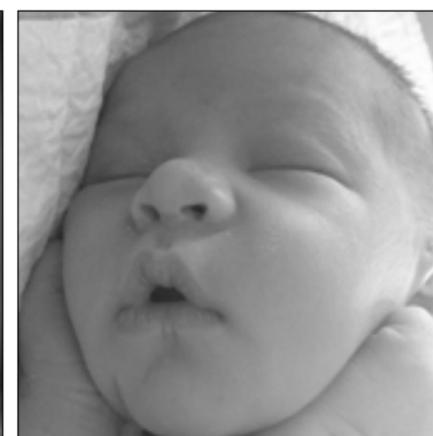
George Montgomery

Evan & Helena Mooney and big sister Emily are very excited to introduce baby George Montgomery. Born at home in the bath on Sunday **31 August 2014** at 8.27am, weighing 3.6kg. Huge thanks to our midwives Tanya Munten & Sheryl Sidery for supporting us so beautifully and for their incredibly important work in keeping birth normal. And to Claire Hickson for being Emily's support person, a great friend, and for looking after us so thoughtfully on the day. An extraordinary and yet ordinary experience - I am so grateful. Homebirth Rocks!



Bryn Kanen Arnold

Bryn Kanen Arnold, you march to the beat of your own drum. Bryn was welcomed into the world by his delighted parents, Ian and Nerida, brother Jarrah, and his Nannie Judy (whom Nerida picked up from the airport less than five hours prior!) at 4:30pm on **Monday 8th September 2014**. After a night of pre-labour which died down on rising that morning, we were all surprised by the speed of a 2.5 hour active stage, with our wonderful midwives Sheryl Sidery and Tanya Munten only just arriving in time for Bryn's peaceful, perfect birth into water in our lounge room. Thanks also to the talented Anna Todd for all our amazing photos. (Photo credit: Anna Todd Photography)



Lacey Lee Curran

Jessica, Baden and big sister Isobel are thrilled to announce the arrival of their precious baby girl, Lacey Lee Curran. Born at home on **15th September 2014** at 2.41am. Weighing 3570g and 51cm long. She was delivered in the birth pool by Mum, with Dad right beside them. Thank you to our beautiful midwife Hazel for her amazing support. We are all absolutely smitten with our sweet baby girl.



Lewis George Fallah

Alborz and Anna are thrilled to announce the arrival of baby Lewie 9lb. Born at home with the help of our skilful midwives. At 2.58am on the morning of **October the 3rd**. Thank you to all the wonderful community support x

Committee Member Profile



Jacqui Fae:
Birthings Designer

When did you join HAS?

In 2012 when I applied for the volunteer Graphic Design position.

Who is in your family?

In our immediate family, there's myself, my partner Jono, my twelve year old daughter Esha, eight year old son Araphin and five year old son Zerai. Also my mother; Grandma Sandy down the road.

What did you do before children?

I finished my HSC at a Catholic Girls School in 1999. All through high school I had worked in fashion retail in Bondi Junction. After finishing school I worked at an Independent Girls School as a teacher's aide and photographer. I met my partner when I was 18. We decided to move from the city to Mullumbimby, in Northern NSW, to raise a family.

What have you done since children?

Giving birth was an initiation into womanhood for me as I gave birth to my daughter when I was 20. I have had a blessed full, creative life with my partner Jono. The children have always been included in our adventures. We work in events and festivals. Check out upliftfestival.com and cockatooisland.wanderlustfestival.com. We have travelled to India, New Zealand, Dubai and Bali with all three children. All five of us riding on the back of a scooter through India and Bali. Catching tuk tuks, horse and carts and rickshaws. Visiting temples and learning about different cultures. Yoga has been a huge part of our family life. I have been practising now for 15 years. Some of the things I do apart from being a Mum to three amazing young people: I am a graphic designer and design this magazine. I sew for the event industry and make stuff. I'm crafty. I take photos and video. Community projects are important to me and I volunteer my skills where I can. My passions are training in the circus arts and training in contemporary belly dance. I'm pretty much obsessed and enjoy working on building strength and flexibility.

Why Homebirth?

Birthings at home is natural and from my own experience is less disruptive for the family, especially when siblings are involved and present in the process of their life changing event. We feel more relaxed at home and in control of our environment. I believe in having an empowered approach to life. Homebirth is very empowering and can be a deeply healing experience for many women.

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

- Brittany Kent
- Bronwen Dyer
- Brydie Pereda
- Caryn Cridland
- Clare Colman
- Daphne James-Buehler
- Debby Wall
- Ebony Wayne
- Elle Kolotos
- Elodie Beaujean
- Emma Blenman
- Emma Raycraft
- Helen Hanna
- Holly High
- Jasmin Tarasin
- Julie Johnston
- Kate Wood
- Kathy Johnson
- Kelly Prieur
- Korina Ivatt
- Leanne Wilson
- Lenka Havelkova
- Liisa Halme
- Lisa Worth
- Maggie Fitzsimons
- Naomi Green
- Noriko Amies
- Paola Guerrero
- Petra Tesarova
- Rebecca Micallef
- Rhonda Newton
- Rowena Doig
- Sonja MacGregor
- Veronika Laws

Membership

For new memberships or renewals

please go to

www.homebirthsydney.org.au

and click on 'memberships'.



Moonsong

One Day Workshops for Women 2015

Reclaiming feminine power through reconnection with the women's mysteries.

with **JANE HARDWICKE COLLINGS**

Midwife and Teacher of the Women's Mysteries, founder of The School of Shamanic Midwifery and Moonsong.com.au

Moonsong

Reconnect with the women's wisdom within you:

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- The influence of the lunar cycle and the earth's seasons
- The spiritual practice of menstruation and the transformative power of our rites of passage
- Understand why you feel the way you do!

It is time, women are awakening..

"MoonSong was inspirational. It really helped me to make sense of my life and where I'm going. It showed me how powerful I really am, and how to live my life to the fullest. I think MoonSong helps women understand the flow of their cycles and how empowering they actually are. It gets us in touch with our essence." Sylvie

Workshop Dates -

- Sydney Feb 22 2015
- Melbourne April 12, 2015
- NNSW/SQLD Sept 6, 2015
- Sydney Nov 6, 2015

Connecting with the Shamanic Dimensions of Pregnancy

This workshop focuses on the shamanic dimensions of pregnancy, in other words:

What lay beneath...

With prior preparation contemplating our life experiences, we will do some shamanic processes to understand the origins of our beliefs, attitudes and fears around birth, seeing the connection between how we were born, our menarche (first period) and the stories about the women in our family, as well as any experiences of pregnancy and giving birth we have had so far.

Then a *Letting Go of Fear* process and fire ritual and a shamanic drum journey to meet the baby, soul baby or Inner Goddess, to seek guidance, clarity, information etc.

This workshop is for all women. You don't have to be pregnant or planning to be and there is no prior experience necessary.

Workshop Dates -

- Sydney NSW Feb 21 2015
- Melbourne VIC April 11 2015
- NNSW/SQLD Sept 5 2015
- Sydney NSW Nov 5th 2015

For women of all ages and young women past menarche

Cost: \$180 - Fully catered | **Enquiries:** enquiries@moonsong.com.au

Siblings At Birth – Be Present



For the moment I want you to imagine being a small child – let's say a four year old. Your mummy has told you that there is a baby growing in her tummy, as time goes by you witness mummy's tummy move and jump and mummy tells you it's the baby kicking.

You're aware of lots of changes occurring. Lots of baby gear is being brought into the house, tiny little clothes are being washed and hung out to dry and mum tells you it won't be long before the baby arrives. There's heaps of talk about the new baby from mum and dad and other relatives and friends. One night Daddy tells you that soon mummy will be going to hospital and that the Doctor is going to get the baby out of mummy's tummy. Your imagination runs wild and you have no idea how the Doctor will get that baby out. Ahhhh, maybe THAT'S what the belly button is for, you think to yourself. You're told that any day now you're going to be a big sister or brother – chances are you're not feeling very big at all.

Then one day mum tells you she has some pains in her tummy and that she thinks the baby is on its way, every now and then mum stops what she doing and rocks her hips. You go to bed that night and daddy tells you that 'it' might be tonight. When you wake up in the morning Grandma is at your house, she tells you that mummy and daddy have gone to the hospital to have the baby and when daddy calls you'll be able to go to the hospital to meet the baby. You have a nice day with Grandma but you're wondering where mummy is and when and how the baby will show up. Eventually in the evening Daddy calls to tell you that you have a baby brother. Grandma is very excited – it's time to go to the hospital to meet the baby and you feel nervous and excited.

When you arrive at the hospital mum is lying in a bed with a big bundle of blankets on her lap. She smiles at you and you go and give mummy a big kiss. 'Look', she says pointing at the blankets and you see a little face looking out. It's the baby. Mummy asks you if you want to hold him, you sit up on the bed and have him on your lap. You're a bit distracted by strangers coming in and out of the room, some of them smile and talk to you, others don't even look at you.

After a while it's time for Grandma to take you home. Daddy says he'll be back a bit later and that he'll see you in the morning. Grandma takes you home and tucks you into bed for your good night story. So now you're a big sister!

I personally birthed four children in five and a half years (all naturally into water with the last three births taking place in my home) and subsequently had my own pre-school at home! This is when I became passionate about issues around childbirth – a self confessed 'birth junkie' – and studied, attended courses and workshops and became a childbirth educator and doula before becoming a midwife.

All of my children were involved in the births of their siblings and their involvement was one of the many reasons I chose to birth at home with the last three babies.

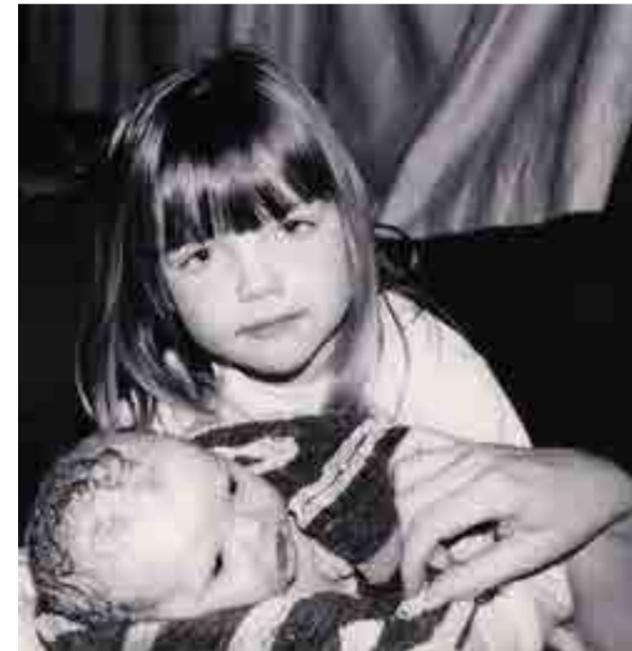
I could wax on for ages about the social, emotional, cognitive and physical developmental benefits for children who witness the birth of their siblings, all of which are valid and factual points to make, however I consider it to be more beneficial to try a little exercise at getting you into the mind of a small child.

1ST SCENARIO

Try to cast your mind back to childhood, just try to remember some of the feelings of being in a small body and being a small child. Now remember some important family events from childhood, it may be Christmas, a family wedding, a birthday, an engagement party. Remember how it made you feel when you were involved in a family event and remember how it made you feel when you were excluded.

Should Children During Childbirth?

BY JO HUNTER, MOTHER, MIDWIFE, CHILDBIRTH EDUCATOR, DOULA AND FORMER PRE-SCHOOL TEACHER. THIS ARTICLE WAS WRITTEN 10 YEARS AGO.



The next thing you know daddy is waking you up to tell you that the baby is coming. You go into the lounge room and mummy is in the big pool that you helped daddy blow up a few days earlier. The midwife is there too and she smiles and says hello. Mummy is making some big loud noises and she has her eyes closed. At first you feel a bit worried, and then she stops making the noise, opens her eyes, looks up at you and smiles.

"The baby's going to be here soon," she says, and she squeezes your hand. You help dad with cold washers for mum's face and offer her water to drink. After a while the midwife says she can see the baby's head and she shines a torch through the water so that you and dad can see too. Then mum makes some really really loud noises and a baby's head comes out of her vagina, soon after the baby's body arrives and the midwife passes him up to mum. Mum and dad cry happy tears as you look on in amazement. Mummy turns around and kisses you, you reach out to touch the baby, you stroke his head and his hands and he squeezes his hand around your little finger.

After a while the placenta is born and mum gets out of the pool because it's getting cold. She goes for a shower and daddy helps you cuddle the baby.

When the midwife goes home you all jump into mummy and daddy's big bed to sleep – dad, then you, then the baby, then mum! So now, you're a big sister or brother!

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Almost every aspect of early childhood development is affected by environment and experiences and ultimately shapes who we are, how we view the world and ourselves within it.

Children are incredibly robust and have the ability to deal with the majority of situations as long as they are told the truth and the facts of the situation. We can help them through by giving them words to express how they feel, however when they are excluded from life's experiences and left to imagine situations we are unable to help and protect them from their imagination and nightmares.

Perhaps by not sharing our life experiences with our children we think we are protecting them, but are we really or are we actually doing them a grave disservice?

Children in our society learn about birth from TV soaps and hospital sitcoms where birth is depicted as an emergency, with overtones of impending catastrophe and final salvation by the OB. They learn that birth means fear, a frantic rush to the hospital and life saving surgery. We condition children to think of birth like a road accident or a heart attack, as this is the first images children see related to birth. What message is this giving our children? How will they use this when it is their turn to have children, should they indeed want to even try after being bombarded by these images?

Reprinted with permission from Kelly Winder and Jo Hunter.

Kelly Winder is the creator of BellyBelly.com.au, a doula and mother to three amazing children. For the last 12 years, she has been passionate about educating and informing women and men about all things pregnancy, birth and parenting.

Jo Hunter is an homebirth midwife living in the Blue Mountains with her partner of 24 years, 4 teenage kids, a crazy dog and a menagerie of other animals.

2ND SCENARIO

Now just imagine you're the same four year old, you know that there is a baby growing in mummy's tummy. You know that when it is time for the baby to be born that mummy will have pains in her tummy and that she might make a lot of noise, but mum said that's ok because it helps the baby to be born. You have been to visit the midwife lots of times with mum. Your favourite part is helping her listen to the baby's heartbeat – she lets you press the buttons on her machine, the baby's heartbeat sounds like a horse galloping. She listens to your heartbeat and she lets you help with the blood pressure machine. Sometimes you even get to wee on a stick – just like mummy.

You have some special jobs for when mummy is in labour: you have your own camera to take photos; you will help daddy or the midwife fill mummy's glass with water; and put cold washers on her face. This will help to get the baby out. Mum has told you that the baby will come out of her vagina and that it can sometimes take a long time but that it is ok; the baby will come when it is ready. You've watched videos of other mummies having babies and other children helping their babies be born. You ask mummy why the dad and mum are crying on the videos. "Grown ups sometimes cry happy tears," she says. You think that's a bit strange cause when you cry it's because you're sad, angry or hurt. Mum reads you books about babies being born and she has even bought you your own special baby doll – but you're excited about the real baby coming.

One day mummy starts to have some pains in her tummy and she tells you she thinks that the baby might be on its way. Every now and then she stops what she is doing and rocks her hips. That evening daddy comes home from work and you all have dinner together but mum keeps getting up and rocking. Daddy says that its bedtime and promises you that if the baby decides that it's going to be born tonight that he will wake you up so you don't miss out – 'Promise?' you ask. 'Pinky promise', he says, as you shake your pinkies together.

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Lily's Birth Preparation

BY LOU WILLIAMSON



Lily was not present at the birth of her sister Daisy – something that I don't actually regret! Having said that, in the case that she may have been present, I did spend quite a bit of time preparing her for the birth. This was mostly because I was also preparing myself for the birth, having had Lily via a general anaesthetic caesarean due to a failed induction.

To give her a bit of ownership over the baby, and maybe as a bit of a jealousy prevention strategy, we used to ask Lily whether the baby was a girl or a boy (a Daisy or a Declan). We gave her a doll (my old doll) to play with to mimic what I would be doing with the baby. She really loved her 'baby' and still does. And I let Lily hug me all the time whilst pregnant. She loved hugging her baby in utero.

