

BIRTHINGS

a HOMEBIRTH ACCESS SYDNEY quarterly publication
www.homebirthsydney.org.au



Celebrating 100 issues of Birthings

plus all our regular features
birth notices, letters, your stories and pictures
the personal is political, media watch
& updates on our community activities

Summer 2008 Issue 100

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 Danielle Townsend at dannit@bigpond.net.au
Photos and written submissions must be emailed. Prior notice to the Editors of your intention to submit work is not necessary, but can be helpful in planning content.

deadlines for submissions

Autumn 2009 No 101—1 February 2009
Winter 2009 No 102—1 May 2009
Spring 2009 No 103—1 August 2009
Summer 2010 No 104—1 November 2009

back issues

Back issues of *Birthings* are like hen's teeth! But we will try to accommodate requests. Back issues cost \$7.00 per issue. Postage is \$3.00 per single copy. A price for multiple copies can be arranged. The newsletters are very valuable in that they contain 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 ameliaa@iprimus.com.au

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*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*.

Contributing to *Birthings*

The strength of *Birthings* is all the thought-provoking, inspiring and challenging writing from members of our community. To ensure that the magazine is balanced, responsive to our audience's interests and needs, and reflects the priorities of HAS, we have developed a set of contribution guidelines.

We also work with an editorial board, selected by the HAS executive, to reflect the range of people in our community. The founding board members are Maggie Lecky-Thompson, Adrienne Abulhawa, Jo Hunter and the two current editors, Alison Leemen and Danielle Townsend. 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 1500 words. Submissions on the theme should be under 2000 words.

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

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

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

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

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

TERMS OF USE Please note that by submitting your story to *Birthings* you warrant that the content is not confidential and that you have the right to offer it for publication.

You also agree that you grant *Birthings* the copyright permission for the purposes of publication in this magazine and on the Homebirth Access Sydney website.

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

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

PROCEDURES Please provide your story as a Microsoft Word or equivalent document attached to an email and sent to Danielle Townsend at dannit@bigpond.net.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.

HONOURARY LIFE AND FOUNDING MEMBERS

Maggie
Lecky-Thompson
Elaine
Odgers Norling

HONOURARY LIFE MEMBERS

Robyn Dempsey
Jo Hunter

With thanks to our
postage sponsors



BIRTHINGS

Celebrating 100 Issues

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Araminta's Birth Story	NICOLE CHRISTENSEN



Contributors

NICOLE CHRISTIANSEN lives in the beautiful Blue Mountains with her gorgeous family—hubby Rock'n Ronnie and three princes and a surprise princess. She is passionate about homebirth, breastfeeding, co-sleeping, natural therapies & vegetarianism.

ROBYN DEMPSEY is an independent midwife working in the northern areas of Sydney, attending homebirths since 1995. She was on the HAS committee since her first meeting in 1990 and served in almost every position over the next eight years. Robyn has three children, all born at home, and she believes birth is a normal event in the life of a family. She says, "I trust birth and love being a midwife."

SONIA GREGSON is a part time vet nurse and mum to two home birthed children: Riley (28 months) and Vera (2 months). She believes that educating people about the benefits of natural birth (and especially homebirth) is very important and hopes to share her knowledge with as many GPs as possible.

CLAIRE HICKSON is mother to two beautiful boys, Benjamin (6½) and Nathanael (5 months), both home waterbirth babies. Claire was an active member of the HAS Committee serving some time as Editor of *Birthings* and then Membership Coordinator, before moving on to focus on her family Aura-Soma business, The Colour Rose.

JO HUNTER lives in the Blue Mountains with her husband, four children—Jai 12, Bronte 10, Riley 9 and Maya 7—and a menagerie of various animals. She works part time as a doula and is a full time Bachelor of Midwifery student. She is passionate about women's, children's and animal rights and is currently the National Convenor of Homebirth Australia. Jo first joined HAS and became treasurer in 1998. She was editor of *Birthings* from 1999 to 2002 and was coordinator from 2000 to 2007. She was made a life member in 2007.

MAGDA JENSEN moved from The Netherlands to Bondi two years ago and now works as a music manager and publicist together with her husband Neal.

MAGGIE LECKY-THOMPSON was a founding member of HAS. As a consequence of her homebirth with her third child she established a private midwifery practice in northern Sydney. Attending over 1200 homebirths over a 20 year period, Maggie was ultimately deregistered after two long drawn-out court proceedings. Maggie then studied to be a social worker and is now happily engaged in this work in mental health. She is Pete Gailey's partner (art teacher and childbirth educator) and counts amongst the best highlights of her life, assisting at the births of her elder daughter Melanie's two homeborn babies.

Now in her early 50s, **AMANDA LINN** has three children, all born at home between 1980 and 1985 (and is now a proud grandmother). Amanda was a founding member of HAS and then went on to be active in the Blue Mountains Homebirth Support group. She feels particularly privileged to have been a support person at several friends' homebirths. Amanda still has a strong personal belief in the rights of women to have access to safe and supported homebirths.

ELAINE ODGERS NORLING became the first Honorary Life Member of HAS in recognition of her tireless promotion and support for homebirth. She is a feminist activist in pursuit of equity, fairness and justice and has held many positions in a variety of community organisations. In 2008 her work was recognised by WEL (Women's Electoral Lobby) with a Community Activism EDNA AWARD.

New and renewed members

We extend a hearty welcome to the following new and renewed members. We value you and thank you for your continued support.

Naomi Green	Jodie Dearsley
Stacey Halse	Diana Mund
Isabel Palethorpe	Adiine Bigelow
Melanie Tasker	Paula Costis
Kylie Wilson	Stacey Halse
Christine Duff	Sonja Fernance-Miner
Andrea Quanchi	Marissa Gallagher
Marlowe Richards	Loulou Anderssen
Tanya Hibbard	Chloe Coulthard
Helena Court	
Merrie Caruana	
Heather Riedyk	
Jennifer Hocking	
China Friar	
Tamara Newland	
Cherry Johnston	
Kim Brickwood	

Front cover



Front cover design
by Melinda Holme

Back cover



Jane Hardwicke Collings giving
birth. Photo by David Hancock

editorial



ALISON LEEMEN

We made it! You see before you the 100th issue of a publication that has survived and frequently thrived through 26½ years, entirely under the efforts of volunteers—mostly sleep-deprived, overworked, unpaid mothers of small children, that is to say, some of the most time-poor people around. Most commercial publications don't last that long. During that time, the Berlin Wall came down, Nelson Mandela was freed, Aborigines received some recognition of their land rights, the first woman was appointed to our High Court, and the first black man was elected President of the United States. And homebirth in Australia—unfunded, marginalised and often persecuted—was kept alive by the women who knew it was the best way for them to welcome their babies into that world. What a phenomenal achievement! And what a testament to the enduring commitment so many women have made over a quarter of a century to sustaining natural birthing options for other Australian women. Particularly when, over that same period, rates of birth intervention in our hospitals have doubled or tripled.

Of course, it hasn't been without a struggle, and if anything is certain it's that the struggle will continue. There are many challenges facing us at the moment. To keep *Birthings* going, we are still in desperate need of sponsorship. We are enormously grateful to those who have brought you this issue when we suddenly lost our corporate sponsorship on the cusp of this historic edition: many thanks to two small, woman-run, earth-friendly businesses who have long supported our mission—Nurture Nappies and Nature's Child—for committing to sponsor postage and envelopes for an entire year at least.

However, we still need a longer-term print sponsor or other funding solution to keep printing the magazine.

We have been working, continuing from the women who went before us, to raise homebirth's profile in the community, to obtain fair public funding, to engage the mainstream in a dialogue about safe, responsible birth practices and to support women's right to choose not only whether, but how, to birth. And we know this work will continue, with the women who come after us, because as long as women are perpetuating the species, there will be those sufficiently in touch with their bodies and their instincts to know that natural birth, normal birth, healthy birth, is fundamental to continuing life.

Like life, HAS has its natural cycles of renewal.

One intake of activists and their particular style of energy and emphasis will be replaced by the enthusiasms of new women into the homebirth fold, fresh with joy and thankfulness at having found both a beautiful way to bring their children into the world and a wise, warm and welcoming community of families among which to raise them. Certainly, that has been my experience, and my world is the richer for it.

And now is one such time, when a recent burst of fertility among HAS committee members brings with it a need for renewal in HAS. Danni and I are resigning as editors of *Birthings*, effective after next issue, which we'd love to use as a 'transition' issue to the next editor(s). Our designer, Melinda, has recently moved to Melbourne, will marry in January and will also finish up after Issue 101. Anne, the energetic reinventor of our merchandise, is also vacating her position as of 2009 and Amelia, who will meet her third child in a few months, is relinquishing her role as memberships coordinator. In addition to those roles, all existing committee positions are up for renomination at our AGM on 27 February 2009 and there are infinite other roles available for you to mold to your skills and interests.