Lily really liked the TV show, *Call The Midwife*. She used to enjoy watching the babies being born and the children in the show. I used to watch it to help me prepare for birth. I really liked, and still like, that show. But having watched it after the birth of Daisy, I realised how sad some of the stories were in the show. It wasn't just about birth; it was very much a show about life! As I had had Lily in a way that I never expected or wanted, those storylines were lost on me until after Daisy's birth, as I got so happy and excited watching the ladies give birth the way I so wanted to.

I also prepared her by watching YouTube videos of homebirths. Our favourites were generally the HBAC videos (obviously!) but we watched a whole assortment of them. Looking back, it is interesting to see the differences between what happens in the United States (where most of these videos came from) and Australia (e.g., suctioning the mouth with those suction squeezing things). I will say that the video on the *Documenting Delight* blog entitled 'Madeleine's Birth – a HBAC video' was probably the most helpful. It was also exciting to watch the follow up birth entitled 'Eddie's birth/a homebirth with siblings' with Jo, my midwife, during one of our prenatal appointments (that was such a lovely appointment and a moment in my pregnancy I will treasure). So Lily and I watched that one a few times too.

At 30+ weeks, Jo also gave us the book *Mama, Talk About When Max Was Born* to read to Lily. So we used to read that to Lily at night before bed. She loved it and I thought it was so lovely that Jo thought enough of Lily to do that for her. We changed the words and the context to match our own family situation.

On the night that Daisy was born, Lily came bouncing into our bedroom to meet her new sister. Jo videoed the event for us as Daniel and I were in bed with Daisy. Lily kept remarking how Daisy "Wasn't hungry". She gave her a big kiss and hug and was so happy to see her

new baby sister. It is really lovely to look back on.

As it is, Daisy is now eight weeks old and Lily is still absolutely besotted by her new sister. She is definitely a smother (LOL!) but we know she means well and would hug and kiss her all day long if she could.

Lou is a stay at home mum to Lily (27 months) and Daisy (2 months). She hopes that both her girls will experience birth with the love of a caring homebirth midwife.



Becoming a Big Brother

BY RENEE RAPSON



It's a hard concept to understand for a 2.5 year old boy; that of becoming a big brother, that of having another little human in the family! It certainly would be hard to take in that suddenly, you're not the only tiny master of the house.

While I was pregnant, we prepared by watching lots of homebirth videos on YouTube; he asked to watch some every day, and was always truly excited about the baby coming out of the "Mummy's bum". It was a bit hard for him to grasp the particulars, but we thought it close enough for a 2.5 year old. We read *Hello Baby* every now and again, pointing out the baby coming out, the family gathering around, etcetera. And we bought a MamAmor Doll, which he absolutely loved playing with. In true toddler style however, he loved playing with the little 'toddler' doll, which was supposed to mimic him.

When it came to the birth, he was absolutely amazing. We had his dad there (my partner), my doula (a personal friend), photographer (a personal friend), and my midwife. He was comfortable with everybody there. He was comfortable with the photographer and doula because they were my friends, and he had been in their company, and the company of their families many times before. He was comfortable with my midwife thanks to the many long and relaxing antenatal appointments at our home, where he was in his own space, free to be himself. He had become very comfortable with her, as she took the time to get to know him as an individual. He was always stoked at her arrival, and towards the end would ask if today was the day for the baby to come. He was always a little disappointed when we had to say, "No, not today". He helped take my blood pressure and listen to the baby's heartbeat with the Doppler and Pinard. He quite liked being the little midwife himself.

I awoke with slow contractions to find my son had snuck into our bed early that morning. I needed a bit of space, so hopped into his bed so I could see if the contractions were becoming regular or picking up. Everyone soon woke and the morning began as normal. I was regularly contracting every ten minutes after my waters broke just before breakfast. They were easy and it was exciting that things were beginning, as I was 18 days past my EDD.

We ate breakfast as a family and my son went off to do his own thing, as he does normally; he's quite an independent creature. My partner went about setting up the birth pool in the lounge room and filling it. This, of course, excited our (now) three year old who wanted to jump in immediately and test it out.

During the labour, my son flitted from the lounge room, where the birth pool was, to his toy room, to the outdoors. He was happily watching movies, jumping on the trampoline and being entertained by the other wonderful people there. He didn't bother me, or seem to need me while I was in labour, he seemed to give me my space and do his own thing. He would occasionally hop in the birth pool and have a splash, sometimes with me, other times alone.

At one stage he helped massage my lower back with the assistance of my doula. I think he also helped to drink my coconut water, which I had to hydrate myself during contractions. He was pretty excited though throughout the labour as it was finally that day!

As his sibling was entering the world, my birth team were surrounding the pool, while he was jumping from lounge to lounge having a blast, seemingly ambivalent to my screaming and moaning during transition.

As soon as his baby sister was born, he looked transfixed, and he wanted to hop in the birth pool straight away to join the rest of the family.

Once we were out of the pool, my partner cut the baby's cord, and I birthed the placenta. My son was still extremely excited, and we had a birthday cake in celebration. He was so excited to sing happy birthday and to carry (and of course eat) the cake, which we had prepared earlier.

Overall, he was a wonderfully calming presence during the labour and birth of his baby sister. We were unsure of how he would cope and were somewhat worried as we have no family around to help out during these times.

I believe because he was so familiar with our birth attendants, he was comfortable in his own home to live as he normally would. Having our second baby at home after having our first in a birth centre was just simply bliss; so natural, I wouldn't have it any other way.

Today he and his sister have an incredible bond; he is her number one person, and she is his number one fan.

Renee and her partner Ashley live in Port Stephens with their son Ciaran, now aged 4 and daughter Lydia, 10 months.



The Shared Birth of Charlie Reuben

BY SHALOME DORAN AND SCARLETT DORAN (AGE 8)

Pregnancy photography by Lauren Emily Photography
Newborn photography by Firefly Tales Photography



Scarlett was clearly quite enamored with the subject as I overheard her chatting to an elderly lady in the queue at the supermarket, explaining how babies are made and that her mum was going to have a baby at home. It reaffirmed for me that we were doing the right thing - I wanted my daughter to be aware of her body and her birth options, and to be excited about birth, as I was.

As we progressed through our pregnancy, Scarlett was my mini-midwife - she attended the 12 and 20-week scan asking lots of questions about body parts and ultrasound equipment. She was present at many of our midwifery appointments and enjoyed listening to the baby's heartbeat and helping with the blood pressure pump. We read *Hello Baby* and watched home birth and water birth videos, alongside my sister who was going to be present at the birth as Scarlett's caregiver.

We set up the birth pool and had several discussions about why she couldn't have her bath in there each night in the week before the baby was born. I can see why it was so tempting - a big blue swimming pool set up in the lounge room is a six year olds dream. How cool it would be to have a bath AND watch TV!

Our only obstacle during pregnancy was with regards to naming rights. Scarlett felt that as the big sister, she should get to name the baby. She had several fairly exotic names in mind (based on popular singers of the moment) and was quite clear that she felt this was a definite role for her.

And then, at midnight on the 23rd October 2012, I was awoken with a strong sensation. I crept to the couch and spent the next couple of hours breathing and timing my surges as they became more and more regular. My man woke up at 2am, timed me for 10 minutes and called the midwife. I honestly had no concept of how far apart or regular my surges were but when I heard him say, "They are 3 minutes apart and go for 1 minute" I knew our baby was coming earth-side.

Our beautiful midwives bustled through the house an hour later and made themselves at home. I kept reminding everyone, "Please wake Scarlett soon," as I knew I was getting closer and was worried that she would miss out on the birth. Everyone assured me that they would wake her when it was time and I settled back into my birthing zone.

By 5.30am, I had moved to the shower to enjoy the hot water on my lower back and as I moved out of a long deep surge, her little face was peering at me through the glass. "Hello beautiful," I smiled. She looked at me with her big brown eyes and watched me as I moved and swayed, crouched and roared my way through each surge. I was able to talk to her between surges and answer her many questions: "Why are you swaying like that?"; "Why are you in the shower?"; "Can I get in too?"; "Is the baby coming soon?"; "Will it slip down the plughole?"; "Can I have some toast?".



I moved to the couch to birth our babe on all fours. Scarlett stood near my feet with my sister beside her as our baby crowned. I was concentrating on my breathing but distinctly remember her saying, "Ugh, that is disgusting." Ha ha - there's nothing quite like six year old matter-of-factness!

As our babe was passed through my legs to settle on my chest, Scarlett was right beside me. I felt a very strong sense of connection and family at that moment. That everyone I loved was right there beside me - it was a beautiful way to bring our baby into being. After a few minutes of pure adulation, Scarlett asked if we had a boy or a girl. No idea! So we asked her to check. It's a BOY! Our Charlie Reuben was here.

Once the cord had stopped pulsing, Scarlett cut the cord and explored the placenta as the midwife showed her how it was attached and all of the intricacies of this vibrant organ. I was beaming with my newborn on my breast, on a complete birthing high, and wanted this moment to last forever. Scarlett seemed to smoothly take it all in her stride and five minutes later was asking if she could have the iPad now and play some games please? Boom, back to reality.

The following morning we left Charlie at home with his Dad and I took Scarlett to school. As we got in the car, she said to me, "Mum, next time I'd like you to have twins."

"Oh yes," I murmured as I gingerly positioned myself in the car seat.

"Yes," she said "You know that love thing you and Brendan did to make Charlie? Well, I'd like you to do it again. Tonight please. Twice."

Tonight? Twice? Oh my.



Shalome is the editor of natural birth magazine - Down to Birth and a passionate believer in our bodies and our babies' ability to birth naturally together. A highly-medicalised hospital birth and two sensational home births taught her of the importance of putting the trust back into our innate ability to birth. Shalome works with pregnant mamas to replace their fear of pain with the skills to roar their baby out - by creating their own informed, empowered and amazing birth experience. You can find Shalome at www.rockstarbirth.com

It was the moment that the obstetrician gloved up and started unwrapping the episiotomy scissors that I thought 'Mmm... this is not cool.'

The midwife-on-duty whispered in my ear, "Honey, you do not want her coming near you with those things. Push that baby out NOW!"

And so I did. With gritted teeth and an almighty push, my baby girl was born. And she was amazing, fantastic, breath-taking. Mmm... but it was hardly the birth I'd dreamed of. Strapped to a hospital bed, bright lights bearing down, feet in stirrups, catheter / epidural / fetal monitor / oxytocin all tubing into me, a stranger between my thighs threatening me with secateurs ... this didn't feel natural and blissful. What was going on here?

Surely there had to be a better way. A way that wasn't so medicalised, so wrapped up in fear, and so influenced by hospital protocols watching over my 'progress'. I mean, women had been birthing naturally forever, surely I could do this under a tree or in a rice field if I had to? In that moment, I learnt that you have to do more than wish for a drug-free, intervention-free, natural birth. And so I started investigating.

And I discovered that there is another way. I discovered that you can birth without any unnecessary medical intervention. You can trust in your body's ability to birth naturally. And you can birth your babies at home with your lover AND your kids beside you if it feels right.

The next time I became pregnant, I quickly came to the decision to birth at home with a fabulous midwife team alongside my man, my sister, and my daughter. Aged six and a naturally inquisitive child, it was a beautiful age for Scarlett to be involved in our birthing journey.

Her first question was, "Mum, exactly how did the baby get inside you?" and so *Where Did I Come From?* was pulled off the shelf and we stepped through the cartoon pictures of love and tadpoles.

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Helena and

Emily's story

BY HELENA MOONEY



On 31 August, exactly one week before Emily's birthday and four days before my due date, I woke up at 4am dreaming that I was having contractions. I didn't quite believe it but after trying unsuccessfully to go back to sleep, I realised that my number one priority was suddenly to sort out my birth music selection! I hadn't bothered doing it yet as I assumed I still had at least a week to go. While trying to figure out technology, I called my mum in the UK who thought I really should start timing my contractions as they were coming regularly and I wasn't able to talk through them. They were 5 minutes apart and lasted for about 40 seconds.



Feeling bad about bothering her so early, I just sent Tanya a text around 5am. I classically thought it wasn't real labour yet. In fact, as I hadn't seen my mucus plug, I assumed it was false labour, and rather berated myself for finding these 'false labour' contractions so painful. And even if I was in labour, surely nothing would really happen for hours yet.

Around 6.30 am Evan and Emily started to wake up and I was finding it harder and harder to deal with the contractions. I had given up sorting out my music by that stage – my brain wasn't working well enough to figure out how to transfer the music from my computer to my phone – something I can usually do just fine.

At 7am I called Claire and assured her I was fine; to take her time. Nothing was going to happen for a while, but to be on standby. I suggested she come in about an hour and a half. No rush.

At 7.15am I called Tanya to give her an update. All fine, no rush. I mentioned about the lack of mucus plug so that it was probably false labour. She tried to tell me that not everyone sees the plug, so it probably was labour, but I wasn't really listening properly!

At 7.30am, after 5 very intense contractions close together, I called Tanya back to say that I really needed her NOW! I thought I'd also called Claire, but turns out I hadn't.

For Emily's birth, I had a classic first labour. The whole process lasted about 24 hours, with the contractions building up slowly during the day. I could manage the pain using my Calmbirth breaths and going within myself. I didn't want to be touched at all.

This time, the contractions were really strong and I needed my family to help me through them. Evan and Emily were fantastic. I would push my head into Evan's stomach and either he or Emily would lightly stroke my back. We were a team, working together to make the contractions bearable.



Emily was very involved throughout. She didn't make demands on me to divert my focus. She was incredibly helpful, would run to stroke my back when a contraction came and helped Evan with the set up of the birth pool.

Ah yes, the birth pool. Hmm. Should have started filling that up earlier, just like everyone told us to!!

When Evan started to fill up the pool, I got into our bath while waiting. Luckily it's a full sized bath, so I could go on all fours in the water. This is when the noise really started. I was groaning incredibly loudly with each contraction. The pain was intense and at times overwhelming. Tanya arrived at 8am in time to see me trying to vomit and groaning loudly. She soon suggested that I turn over so that I could lie back as I was about to have my baby. Apparently I looked at her in bewilderment. I wasn't ready to have this baby just yet; the birth pool wasn't ready (it never was) and I had lots of things to do first!

It was painful to turn over, but I managed it. And then the head started to come out. I suddenly stopped groaning and went really calm, very quiet and absolutely still. Tanya's eyes became my focus point and I just locked onto them and breathed.

Gradually the head came out. No pushing, no grunting, just calmly breathing as it slowly glided out. It was pleasurable to feel it moving after the intense contractions in my belly. Once the head was out, we waited for the next contraction. And with one almighty push and quite a bit of grunting and groaning, he rushed out at 8.27am. And that was it!

Throughout this time, Emily was leaning on the side of the bath peering at 'the business end'. She was intrigued and as soon as the head started to come out she wanted to touch it. As soon as the body was out, she wanted to see if it was a boy or a girl. I needed some time to just breathe and admire my new baby (both times I've given birth my first words are "It's a baby!" as if I'm surprised!).

After a short while she was the first one to see that he was a boy. Once the cord had finished pulsating and had turned white (I think it took about 20 mins for it to fully drain), she was the first to cut the cord. Evan finished the cutting as it is really tough and rubbery.

Fortunately Claire arrived as the head was coming out and then Sheryl came straight from the airport after her holiday just in time for the birthing of the placenta. It took a while to come out and I needed to get out of the bath to let gravity do its work. It finally came out whilst I was sitting on the loo and plopped into a bowl. Aah – the relief!

Then our newly extended family all tucked up into bed afterwards. It was so lovely that I only had to move next door into the bedroom and could stay there for the rest of the day (actually I stayed there all week!). I could sit there with my two children while Evan supplied champagne and a delicious lunch and we could just 'be'.

As for any child, it's been a big adjustment for Emily to have to share me. Being such a part of his birth has really helped with this transition. There was no drama, no separation. She wasn't worried in the slightest about the loud noises I made – there was no 'trauma' about seeing her mum in pain or pushing a baby out. All natural, all normal, and all accepted as such.



For me, having a homebirth was particularly wonderful. It took me years to get pregnant again and if I was in the hospital system I would have been considered high risk as I was 40 and George was conceived by IVF. With Tanya and Sheryl, the entire process felt incredibly normal. They had such trust in my ability to give birth and there was never a hint of drama or doubt. I will be forever grateful that I could have a medical conception and then a drug free birth at home. Both experiences have enriched my life and given me my beautiful little boy, George.