Indeed, key among the attractions of being involved in HAS is the opportunity to steer it in the direction that interests you. Things happen (or don't) because you make them happen (or don't). I've loved developing *Birthings* towards the homebirth magazine I wanted to read, just as I've loved providing for others the evening community information meetings that I myself needed when I was first pregnant, and holding aloft the torch awhile in our organisation's long-running quest for Medicare coverage. Others whose passions lie in different directions have known similar satisfaction from giving shape to them under the banner of HAS. It's easy for me to invite you to step forward and join the long-running conversation that is HAS and our beloved *Birthings*, because I know that you will certainly grow, learn and connect with the other women you'll meet and, as I do, give thanks for the experience.

Meditate on it over these glorious summer days. I look forward to meeting you in the new year, hearing your ideas and watching you walk with HAS into a second century of *Birthings*.

— Alison

birth announcements



Sonia and Christopher Gregson welcome

Vera Abigail

4 October 2008

Born at home into water

Siblings—Riley Gregson

Sonia, Christopher and Riley welcomed sweet little Vera Abigail into our lives on 4 October 2008 at 5:40pm. Weight: 3.45kg, Head: 33cm, Length 50cm.

Born at home with our superb midwife Betty Vella and the amazingly supportive Grandma Metcalfe by our sides. A special thank you to the unwavering belief that my husband and all our support team (including our twenty six month old son) showed me.



Nic, Ron, Tiernan, Nemiah and Ezra Christensen are thrilled to welcome their darling daughter

Araminta Willow

12 August 2008 7:25pm
weighing 8lbs 10oz

Araminta was born at home in the Blue Mountains on a beautiful winter's eve after a quick two hour labour. Caught by Mummy and Daddy and also welcomed into the world by her three older brothers and our dear midwives, Pat and Nicky (her grandmother arriving in her first few minutes!).

Nemiah and Ezra (7 and 5) were excited and enthusiastic throughout—armed with torches and disposable cameras. Tiernan (16) now a veteran (this was his third sibling birth!) filmed and took photos, all three boys giving Mum lots of encouragement.

Araminta was amazing at birth, calm, serene, looking around and drinking us all in...even smiling...such a gorgeous, precious soul...our delicious surprise baby girl.



Magda Jansen and Neal Hunt welcome

Jonas Neal Hunt

14 September 2008

Born at home in Bondi

Jonas was born at home on Sunday 14/09/08 at 9:20pm. We laboured for a long time by ourselves. Two hours before the birth our midwives from St George Hospital, Jaclyn and Jane, and our doula Nicole arrived. Jonas was born in the birth pool and is such a peaceful little boy. Thanks to our wonderful midwives and doula for making our first pregnancy and birth such a beautiful experience.



Sarah Henke and Daniel Nathan welcome

Elijah Daniel Nathan

27 September 2008

Born at home. Waterbirth.

Elijah was born peacefully in his lounge room. We are overjoyed to welcome him into our lives. Thank you to our midwife Marilyn Allen, who gently supported us and reinforced our belief in birth as the most amazing and natural experience.

Celebrations
of love
and life

**WEDDINGS
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West Pennant Hills, NSW 2125

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coordinator's report



JO TILLY

*Celebrating
our roots & still
growing strong*

Welcome all members and supporters

to this momentous 100th issue of Birthings.

What a fabulous achievement for a small, volunteer based community organisation to be celebrating 100 issues of our journal. As we all go about our incredibly busy lives with small children in tow, I am always amazed at our members who are able to find the energy to keep lobbying for change, supporting other families and helping spread the word about having a great birth at home.

The 100th issue also provides a fantastic opportunity to look back over the history (or should that read herstory) of the strong, feisty women, and their families, who have supported our cause over the years. Being involved in the world of birth provides an amazing sense of connection to the fights and the women who have gone before us. While we are still battling on many fronts for better births for women, it does seem like we are getting close to making some real progress.

In the last few months HAS and many of our members have been involved with making submissions to the national Maternity Services Review. This is a really exciting opportunity for the federal Government to introduce significant changes to maternity care at the national level to increase the range of birthing options for Australian women. It was particularly heartening that the Review's discussion paper took as a starting point issues like the importance of providing continuity of care to women and the role of homebirth in reducing intervention rates. We will certainly be waiting with anticipation to hear more about the outcomes of this Review.

I was also delighted to attend recently the Australian College of Midwives conference, which was focused on how consumers, midwives and other birth professionals can all work together to increase normal birth. It was fascinating to hear about some of the fabulous models of midwife-led care being developed in NSW in places like Manilla, Mullumbimby and Ryde and the commitment of so many midwives to promoting models of care that

put women first. Of course, independent midwives have for many years provided care to women in their homes, but women getting care through the public health system are also now starting to see increasing opportunities to have a homebirth.

One such service is the Belmont Birthing Service, a midwife-led birthing service based at Belmont Hospital and available to all well and healthy women in the Hunter region who are unlikely to experience complications during pregnancy, labour and birth. The service provides women with a safe option for antenatal care, birth and postnatal follow-up, including education to prepare for birth, parenting sessions and breastfeeding groups. And importantly, women can choose to birth either at the Centre or at home.

The Belmont Service was one of the key examples discussed the day before the conference at a special Forum *Moving Forward with Government Supported Homebirth* hosted by the Gold Coast Hospital and the Queensland Branch of the Maternity Coalition. While these services are growing, we still have a long way to go before they are available to the majority of birthing women.

There can be no doubt there's more work to do but I would like to take the opportunity to thank all our members and readers for the time, energy and commitment you give to supporting homebirth.

I recently received a letter from a new mum who thanked HAS for our community work and said "I learned so much from your information evenings that, coupled with my own research, I ended up having exactly the birth I wanted—in water without any drugs, with my midwife, doula and husband supporting me."

Getting letters like that makes all our efforts to spread the word about the benefits of homebirth feel even more worthwhile!

Have a wonderful summer and I hope you all get a restful break over the silly season.

Yours in birthing—Jo

letters

Hi, I just wanted to say a huge thank you to HAS for educating me so much on the benefits and beauty of a natural birth. I attended your evening talks discussing going overdue, waterbirths and doulas and found it so inspiring to hear such positive birth stories from your members and to discuss birthing with them. I learned so much from your information evenings that, coupled with my own research, I ended up having exactly the birth I wanted—in water without any drugs, with my midwife, doula and husband supporting me. However, instead of being at home, I had my daughter in hospital at the Royal North Shore. I was emphatic that I wanted midwife care and was very lucky to get onto their fantastic Midwife Group Practice scheme where I had continuity of care by one midwife and the opportunity to choose the type of birth I wanted. My midwife suggested I attend the Calm Birth classes which I did in Neutral Bay and found them to be fantastic. I laboured calmly at home with my husband and doula until I was 8cm. Arriving at the hospital was upsetting as it broke my calm and focused state. My doula

(Jacqui James) put on the *25 Ways to Awaken Your Birth Power* CD, which I had listened to extensively during my pregnancy to help me regain my composure (it was so hard to get it back). As soon as I got into the bath, I was back into my meditative state and continued to birth calmly. I am so proud of myself for gaining such a positive understanding of birth through HAS and books such as *Gentle Birth*, *Gentle Mothering*, developing a powerful support network and ultimately trusting my body in this natural process.

My eyes have now been opened to this natural, beautiful approach and I am co-sleeping, baby wearing and founding a Lower North Shore Attachment Parenting group—things I never thought I would do, coming from a very traditional English background!

My intention is to have my next child at home and I will continue to learn through HAS/*Birthings* how best to do this. Thank you once again—HAS has made an enormous difference to me and my daughter, and I am trying to spread the word with my girlfriends... — *Helena, mother of eight week old Emily*



Here's a pic of my hubby caught reading *Birthings* with our seven week old daughter. I absolutely love *Birthings* and look forward to every issue. I particularly love the birth stories and feel so privileged to read them and see the beautiful pics. What a great resource for new and future parents, and also for the self-confessed birth junkies too! Congratulations on the 100th issue of *Birthings*.

I have very fond memories of the homebirthing group in the Mountains in the 80's—as my Mum was within that circle, having a homebirth with my youngest sister when I was 18. What an inspiration the beautiful women were to me back then—so much so that I ended up being a homebirther myself 13 years later.

I truly hope that *Birthings* continues to grow and flourish for many years to come so that my children, grandchildren and future generations can gain what I do, when it's time for them to have their babies.