And I am immensely grateful that my daughter could be part of the whole process. She was there when I injected myself with IVF drugs and she was there when he came out into the world. Birth is really the most natural event and Emily will hopefully have a strongly positive view of it to carry into her adult life.

I fervently desire that she will have the same opportunity to birth in a natural, normal way, supported by such beautiful midwives, in the comfort and safety of her own home.

Helena Mooney is originally from the UK, and now lives near Manly with her two children and hubby. She is a doula, a Parenting by Connection Instructor and an Aware Parenting Instructor, and is passionate about supporting parents with birth and parenting. She runs parenting events and writes articles at www.birthandparenting.com.au

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Birth of a

Big Brother

A PHOTO ESSAY BY NERIDA HOPKINS - ARNOLD

Jarrah knew our baby would come out of Mummy's tummy through her "gina", that Mummy might make loud noises, that there would be a "marvellous cord" (thanks to the book "My Brother Jimi Jazz"), that he would need to share Mummy's "mine-a milk".

But in the end the transformation from only-child to big brother is as mysterious and profound as that of becoming a parent...

Photo credit: Anna Todd Photography

Nerida is wife to devoted husband Ian, and mama of two gorgeous boys, Jarrah and Bryn. When not on maternity leave she works as an orthotist. Through motherhood she has discovered the joys of holding her boys close, and is now a trained Babywearing Consultant.







Alice and me enjoying my belly the evening before Leo was born. My waters had been slow-leaking all day, and I was having sporadic contractions.

I was planning my second homebirth, and was really hoping that my daughter, Alice, would be present for her sibling's birth. Well, let's be honest: I was far too attached to the idea! She was (and is) such an equal member of our family, and in my mind she simply had to be involved in the birth, since it was a family event.

As well as this, I had heard that it can often help a child to adjust to having a younger sibling if they are present for the birth, and I was keen to give her this opportunity, if she was happy to be there. I remember the look of horror on a friend's face when I told him we planned on having Alice present; that look that says, "How could you put an innocent child through such an intrinsically horrifying and traumatic event?!"

But we knew that our 22-month-old had none of these enculturated notions of birth; on the contrary, due to my own intense interest in birth, she was perfectly comfortable with the birth videos she had watched, and displayed about as much horror and trauma as she did when she watched Peppa Pig (i.e. none). As well as this, my partner, Troy, is a very calm person, and having seen how relaxed he was during Alice's birth, I was confident that he would be a model of calmness for Alice to take her cues from this time around.



Alice watches as my body pushes Leo out. Our fabulous midwife, Rachele Meredith, patiently observes. [still from video]

Alice at

In terms of Alice's involvement in this birth, we had a number of options:

My 'Plan A' was that she would be present for the birth; she wouldn't be bothered by my noise, she would be so well-prepared by the birth books and videos and lovely chats we'd been having that she would take it all in her stride. And Troy, and our midwife, Rachele, would be able to take care of both a birthing woman and a toddler between the two of them. Simple! (Ahem.)

'Plan B' was that if Troy and Rachele were both preoccupied with me, we would get a friend to come over and take care of Alice, probably in another part of the house.

'Plan C' was that if Alice wasn't coping, or if her presence was distracting me too much, our friend would take her out of the house.

Plans B and C didn't actually appeal to me at all, because I so wanted Alice present! I reluctantly made these contingency plans, knowing they were necessary, but I was also aware that I wasn't emotionally prepared for anything but Plan A. I forged ahead, knowing it was the weakest link in my birth plan, and just hoping it would all turn out okay...

At 38 weeks and six days, I decided to buy new cushions for our couches, as my final act of nesting. I knew I was close to birth; I had that feeling where every waddling step made my uterus twinge - not painfully - but enough to remind me that the very early stages of the birth process were already underway. I remember thinking what a picture Alice and I were - adorably cute little girl, and spectacularly pregnant woman - making our way into the shopping mall, each in our own slow way. I knew it was probably our last outing together as just the two of us, and while I normally can't stand the mall, I felt as though we were in our own protected bubble, and it was actually a bit magical. I let her take her time, and stop to look at things, and when we finally did get the cushions, she sat in the trolley going "wheeeeeee!" and we really enjoyed our time together.

When we got back to the car, Alice was tired, and things got not-so-magical as she started shrieking and flailing when it was time to get in her car seat. I was wearing my favourite necklace, made of colourful beads, and as she flailed she hooked a finger in the necklace and it broke, sending beads all over the car. I was so sad to lose the necklace at the time (it couldn't be easily threaded back together), but since then I have come to see the moment that Alice broke the necklace as the symbolic beginning of early labour. Now, when I attend a friend's blessingway, I give her one of these beads, as they're so full of birthing energy!

The next day, while Alice had her morning nap, my waters started slow-leaking. I used a succession of her nappies to catch the fluid as the day went on. Mild contractions started in the late afternoon, Troy snuck home from work without alerting his colleagues to what was going on, and we spent our last evening together as a family of three.

My contractions became more intense, so we asked Rachele to start her three-hour drive to our place. By the time she got here, it was clear that I wasn't in fully-fledged labour yet, so she slept in our spare room that night. Alice wasn't regularly co-sleeping with us yet at that stage, but she was having a rough night, so ended up in bed with us.



Alice's look of delight the moment Leo is born and Troy lifts him from the water. [still from video]

Leo's Birth

BY SARAH DAVIES



Leo at one day old, with his admiring big sister.

It was a funny and slightly ridiculous night! I was having sporadic contractions throughout the night, and would often have to leap onto all fours and breathe deeply, which would usually wake Alice. Troy explained to her that I was doing this because the baby would be born soon, so in addition to the disturbance of my contractions, we also had Alice announcing "baaaaby!" with each surge. We didn't get a lot of sleep, and even though I was a bit worried about being sleep-deprived and exhausted the next day (when I assumed, rightly, that I would be giving birth), it was actually a lovely night, and I'm really glad Alice was a part of it, and able to share in the excitement.

The next morning, the contractions slowed down again, so Rachele went to see another client who lived 40 minutes' drive away, and we were happy that she would be relatively close by without having to sit around getting bored at our place.

Around mid-morning, I breastfed Alice before her morning sleep, and the oxytocin rush set off four contractions in ten minutes, which were very uncomfortable, as I was stuck in the rocking chair with a toddler wrapped around my belly. I just wanted the feed to be over and done with, so I could get up and lean forward through the surges. But every time I started deep-breathing to deal with a contraction, Alice would stop feeding and watch me, and say "baaaaaby!", drawing out the feed even more! Eventually she finished (whew!), and I put her down for her nap.

The breastfeeding brought on labour like a freight train; things ramped up quickly. A lot of it is a blur for me, as I floated into foggy labour-land, but I know I went from breathing through contractions, to moaning through contractions, to yelling through contractions, rather quickly!

I had texted Rachele and she was on her way, and Troy was filling the birth pool. Labour was fast and furious; very intense. I have no memory of Alice waking or Troy bringing her out of her room, but I do remember at some point noticing that I could hear her watching videos on the iPad. Rachele arrived, and as I reached transition, I laboured on all fours next to the birth pool, which was within Alice's sight. I was very loud, but she wasn't bothered. I got in the pool and continued roaring, and after only a few minutes I could feel the head starting to emerge.

Troy asked if I wanted Alice to come in, and after I gave a breathy, neocortex-less "yeah", he brought her in. I could hear her happy noises, and while I was only vaguely aware of her, I was so glad she was there, and that she was happy! Even though I was so focussed on the wild intensity of this last bit of labour, it felt fantastic to have my complete birth team gathered around me, eagerly and excitedly awaiting the birth.

I now have the benefit of being able to watch the video of the birth, and see Alice's reaction, which is wonderful. As her brother slowly emerges, she watches with interest, unconcerned by my roaring and bellowing. Little Leo is born, and as Troy lifts him out of the water, her face lights up and she giggles with delight, saying, "Baby!" over and over. The rest of us are fairly quiet, as we are focussed on helping him to start breathing (he took a while, but we weren't scared). Alice, on the other hand, is captivated by her brother, and welcomes him with pure, sweet, joy.

Among the many emotions and feelings of gratitude I had that day, I was over the moon that my 'Plan A' had actually come to



Wrestling pals - Leo at 10 months, Alice at 2.5 years.

fruition! What luck! Alice was joyfully present for Leo's birth, but not only that - she had actually instigated the process, twice: first, symbolically, with the breaking of the necklace, and later, physically, with the breastfeeding that triggered established labour. It was all more than I could have hoped for.

Alice's affection for Leo has continued since that day. She loves him, looks out for him, and now at 20 months, he is her very best playmate. We have had to deal with very little jealousy so far, which is due to a number of factors (including luck!), but I absolutely believe that Alice's involvement in her brother's birth gave her some ownership of the process, and provided her with a rite of passage through which to emotionally integrate the arrival of a new sibling.

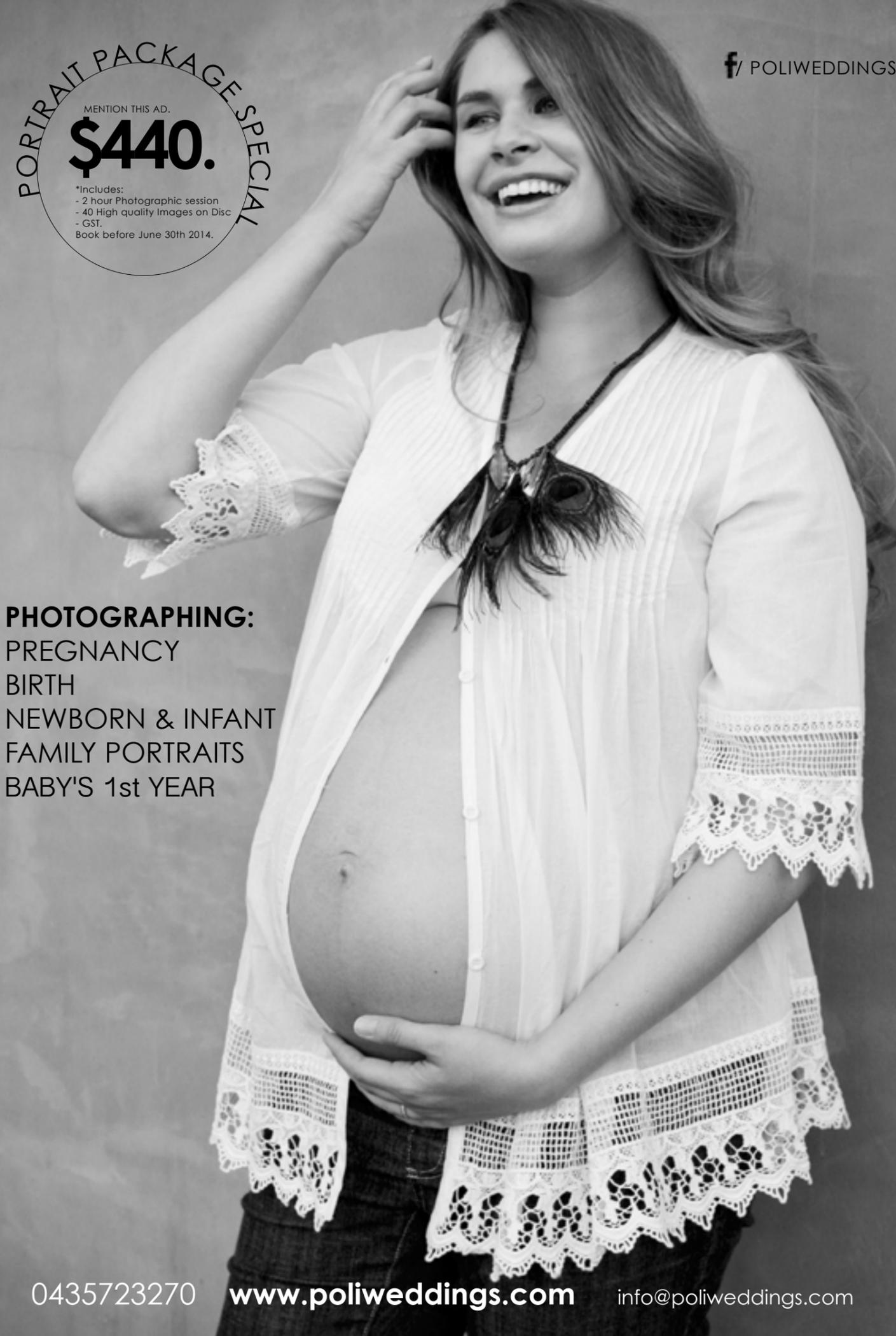
I wouldn't have dared hope that her involvement in Leo's birth - and their relationship since - could have gone so brilliantly. I'm so glad she was a part of it.

Sarah Davies is a birth nerd, trainee childbirth educator, domestic diva (cough), and mother to her two little kids, both born at home.

Alice Reddick is three-and-a-half, and the home-birthed daughter of birth nerd and trainee childbirth educator, Sarah Davies. She witnessed the birth of her brother, Leo, when she was 22 months old. Alice enjoys art, counting, music, dancing, playing with Leo, and watching Peppa Pig. Her favourite online birth video is called "Our Easy Homebirth", but she calls it "the purple baby" (unlike most people, she is perfectly comfortable with the colour of a seconds-old newborn). Sometimes she says "placenta" loudly and clearly in public places.



Alice and Leo today, at 3.5 years and 20 months



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Bonnie's Thoughts on Siblings at Birth

BY BONNIE PEARL

I'm a big fan of siblings at birth. When I was born, my 6 week old cousin was apparently in a bassinet under the sink. When he started to cry, the midwife lent over, stuck a dummy in, and got back to what she was doing. I was five when my brother was born in the same birth center. I remember sleeping, and being asked to cut the cord. Growing up, I always had good feelings around birth. When I was 17, I spent time looking after my cousin's four year old while she was in labour. When it was time, we went in and he saw his younger brother being born. A couple of years later, another brother was born, and I was there with the two older ones again. Being at these births gave me such a fantastic view of birth, that when it came time to give birth myself I was excited and looked forward to it. I was six weeks pregnant when my partner gave birth to our first child. Seven months later, she was sleeping in the next room when I gave birth to our second. The cousin that had invited me to her births was there too! And of course when our twins were born recently, they were at each other's birth!

Bonnie and her partner Zenia live in Sydney with their four lovely and amazing daughters - Aurore, Freya, Luna, and Inara.



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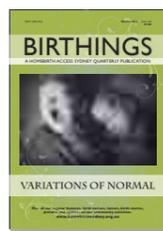


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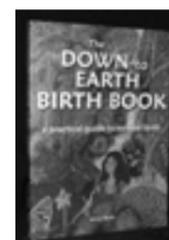


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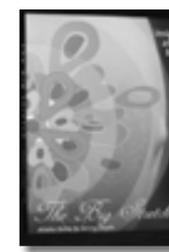
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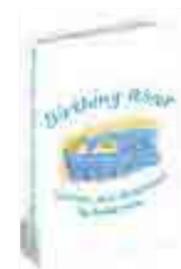


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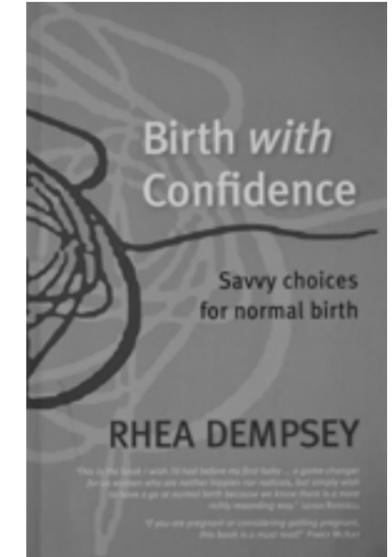


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Hathor the Cow Goddess... "Bigger Bed"

Book Review:

**Birth with Confidence:
Savvy choices for normal
birth, by Rhea Dempsey
(Published 2013)
Review by Sarah Davies**



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.

I'm really interested in labour pain and how people in our culture talk about it. Partly because I'm a birth junkie, and partly because I've had one painless birth (my first) and one painful birth (my second). So I'm well aware that painless birth *can* happen, and while I do believe that my preparation for my first birth contributed to it not hurting, I did very similar preparation for my second, and yet it was painful (thankfully I didn't assume it would be painless, so it wasn't a horrible shock when it hurt).