— *Nicole Christensen*

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Susan Ross, the founder of *Birth Right*, is a Midwife, Doula, Childbirth Educator, Mother, Trainer and author of the book 'Birth Right'

For more information and bookings contact:

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100 Issues On

DANNIELLE TOWNSEND

Reading over the 99 previous issues of *Birthings*, a sense of déjà vu can be overwhelming. There's this from issue 29 (Winter 1989) when public funding for homebirths seemed close:

In June, Jean Jenkins, an Australian Democrat from Western Australia proposed legislation that supported public funding for homebirths. This has been passed and now a committee is reviewing the implementation of the legislation.

And on an organisational level, this one feels like it actually appeared in the latest issue of the magazine:

Sorry, [*Birthings*] is running late (again) but HAS needs help. If you can help in any way, contribute a couple of hours of your time, you would be more than welcome... We need lots of positive energy in the group, and we know it's out there, so come on homebirthers. (Issue 9, Autumn 1984)

While the themes often remain the same, there have been some differences that seem indicative of a variety in the style of organisation Homebirth Access Sydney has been at times. In the very first issues of *Birthings* (which wasn't called *Birthings* by the way until December 1992), birth notices appeared grouped under the baby's astrological sign and for births that were transferred to hospital full details were given of the reasons, for example, "no dilation of cervix" or "caeser at Katoomba due to pelvic disproportion". Midwives provided the information about their clients' births to the newsletter to print.

By the early 1990s there was some concern about the privacy aspect of the birth notices list and *Birthings* stopped printing information provided by midwives and changed to the current system of printing details of births that were provided by parents.

The community and support aspects of the group seemed to be stronger during some times than others. In the mid-1980s a dial-a-mum, dial-a-dad and even dial-a-granny service was established which listed homebirth people who were happy to be called to talk to—about homebirth, for advice or just for someone to chat to.

The Homebirth Access Sydney home-help service was active in 1982, when issue 1 was published, and a list of people were available who would help with shopping, childcare and housework in the weeks after birth. This service seems to have diminished over the next five years until all that remained were pleas for more volunteers. I wonder if people would still benefit from this service and whether they would be on such a roster?

Local meetings and support groups have been going strong throughout the life of the organisation. It seems that women have always liked to get together with other women and their children to share ideas, chat and work.

In 1985 the Homebirth Mediation and Conciliation Group was developed to help homebirth consumers with grievances regarding their



relationships with their midwives. Members of HAS provided counselling and mediation services and in 1989 the service was expanded to include assisting midwives with their resolutions of conflict. This service no longer exists and consumers can only now try resolving issues on their own or by taking their complaint to an authority or the courts. This seems to be a gap in service to homebirth families, and whether the Mediation and Conciliation Group was the right solution, it would be good to open up discussion about how some kind of service could be provided again.

Sadly, much of the lobbying and news on funding seems to have moved on very little. Early issues of the magazine talk of the hopefulness that Medicare support for homebirths will soon be available, and this from issue 30 (Spring and Summer 1989);

Homebirth Access Sydney Press Release – 21st August 1989.

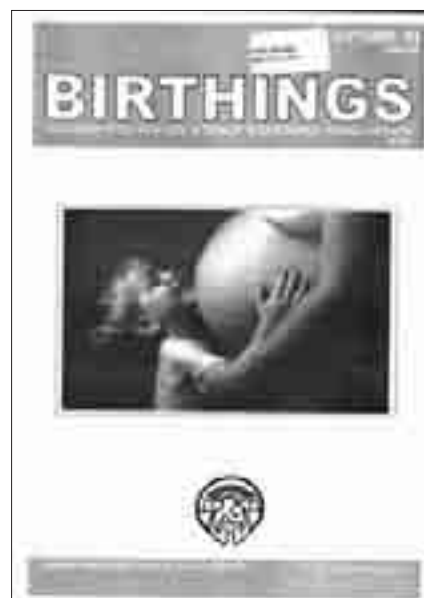
The consumer based support organisation reports a steady flow of inquiries from women wanting a homebirth. Many feel that they are being discriminated against because of lack of financial rebates from major health funds. We are the only group of pregnant women whose choice of birthplace is not catered for by the major health funds.

The cost of midwife based maternity care is one which has been borne by many determined homebirth families who are committed to the best possible care for themselves and their babies.

Not surprisingly, fundraising and the costs involved with running HAS have always been of interest. In issue 35 (Winter 1991) sponsors were being sought for the International Homebirth Conference, there was a report from the chocolate drive, a detailed account of HAS finances (\$500 income from merchandise spent mainly on resources for the library) and a call for a donation of a filing cabinet. The main theme is that HAS has always used a wide variety of ways to raise money—raffles, secondhand stalls, even a bush dance—and it has always used these funds wisely and with a great deal of support from lots of volunteer men and women.

The one thing that really hasn't changed through the hundred issues of the magazine is the birth stories, including the first birth story to be printed (see page 29) and the four latest ones that appear in this issue. Many of them are completely timeless and would be hard to pick for the time period that they occurred within. Natural birth, at home, in the presence of family and loving attendants reads exactly the same 25 years ago as it does in 2008.

We hope you enjoy this walk back through the last 100 issues of *Birthings*. Thank you to our life members for their contributions, memories and wisdom. I think you'll find much to inspire, interest and motivate you.



NRB=Nurses Registration Board
 RACOG=Royal Australian College of
 Obstetricians and Gynaecologists
 NHMRC=National Health and Medical
 Research Council
 HBA=Homebirth Australia

Timeline

1977	Parent's Centres Australia (PCA) established a Homebirth Service, initially a phone contact for support	
1978	PCA supported (financially and otherwise) the launch of Homebirth Association Sydney	
1979	NRB and Health Department reviewed NSW regulations governing nursing, considering whether standard guidelines ought to be developed to govern both homebirths and hospital births. Guidelines were opposed by homebirth consumer groups for the next three years.	Homebirth Information Service (HIS) formed by a dissatisfied member of Homebirth Association Sydney. HIS later became Homebirth Access.
1980	First issue of HIS's Home Birth Information Service Newsletter and first issue of Homebirth Association Sydney's Newsletter	NSW Health Commission circulated proposed changes to the Nurses Registration Act with severe limitations on homebirth practice.
1981	HAS defined itself as a consumer group and midwives Maggie Lecky-Thompson and Akal Khalsa no longer held committee positions	Sydney's homebirth organisations and practitioners lobbied NSW parliament objecting to the proposed regulations on homebirth practice.
1982	Homebirth Association Sydney and Homebirth Access (formerly HIS) overcame their differences and became a united group, Homebirth Access Sydney	July: first issue of the newsletter of the combined group, Homebirth Access Sydney (HAS)
1983	Maggie Lecky-Thompson appeared before the NRB over the death of a baby after transfer to hospital. Maggie was cleared by the NRB but angry at the lack of support by HAS.	NSW Health Department and NRB decided that no definition of "reasonable practice" could be agreed upon. (This was the lobbying position of homebirth consumer groups.) So homebirth midwifery wasn't banned or otherwise restricted.
1984	Julie Clarke and Richard Neville (Oz magazine) had a homebirth. Richard gave great publicity to the movement through his work on the Mike Walsh Show.	Hawke Labor Government introduced Medicare. Domiciliary midwifery was not covered.
1985	HAS introduced "Dial A Mum/ Dial A Dad/ Dial A Granny" counselling service for people considering a homebirth.	Rossllyn Hawke-Dillon, Bob Hawke's daughter, gave birth at home. Bob: "I argued strongly that the baby should be born in a hospital, but I was wrong." Hazel: "Babies should be born at home."
1986	The Layton Report of the Medicare Benefits Review Committee refused midwives admission to the benefit. The Report was satisfied with the services provided by midwives but said there was inadequate regional back-up in the event of a complication arising. Recommended a Health Program Grant of \$2m for a 5 year research-linked pilot program into domiciliary midwifery services so the outcome of independent midwifery practice could be evaluated.	Dr John Stevenson was struck off the medical register after 27 years of practice and attending 1100 homebirths. His High Court appeal in 1984 failed, he was ordered to pay costs and in early 1989 was forced to sell his home.
1987	George Negus and Kirsty Cockburn had a homebirth.	Decision taken to incorporate HAS
1988	Hilda Bastien, President of HBA, received a \$5000 grant from the Consumers Health Forum, to analyse Australian homebirths 1985-1987, based on surveys of Australian homebirth parents and midwives.	First listing in Newsletter for a birth support person (not referred to as a doula)
1989	Major statewide review of maternity services (the Shearman Report) attempted to reorient birth as a normal physiological event and move away from the medicalised model.	Letter-writing campaign to gain Medicare for Midwives, with a kit produced by Hilda Bastien of HBA.
1990	Highly controversial report, Home Births in Australia, 1985-1987, compiled by HBA and the National Perinatal Statistics Unit. The findings were mixed: the caesarean rate for homebirths was 2.2%, about an eighth of the national rate; under 5% of homebirths involved an episiotomy, compared with hospital rates of 30-80%; and the perinatal mortality rate for homebirths was stated at 5.9 per 1,000 births compared with a national rate of 10.7; but the intrapartum death rate (babies that die during labour) was reported as 2.4 per 1,000 births compared with 0.9 nationally. The report's methodology was suspect, based on figures gathered by HBA from various sources including newsletters that prevented proper study of the causes of death, and was not a representative sample of homebirths since reporting outcomes was random.	Maternity Alliance established by a range of groups connected to birth and breastfeeding, including HAS and HBA.
		Deepening philosophical differences within HBA. The midwives produced their own newsletter, <i>The Independently Practicing Midwives' Communique</i> (now <i>Communique of the Australian Society of Independent Midwives</i> ; ASIM was also established around this time).
		Sue Pieters-Hawke, Bob Hawke's daughter, gave birth at home
		Sue Pieters-Hawke, Bob Hawke's daughter, gave birth at home to Ben.
		Some midwives were withholding their statistics from HBA because of issues of confidentiality and lack of involvement in the process of collation, research and publication of the data. Relations between ASIM and HBA were tense. ASIM unsuccessfully sought Bastien's removal as HBA President and to block her access to HBA's statistics. There was dispute as to whether Bastien or HBA owned the statistics.

1991	Draft Homebirth Guidelines released by the NHMRC recommended parents reconsider a homebirth in the case of major medical conditions, malpresentation (including breech), multiple pregnancy and development of pregnancy or labour complications (eg hypertension, gestational diabetes or fetal distress); hospital bookings should always be made; a doctor should examine the woman's general health and refer her to an obstetrician if there is any deviation from normal; and minimum tests and labour observations.				
1992	Nurses Act criminalised lay midwifery for the first time in NSW, with a \$4000 fine and/or 12 months imprisonment for unregistered persons holding themselves out as midwives or for the unauthorised practise of midwifery.	Second International Homebirth Conference—speakers included Sheila Kitzinger, Marsden Wagner, Wendy Savage, Janet Balaskas, Ina May Gaskin and Michel Odent.	Newsletter renamed <i>Birthings</i> after David Crossley won a naming competition.		
1994	HAS's AGM discussed independent midwives as committee members, evolving into a discussion of whether HAS should continue as an organisation. A motion that HAS cease to operate was then put at an extraordinary meeting. A clear majority agreed that HAS should continue; another meeting scheduled to re-examine HAS's aims and objectives and decide what sort of a group HAS was determined that nothing should change.				
1995	Maagie Lecky-Thompson was sued in the Supreme Court by Jacq Jensen and partner over the stillbirth of Jacq's baby. The case was settled by Maggie's insurer before the defence was presented.	<i>Birthings</i> published an article seeking member feedback on the role and development of HAS in response to a lack of volunteers and energy and some critical comments from members as to what HAS was achieving. No members made comments or suggestions following the article's publication.			
1997	HBA produced a draft Birthing Woman's Rights and Responsibilities				
1998	NSW NRB Tribunal handed down decisions on six cases against Maggie Lecky-Thompson, finding two counts of unsatisfactory professional conduct and four counts of professional misconduct. Five of the cases were pursued by obstetricians not present at the births, against the wishes of the parents involved; the other was initiated by the family involved, after their Supreme Court suit had failed.				
1999	HBA conference in Byron Bay with guest speaker Germaine Greer.				
2000	HAS website launched.				
2001	Australian insurance crisis: Guild Insurance withdrew professional indemnity insurance for independent midwives. Pregnant women lost care providers and women lost insured homebirth. HAS, along with other groups like ASIM, HBA and the Australian College of Midwives lobbied governments and insurers to address the situation, without success to date.	HAS Committee desperate for support, with only four people filling five positions and eight positions vacant.	<i>Birthings</i> started accepting paid advertisements	HAS received a \$3100 grant from the International Year of Volunteers Small Equipment Grants Program, which it used to buy new computer and printing equipment.	
2002	<i>Birthings</i> printed the results of a survey of homebirths conducted in 2001 by Kate McMaugh. The survey covered the reasons people choose homebirth, the experience of homebirth, the experience of hospital birth, birth complications and opinions on birth services.	Maggie Lecky-Thompson was charged with holding herself out as a midwife and practicing midwifery without being registered, after attending a birth as a support person. HAS raised funds to assist in her defence. All criminal charges, pressed by the NRB, were dismissed in the Local Court.	HAS sought member input to clarify its role as either a consumer support group or a combined consumer and midwife support group, in response to (a) increase unattended homebirths because of the insurance crisis; and (b) debate about HAS's support and fundraising for Maggie L-T in criminal proceedings against her. Other issues included whether HAS should collect feedback on midwives and suspend referrals to midwives who received enough complaints; whether support should be provided for midwives, consumers or both in any legal proceedings over a birth; whether HAS should continue advocating for homebirth with registered midwives only or also for lay midwifery and unassisted homebirth; and what other services HAS should provide, such as independent mediation, case review, written consumer information, etc. The article also called for volunteers. The article was met with no submissions.		
2004	Student Midwife Robyn Rudner did a study of HAS as an assignment, which was published in <i>Birthings</i> , entailing a history of HAS and a SWOT analysis that identified Strengths ("HAS members feel passionately about women's rights to give birth at home and bring to the group a powerful energy in terms of support during pregnancy and the postpartum... HAS provides information networks... and promotes the concept of homebirth at relevant conference and expos. It seems that the singular most significant strength of the group is concerned with grassroots information sharing and networking. In this respect HAS can consider itself to be practising the principles of primary health care as it is run by the community and for the community...") Weaknesses ("HAS is a small group and the representative committee members sometimes hold more than one position..."), Opportunities ("An opportunity exists for a dynamic movement to enter the group, redefine its original aims to promote homebirth in the political arena on behalf of the consumers; to demand that women not only have the choice to birth at home but that midwives are adequately trained at universities to practice independently... the insurance debacle needs to be addressed so that consumers are able to make claims where needed..."); and Threats ("It is a small homogenous, non-professional, non-political group with minimal resources and skills for effecting change. HAS is in danger of becoming extinct and perhaps existing only as a mother's group for like minded women who choose to give birth at home.") Conclusion: "For the past thirty years HAS has been witness to a continual struggle for progress. When reviewing the current rates of intervention during childbirth and the enormous associated costs in terms of the health dollar and the social implications of high intervention it is clear that the struggle to return the power of birth to women is far from achieved. Groups such as HAS need to continue to share their energies with like minded women, to lobby for the establishment of a working homebirth infrastructure and to give a loud public voice to homebirth as a safe and viable option for those who so choose."				
2005	Insurance for Midwives Forum in Parliament House, Canberra, hosted by Senator Aiden Ridgeway, attended by midwives from around Australia, representatives of the Minister for Health, Maternity Coalition and Australian College of Midwives.	Kimberly-Clark sponsored <i>Birthings</i> with free printing and postage and the magazine went colour. One person resigned membership in protest at the sponsorship.	HAS's Eastern Suburbs Homebirth Support Group started holding regular evening and daytime community meetings on topics related to natural and homebirth.		
2006	Jan Robinson of ASIM, obtained signatures of 200 midwives interested in obtaining professional indemnity insurance to enable them to practice homebirth midwifery. Despite this, no insurance was available.	HBA Conference in Geelong with Ina May Gaskin, among others.			
2007	The ALP's National Conference passed a resolution on maternal and child health services that included using Medicare to expand midwife-led care and considering ways to indemnify midwives. This resolution formed the basis of a fresh lobbying campaign led by HAS in 2008, after the ALP won office.	Justine Caines launched and registered What Women Want, a political party, to run candidates in the Federal Election on a progressive platform that emphasised midwifery-led maternity care. Many in HAS supported her.	Janie Nottingham drove for reform from Victoria to Canberra, to lead a rally outside Parliament House protesting the state of maternity services.	HBA Conference in Sydney with Sheila Kitzinger and Rikki Lake, showing her new film <i>The Business of Being Born</i> .	
2008	HAS revived the Annual All Members Family Picnic	Kimberly-Clark withdrew sponsorship of community organisations, including HAS, and would no longer print or post <i>Birthings</i> . HAS was forced to scramble to find alternative interim arrangements to print our historic 100th issue. Two woman-run small businesses supportive of our goals stepped in as postage sponsors.			