Because of my experience, I'm firmly in the 'every birth is different; nothing is guaranteed' camp, and I'm always interested to see how various authors and teachers approach the subject of labour pain.

In many birth preparation books and classes, the word 'pain' is somewhat taboo, with pregnant women instead being encouraged to think of labour as causing 'sensations', or other pain-free terms. This idea certainly has some merit; there is no doubt that the fear of labour pain can be a self-fulfilling prophecy (as per Grantly Dick-Read's 'fear-tension-pain' cycle). And there's also no doubt that for any labouring woman, a state of relaxation, rather than tension, is going to help facilitate the process.

These ideas are helpful up to a point, but they are only part of the story, and some women who rely *only* on these ideas find that their birth preparation backfires. They may have thought that a certain type of preparation would guarantee a calm, pain-free birth, but this wasn't their experience at all. Or they might have found that relaxation and breathing exercises helped in the early stages of labour, but that these strategies went out the window when things became intense, and gave way to an unexpected and unpleasant feeling of loss of control. A lot of these women feel that their birth preparations gave them unrealistic expectations of what labour and birth would be like. They may also feel like failures; like they didn't do birth 'right' because it hurt and they yelled a lot and complained that they didn't want to do it any more. While scaring women with stories of excruciating pain is obviously not helpful, going too far in the other direction - and failing to address the fact that most women experience some degree of pain during labour - is doing them a disservice.

This is where Rhea Dempsey's book *Birth with Confidence: Savvy choices for normal birth* is different. Rhea delves enthusiastically into the topic of pain, moving past our culture's notion that pain is necessarily bad, and should always be avoided. Instead, she distinguishes between 'functional pain', that is, "the physiological pain felt in a healthy body working at high intensity", and 'pathological pain', which is the result of injury or disease. Just like the pain felt by the endurance athlete as their body works at peak performance levels, the pain of birth can similarly be seen as 'functional pain' - a necessary and useful part of doing the work of labour. So Rhea focusses on helping women to work *with* this functional pain, and to see it in a positive light, rather than struggling against it.

Another important feature of many births is what the author calls a 'crisis of confidence'. She points out that even a woman who is totally committed to having a normal physiological birth normally reaches a point (or many points) during labour where she feels utterly overwhelmed, and that she can't go on. She "feels that she doesn't have the resources to match the intensity of the labour—the pain is too much, too strong, too tiring. It's all too overwhelming. She wants saving, she wants out, she wants drugs and she wants them now!"

Rather than creating the impression that this situation is avoidable through correct preparation, Rhea helps readers to see it as a normal, expected part of labour - a sign that labour is actually progressing well - and offers strategies for women and their support people to work through these crises when they occur.

The final chapter focusses on the crucial issue of birth support for women who want a normal physiological birth, in a birth culture that seeks at every turn to undermine their confidence. She points out that while the athletes in our culture are admired and encouraged through their functional pain (think of the marathon runner being cheered along as they suffer towards the finish line), labouring women are usually pitied, treated with sympathy, and offered various ways to escape the pain.

Obviously this is totally discouraging; it would be bizarre to treat an athlete this way, but in our birth culture it is seen as a perfectly appropriate way to treat a labouring woman, even if she has explicitly stated she wants a normal physiological birth. Rhea advocates instead for support people (partners, family and friends, as well as care-providers) to exude waves of confidence towards the birthing woman. She says a supporter's role "is not to 'save' the...woman from the effort-filled and often painful work of birthing, but rather to save her from her own perceived limitations—her self-doubts, fears, resistances and any inhibiting life patterns that may undermine her physical stamina and emotional resourcefulness." Rhea has attended over a thousand births as a support person, and so gives an extraordinarily well-informed account of how support people can affect birth outcomes, depending on their ability to remain confident in the birthing woman through these crises of confidence.

Overall, I would recommend this book to any woman who may be interested in normal physiological birth, regardless of place of birth. I would also recommend it to support people, from partners and family right through to doulas, midwives and obstetricians. Rhea Dempsey is incredibly sensible, realistic and wise, and her willingness to discuss pain and crises of confidence in great detail is empowering, rather than frightening. The book is easy to read, and very relevant to Australian women, as it is written within the context of the Australian maternity system and birth culture. I'm glad to have read it, and hope that Rhea will continue her work as an author, as I believe her approach to birth has the potential to greatly improve women's birth experiences, and therefore their lives, and their children's lives.

Sarah Davies is a birth nerd, trainee childbirth educator, domestic diva (cough), and mother to her two little kids, both born at home.

The Home Birth of Joshua Steven

BY ISIS CAPLE

1.39pm on Monday 19th February 2007

At around 2am on the 19th (I was 40+ weeks) I woke with a feeling of heavy period pain. It lasted around 40 seconds and was very much reminiscent of an upset tummy. I rolled over and went back to sleep. Another 'pain' woke me around 15 minutes later, so I went to the loo and sat for a few minutes. Nothing more so I went back to sleep.



I woke a couple of times with other pains, but just breathed through them and barely even opened my eyes for them. The children came in at around 7.30am to wake us up. Once up and about, the pains seemed to be coming anywhere from 8-15 minutes, lasting anywhere from 15-40 seconds. I wasn't sure this was early labour, or just a tease. I told Andrew to go to work, jokingly telling him to expect a call as soon as he got in there, to come home. I truly wasn't sure what was happening.

I walked Julia (5) to school (a six minute walk). Had a contraction while chatting and laughing with another mum at the playground, then had another walking home. They were really weird pains, not what I had experienced with Nathan (3) at all. These were felt exclusively down in the lower part of my uterus, as if it was purely dilation pains I was feeling. Where was the supposed textbook contraction, beginning gently at the top of my uterus, working down, slowly tightening to a peak, holding, then releasing slowly? These ones hurt, they took all my concentration to remember to breathe, rock and let them happen. Especially while trying to hold a conversation with a 3.5 year old!

I was expecting my midwife and my follow-through student midwife to be over at about 10.30-I am for a check up, so I just potted about and chattered to Nathan, while slowing regularly to listen to what my body was telling me. My main midwife rang to say she was leaving her house; I almost cried hearing her voice, because I was so unsure of what was happening and needed someone to tell me what was going on! So much for being a doula myself huh.

My student midwife arrived at 10.30ish and immediately started doing some vacuuming (I was having a mad nesting urge to clean the birth pool and the floor of the kids' crumbs) and general tidying up while I stopped every now and then to work through a contraction. Nathan was busy watching television, chatting to me, helping the student clean. My main midwife arrived at about 11.15am and I told her what I was feeling. She sat down and got out her paperwork and BP cuff etcetera while I kept pottering.

She watched me for a bit, then I heard her say to the student that she was going to get her kit out of the car, that baby was arriving today. I finally called Andrew and told him to come home – by taxi from the city, not train.



At about midday Nathan needed a nappy change that was way past my concentration ability to clean up, so I popped him in the shower to wash, while I sat on the toilet for a while. I noticed I had a bloody show when I got up. I reported this to my midwife when I next passed through the lounge room. She quietly got on the phone to our back up midwife to see where she was. She was unable to leave work, so we had a quiet brainstorm about who I wanted to come and be back up. My choice was contacted, she was only 15 minutes away and free to join us. That was fate stepping in to pull together the birth team that ended up being in attendance.

Andrew arrived home shortly afterwards, hearing me getting slowly more vocal as the contractions were really getting teeth. They were truly all centred at the base of my uterus and my cervix, with no seeming regularity, timewise or lengthwise to them. Admittedly, I was not watching the clock, I was just wandering around, and stopping where I needed to, when I needed to. The birth pool started being filled at about 12.45pm, while I paced around it and the lounge room and the kitchen.

I had a massive contraction that actually had me crying out, with tears and the first thought of, 'What am I doing, I don't want this, go away' (transition anyone?). This contraction is caught on video and it was a long one, with Nathan in the background asking why I'm crying, with Andrew reassuring him that I am okay, just working hard.

When it finished, I stood up with my eyes closed, wiped the tears away and looked at the camera with a relieved expression. Thank goodness for the spells of nothing between contractions!

I sent Andrew and Nathan off to get Julia from school at 1.15pm. Apparently as soon as Nathan was gone, I got really vocal and serious about working through the contractions, which now seemed to be constant. The water temperature felt so good on my hand; when it was deep enough, I literally threw my clothes off and loaded myself in. Bliss. Utter bliss.

The heat and depth of the water dropped me to another level totally. I laboured hanging over the edge of the pool. I laboured with my head resting back on the edge, with my hands wedged under my sacrum. I could hear with each contraction that I was really starting to bear down. The roar I had with Nathan was happening again. I heard my midwife asking the student if she had Andrew's number, because he and the children had to come home RIGHT NOW. His was the only number not listed on the fridge. I could have given it to them, but of course, they didn't want to disturb me. They found the number, his phone didn't answer anyway.



I was on my knees over the edge of the pool, when I felt that familiar poo sensation that I recognised as baby moving past the bowel. I tried to not push, but it felt so good to work with that, so I sat back on one knee, with the other lunged to the side, put my hand down to feel what was happening. I could feel his head pass down the birth canal, I could feel his head crowning, and it felt so, so good.

I was again trying not to push, trying to breathe him out, but he was just coming, my body was in control, not my mind. As soon as his head was born, I rested back to lean my head on the pool side. Again, the contractions were ruling my actions. My midwife was reminding me to breathe; I was trying, but the roar was happening.

It was now that Andrew and the kids ran in the door. Apparently they had heard my roaring from three doors away and bolted home. Andrew picked up the video camera in time to film Joshua's body being pushed into the water at 1.39pm. The kids had raced to be beside my head. Nathan called out, "There's the baby!" My midwife had to unravel his body in the water as he was tangled in cord bodily and around his neck, then she brought him straight out and into my arms.

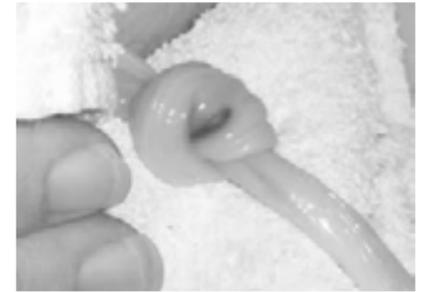
The time from his body birthing to him being given into my arms was just seconds. Julia was indeed already touching Joshy as I was still coming to terms with the fact that I had done it. Given birth, at home, in the pool, to our third child. Fantastic, powerful, shocking, fast, intense, satisfying, primal, sensual, joyous.

All wrapped up in a few hours, with the prize of a beautiful 7lb, 14oz (3.5kg) fair haired baby boy. I would say that officially first stage was about an hour and 20 minutes, 2nd stage about 15 minutes, physiological 3rd stage about 25 minutes. So all up, about 2 hours again.

Joshua had a little cry, then gazed around and fell asleep. During this time my dear friend Alexis arrived and I realised that the people around me at that moment were exactly who were meant to be there. From having a planned cast of thousands, to just my close family and trusted midwives, with a dear friend arriving practically straight after the birth. Couldn't have asked for more.

I stayed sitting in the pool for about 25 minutes, then I got up to get out, so I could birth the placenta. It was then that I saw that there was a knot in his cord.

What a spin out that was. Born wrapped in his cord and with a true knot in it as well. What a special boy I had.



The placenta came without a fuss (Alexis helped with that by holding the bowl for me), we moved to the lounge, then Julia cut the cord and Joshy had his first feed.

No problems with bleeding, or feeding, or anything. The only reportable 'issues' were that some of the membrane was retained (came out later that day) and I got a tear along my old scar line to the second degree. Again. Pesky scar tissue. And while being sutured, a small nick was made to my bowel, but that was discovered and addressed straight away and I am on antibiotics to counter any possible infection. Joshua does have what appears to be positional talipes of the left foot, so will be seen by a paediatric boneman ASAP. Oh, and no worries with my blood type being AB- either, as so is he. Very glad I didn't have prophylactic anti-D during this pregnancy.

Here I am on day three at home with my husband and older children, with milk coming in, and a beautiful, healthy, calm and clear newborn. Perfect. Normal. So simple. Home birth rocks!

Isis Caple is now 38 years old and a junior midwife at a regional hospital. She lives with her husband, three children (Julia 13, Nathan 11 and Joshua 7), cat Harimou and dog Charlie. At the time of Joshua's birth she was a SAHM, who dabbled in doula work and birth advocacy.



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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.

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Siblings at Birth: another view

BY KIRRILEE HEARTMAN



two boys when I was birthing my first daughter. My boys often went for sleepovers to my mother's, so it was no unusual circumstance for them. For my fourth and fifth babies it was too hard to arrange sending the children to a close relative if the birth was to occur overnight, and in any case my mother was invited to witness these births.

We made a 'daytime' plan where my mother-in-law would take the children, and our night time plan was to do nothing, trusting that the children would remain soundly asleep, and for both these last two births, which did occur overnight, this is exactly what happened. Even our light sleeper who stumbles into our bedroom numerous times a night remained asleep! There are many precious memories from those births, with my children stumbling out from their beds to find their new sibling had emerged during the night.

There is however, one exception to this rule. During my fifth birth, the pool, filled with water, suddenly split apart and began deflating. This happened as I was in transition. To avoid flooding our house we did have to wake up my then 12 year old son to help bail out the water. In the end I gave birth on the lounge room rug, only a few feet away from my madly bailing son. The midwife assures me his eyes were fixed elsewhere, but I do remember worried thoughts flitting through my mind between those primal urges to push. My son, on the cusp on puberty, watching his mother give birth?

For a while afterward I felt deeply uncomfortable with this. It is one thing to not want my children present at birth because I feel they are too young to really understand. It is another, more confronting and complex situation to feel my child is too old to be present due to his impending puberty. Now however, nearly three years later, I have made peace with this unusual birth and my elder son's role in it. It is simply our story now. Family history.

I have many friends who have siblings at birth, for whom this experience is something they cherish and hold precious – and I wholeheartedly support that for them. In Attachment Parenting and natural birth circles it is a really popular choice nowadays to have siblings present. It is simply not what feels right for me.

Kirrilee is the mother of five children and former Editor of *Birthings*. She runs a Steiner Playgroup and craft workshops for women and children. She blogs at www.mothering.com and www.kirrileeheartman.wordpress.com.

Photos: Siblings cuddling Robin in 2012.



I have never planned to have siblings at the births of my subsequent children. For me, the reason is simple – for me to birth smoothly I need to fully surrender, in mind and body, to the forces operating in my body. I need to feel safe, to have space to go deep within. And I need to be the centre of attention of the caregivers and support people present.

I know I could not achieve any of these things with my children present. I would be split in two – the birthing woman and mother, both jostling to be the dominant energy. I have felt that split before. My first two births took place in a birth centre and then hospital, and I remember all too well having to advocate for myself whilst in the throes of labour: the warrior competing with the labouring woman who wanted to retreat. Needless to say those births were slow, and pushed me to the limits in terms of pain and that struggle to surrender.

There is one more reason why I am not keen on siblings at birth. We are a family heavily influenced by anthroposophy and the ideas of Rudolf Steiner. A key aspect of these ideas is the preservation or protection of the innocent, imaginative space of childhood. A child is prepared for the world not by exposing them to its raw reality from the beginning, but by nurturing the spiritual and etheric forces which help the child grow into optimal health in mind, body and spirit. Allowing the child to remain in the dreamy, highly imaginative state that is natural for them in early childhood in turn strengthens their sense of self – the best preparation there is in facing a difficult, complex world.

These ideas resonate deeply with me. Birth can be beautiful, natural, powerful and intense, but I just never felt it was right for my children to see it in graphic detail. They would have no context to place it in.

How does this work in practical terms? My firstborn went with my mother when I went into labour for the second time, as did my



Passing it on

BY MELODIE GLASS

It is hard to recall exactly the moment that we decided to invite our children to watch their siblings being born. Being an early childhood teacher I guess I always seem to view the world with two lenses – that of my own (an adult view) and that of the child.

Knowing that children are naturally curious, and often open to and accepting of new events, we decided that our daughter would probably be interested in meeting her sibling at her arrival. And of course it would be, when the time came, her choice.

So we set about making preparations – this time, my second home birth would involve two 'birth plans': one for me and one for my daughter. Her plan included options and ideas for her own special 'birth partner'. It also included phone numbers of friends for play dates, addresses of favourite parks and cafes – after all who knew how long her sister would take to arrive! Other preparations included reading our favourite book *Hello Baby* which would be read over and over for years to come.

On the evening of her sister's birth, she woke in the middle of the starry night. She was only 2.5 years old, but so very aware that things were different in our house – her sister was on her way. Given I was very close to birth, my mother first brought her to a glass door to watch all that was unfolding, and after a few moments she gently asked if she wanted to go in. She responded, "yes" and entered and sat, eyes wide open, on my mother's lap only saying a few words: "mummy saying ooh ooh". When her sister arrived the connection was almost instant. As I watched these two girls meet I felt proud, not only of the birth, but the gift I was giving my daughters too.

Fast forward two years and the girls are now five and 2.5 years, and they are eagerly awaiting the arrival of their brother. This time the older of the two tells tales to the younger about what it is like to be at a birth (though we do wonder how much is recalled and how much is created). By this stage we have two copies of *Hello Baby* and they are very well thumbed. In fact they can tell the whole story to each other, with poetic licence to suit what they think will happen in their home soon.

As labour begins our home settles into what feels like a familiar joyful feeling of getting ready for a new baby. This time the girls are actively involved. They make crowns to wear at his arrival and help their daddy with water, hot cloths and preparing clothes. The younger one bounces about the room with her birth partner, the older one hangs on the side of the pool patiently watching me labour.

When our little boy slips earthside the girls are bursting with excitement and delight. The little one almost falls into the pool trying to get to her brother, the older one swoons over him. We are a family of five from the very start. The girls delight in every part of this process and again, as I look at them, I feel so proud of the gift I have given them.



Now over a year on, the girls still talk about their experiences from time to time, and they talk about being mothers one day. One thinks she wants to go to hospital (because she likes hospitals!) and the other thinks she'll birth at home. At only six and four, they have a lot of time to consider their own birth choice. But one thing I feel certain of: they will now carry an imprint of what birth can be: joyful, natural and full of love.

Melodie Glass lives in Sydney's Inner West and is mother to Isabelle (8/08/08), Stella (29/11/10) and Max (28/04/13) who were all born at home. Since her first birth in the UK she has been a strong advocate for birth choice and education, including teaching *calmbirth*®. She now works full time in children services management and is married to an amazing man, Nik, who is a full time super-daddy and part time music educator.

Photos by Leanda Cochrane, Studio 22 Photography, <http://studio22photography.com.au>.



Two Big Meet Their

Brothers Big Little Sister

BY NICOLA JUDD



When we decided back in 2012 that our third baby would be born at home, we put a lot of preparation into what that birth would be like. Having had a previous traumatic birth, I was determined to tackle my fears head on, take control and forge a positive relationship with my midwife in order to have the best chance at the birth I wanted.

All of my preparations were going well; I felt confident and happy and was looking forward to the birth. But the area I wasn't so sure about was who else, apart from my husband and my midwife, would be at the birth.

Our eldest son, Benjamin, had just turned five and our youngest son, Alexander, was two and a half years old. Not having much family support where we lived, and knowing that our babies seemed to like coming at night, we weren't sure who we might call upon to look after them when I went into labour.

I started to think that maybe having them at the birth would be okay. When I'm in labour I go deep into myself and knew that having them in the room was unlikely to cause me to lose focus. I was more concerned with how they would handle seeing me in pain and hearing me make strange noises.

I started talking to them a bit more about the upcoming birth of their new baby sister. They were both quite excited about the baby in my tummy. They talked to her, felt her kick and cuddled my belly a lot. They had already been with me for most of my antenatal appointments where my midwife, or one of her colleagues, had come to our home to do my check-ups, and they had been at the scans we'd had. It seemed right to give them the opportunity to be there when she was born if they wanted to.

We went from talking about the birth to watching a few YouTube clips of homebirths. I told them how noisy I might be and that it did hurt when the baby came out, but that it was a good pain, because I knew I was okay and that we would have a lovely new baby at the end of it.

They were most excited when the birth pool arrived and we did a test inflation. They really couldn't wait to have a go in there, but I explained they would have to wait their turn; me and their new sister had first dibs on it. I promised they could have a good swim in it after that.

As the birth drew nearer, we made some alternative arrangements in case, come the time, they didn't want to stay and watch. I felt fairly sure that Benji would want to stay but I wasn't so sure that Alex, at just two, would understand and I wanted to have somewhere for him to go if he didn't want to be there. Our nearest neighbour, who we are good friends with, offered to have them both at any time of the day or night if needed. It was good to know we had a plan and I felt confident that whatever happened, all would be well.

I went into labour at 3am on the 4th of February, 2013. I lay in bed for an hour or so to be sure that it was the real deal and, when I felt certain that it was, I woke my husband up and asked him to get everything ready.

The pool was already 90 per cent inflated as we'd guessed that I'd be in labour some time that week. I laboured for a while on the birth ball and then got my husband to start filling the pool with hot water. My midwife, Kim, from Belmont Midwifery Group Practice arrived at 6am, not long after I'd got in the pool. I was having intense and frequent contractions already, but the pool offered fantastic relief and I moaned and moaned my way through them.

Benjamin woke up not long after the midwives arrived. He came and said hello to me and chatted a little bit with me in between contractions. My husband made him some breakfast and he went to watch the TV in the other room while he ate it. He came back in a few moments later saying that he'd like to go to the neighbour's house as I was being too noisy and he couldn't hear the TV! We laughed; I was being very noisy, and my husband quickly popped him round to our neighbour's.

Just as my husband came back, Alex came through having been woken up by the noise as well. Bryan offered to take him next door too, but he was adamant that he wanted to stay with me. By now, I knew that the baby was going to be here soon. Kim suggested I check myself to see if I could feel the baby's head. I could, and it wasn't far away! The intensity of the contractions was still growing every time. I was louder each time too as I moaned my way through them. I felt strong though and in control.

Alex continued to sit on his dad's lap, near the birth pool, quietly watching as his sister started to emerge into the world. There were a few issues with her finally coming out; but at 7.11am, with some assistance from Kim, I finally birthed my daughter, still in her caul.

She was perfect; a beautiful chunky 4.25kg, and I had done it! The joy, the relief; such strong feelings and such love for my daughter. I marvelled at her as I cradled her to my chest. My husband quickly ran to our neighbours to get Benjamin back home to meet his new sister. I stayed in the pool while our little family got to meet its newest member.

The boys were thrilled and touched her head and kissed her gently. The midwives took some pictures for us and Bry put the kettle on for a well-earned cuppa. After about half an hour, Benjamin cut her cord. I felt so happy. Everything was as I had hoped. The birth had been intense but empowering, and my first daughter was here with us safely.

I was so happy that it had been a good experience for the rest of the family too. Alex, nearly two years later, still talks about Vivienne being born in the pool and seeing her come out. And Benji is still proud as punch to have been the one who cut her cord. It truly was a beautiful, healing birth and it was made all the more special by the boys being so involved.

Nicola Judd is a 38 year old mother of three young children. Originally from the UK, she now lives in Newcastle, NSW. She has background in training and administration but currently runs a freelance transcription and editing business from home. Nicola became interested in all things birth after a traumatic birth experience with her second child. She is now a vocal supporter of homebirth, birth trauma counselling and women-centred birth practices. Nicola hopes to one day be able to train as a midwife herself.

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SO LONG, An interview

FAREWELL..... with Sonja

BY JO HUNTER

When I first started practising as a homebirth midwife, Sonja was an enormous support to me. A colleague and friend that I knew I could call on any time of the day or night. I had worked alongside her at lots of births as a doula prior to becoming a midwife. So when Virginia asked me to interview Sonja for Birthings magazine regarding her time as a homebirth midwife, I was more than happy to do so (plus it was a good excuse for a long lunch together and a glass [or two] of wine).

Where did you first practise as a midwife?

After I trained, I completed a postgraduate year at Campbelltown Hospital. After that I worked at Westmead Hospital for six months but I hyperventilated just about every time I walked through the door. I could get a job doing the same work closer to home, so I returned to Campbelltown Hospital for another year. After that, I moved to Camden Hospital and worked in the Birth Centre, then I moved to caseload midwifery through Camden. This is where I learnt about one on one continuity of midwifery care. I loved that job and the relationships I developed with women.

When I was at Uni Jan Robinson was one of my lecturers [for those who don't know Jan, she was a homebirth midwife practising in Sydney for many years before she retired]. Jan always talked about homebirth midwifery and I thought, 'I want to be like her when I grow up.'

Natalie Dash, a doula from the Blue Mountains called me to ask if I would support a woman wanting to birth at home. I said, "I can't, I don't know how!" Natalie called back and said the woman was unable to find a midwife to attend her and tried to convince me to support this woman. I ended up agreeing as long as Natalie was going to be there too.

My first planned home birth as a midwife ended in a transfer to hospital and I thought, 'No, this is not for me,' but I already had other bookings because Nat kept referring women to me as there was no homebirth midwife working in the mountains. I always said I'd babysit the mountains until you were ready Jo. I juggled working in caseload and in private practice and then left the hospital and went into full time private practice.

What have you loved the most about your career?

2009 was my best year of practice. I was really busy that year, only attending planned homebirths and practising exactly how I wanted to practise. I really loved working with families having their first baby.

I love that in homebirth you can just be yourself, talk to women like friends and not have to wear a 'professional persona'. I also love attending the births of repeat clients, they're really special, the relationship with these women is different. We already know each other really well and are very comfortable with each other. I have a few clients where I have been midwife for all 4 of their babies.



Why have you decided to stop practising?

Over the years there have been necessary transfers to hospital and the complaints made by hospital personnel to the Nurses and Midwifery Board (the Board) started to come. Some of these complaints have been about the most ridiculous things and not one complaint has come from my clients. Public conditions were placed on my registration and it got to the point that whenever I transferred to hospital, staff would make a complaint after viewing my registration and seeing that I had 'conditions'.

I've decided to stop practising because I cannot make a promise to women that I will still be 'allowed' to practice without restrictions, or supervision or suspension for the entirety of their pregnancy.

Since National registration came in, the handling of complaints by the Board has changed and many midwives, including myself, have had conditions slapped on their registrations before an investigation has taken place; 'guilty until proven innocent'.

It took 4.5 years for one of my complaints to be concluded. The Board's catch cry is "for the protection of the public". I don't understand how taking 4.5 years to conclude an investigation "protects the public". Surely if my practise is so concerning you'd think they would be a lot quicker about their investigations.

When a midwife is called in front of the Board there is a panel of four people who interview the midwife about the notification, but only one of the people on the panel is required to be a midwife. So we have people who are not even midwives, let alone homebirth midwives, sitting in judgement of our practise. They are radiologists, physiotherapists, nurses and businessmen as the 'consumer reps'. Rarely does the token midwife have private practice experience.

How do you feel about ceasing practice as a midwife?

I'm ok with it now. I definitely suffered from PTSD and I have regrets about how I handled the complaints and the Board. The timing was particularly unlucky because the handling of the first complaint was right when we were moving from state-based registration to national registration and this was the first time this new board had to handle complaints and I don't think they really knew what they were doing.

I really believe that we need a separate midwifery board, so we are judged by our peers and not random people who have no idea about midwifery, let alone private practice and homebirth.



What aspects of homebirth and private practice are you NOT going to miss?

I'm not going to miss the phone ringing at 2.30am, or having to organise holidays nine months in advance. I won't miss having to stay at home on weekends just in case someone calls or having to stop at one glass of wine when it is really good and you want another.

I won't miss the bullying from the Board and I won't miss the clients who don't pay. I don't think people realise how much comes out of our income, we need to pay tax, insurance, car payments, petrol, tolls, wear and tear on the car, memberships to the union, birth pools, pool liners, oxygen, midwifery supplies, College memberships, ongoing education, Midwifery Practice Review, the list goes on. You don't go into private practice for the money, that's for sure.

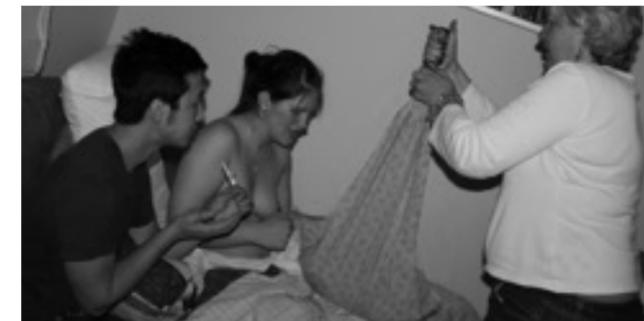
What are you going to miss the most?

I'm going to miss the women, visits with them and their families. I'm really going to miss attending beautiful births and watching women transform. I will miss working in my own time and the mostly flexible hours. I'll miss my colleagues and our meetings and support systems and I'll miss sharing women's journeys and becoming part of the family for a short time.

I really am ok with my decision now, I think it's the right one for me: to stop practising on my own terms. I don't have the energy for the fight any more and although I have been forced to make this decision before 'they' make it for me, I really don't want to be another casualty of the bullying and harassment of the Board and be part of the media circus that comes with it.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank you Sonja for your everlasting commitment and support to the women and families you have served over the years. There is so much more to Sonja's story but it simply won't fit over a few pages (that's for your memoirs Sonja!). I'd like to thank you for the support you have given me personally and professionally over the years. Thank you for your hilarity, you never lost your sense of humour, even in the darkest of hours. You have left a very big hole in the homebirth community and you'll be dearly missed by many.

Jo is a home birth midwife living in the Blue Mountains with her partner of 24 years, four teenage kids, a crazy dog and a menagerie of other animals.



Lewis George Fallah's

Birth Story

by Anna Fallah



It was Thursday October 2nd and in my most typical dramatic Anna flare, I had decided at 40+5 that I was destined to remain pregnant forever! This was the longest I had gone in a pregnancy. I started getting a lot of pressure that day. It really felt like baby had dropped the rest of the way into my pelvis. As a treat I went and got a massage at the local shopping centre. In my pregnant state, I even managed to scrape a pole in the family SUV, much to my husband's delight!

That night it was business as usual, putting my other two children Alex (10) and Ari (3) to bed.

My husband asked me if I was ok and I just mentioned the pressure I was feeling. He asked me if I was feeling "birthy" to which I replied that I actually was. We laid down to bed at about 9.30pm and my husband fell fast asleep. I, however, was having trouble sleeping so I bought a contraction timer app on my iPad as the pressure was coming in waves.

I realised that the pressure was coming roughly every 8-9 minutes. I didn't say anything to hubby as I wanted him to have as much sleep as possible. I got up and proceeded to slowly set up the birth space while still timing the contractions. They were a bit irregular. I would get a full one minute contraction at every 8 minutes and then a 30 second contraction at the halfway mark so I thought it was all just a lot of mucking around and prelabour.

It then dropped to every 6 minutes with a 30 second contraction at the 3 minute mark and at 10.50pm, I made a call to my midwife Georgina. I explained what was happening but was hesitant to say it was the real deal after a false alarm the week earlier. I told her that I would call her in half an hour. Things were picking up. I called my midwife again at 11.30, told her to have a rest and that I'd call when I needed her. Then I rang back at midnight and told her to come. The surges had really picked up and I was no longer wanting to be alone.

I put in a call to my photographer and student doula. At this stage with contractions coming every 3-4 minutes, I put on the tens machine and proceeded to wake up my husband. It took him a while to warm up to what was going on but I made him have a cup of tea and put the liner in the pool.

I was leaning over the beanbag, kneeling on a gym mat, listening to birth affirmations on my earphones and using the tens machine and relaxation breathing techniques during surges. At 1am people started to arrive. I stayed pretty tuned out to it all, getting up occasionally to show people where things were. The surges were best described as very intense pressure, not really pain. But I had to concentrate very hard to get through them.

This continued with surges coming probably every 1-2 minutes and I started vocalising. I remember thinking that the second breath was the hardest. I would average 3-4 breaths per minute so I knew the peak of my contraction would be in my second breath. I never stopped deep breathing even in between my contractions as this is what got me through my labour.

We had put some white noise on in the kids' bedrooms as I wasn't sure I wanted them in the room for the birth. Ari did awake at one point but was comforted back to sleep by his father and Alex, despite having his bedroom directly below the birth space, managed to sleep like a log.