The Birth of HAS

ELAINE ODGERS NORLING

Because of my involvement in the 'childbirth movement' since 1969 I have been asked to explain the origins of Homebirth Access Sydney for this 100th edition. There are a lot of names and dates to mention but it was a particularly fascinating and exciting couple of decades.

I am but one of the thousands of individuals who experienced an unsatisfactory institutionalised birth and as a consequence tried to change birthing practices. Most of us were full-time stay-at-home mums with no particular expertise regarding birth and the medical model that controlled it. We were, however, clear about what needed to change if our needs were to be met. Our passion took us through the early years as we gained the knowledge and skills needed to challenge the medical model.

A few midwives and doctors sided with our cause and gave very valuable assistance but our requests were ignored or change came too slowly and when the system repeatedly failed us, the logical, albeit radical, step for many was to birth at home.

Radical change rarely happens in a vacuum. Feminism and beliefs in equity, fairness and justice underpinned the reforms and innovations being sought by a variety of consumer groups. Social, political and medical norms were being challenged in the western world.

Childbirth classes, often privately run by physiotherapists, gave us the knowledge and opportunity to share stories and find our collective strength; our voice. Many single issue groups were being formed and I joined Childbirth and Family Education Association (CAFE, established in 1968 and later known as Parents Centres Australia, or PCA, from 1970) because it had a more flexible structure than the Childbirth Education Association and a broader agenda than the Nursing Mothers Association.

In 1975, the Whitlam government held the Human Relationships Commission and PCA's submission covered pregnancy, parenting and childcare. We were now being referred to as 'consumer activists'. Our voice was being heard. In this internet age it's hard to understand how much we were insulated from each other and the Commission gave a chance for individuals and groups to make contact across Australia.

Homebirths here and in much of the Western world were few and far between but were on the rise. Our pioneers were Henny Ligtermoet, who had set up the Midwifery Contact Service in WA in 1956 (she was Dutch, and homebirth seemed a normal choice); midwife Edith Gosling, who was attending homebirths in Sydney from 1967 and in Victoria, midwife Pat Woods and Dr John Stevenson, who attended homebirths from the 70s onwards.

Institutionalised birth was becoming less popular with well-informed women and in May 1976, PCA expanded its role and set up the Homebirth Referral Service. As PCA's President, I expected flak and was surprised by several doctors making supportive phone calls and Cleo magazine running a story 'So You Want to Have Your Baby At Home'.

Films and books about homebirth started to appear and with the continued rise in interest, PCA formed the Home Birth Support and Referral Service in December 1978.

Homebirth midwives were in short supply so we advertised and found some English and Scottish midwives, who were the ones most likely to have the skills and confidence to attend homebirths.

The Nurses Registration Board, after much lobbying stated that 'registered midwives are free to practice in any setting'. Lay midwives were left outside the law, yet grew in numbers.

Edith Gosling had started the Organization of Australian Midwives (OAM) in November 1977 and it remained separate to PCA. Different

In the 1960s and 70s the scene was different, but the aims are still the same.

agendas, goals and philosophies created a need for different groups and a national organization. On 11 November 1978 Homebirth Australia was created at a combined meeting in Canberra and became the umbrella organization for the many groups that now existed throughout Australia. Local groups still had much to offer and in Sydney, the Homebirth Information Service formed.

Change was happening and birthing choices were expanding. We were part of a worldwide movement. Local, state, national and international conferences were regularly being held, newsletters and birth stories were published, films made and a relentless campaign to better all forms of birthing practice continued.

The debate as to whether or not special regulations were necessary to govern homebirth brought the antagonists out in public and we put out a press release, 'Obstetricians Proving to be Dangerous at Births', but the establishment fought back.

We heard of midwives in the USA being charged for attending homebirths and in Sydney, Edith Gosling faced deregistration in 1980. She was ultimately given the opportunity of 'retraining', which she declined. Dr John Stevenson was taken to court and deregistered in 1984. Others were to follow with varying outcomes [see page 20—Ed] but it was clear most of the medical and legal professions did not want homebirth as a viable option.

Meanwhile, the consumer groups grew in number and strength and the homebirth wing of PCA became independent and known as Homebirth Association Sydney (HAS) in April 1981. This gave more freedom to this special interest group and the opportunity for a homebirth-focused newsletter to be published. National Homebirth Week was declared and held in the last week of October.

There was, however, a struggle within the group. Consumers considered homebirth midwives often had a different agenda. It was a sad time and the midwives left the group.

By mid 1982, Sydney's two homebirth groups could see no advantage in being separate and merged, incorporating both names Homebirth Association Sydney and Homebirth Access and become Homebirth Access Sydney, affectionately referred to as HAS.

In 1983, at the 3rd National Midwives conference, Dr John Deeble, whose brainchild was Medicare, was asked "what do midwives need to do to achieve financial and Medicare recognition?" The advice was to send a submission to the Medicare Tribunal. Many submissions to a variety of reviews have been sent over the past 33 years. We can but hope the Federal Maternity Services Review 2008 is followed by action.

Often the changes we seek come, but not always for our reasons. A shortage of obstetricians, the high cost of running hospitals plus overcrowded maternity units has given consumers and midwives an opportunity to create more choice and autonomy.

So once again I will take up my much worn 'pen' for another submission, maybe time and circumstances are now more favourable and my long held mantra becomes a reality. I believe every woman has a right to birth where and with whom she chooses and that her choices should not financially disadvantage her, or her standard of care, or put her or her birth attendant outside the law.

That's the overview story of HAS but these are the reasons why so many groups sprang up particularly in the 60's and 70's.

I will try and paint the scene: the backdrop is the sexual revolution. This is a time of doing things differently and better than our parents. Our higher standards of education, the contraceptive pill, an abundance of

work opportunities, affluence, leisure and travel meant risk, experiment and questioning of our social, political and medical models was inevitable. The Vietnam War gave impetus to the peace movement where activists learned the skills that made effective the challenging of these models.

Medicalised childbirth wasn't serving women or babies needs, indeed it often caused needless damage.

L *"A shortage of obstetricians, the high cost of running hospitals plus overcrowded maternity units has given consumers and midwives an opportunity to create more choice and autonomy."*

Compare the following scene with birth today. How much has changed?

- Birth in the 60's & 70's was called confinement.
- Women were delivered of a baby rather than gave birth.
- Individual needs were not considered. Birth was a medical procedure, often with sedation and routines that were unfounded yet held sacrosanct.
- More women were choosing an obstetrician rather than a GP, so normal became medical.
- Weight gain in pregnancy was kept to a minimum, often to the detriment of women and babies.
- Once in hospital, all rights seemed in the hands of the staff and doctors.
- Personal clothing and jewellery were removed and the 'patient' tagged.
- No husband, let alone partner, family member, friend or sibling was allowed past the waiting room. (In 1969, my husband was threatened with the police if he attempted to stay with me. Fortunately this changed during the 70s.)
- Women laboured and gave birth with strangers.
- Labour took place in bed.
- For the birth you were flat on your back often with your legs in stirrups.
- A pubic shave and enema were routinely administered on admission (a practice that only increased the rate of infection, but created the so-called 'sterile field').
- Women were never asked, only told, what to do.
- Regardless of the length of labour, no food or drink was given.
- Many vaginal examinations would be carried out.
- Staff would change shifts—there was no concept of the value of continuity of care.
- A variety of sedations would be given 'to help' (often making for discomfort and immobilization).
- Inductions, augmentation of labour, intravenous therapy and analgesia were routine.

- Episiotomy and forcep extractions were accepted as 'normal' procedures.
- Caesareans increased and were even performed for non-medical reasons (no drug having been proven safe for mother or baby, seemed irrelevant).
- Placentas, if not immediately delivered, were manually removed and discarded.
- So great was the 'takeover' during birth, some described it as clinical rape.
- The doctor announced the sex of the baby (males were circumcised routinely, often before discharge).
- The cord was cut immediately.
- Mothers often only got a quick look, not even a touch of the baby before it was moved to the central nursery.
- Breastfeeding was out of vogue (probably as there was money to be made from 'formulas' which were advertised as superior to mother's milk).
- Feeding was by the clock and usually with a bottle (a Sydney Morning Herald article reported that "bottle feeding is a giant twentieth century uncontrolled experiment").
- Breasts were seen as unhygienic and were swabbed before feeding.
- Feeding in public places, even when discreet, caused anger, dismay and even eviction from stores and restaurants.
- To breastfeed meant breaking down social barriers and re-learning the art of breastfeeding.
- There was no paid maternity/paternity leave.