I had asked fairly early on for the pool to be filled. I am not a very vomity person but I asked for a bucket to be near as I was getting a lot of heartburn and reflux and was feeling quite shaky. I remember saying to my midwife that if this was just prelabour that I didn't want to do it any more, to which I think there were a few giggles as she explained that this was indeed the real deal. As it turned out, it was in fact transition.

I started getting a catch in my breath and feeling pushy during contractions. I asked to get in the pool but in order to do that I reluctantly had to take off the tens. I needed help doing this and the poor birth supporters got zapped while doing it. I leapt into the pool.

Almost instantaneously I was pushing. This was the part that I had been looking forward to but it was a lot more intense than I could have possibly imagined. I could feel absolutely every single millimetre of baby moving down and spreading my muscles and pelvis. I was overwhelmed. It was the first time I thought that I couldn't do this.

I'm not sure how long I was pushing but I remember feeling like his head had or was coming out only to be told that they could not see the head. It turns out that pressure was his membranes bulging out of me. My midwife asked if I wanted to reach down to feel the head but I didn't want to unless the head was out.

When I felt it was out I reached down and could feel his head still inside the sac. I then stalled a bit in the urge to push and could feel the baby kicking to get out. I tried a few pushes but nothing happened and my midwife asked me to get out of the pool. There was a fleeting thought of "how the hell am I going to do that?" But you've never seen a lady with a caul-covered head between her legs leap out of a pool faster onto all fours.

The caul ruptured as I landed on all fours and the midwives removed the cord from his neck and attempted to dislodge his posterior shoulder. They weren't successful in that position and I was asked to lay on my back with my knees up at my shoulders. It was in this position that they were able to unbudge his shoulder and I was able to recover and birth my baby.

I was a bit too shocked to catch him myself but my midwife passed him onto my chest where it soon became apparent that bub was a bit shocked too. I reached down between his legs and felt that I had a new son. He did a big poo but didn't cry. He was nice and pink, but just a little quiet. They had to give him a bit of oxygen.

We cuddled skin to skin for an hour. I birthed my placenta and drank a placenta smoothie all the while admiring my new chubby 9lb baby. By the time I passed him to my husband so that I could take a shower, he was screaming the house down.

Ari soon woke up and was brought in to meet his brother and sent to go wake up Alex so that he too could meet his new baby brother. We had a beautiful time bonding together as a new family of five! I am so glad for my birth support and so happy that I was at home in an environment I was comfortable in. This was my first homebirth after a caesarian section and a hospital vbac. It was a very empowering and healing experience and we now feel that our family is truly complete.

My husband's birth story

Despite being at the mercy of the hospital and a rather useless doula for Ari's (our now three year old son) birth, I was still very uneasy about the idea of having a homebirth with our next baby.

My initial thought on the process was that 'my wife is mad', which is a common thought I have regardless, but in this case I am thrilled to say I was absolutely wrong.

Through the nine months leading up to Lewis' birth, the research and the endless number of videos, workshops, articles and book that Anna made me consume (though I did my best to avoid) helped to slowly ease my nerves.

I was still relatively petrified about the idea at heart. Giving birth to a child is something that us men are not exactly comfortable with to start with and historically we've had basically nothing to do with it either.

All we know is there's lots of screaming, pain and hopefully a happy ending in the end, at which point we storm in triumphantly and claim our offspring while congratulating ourselves on the hard work we've done putting up with a near-insane pregnant lady for what was surely a never-ending eternity.

Unfortunately that's a product of our society, priming us to believe that birth is this almost unnatural process that requires a needy hospital environment and a plethora of painkillers that no one really knows the long-term side effects of.

It takes a slight moment of rational thought to realise that female human beings, like all other female animals, are designed to give birth. Millions of years of evolution has created the perfect growing and baby delivering machine.

Sure, some have complications and need the help and advancements of the medical profession – and it's great that we have that at our disposal – but in the great majority of cases, intervention is not required.

What a mother needs is a strong support group that encourages her own natural instincts, something the hospital environment (at least in my experience) appears to be almost entirely opposed to.

For Ari's birth Anna made me promise to not let her have an epidural, something she reiterated over and over again for nine whole months. But when she went in to labour we went straight to the hospital and it didn't take her long to ask for an epidural. I was hoping the doula would step in and reassure her that all was ok and the pains were normal. She didn't, and Anna ended up having an epidural; something she regrets to this day (though thankfully I am not held solely responsible).





Leading up to Lewis' birth we saw plenty of midwives, some a little 'out there'. However, we found an excellent one in Brisbane (Georgina) who put my mind at ease with her progressive approach to birth. She emphasised the natural instincts of the mother and her body. She made sure that all immediately necessary medical equipment was at hand while concurrently keeping the hospital informed and prepped in case we needed to transfer.

We were expecting Lewis in September, but he made his decision to come in October.

It was around 1am on the 3rd of October when Anna woke me up to let me know she was in labour. I didn't really believe her at first (we'd had one false alarm before) but then I eventually realised that it might actually be real. Being 1am, all I wanted to do was sleep.

Once Georgina arrived, I did actually go and have quick lie down. However, it was only for about 15 minutes and I was up and in the right mindset to welcome our little one into this world.

Initially I was expecting the labour to last for hours, at the very least till the sun came out around 5:30am. I closed the door to Ari's room, making sure he didn't wake up thinking something was wrong and I also shut the windows so that the neighbours were not disturbed – even though we had let them know of our intentions to have a home birth and the potential noise.

As the labour progressed I genuinely thought the midwives (of which there were two and one a trainee, in addition to our photographer) were just trying to comfort Anna by telling her that the baby was almost here. Surely not, it was only about 2am. This is meant to last a while, right?

There were a few minutes there where I thought things were going wrong as the midwives asked Anna to change positions a few times and struggled (at least I thought they did) to help bring the baby out but that 'panic' lasted mere moments and by 2:50am little baby Lewis was out.

It was a bit surreal as there were no drugs, no doctors, no hospital and a hell of a lot less screaming than last time when all those things were present. If you logically think about it, with all our existing predispositions to the birthing experience, it really should be the other way around. It's not, and that's the hardest thing to allow your mind to comprehend.

I said to Anna that she made it look really easy and (jokingly) that she has wasted months of my time for an event that appeared to be a piece of cake. Thankfully she didn't have anything close by to throw at me.

Having had kidney stones in the past, I still reckon I've had it worse, but don't tell her I said that.

Lewis didn't make too much noise after he came out, which again caused some concern as I was worried something was wrong. Everyone assured me that indeed his colour was fine and he just needed some time. By about 4am, he was enjoying some skin to skin with his daddy and crying like a champion.

We woke the kids up and all enjoyed cuddling the newborn. I think for us as a family it was such a relief that everything happened at home, in an environment that we had spent months perfecting.

Would I recommend a home birth? Absolutely. It might not be for everyone and it certainly wasn't for me a few years ago, but now when I think about it, my hospital experience was significantly more stressful – particularly the days following the birth – than just being in our own home and bringing our child straight to where he will be safest and most loved.

What really reassured me was the availability of the hospital in case we needed to go and the midwife's absolute guarantee that she would not hesitate, even for a moment, if she felt something was wrong.

Given this is our last child (or so I hope), I am glad Anna got the birth she wanted. To be perfectly honest, I wouldn't have cared if the baby came out via an alien extraction device, all I wanted was for Anna to be happy with her birth experience. I now feel like she finally got to do something she had for so long felt she was unable to do. She trusted her body and her own instincts, further aided by a strong support group around her, and let nature take its course. A beautiful realisation of just how powerful the human mind and body truly is when it's in the right and positive mental state.

If you're reading this and wondering, then no, I am not a hippy. I am the opposite, actually.

Not too long ago the thought of having a child at home absolutely scared the life out of me, but having gone through it now, I wouldn't want it any other way.

Anna and her husband Alborz are both 30 years old. Anna is a stay at home mum for their three boys, Alex, Ari & Lewie. Alborz is a motoring journalist for Caradvice.com.au. When they fell pregnant with Lewie, they were living in Lavender Bay NSW but relocated mid-pregnancy to Brisbane QLD.



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River Lily - born 6:26am 23rd July 2013

BY INEKA HANEPEN



I looked into our little boy's crisp blue eyes. We named him Jarrah and the name had certainly fitted him. He was strong, tall and grounded. Jarrah's birth was special and I remember it so well. In the birthing phase I remember virtually every movement he made. It was a waterbirth in a hospital. I'm amazed I managed that.

I'd been through the beautiful, confusing, full on gateway of becoming a mother at 23 and now we were ready for another little one, and she was ready for us.

This time around I was certain the hospital couldn't support us in how I wanted to birth, even though the first time I really did get lucky. The drive during labour, the environment, and mostly the new faces that would appear on various parts during pregnancy wanting to prod me with things and tick boxes not to mention when I walked in the hospital doors in my most powerful turned vulnerable state. The check-ups with the nurses who just ticked the boxes and didn't really try to connect with me - not like I wanted.

And so, at three months pregnant we went searching for our birth path and in this, a very special place to birth our second child.

At first I considered a doula. She was wonderful and really opened the door for me to really trust in my instinct to birth at home. She sent us to a very special woman, Sheryl Sidery and it was clear she would join us on this next part of the journey. I had enormous trust in her. Sheryl wasn't just a kick-ass woman who is confident in her own abilities supporting women in birth. She was confident in me. She reflected back to me what I deeply knew was true - that my body would birth my baby and it would be an ecstatic and deeply spiritual experience.

My next part of the search was for a new place to call home. We were living with my mother at this point. Somehow this little bush cottage appeared for rent at Cottage Point. Cottage Point is a remote little collection of about 50 houses in the National Park in Sydney's north. The house was a small bush cottage, kind of falling apart with three bedrooms, possums living in the roof and a glorious view across Cowan Waters to the untouched National Park. All at once, I knew I felt more supported birthing with the soil beneath my feet, all the trees and the water, than I would in a hospital.

We moved in when I was about six months pregnant and I began preparations setting up the home and preparing for birth mentally,

spiritually and physically. Every day I put so much intention into the birth and cleared barriers in my mind about birthing. I was certain it was going to be amazing. I was going for an ecstatic birth!

At almost 42 weeks she was ready to come. I lay with my sweet blonde headed boy as he fell asleep and started to feel the beginning of my surges. I smiled, whispered that he would meet his sister in the morning and held his little hand till he went to dreamland.

We were excited. It had been a turbulent two weeks waiting for her. It had rained non-stop and we had all had a cold, so we were glad she wasn't ready. We walked outside to see the 'super' full moon and the still, clear, cold night sky.

I retreated to our bed and Col moved the birthpool into our bedroom. I always knew I wanted to birth in there.

My dad had visited us a few days before when we had it all blown up in the living room ready to go. He was surprised and joked I was going to have a baby in there. He was secretly really proud. It felt really safe to me - the safest place in the world to be there in that little pool.



I laboured on the bed for a couple of hours with just a small dim salt lamp on. At 3am, Col told me he was calling Sheryl.

I was kneeling in a small section between the bed and the cupboard when Sheryl came in. I reached out for her hand. Surges were very strong and I was needing Sheryl to be there holding the space with my partner.

It felt like what I remembered of transition in Jarrah's birth. My waters hadn't released. After some time, they were getting stronger until there was a space of less than ten seconds where I could rest.

The pool was warm and it was amazing and comfortable in there. It took me back to my days working as a dive instructor where I could descend underneath the water and be in this magical world.

My mind decided to analyse the situation when I felt an urge to give up. I told myself and knew that I was almost at the birthing phase. I was. Before long my sounds turned into low primal roars. It felt good to do them, there in my space. Our baby girl was coming and with a few more openings she came to us in the caul (in the sac).

The sun's first rays were peeking through the embroidered cover hanging over the window. I was surprised to see them as I had no idea what time it was. Our midwife peeled the sac off gently and helped to move the cord from around her neck until the sac was floating magically in the water next to us. She had a few little cries before she rested on my chest. I let the tears of gratitude roll down my face as we heard the call of three kookaburras who had perched outside our bedroom window. They knew - oh that sweet moment of interconnectedness.

I got out of the pool and into a warm towel then into our bed. The delicious smell of home and a new baby.

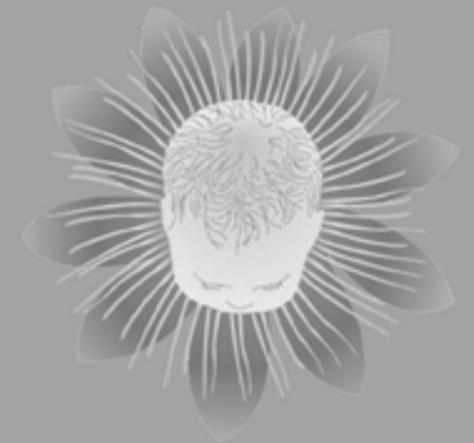
I was on top of the world! We heard the shuffle of Jarrah making his way down the hall. He had slept through all the roars. "What's going on here?" he asked as he pushed open the door.

We placed her in his arms and he fell asleep. Oh, that moment.

Sheryl left us with our sweet new baby, a proud man, an ecstatic woman and a calm happy little boy. This was how birth was meant to be - and I was so grateful.

Ten months on now, we have relocated and I sit in our new home reminiscing about that precious time of River's birth. It was textbook crossed with a fairytale and I still sit in bliss of the journey and of that moment. It was hard to leave that little bush cottage. When it was time to leave I peeked in and out of that room she birthed in with a little tear, and then planted the sac under the tree where the kookaburras sang.

Ineka Hanepen has relocated from Sydney to the Northern Rivers where they are loving the rural coastal lifestyle. Ineka and her partner Col LOVE being able to work from home where they care for their two children together. Ineka is a musician singer/songwriter and local wedding singer. She is inspired by all things love and community, music, art, nature, the ocean, conscious parenting, gardening and her two little teachers, Jarrah and River.



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The Birth of Lacey Lee

BY JESSICA LARCOMBE



We finished setting up the birth pool – filling the top ring with air and fitting the liner. I had lit all the candles in my birth space and was burning lavender essential oil.

By 10am contractions were easing off - I'd only had one or two contractions in the previous hour. I couldn't help but feel disappointed. Isobel went to sleep and Baden suggested I lie down with her and try to get some rest. I laid down for an hour or so but I found it difficult to sleep with my mind racing and the infrequent and mild contractions.

I got up at about 11.30am and saw that Baden had blown out the candles. I was terribly disappointed and thought "great, another false start". I had pain in my lower back, so I sat on the gym ball while Baden gave me a massage.

Isobel, who had given up on day sleeps since she was 18 months slept until almost one o'clock! When she woke, we went outside and played. At around 2.30pm I realised that I couldn't remember the last time I'd had a contraction and down-hearted, I rang Hazel to let her know. She was great and gave me a 'prescription'. I was to go for a walk; to get some fresh air and some sunlight and if able, to stop for a drink and snack along the way.

We set out just after 3pm and walked towards a nearby café. My sister rang and told me that she and my mum had come up and were just hanging about in town. She asked if I wanted them to go home. I told her that labour had stopped, we were walking and I didn't think anything was happening. I suggested that they come over and make us dinner before heading home. When we got to the café, it was closed, but we didn't mind as none of us were hungry. We kept walking. At 4.30pm we got home and my mum and sister arrived soon after.

I sat on the floor in the lounge room and stretched. Contractions had started up again and I timed them discreetly by glancing at my phone. They were regularly 10 minutes apart for an hour or so. I rang Hazel to let her know and she asked if I wanted her to come in. Again, I told her, "Not yet." She told me to call her when I was ready and to remember it would take her at least half an hour to get here.

I re-lit the candles and oil burner in my birth space and then calmly walked around and swayed through contractions. My mum and sister asked if I still wanted them to leave and I told them they could stay. I wasn't interested in eating so I sat on the gym ball and watched some of my favourite YouTube birth videos while everyone else ate their dinner. Isobel came to join me when she had finished and I remember I was crying.

We started to fill the birth pool and ran out of hot water when it wasn't even a quarter full. My mum and sister filled all of our largest pots and placed them on the stove to boil. Luckily they were able to fill the pool without having to bother our neighbours.

Lacey was born on Monday 15th September 2014 at 2.41am. Her birth was incredible; the labour was long, powerful and intense.

We started preparing our daughter, Isobel (who is now two), for the birth of her baby brother or sister as soon as we found out we were expecting. We decided early on that we wanted to give birth at home, a large factor in that decision being that we wanted Isobel to be present.

We prepared her by talking about the baby, labour and birth with her whenever possible, watching homebirth videos on YouTube and reading her children's books about birth. Her favourite bedtime story from the time we were about 30 weeks was *We're having a homebirth!*. Our wonderful midwife, Hazel, involved her in our antenatal appointments and we always listened to Isobel's heartbeat after listening to the baby's.

Once our birth pool arrived at 38 weeks, we set it up in her playroom (our birth space) and it was her favourite place for tea parties, story time and 'sleep overs'. She loved explaining that this is where "Mummy [will] push the baby out" and we would take turns role-playing the labour and birth, practicing the sounds and movements Mummy might make.

I went into labour on Sunday 14th September at around 5.30am. This was my due date and I was feeling very excited, even though I had already had a few false starts. I laid in bed until around 6.30am, breathing through the mild, roughly 10 minute apart contractions, when Isobel woke up. She wasn't feeling well so we went out into the living room together, where we cuddled, read our birth books and bounced together on our gym balls.

At around 8.15am I decided to call our midwife, Hazel, to let her know that things were happening. Contractions were still mild and were anywhere from 5-10 minutes apart. She was getting her family ready to take to their local country show and wondered if she should cancel and come over. I told her to go as I felt things were still a few hours off (they were actually many hours off). I then rang my sister and mum to let them know too and although they were both eager to drive up straight away, I asked that they hold off for the moment.



Lacey Lee

Contractions continued to build. Hazel sent a message at 7pm asking if I was ready yet. I replied saying that I thought I was ok. Just five minutes later, I sent her another message saying that I was ready. She arrived about 30 minutes later, followed by our student midwife, who had attended a couple of my antenatal appointments. Hazel listened to the baby's heartbeat and watched me through a few contractions.

I continued to walk through the contractions, swayed my hips, banged my thighs and sought out quiet, empty corners to "aaahhhh". Hazel and Baden followed me through the house to apply pressure to my hips whenever and wherever I stopped.

At around 8.30pm, Hazel suggested that I call the photographer we'd arranged. I still wasn't sure if it was really happening but I got Baden to send her a message anyway. She arrived soon after.

I had to stay really focused with so many people in my space. During contractions I wanted nothing but to hide away and would search for the quietest corners and spaces to rock, sway and "ahhh" until the contraction eased again. At many stages I wished everyone would leave to allow Baden, Isobel and I to labour in private.

Between contractions Hazel rubbed my lower back, which felt great. She showed Baden how my hips and sacrum were widening as the baby descended. "Hazel just said you have a fat arse," he told me. It felt good to have a laugh.

I loved having Isobel with us. She helped me to smile and laugh and relax. She watched my contractions with amazement. There was no fear. But, she was getting tired. After a couple of attempts to get her to sleep, my sister took her for a drive. It was 10.30pm. I was incredibly disappointed as I realised that Isobel wasn't going to be present for the birth of her baby brother or sister.

I had just hopped into the pool. It was warm and I was relaxed. Contractions slowed. I wasn't in the pool for long before I needed to use the toilet. On getting out of the pool, contractions were instantly more intense. But, I didn't feel like hopping back in. I hugged Baden and swayed. Hazel suggested we have a lie down and that I try to get some rest. She asked everyone to leave us alone in our birth space. Baden and I lay on the sofa bed and cuddled. It was just what I needed. Contractions had spaced out again. I moaned through a few contractions in the half hour or so that we lay there. It was difficult getting through the contractions lying down but, I needed the rest and it gave me the opportunity to re-focus.

I hopped back into the pool. Contractions were getting much more intense. I was "aahh"-ing very loudly to get through them and moving around the birth pool, squatting, swaying, rocking, doing whatever worked. I remember sensing that we were nearing midnight. "What's the time?" I asked. "Don't worry about the time," Hazel told me. "I need to know," I responded. "It's 10 minutes to midnight," someone informed me. "Oh" I cried, "I'm not going to have a September 14th baby". Everyone laughed and we agreed that the 15th of September sounded just as good.

Hazel asked if I wanted Baden to hop into the pool. I shook my head. "None of you deserve to have to see him in his speedos," I joked.

I continued moving and "ahhh"-ing and then relaxing between contractions in the pool, getting up and going to the toilet as needed. Back in the pool, I felt the baby's head.



It was oh-so-close but then moments later it was gone. This continued for what felt like hours. It probably was.

"I feel like nothing is happening," I told Hazel.

"I think it is," she replied, "I can check if you like, but you hated that last time".

"Yes, I really did," I told her.

"Then I'm not going to," she said. I felt relieved but still confused as to what my body was doing.

Following an incredibly intense and demanding contraction, Hazel asked if I was ready for Baden to hop in the pool. I nodded sadly. He joined me moments later, remarking "I don't know what she's complaining about. It's really nice in here". I continued doing what I needed to. Baden applied pressure to my back and I moved his hands to wherever I needed it most. After contractions, I would fall back on him, squashing him I'm sure. In between contractions he would stroke my back. It felt great to no longer be 'alone'.

The urge to push was vague. "Should I be pushing?" I asked Hazel between contractions. "You are pushing," she replied.

'I am?' I thought. I thought about it quickly and realised that I had been pushing, but only slightly, for quite some time. 'Right,' I thought. 'I'm going to do this now.' I concentrated all my energy into pushing over the next few contractions. I could feel the baby's head but still, it was almost there and then gone again.

"Am I trying to push out this baby bum first?" I asked Hazel, exasperated.

"I don't know," she replied, "would you like me to check?" I nodded. She started putting on her gloves and I started pushing harder. I felt the membranes finally rupture and I announced the same. Hazel asked somebody what the time was. "It's 2.40am" they said. With the next contraction I pushed out our baby's head and moments later, the rest of her body. It was 2.41am.

I brought her little body up to my chest and collapsed back into the wall of the birth pool. Hazel rubbed her body. "Oh your eyes are open," she said. I determined we had a little girl and she started to cry.

"Oh, I hear you, baby girl," I told her. "I'm sorry, that was tough. That was so tough..."

I sat on the seat in the pool and had some tea that Baden handed me. I offered Lacey the breast but felt uncomfortable in the water and decided to hop out. I delivered the placenta soon after and Lacey had her first breastfeed.

After a quick shower, I said a final thank you and goodbye to Hazel and I climbed into bed with Isobel. I cuddled her tight. Lacey was in a basket beside us. We all slept. When Isobel woke a few hours later I told her that she had a little sister.

"Oh a baby" she said, giggling. "Oh, it's so cute... little fingers... little nose... little ears... little mouth..." she exclaimed as she examined her perfect features. Our sweet little baby girl had all of a sudden become a beautiful big sister to our darling "baby Lacey".

Jessica is mum to Isobel and Lacey and wife to Baden. They live in Orange, Central West NSW. She has studied, but is no longer practicing, Naturopathy and hopes to start training to become a doula sometime in the next few years.

The Birth of Lucy Grace

BY VANESSA STASINOWSKY



Our son Lachlan was almost two and a half when we found out that we were expecting his sibling. We weren't sure when we would try and explain to him that I was growing a baby, but he came along to our dating scan with us. When he pointed to the little bean on the screen and announced, "It's a baby!" we figured we would roll with it and start discussing the arrival of a new baby.

We already had Hello Baby by Julie Vivas in our book collection, but I bought some other birth related books including We're Having a Homebirth and Our Water Baby. Hello Baby quickly became the favourite and Lachlan asked for it before bed every night.

We had the same incredible midwives that we had for Lachlan: Hannah Dahlen and Melanie Jackson. The midwife's name in Hello Baby is Anna and before long, Lachlan was correcting me, saying her name was Hannah.

I enjoyed this second pregnancy immensely, as I had enjoyed my first. Obviously this time I had a very energetic boy to run after as well as my teaching job keeping me busy, so I was more tired throughout this pregnancy but otherwise I loved it. I loved our antenatal appointments with our midwives just as much as the first time, possibly even more, as Lachlan was so involved.

Watching Lachlan prepare for the arrival of his sibling with the midwives that had helped to welcome him into the world was such a joy. This time I had to work through a lot of issues that lingered from Lachlan's birth (a planned homebirth – hospital transfer, a long 38 hour posterior labour and a somewhat traumatic experience in the Special Care Unit of the hospital). Hannah and Melanie were amazing through all of that and their support and unwavering faith in me reminded me how fortunate we were to be in their care.

Hannah often commented that this would be my "Redemptive birth" and Melanie believed from the start that this baby would be born quickly and easily at home. I had quite a task regaining confidence in my body but I managed to do so with the help of affirmations and by redoing the Calmbirth course with my husband Joel.

As my pregnancy progressed we spoke with Lachlan about how the baby would come and that I would have to work very hard and make lots of noises to get it out. We practised the noises and watched many birth videos together, including the video of his birth. I hoped that he would be present for the birth, but I did wonder

if he would be distracting or if he would even cope with it, so we organised backup support for him; someone to come and be with him, or take him away as necessary.

At 36 weeks I had a Mother Blessing, which was wonderful. It filled me with such confidence and love and put me in the right headspace for birth. In the days following the Mother Blessing I began to prepare my birth space, hanging the bunting that had been decorated by the important women in my life. The bunting was full of beautiful quotes, affirmations and well wishes. We did a trial run and inflated the pool, which Lachlan thought was great fun. He played in the pool most of the day and we pretended I was in labour. He helped me to make roaring noises while he rubbed my back.

On Friday 25th July (37+5) I woke up from a dream that I was in labour and realised I was quite crampy. I took Lachlan along to my prenatal yoga class and mentioned that I had a feeling it would be my last class. Afterwards we went from shop to shop, picking up final supplies for birth.

That evening I lost my mucous plug and, after texting Hannah and Melanie to let them know, we had an early night in case labour started. Nothing happened overnight but Lachlan was very excited when he woke up and saw that the pool was once again inflated. The weekend passed with lots of insane nesting and pre-labour cramps and niggles. The cramping was most noticeable at night once Lachlan was in bed, which did make me wonder if he would be a hindrance to my labour.

On Monday 28th July (38+1) Lachlan and I had a lazy pyjama day at home. Lachlan had been asking for milk since we woke up but I

wasn't in the mood to breastfeed him so I had been saying no and distracting him. Just before lunchtime he was getting a little clingy and still asking so I said he could have a quick feed. As soon as he began, the cramps started and, for the first time that weekend, they felt like they were coming and going. Some of them caught my breath so I made him stop feeding and timed a couple of the cramps. Some were ten minutes apart and some were three minutes apart. I texted Joel and our midwives to let them know, and then tried to get on with things and ignore the cramps as much as possible.

By around 5pm, I couldn't ignore them any more and I finally admitted I was in early labour. I went for a lie down knowing that labour would probably establish that night. Lying down was uncomfortable so I sat on the gym ball and leant on edge of the bed.

Joel bathed Lachlan and put him to bed around 7pm, which was perfect timing because I started to need Joel around this time. The contractions were coming every five minutes and I appreciated Joel putting pressure into my lower back when they came. Hannah rang me around this point and listened to two contractions over the phone. She said I was still quite chatty so she would leave me be but to contact her if things ramped up. At around 9pm I had two really strong contractions very close together and Joel decided to call Hannah. She heard me have another strong contraction in the background and said she would get straight in her car.

Hannah arrived at about 9:50pm and we had a big cuddle. I couldn't believe we were all here again having another baby. I had a lot of pressure in my lower back and tailbone but it felt different to the posterior labour I'd had with Lachlan. We discussed, and I agreed to a vaginal exam (VE) because of all the pressure. I tried not to be disappointed when Hannah told me I was 4cm, knowing that second labours are very different to first labours, but Lachlan's long, drawn out labour played on my mind. (In a discussion with Hannah afterwards we both regretted the VE because of how much it played on my mind.) I didn't expect to hear 4cm – the contractions felt far too intense to deal with for what I imagined would be hours.

Sometime between 10pm and 11pm the contractions got even more intense and I didn't know how much longer I could deal with them. Heat packs and counter pressure on my hips were providing little relief. I noticed Hannah somewhat frantically trying to fill the pool and I realised she was heating pots on the stove; we had run out

of hot water. I thought that Hannah was filling the pool because I wasn't coping well and that the water might provide some relief. I certainly didn't think the baby was close; I was still thinking about the 4cm.

Around 11pm I started feeling really hot and stripping off my clothes. I was almost crying with the contractions and telling Joel that I couldn't do them any more. One part of me recognised those things as signs of transition but I could not believe that we could be there already. Hannah called Melanie to come and join us and I got into the pool. Hannah was still trying to make it warm enough. Because the pool was set up in our dining room, it was right outside of Lachlan's bedroom and it wasn't long before my noises woke him. He wandered out and into Joel's arms as I roared through the most intense contractions.

This labour was so much harder than Lachlan's. It was much more primal and raw. I somehow managed to look up at Lachlan and smile between contractions and I told him I loved him. Joel and Hannah were excitedly telling him that the baby was coming. Hannah called out encouraging words from the kitchen where she continued to heat pans on the stove. I felt a pop, realised my waters had broken and was so relieved that the water in the pool remained clear (Lachlan's water was meconium stained).

At 11:30pm I put my hand down and felt my baby's head very close to being born. My body took over completely and I felt it pushing the baby out. I had no control over the pushing. I had envisioned breathing it out slowly and calmly but three minutes later the baby was out, caught by me with some assistance from Hannah. It was 11:33pm, only an hour and a half after the VE.

As soon as the baby was born, Lachlan started squealing, "It's a baby! It's a baby!" and other beautiful things. He introduced himself to the baby which made my heart swell and I am so thankful that Joel managed to get it all on video. Lachlan got out of Joel's arms as quickly as he could and climbed onto the side of the pool to get a closer look.

Our tiny little bub (only 2450g – 130g bigger than Lachlan) was a little stunned on arrival. Her colour and heart rate were good and she was looking up at me but she didn't make any noise. Hannah gave her a bit of oxygen and we had a little peek and realised we had a daughter!

Melanie arrived about ten minutes after the birth. It was such a shame that she missed it! Melanie helped me out of the pool and onto the couch where I had lots of delicious skin-to-skin time with my beautiful girl. She had her first feed at around midnight and I literally coughed out the placenta about 40 minutes after birth.

Lachlan was still so excited about his new baby sister; so excited that at around 2:30am, when Hannah and Melanie



had tucked us into bed and were leaving, we had to call my mum to come and get him because he was jumping all over the bed and showing no signs of going back to sleep.

In the days that followed we chose a name for our girl. Lachlan's suggestion was "Outta the 'gina" which we found hilarious. (Well, that's where she came from!) And even when we decided on Lucy, he would tell everyone that her name was "Lucy outta the 'gina". Now there's a story for his 21st.

We have had some challenges with Lachlan adjusting to his sister being around and teaching him to be gentle with her, but mostly it has been wonderful, and I am so glad that he was there to witness her birth. I hope that he remembers it fondly and I often wonder what impact it will have on his beliefs about birth in the future.

Hannah was right. Lucy's birth was redemptive. It was a wonderful, healing experience. I still can't believe that she was born at home. I am filled with so much joy when I think about it. Three months on she is absolutely thriving – she gained weight very quickly (1600g in six weeks!) and has been such a calm baby. We have a really beautiful connection and I think that the circumstances surrounding her birth contribute to the bond that we share.

Vanessa Stasinowsky is married to Joel and loves being mum to Lachlan (3.5 years) and Lucy (15 weeks). She studied primary education and teaches extension programmes to gifted and talented students in Baulkham Hills, but developed a passion for all things related to pregnancy, birth and birth choices in 2009. She is looking forward to studying midwifery - hopefully in the near future!





Homebirth Access Sydney and Becoming Dad presents:

The Inaugural 'Homebirth Dads Night Out!'

Saturday, February 28, 2015

6:30pm

Harlequin Inn

152 Harris St, Pyrmont

\$10 On the door: Includes dinner and 1 beer or soft drink

This fun male-friendly and Dad-focused night will be for expectant dads planning for homebirth and wanting to learn more, and for new/seasoned homebirth Dads who wish to meet and network with each other, to share their stories and wisdom with and for the benefit of the expecting Dads.