A small minority of women were now choosing to birth at home rather than face ritualised routine medicine in an institution. Independent childbirth education classes that educated parents, rather than just prepared them for a hospital birth, proved invaluable in the process of change. Categories of young or old, early or late, or so called 'at risk' labels were soon found to be irrelevant to a woman's ability to birth safely at home. These highly motivated, well-informed women had excellent outcomes. The system was challenged.

Of course not all women could birth at home and some transferred to hospital. Often they were met with hostilities and reprimands, widening the gap between home and hospital. A wonderful opportunity for an exchange of skills, knowledge and philosophies was delayed by decades.

I leave you with this grim story. I know much has changed but wonder how much longer we still have to wait before the World Health Organisation recommendations regarding acceptable caesarean section rates and midwives' skills are reached.

Independent Midwives have played a vital role in creating the changes many now benefit from. They are resource to be cherished and nurtured. They need insurance and their clients need Medicare-refundable births.

There are still many challenges ahead and I encourage current activists to clarify a 21st century wish list. ●

We congratulate Elaine on being presented with an Edna Ryan Award for Community Activism earlier this year. Elaine's work in childbirth reform is as enduring as HAS itself and she has demonstrated an abiding feminist commitment to birthing women. Elaine notified HAS that she received the award with the generous comment, "It's for all of us really, and the work we all do." Congratulations Elaine.

HAS: Beginnings and Bounty

MAGGIE LECKY-THOMPSON

From a personal experience came anger and the power to work for change.

I would like to take this amazing achievement of the 100th edition of *Birthings* (which also marks the 30th birthday of the first homebirth I attended) to share some of the inspiration, some of the passion and some of the learnings that I have gained from being part of HAS.

From my meeting with Ina May Gaskin on a blistering January day in 1978 in Paddington Town Hall, when I began to envision how I could resurrect my childbearing pattern of failure, till my deregistration as a midwife in December 1998, one of the few constants has been my relationship with HAS. It is still one that gives me great joy and one of my proudest moments was to be made a life member.

This relationship began with my need to create a support network for myself as a mother planning a homebirth. It carried over to provide me with the confidence and knowledge to help other women achieve successful homebirths and to become an activist for childbirth reform. I was determined that HAS would continue to survive, and that its newsletter would be sent to every new mother planning a homebirth. Thus I committed to joining every new client to HAS. Many of these women told me that this was as significant a step in their growth and enjoyment of motherhood as were their homebirths.

When I met Ina May I was 30 years old and I was very angry. I was politically naive and very much a product of my nurse/midwife training. One aspect of this was that I was emotionally incapable of challenging ridiculous medical and hospital dictums.

I don't know if many are aware today that up until the late 80s, pregnant women were subject to vaginal examinations at most prenatal visits. All labouring women had routine enemas and their pubes shaved. They 'had to' wear hospital gowns when in labour, and use bedpans instead of toilets. Routine were inductions, bed birth only, stranded beetle or left lateral position only, stirrups, episiotomies, being forbidden to leave the room for a walk, not eating in labour and restricted fluids. Baby's cord was cut immediately by the accoucheur and baby whisked to the resuscitation trolley for vigorous suction to nose, mouth and throat.

My firstborn, like all the babies born in 1973 at the Royal Hospital for Women at Paddington then, had my name painted in Gentian Violet on her chest—“Baby of Maggie Lecky-Thompson”—before I saw or held her. Rare was it for partners to be present. Unheard of that children would enter the Labour Ward. Circumcisions were routinely performed on the majority of baby boys on their day of

discharge. Few women would dream of going home before Day 7, no matter that they had children at home, and family keen to help.

Why more of us did not clamour for homebirths might seem a mystery to women today but it's evidence of how we viewed ourselves that so many of these inhumane practices were accepted without dissent.

Hmmm, drifting away from the positive already! But it's important to explain my anger. Whilst it might seem natural to you reading this list above, I felt pretty much alone in my rage. Despite two beautiful little girls and two breastfeeding experiences that had done wonders to restore my faith that I could mother well, the inadequacy I felt about their births was a source of continued grief and my reaction to this was a common one, as it is even today. I felt a strong need to blame others for the shortcomings of my daughters' births.

When the energy we gather to birth our babies is thwarted by a less than desirable outcome, it is natural to want to blame others. I had no idea how uninformed as a woman I was about birth, thinking my midwifery training would have prepared me. It took listening to Ina May and other wonderful lay midwives for me to learn to listen to experienced mothers. I had to learn to let go of my pride and see that my midwifery training was actually quite insubstantial for the task of birthing well or for being a homebirth midwife.

The realisation that I would be asked to help at others homebirths had not occurred to me initially. However, flimsy as I felt my qualifications to be, they did allow me to access GPs who taught some of the interested midwives the skills of perineal repair, IV infusions, neonatal resuscitation and managing a maternal haemorrhage at home.

Parent Centres Australia (the group that launched the Homebirth Information Service in 1978 that evolved into HAS) loaned me the money to buy my first oxygen cylinder as an impetus to get me started. It was a generous step for a small organisation. It also was a where I met my first midwife colleague. Chris was finishing her midwifery training at St Margaret's Hospital, where I had 'trained' 10 years before and we decided to attend homebirths together. The first was one of my clients—the family lived off Shirley Rd in Wollstonecraft—and the second was Chris's at Crystal St, Petersham and the third, a mate of mine through Nursing Mothers near the beach at Dee Why. Given Chris had missed each one of mine due to her work hours, we decided that plan wasn't working too well, but it did help our shared anxiety to know we had each other for support. And Chris introduced me to Rescue Remedy which she had found

had revived a 'dead cat' for her once, so we thought it might be useful in the 'kit'. It was reassuring for me, along with the oxygen, which I didn't use for several years but was so grateful then that I had it.

Every midwife knows that anger can be a powerful force for change to assist a birth to fruition. So it is with anything we desperately want to change. I see that HAS had a significant role in directing energies like my own to aid the changes that today makes those standard procedures in hospitals of the 70s a ludicrous collection.

In HAS, I found a vehicle for forward movement for that anger, for workshops to learn from other mothers and experts, for books and articles to be circulated, for friends who understood and provided support and generated projects with large doses of hilarity. It was a means at last for me to work through my sense of inadequacy or impotency.

Whilst there are various organisations and many individuals who have contributed to the work of changing hospital birth practices and obtaining support for homebirthing women, none of them has had the on-going organisational framework and such a large number of consumer members as HAS have always maintained.

Hospitals, of course, have now reviewed their PR and all of those above-listed, once essential, practices no longer exist, due to consumer pressure more than any research.

It is not possible to measure the impact of the work that HAS accomplished in helping to achieve these changes. It is hard to quantify the power of the lobbying generated by the numerous letters written, petitions signed and delivered, telegrams and then emails sent, attendance at rallies and visits to politicians. How do we know how many people we have influenced with our annual presence at events like the Mind Body Spirit Festival and at all the baby shows at which we set up the stand. Not to mention the many conferences we attended to do with midwifery, breastfeeding, twins, the Department of Health, political parties, and drug and medical equipment; nor our own information nights and Homebirth Australia conferences. HAS is almost alone in its achievement of ensuring consumer and midwife representatives on every major NHMRC (National Health and Medical Research Council) and Department of Health working party that was held from 1980 till current times. My experience of these committees was that I was often alone in putting forward HAS members' viewpoint, which was very hard, however I found that if I could swing one person to my perspective then I could influence some changes. Like arguing with Professor Derek Llewellyn-Jones, a celebrated author and leading Obstetrician/Gynaecologist in

Sydney, that women were ideally suited learn suturing skills, as most of us had been sewing since we were little girls.

HAS has always been involved in fundraising, from raising money to buy books for the library, to helping to support midwives in their efforts to survive various court challenges. For me personally, these actions and HAS's show of support at various rallies revealed to the whole community the spirit of HAS and its members. As one colleague noted, "The women want to give something back, Mags. Midwives help mothers through their labours and they in turn want to help midwives through theirs." This networking, this willingness to step forward and help only happens in well-functioning communities.

This brings me to my final point. Well functioning-communities of diverse people who live at different locations can only be achieved by strong communication systems. Whilst we assembled the newsletter the original cut and paste style on the kitchen table in those early days, we determined that it must remain a newsletter that looked professional and was as loved for its content as much as its aesthetic appeal and its consistency/reliability.

As Stephanie Dowrick writes:

Sharing views plays a crucial part in our social development. So does understanding where we sit on issues, or why and when we need to stand up for something. That's vital to a robust sense of engaged living. Writing and reading are fundamental social activities. They may be quiet but they are rarely passive. We read books and newspapers individually, but part of their wonder is how authentically they connect us to other people, regardless of where those people are. These complex processes are easily taken for granted, yet they literally enlarge our world, highlight out interdependence and illuminate our differences. One of the hallmarks of a democratic society is the notion that differences in perspective and experience can be stimulating rather than threatening.

Open, curious and varied public conversations are a necessary to that as they are to our own development.

...our reading is also a shared way of thinking and caring about people and the world beyond our own garden gate... a sense of a diverse community in constant conversation...

(Sydney Morning Herald, Good Weekend, 18 October 2008)

I fervently hope that *Birthings*, our newsletter and masthead, will continue to be for all the future generations' sakes. ●

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Women Supporting Women

AMANDA LINN

Almost thirty years after her first home birth, one woman looks back with pride and a fondness for an old t-shirt.

Congratulations on the 100th newsletter. Homebirth Access Sydney is still doing today what it was doing in 1980 when it was formed: women supporting women thinking about homebirth options, helping women prepare for their homebirth and all that other wonderful support that comes after the birth via the friendships that are made along the way.

It seems like only yesterday that Craig and I were pregnant with our first baby and looking for a natural home birth. At that time (late 1979) homebirth was definitely seen as an unusual and, some said, dangerous choice. I had read about homebirth, but the books that I had were American or English. I didn't know what was available in Sydney. However, this was a time before the internet and you couldn't just google 'homebirth Sydney'. It took a fair bit of leg work to find out about homebirth midwives—the telephone book was no help. I found a flier for a midwife in a health food shop and also got a name from Leichhardt Women's Health Centre. This led to attending a meeting at a house in Roseville where I felt I'd struck the jackpot. I was very lucky and ended up with a choice of several midwives working in Sydney at that time. Our daughter Alanna was born on 19 May 1980 in our rented flat in Waverley. Her birth was supported by Craig (my partner), Joan Brandt (our midwife), Joan's apprentice Chris (a lay-midwife), Barbara and Leigh. I subsequently had two more births at home in the Blue Mountains with the beautiful Geneth Frame as midwife. Angela was born in 1983 and Tiernan in 1985.

Looking through the HAS website, I see that women today are choosing homebirth for the same reasons that we chose it nearly 30 years ago—as a positive, life enhancing, informed, responsible action. Back then, when a woman went to hospital to birth, her partner could only be present if the doctor gave his permission and siblings were definitely OUT; women were routinely shaven and given enemas; babies were whisked away and scrubbed down with phisohex (how dreadful for their beautiful, soft new skin to be exposed to such harsh chemicals); women could not walk around, eat, bathe etc etc etc—all the things that we can do at home—and were expected to give birth lying down. Our rights were taken from us and we were seen as not able to make responsible birthing decisions.

Thank goodness, hospital birthing practice has changed dramatically over the last three decades and I would like to think that the homebirth movement across Australia, and Homebirth Access Sydney in particular, have played a large part in pushing for these absolutely necessary changes. Hospital birth, even in the best

of Birth Centres, is still not HOME birth. There is still such need for women to take control of this part of our lives. This is where a group like HAS comes into its own—by being a collective representative voice for concerned birthing women lobbying politicians. I firmly believe that homebirth is a political act and I thank all those women who went before and came after me.

Being part of the homebirth movement has given me so much—I have lifelong friends that I met in those early homebirth support meetings and my political views on the importance and significance of individual action were born in those days too, along with the babies. And I still have an old Homebirth Access T-shirt in the bottom of my drawer, too precious to throw out!

So HAS, here's to the next 100 newsletters!

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Snip and Stuck: Making Birthings

ROBYN DEMPSEY

Though the method of production has changed, the making of Birthings is still a labour of love.

So there we were. No computer and no idea on how we were going to do the next newsletter.

HAS had just undergone one of its transformations. Over the years, HAS would explode with new energy and ideas. Bubbling along with newfound enthusiasm, a team of dedicated individuals would work together to bring you all the wonderful events and happenings of the homebirth community. Then it would happen: that energy would start to wane, slowly dissipating to a ripple.

So, there we were, stuck in the ripple.

Rosemary Merline and I sat on the floor of her house, staring blankly at each other. We had a birth story and one article, there were just a few birth notices, and no pictures. So we sat there, just me, her and the deadline for the 46th issue of *Birthings*. It was the summer of 1995.

Okay, now what? So, like all strong women, we sucked up our courage and made a start...

Taking the previous newsletter, we used it as a template. Page by page we copied it for the 'standard' information, such as who was on the committee and the services pages. We had to 'cut and paste' actual articles onto A4 paper. I'm talking glue and scissors here, remember, we didn't have a computer.

The articles we dug up from our own experience, or previous newsletters, typed out and literally 'stuck' them on to the paper. I think the newsletter was on waterbirth. Rosemary had some pictures, so we were able to use those. We rang around some of the midwives who were able to give us some generic birth notices.

It was done. Small, but made with love and care, Rosemary and I took our newsletter to the printers. It was an amazing feeling of completion to know we had achieved our own newsletter, without a computer, without any writing skills or basically any idea.

Which leads me to say, 'Hey, you! Yes, you reading this. Don't worry that you don't have any particular skills, if you have some time and a little energy, HAS needs you!!'

I look at the last newsletter, and smile in awe at the beauty with which *Birthings* is presented these days. I know in my heart how much work goes into it, even with a computer!

So happy 100th newsletter. So much has changed over the years, and yet so much is the same.

The look of the newsletter changes, but the beautiful stories remain the same. The pictures may not have been so clear in the past, but they still convey the beauty of birthing.

So, editors and committee members, keep up the good work. Know that I and many other members eagerly await the newsletter!



ABOVE: ROBYN (CENTRE)
WITH LUCRETIA MCCARTHY
AND JO HUNTER, ISSUE 65,
SUMMER 2000.
RIGHT: ISSUE 46 OF
BIRTHINGS HANDMADE BY
ROBYN AND ROSEMARY



Making of a Midwife

JO HUNTER

*From consumer to midwife-in-training
— four events that made a difference.*

The challenges, struggles and triumphs we faced in the homebirth movement during my time with HAS (1998–2007) were not new, as many of the amazing women before and after me will know and understand.

It feels very apt to be penning this piece today, as it is my son's ninth birthday and I spent the morning pondering his beautiful homebirth—“This time 9 years ago...” I wonder if I will ever stop reliving my children's births on their birthdays—I hope not!

Four major ‘events’ come to mind when I recall my time with HAS.

Maggie's prosecutions

I first became involved with HAS when I was pregnant with my second baby and planning my first homebirth. It was a trying time for the movement and for my midwife, Maggie Lecky-Thompson, who was being very publicly hauled through the courts. The public slaying of midwives is not a new phenomenon. We only need to look back to the 17th century and ‘the burning of the witches’.

In retrospect, I find it incredible that the stress of the proceedings, and the media circus that inevitably came with it, in no way affected the heartfelt and sincere care Maggie provided me (and I'm sure many others) through my pregnancies and births. The smallest pregnancy complaint or issue never fell on deaf ears and I now realise how little I understood of what she was going through.

Many of you will know of Maggie's story and I wondered if I should even cover it in this article, but I feel I must as it was this experience that led me to personally enter the political arena and lobby for change—a fight that is still far from over.

Five cases were brought to the courts against Maggie, claiming professional misconduct. Four of these cases had been initiated by doctors who were not present at the births and which were pursued against the express wishes of the parents involved. The fifth case was a second attempt by a couple who had previously lost against Maggie at the Supreme Court in October 1995. The prosecution alleged that Maggie worked totally outside a reasonable scope of practice and Maggie's defense argued that she did not, that she simply worked as many midwives do all over the world and that the way she worked was perfectly normal and reasonable. Ultimately, the court hearings were an argument of clinical differences of opinion. To cut an extremely long story short, Maggie was eventually deregistered as a midwife in 1998.

The year following Maggie's deregistration, others went before the courts. Joie Van Renen from Bellingen, Jocelyn Ritchie from Mittagong

and Claire Brassard from QLD. Although these cases were not as public as Maggie's persecution, the medicos were trying to send a clear message.

It is pertinent at this point to mention how little midwives' opinions are regarded by the medical fraternity in this country, particularly those midwives who do not work within the system. An example of this was the fact that Graeme Reeves, who is now known as the ‘Butcher of Bega’, was an antagonist and witness for the prosecution against Maggie. This was a case where he was the obstetrician on duty one night when Maggie transferred a homebirth client into hospital with a retained placenta. Maggie, her apprentice at the time, and the woman's husband were witness to the most extreme brutality, both physically and verbally towards this woman, which was followed by a series of immense blunders and misjudgments, ultimately leaving the woman permanently incapacitated. In Maggie's court case, his evidence was accepted as more veritable than Maggie's, despite the fact that he had already been sacked from both Hornsby Hospital and The San. Yet another example of the ‘boys club’ protecting their own and finding someone else to blame for their mistakes.