6:30pm: doors open

7pm: Introduction from Homebirth Access Sydney Coordinator Virginia Maddock And Becoming Dad founder Darren Mattock

7:20pm: Homebirth stories by Dads

8pm: Dinner

8:30pm: Midwife panel with Homebirth midwives Janine O'Brien and Jo Hunter.

(An opportunity for the expectant dads to learn about the practicalities of Dads' role during birth at home, and to have any questions answered by the birth experts.)

There will also be:

~Basic Homebirth Dads resource packs will be provided to each expecting dad with brochures / flyers on key topics on Homebirth and making the transition to fatherhood.

~Homebirth merchandise for Dads will also be available for sale on the night.

Public transport:

Central – bus #501

- Bus #443

- Tram to star city (2 minute walk from star city)

Town Hall - bus #501

Circular Quay – bus #443.

Driving:

There is metered street parking, or you can park at Star City Casino after 5pm for \$20 per 6 hours. Star City is just a 2 minute walk from the hotel.

GENEROUSLY SPONSORED BY:

OZ BABY TRENDS, HILLS SPINAL HEALTH, AND SAM SAIDI.



HAS would like to thank everyone who made our Microbirth Screening a great success. We had a wonderful turnout with more than 60 people attending, including midwives, doulas, mothers and fathers. As Event coordinator for HAS and this being the first event, I must say a great amount of work went into it especially since this is the first time I have had the privilege to organise an event.

From the beginning there was the wonderful suggestion by Veronica to host the event at Govinda's Restaurant and Cinema, which turned out to be a wonderful venue. We were very honoured to have the wonderful Professor Hannah Dahlen speak and I could have listened to her words of wisdom all day. We were blessed to have a handful of people, businesses and companies donate to our raffle.

The first prize and most wanted was the dinner for two at Sixpenny at Stanmore. We had a movie and dinner voucher for two at Govinda's, a beautiful print by Chrissy Butler, donated by HAS, a Face of Birth DVD from Hannah Dahlen, Virginia from Natural Beginnings donated her wonderful Herbal External Healing Balm and a 200ml bottle of Raspberry Leaf Tea Tincture. HAS donated A Midwives Memoir and a year's membership, there was a Calmbirth® course and delicious Larissa Bright Organic skin care pack from myself. The wonderful Floridix donated a good few doses of Iron supplements.

Microbirth reminded us all about the increasing interventions that parallel birth today, from our increasing Caesarean rates, inductions and the use of antibiotics for prophylactic treatment of Group B Streptococcus and how these interventions may potentially impact our future.

A wonderful group of scientists and our own Professor of Midwifery, Hannah Dahlen, raise awareness throughout Microbirth of how we are made up of 90 per cent microbial cells and only 10 per cent mammalian cells. Microbirth left us with a very clear message that there are three events that are important for long term health and longevity for generations to come.

1. Spontaneous Vaginal Birth (without induction or antibiotics)
2. Skin to skin contact between mother and baby immediately after birth
3. Breastfeeding for a minimum of the first six months of life

I truly felt that we were preaching to the converted as I know many midwives, doulas, mothers and fathers at our screening already consider these three significant factors to be close to their ideal.

These three factors produce an important seeding from maternal microbes into the newborn baby's gut, affecting epigenetics, turning on and off genes and the baby is enriched by the stress of normal vaginal birth. Last but definitely not least: who thought to think that breastmilk wasn't essentially designed for human babies at all, it is perfectly designed to feed the hosts of Microbes that we need for long-term health.

Microbirth reminds us of the importance of looking to the distant shore:

"Intervening in childbirth is like throwing a pebble into a pond. The ripples keep on going and you don't know where they will end up – but you can bet that on some distant shore there will be an effect. It is only relatively recently that we have been looking beyond the throw of the stone to the distant shore. What we see is very, very scary." (Dahlen H, 2007)



30th Homebirth Australia Conference

Icons of Homebirth - Pearls of Wisdom



29-31 May 2015 Melbourne Town Hall, Melbourne

Elizabeth Davis and Maggie Banks

PLUS Many more awesome speakers --

<http://homebirthaustralia.org/conference>

Media Watch

NAOMI HOMEL

The Stir
26/8/14

Giving Birth on 'The Farm': One Mom Shares Her Experience
<http://thestir.cafemom.com/pregnancy/176300/giving-birth-on-the-farm>

When Kate Kellogg became pregnant with her third child, she decided to give birth on The Farm, a midwifery center in Summertown, Tennessee, run by world-renowned midwife Ina May Gaskin. Some might think this is a surprising decision, given that Kellogg, 33, is a doctor. But after watching the documentary Birth Story and learning that The Farm's 1,700 acres were just an hour from where they were living at the time, Kellogg and her husband became intrigued with the idea of giving birth there. Kellogg had delivered her first two children (a now 5-year-old son and 3-year-old daughter) at a hospital, but didn't like that she had been pressured into getting several medical interventions that didn't seem to help.

The Washington Post
4/9/14

Why I chose to give birth in front of a room full of people
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2014/09/04/why-i-gave-birth-in-front-of-a-room-full-of-people/>

This all may seem wildly unconventional, but the truth is that my son's birth was more traditional and more nurturing than standard hospital births. This is the way it should be: A laboring woman at home, surrounded by a devoted team of friends and family, each person bringing fresh and familiar energy; a baby born into the world surrounded by love instead of the glare of fluorescent lights and masked strangers. Being at home meant the data collection could wait until we bonded for a couple hours. My sister Annie weighed him in a cloth sack after we all made estimations. My midwife tucked us into my own bed before she went home.

Best Daily
9/9/14

"Dear Kate, please have a home birth this time!"
<http://www.bestdaily.co.uk/your-life/news/a595629/dear-kate-please-have-a-home-birth-this-time.html>

If you've been somewhere brilliant to eat, or seen a great film, you kind of want to tell your friends about it. If they take your recommendation, you get a bit excited: "Did you have the prawns?!" "What did you think of the bit when he said he was leaving?!" We're human, we like to share our experiences, it's only natural. When it comes to birth, though, the ground is tricky. Like every other parenting choice, from how and what to feed your baby to when and if to go back to work, conversations can be an absolute minefield and usually it's best to sit safely on the fence where you can't trigger any explosions. "Everybody has to make their own choices", you find yourself saying, but the problem is, if you've had a baby out of hospital yourself, you've got this secret slightly unhinged alter ego hopping around in your head singing, "Have a home birth! Have a home birth!". You know it's best not say this out loud, but the problem is, home birth is so wonderful it's almost impossible not to be evangelical about it.

The Sydney Morning Herald
15/9/14

Death of newborn followed home birth marred by poor treatment, coroner says
<http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/death-of-newborn-followed-home-birth-marred-by-poor-treatment-coroner-says-20140915-10h7ko.html>

The death of a newborn on the mid-north coast of NSW followed an attempted home birth in which the midwife failed to follow her profession's basic regulations and appeared to have an ideologically driven dislike of mainstream obstetrics, a coroner has found. The baby boy, who cannot be named for legal reasons, died on October 9, 2012, at Taree's Manning Base Hospital, after being delivered by caesarean section.

The ABC online
2/10/14

Woman opted for home birth after hospital trauma, coronial inquest told
<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-10-01/woman-opted-for-home-birth-after-earlier-trauma2c-inquest-told/5782808>

The traumatic hospital birth of a first child led a Perth woman to opt for a home birth with her second, the mother has told an inquest into her baby's death. The woman, who cannot be identified, gave birth to a boy at home in 2010 after a 40-hour labour assisted by two midwives.

The Daily Telegraph
10/10/14

Caroline Bagga among 200 NSW women a year who preferred to give birth in the comfort of their own home
<http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/newslocal/news/caroline-bagga-among-200-nsw-women-a-year-who-preferred-to-give-birth-in-the-comfort-of-their-own-home/story-fngr8gwi-1227081444579?nk=ed3255cea90ffc28621686e21939def7>

WHEN Caroline Bagga gave birth to her beautiful baby girl Alysha, she was surrounded by her family in the comfort of her own home. "I was in a familiar environment so my body just relaxed and did its thing," said the Beecroft mother-of-two. Mrs Bagga is among the 200 women who plan a homebirth each year in NSW. A pregnancy yoga teacher at Mother Nurture Yoga, Mrs Bagga used a massage therapist, did yoga and had a water birth to manage the pain-- a far cry from her first birth when she was pumped with "every drug under the sun". Mrs Bagga said she had been induced for being postdate -- 40 weeks and 10 days -- which she believes led to a caesarean.

The Irish Times
18/10/14

Róisín Ingle on . . . home birth stories
<https://www.irishtimes.com/life-and-style/r%C3%B3is%C3%ADn-ingle-on-home-birth-stories-1.1964578>

I'm in awe of all women who have babies but especially those who have them at home despite some people saying having a baby at home is "crazy" or "irresponsible". Knowing these women and their joyful, safe birth stories, has made me curious about the recent investigation launched into one of this country's leading midwives Philomena Canning. A few weeks ago the HSE temporarily suspended her insurance cover while they investigate two home births at which Canning provided midwifery services.

The Age
19/10/14

Private midwives blocked on hospital births
<http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/private-midwives-blocked-on-hospital-births-20141018-117rx7.html>

Women remain unable to employ private midwives to deliver their babies in Victorian public hospitals a year after the release of a Health Department policy that was supposed to give them greater choice. A Health Department "implementation framework" released last November provided advice to hospitals on establishing arrangements with private midwives to act as primary carers for women giving birth, as occurs with private obstetricians. The Victorian framework followed federal changes in 2010 that expanded the role of registered midwives by authorising them to access Medicare and prescribe subsidised medicines when working in collaborative arrangements with hospitals.

The Telegraph
17/11/14

Home birth revolution stalls as numbers drop by a fifth amid midwife shortage
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/health/healthnews/11236009/Home-birth-revolution-stalls-as-numbers-drop-by-a-fifth-amid-midwife-shortage.html>

The so-called "home birth revolution" has gone into reverse with the number of women having children at home dropping by a fifth in four years amid a shortage of midwives, official figures show. New analysis published by the office for National statistics shows that just over 15,500 women in England and Wales gave birth at home, or 2.3 per cent of all births. That compares with more than 19,000 as recently as 2009. Parenting groups said that, far from home births going out of fashion, demand is higher than ever but a shortage of midwives, intensified by the mini baby boom in recent years as well as austerity cuts, is forcing women who would prefer to have their baby at home to go to a maternity ward. It comes despite new draft guidelines for NHS trusts which say that women should be encouraged to have their baby at home if they choose to do so

ABC online
26/11/14

Calls for publicly funded homebirth service option in Canberra
<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-11-26/calls-for-homebirth-options-in-canberra/5919002>

A group of Canberra women and midwives is calling on the ACT Government to make homebirth available as a publicly funded service. Representatives from the Publicly Funded Birth At Home ACT group have met with ACT Health to discuss the possibility of a homebirth service for Canberra. The group has also started an online petition at Change.org, which has attracted more than 800 signatures. Homebirth is currently funded in all Australian states except for the ACT, Tasmania and Queensland. The Australian College of Midwives has offered support, suggesting the option to choose a midwife-attended homebirth is a safe option for women with uncomplicated pregnancies.

PRE-NATAL SERVICES

Inner West

BIRTHSENSE WITH JACKI MCFARLANE

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

KRISTIANE HEIDRICH

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

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

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

Sutherland / St George

ACTIVE CALMBIRTH® COURSES SYLVANIA

The calmbirth® course imparts the knowledge of birth preparation techniques such as deep relaxation, visualisation, breathing, positive imagery, attitudes/expectancy to achieve a rewarding, easier, more comfortable stress-free birthing experience. Julie Clarke is an experienced homebirther. Many women who have done the calmbirth® course during their pregnancy are far more likely to have positive feelings about their birthing experience. Their partners and midwives are quite often very impressed with how beautifully they've worked with their body during the labour.

For enquiries of dates and available times and bookings phone 95446441 - available weekends, weekdays, evenings. Visit: www.julieclarke.com.au see website for dates and discount.

Special note: Julie's calmbirth® course is very reasonably priced. Mobile: 0401265530 / 9544 6441.

9 Withybrook pl. Sylvania (20mins south of airport).

NATURAL BEGINNINGS

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

I can assist you with:

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

Natural Pregnancy, Birth and Post-Natal Kits also available which make great gifts for the expectant or new Mum!

Virginia Maddock
Herbalist, Nutritionist & Doula
0415683074. 5 Balfour Ave Caringbah 2229
www.naturalbeginnings.com.au

TRANSITION INTO PARENTHOOD

Active Birth and Newborn Care Courses
The most comprehensive and best value birth and parenting courses in Sydney. Facilitator is Julie Clarke who is respected as a specialist in natural active birth including waterbirth. Importantly she also presents information beyond the birth to encompass the newborn period, specially on the practicalities and reducing stress, helping you to enjoy the first weeks as a family. Pregnant couples receive professionally presented, well organised course notes. Very suitable for homebirth, birth centre and delivery suite.

See Julie's website for more details, birth stories and pictures, and information. www.julieclarke.com.au
Julie has a great sense of humour and a very gentle approach, she is regarded as one of the most inspirational educators in Sydney. Good variety of courses to choose from: 8 wk evening course 1 night per week, or 2 full Saturdays condensed or 1 full Sunday super condensed.

Julie is a unique birth educator who also provides post natal in home baby care support service exclusively to the couples who have attended her courses.
Julie Clarke / julie@julieclarke.com.au / Mobile: 0401265530
Landline: (02)9544 6441

Southern Highlands

PREGNANCY WORKSHOPS

Midwife Jane Hardwicke Collings gives regular workshops – "Pregnancy The Inner Journey" – in the Southern Highlands and in other places by arrangement. As well as "The School of Shamanic Midwifery" – a women's mysteries school for doulas and midwives
Jane Hardwicke Collings
0248882002, 0408035808
janecollings@bigpond.com
www.moonsong.com.au
www.placentalremedy.com

DOULA SERVICES

NATURAL BEGINNINGS

HOLISTIC HEALTH AND DOULA SERVICE

As a homebirth mum, I have the experience and trust in natural birth to be your ideal birth support, whether you choose to birth at home, in hospital or birth centre.

As a natural therapist, I have the resources to assist you with reiki massage, herbs and flower essences in case the journey of labour becomes difficult.

As an ex-nanny, I can help look after older siblings so that Mum can focus on birthing, Dad can focus on Mum, and older sister or brother can still feel important and included in the process, without fear. My birth package includes 2 prenatal visits, birth support incl. herbs/ flower essences and reiki massage, follow up visit to debrief, and a beautifully presented photo book of your birth for you to keep. Natural Pregnancy, Birth and Post-Natal Kits also available which make great gifts for the expectant or new Mum.

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

PLACENTA SERVICES

KRISTIANE HEIDRICH - Placenta Encapsulation Specialist Offering

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

LOTUS BORN - Lotus Birth Supplies

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

NATURAL BEGINNINGS

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

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

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

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: 0249232291

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 029113 3103.

WOLLONGONG HOSPITAL HOMEBIRTH SERVICE

This public health service is available to women in the Helensburgh to Kiama region. Continuity of care is provided by two midwives throughout pregnancy, birth and the postnatal period. Contact the Antenatal Clinic on 0242534256 and ask to book in with the Midwifery Group Practice (MGP). Your details will be taken down and MGP will return your call.

BIRTHING SERVICES: MIDWIVES

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

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

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

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. Areas 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

GUIDE TO CHOOSING A MIDWIFE

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

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

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

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

QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

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

ELIGIBILITY

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

PHILOSOPHY AND ATTITUDE

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

Sutherland Shire Homebirth Group

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

Pregnancy & Parenting Network meeting - Dundas Valley

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

Pregnancy & Parenting Network meeting - Hawkesbury

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

Illawarra Birth Choices Group

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

Mothers & Midwives of the South (Southern Highlands)

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

Blue Mountains Homebirth Support Group

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

Central Coast Homebirth Group

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

Hunter Home and Natural Birth Support (HHNBS)

2nd 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 venues TBA, 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 Serene 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:

Cultural Homebirth



Birthings is your magazine, so please contribute!

The Autumn 2015 issue is on the theme Cultural Homebirth. This issue will be dedicated to the many and varied ways our cultural background and values influence the way we homebirth.

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

Submissions are due by 1 February 2015.

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