Midwives losing professional indemnity insurance

The second major ‘event’ which occurred was in mid 2001. Guild Insurance Limited decided to “withdraw from the midwifery market”, by ceasing to offer Independently Practicing Midwives (IPMs) professional indemnity insurance, leaving IPMs without cover. This caused a public outcry from the homebirth movement and resulted in much lobbying by consumers, who were primarily led by Justine Caines (then President of Maternity Coalition and secretary of Homebirth Australia). Despite the hundreds of hours spent lobbying politicians, writing letters and holding discussions with the Health Department and the College of Midwives, an alternative insurance has not been obtainable to date. The lack of insurance had a considerable affect on homebirth consumers, as many midwives ceased to practice independently. This left only a small number of IPMs working in NSW and created even less options for birthing women.

A report known as the Tito Report was published in 1995. It was a review of Professional Indemnity Arrangements for Health Care Professionals, Compensation and Professional Indemnity in Health Care. Chapter 10 of the report, “Birthing services: case study of reform”, recommends that “Professional indemnity cover be compulsory for all health professionals either through vicarious liability for employed health



JO HUNTER AND MAGGIE LECKY-THOMPSON

professionals, or through the holding of separate cover by self-employed people.” (Commonwealth Department of Human Services and Health (1995), Review of Professional Indemnity Arrangements for Health Care Professionals, Compensation and Professional Indemnity in Health Care.)

Within the report there are specific recommendations relating to the availability of cover for IPMs: “ensure that products are available at a reasonable cost to the full range of self-employed professionals, including midwives, to minimise any unintended workforce effects of professional indemnity arrangements.” Despite these recommendations, seven years have passed and IPMs are still unable to obtain professional indemnity insurance.

Midwifery recognised as a profession

Whilst the third major ‘event’ is not directly related to homebirth, it will certainly have an effect on homebirth in the future. On 1 August 2004 the *Nurses and Midwives Act* commenced. The Board had previously been called the Nurses Registration Board (NRB) and this was officially changed to The Nurses and Midwives Board (NMB). It was a huge step forward, as midwifery was finally recognised as a profession in its own right and a separate register for midwives became operational.

In many other Western countries (NZ, UK, Holland) the population values its midwives as professionals with unique roles and qualifications. Prior to the changes of this Act, Australian midwives came under the title of Nurse. Since its inception there have been many changes to the profession, possibly the biggest being the education of midwives.

In 2005 the Bachelor of Midwifery (BMid) commenced in NSW, enabling students to study midwifery without first having to be a nurse. Prior to this, Australian midwives were nurses who had completed an extra year of training. Thanks to the changes, the BMid is now a three year degree, resulting in midwives being educated as ‘specialists’ in pregnancy and birth. This has and will no doubt lead to further changes in maternity care in Australia and result in a new generation of midwives who see birth as a normal state for healthy women.

Publicly funded homebirth programs

Lastly, in May 2005, the first publicly funded homebirth program commenced through St George hospital. Whilst this program is a huge step forward and heralds a new era for maternity services in NSW, offering a service to women in the St George region who may not otherwise

have been able to afford a homebirth, there are some concerns amongst homebirth consumers as to its strict exclusion criteria. An example of this is several phone calls that I have personally received from women who were planning to homebirth on the program. At 36 weeks gestation these women had a routine lower vaginal swab to ascertain their Group B Strep status. Unfortunately their swabs came back positive and the women were told they that could no longer birth at home on the program. These women were distraught. Thankfully I was able to put them in touch with IPMs who stepped in and provided the rest of their antenatal care so they could continue their homebirth plans.

It is for these reasons that IPMs are and will always be essential and a national funding arrangement must be established, either by Medicare Provider Numbers for IPMs or by way of a healthcare payment allocated to women during pregnancy whereby women use this money to pay the caregiver of their choice, be that a public hospital, an obstetrician or an independent midwife. There must also be clear guidelines regarding informed consent and the right of refusal, putting women exactly where they should be—in the centre of their own experience and experts of their own bodies and babies.

And all the rest...

Although these were the major ‘events’ which occurred during my time serving on the HAS committee, we also hosted and were involved in several Homebirth Conferences, held information stalls at many Expos, continued to publish *Birthings* magazine, re-launched Homebirth Awareness Week, held mediation meetings, created and maintained a web presence and offered an information and referral service to IPMs. We had lots of fun (sometimes hysterical) times as a committee and I was fortunate to make great long standing friendships with other like minded passionate women.

From a personal perspective my experiences with HAS, as well as my own delicious homebirth experiences were life-changing and led me on a path of personal growth and change. I have recently completed the second year of the BMid. This time next year I will be graduating and I look forward with great anticipation to serving homebirthing women in a different way—this time as their midwife.

—Jo x

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membership

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birth notice form



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.....

Siblings name(s)

.....

.....

Baby's name(s)

.....

.....

Date of Birth

.....

Place of Birth

.....

Tick where appropriate

Girl Labour Ward

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Additional message to be printed, eg midwife, support people, details of birth, weight, length etc

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merchandise, money & more

ANNE HARRIS

Over
the last 25 years
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schemes and fundraisers to keep Homebirth
Access Sydney afloat. Some of the memorable fundraisers
include Lipstick Drives, Paint Your Belly Day, Calendars, Bush
Dances, Car Rallies, Garage Sales and Chocolate Drives. All in an
effort to keep the awareness of the importance of homebirth alive.

The money raised has helped us lobby for change, provide services such as purpose
built birthpools for sale, participate at markets and expos to get the homebirth message
out in the community and repeatedly resurrect the library for the benefit of members.

And we still need your help. Every time you see us advertising to sell something,
it really is a plea for you to help make a difference. Every cent we raise goes directly
back into your homebirth organisation and every item that has a homebirth
slogan or message helps raise awareness. I keep my homebirth shopping bag
on display on the back of my pram, so that anyone who is curious can quietly
ask me for information. It's such a gentle way to raise awareness.

So a big thank you to all of you that have danced, eaten, driven
and puckered in support of HAS and our ongoing mission to
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in their right to choose to birth at home.





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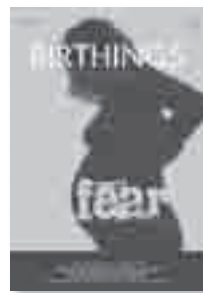
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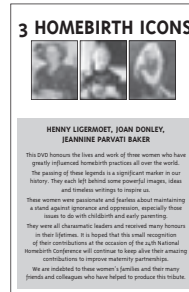
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The work of these women has inspired many honours in their lifetimes. It is hoped that this small recognition of their contributions at the occasion of the sixth National Homebirth Conference will continue to keep alive their amazing contributions to improve maternity practice.

We are indebted to these women's families and their many friends and colleagues who have helped to produce this tribute.

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Kinma students love learning and experience excitement, freedom and fulfilment during their time at the school.

Kinma is a parent managed school with a strong sense of community that embraces the whole family.

Parents aren't left standing at the school gate. They are welcome in the classroom at all times, and can stay all day if they want to.

Kinma enjoys a high academic standard, but success isn't measured by academic achievement alone.

Kinma works to develop each child's academic, emotional, social, physical and creative potentials.

Kinma idyllic bushland setting is a child's paradise. They are given the time and space to climb, build, explore, discover and have adventures.

Large, homey multi-levelled classrooms have lots of nooks and crannies to explore and are well resourced.

New Preschool

Innovative environmentally friendly design

ENROLLING NOW



Families are welcome to visit Kinma at anytime throughout the year.

For More Information Contact Kinma School:

127 Coolowie Road Terrey Hills Phone: 9450 0738 Fax: 9450 0748 www.kinma.nsw.edu.au

The Birth of Sky

ROSLYN TAYLOR

Sky's birth story appeared in Issue 1 of Birthings, or the Homebirth Access Sydney newsletter, as it was then known. Twenty six years later, the story continues.

Events just prior and following

confirmation of my pregnancy would read rather like some fantastic movie script, but somewhere inside it all Jon and I knew, despite rather heavy opposition, that we needed to be together and in a place of our own—somewhere to really get ourselves together and prepare for baby, to be relaxed in peaceful surrounds and clear air. To this end we progressed from friends' houses to a caravan park, to our own little caravan in the park and on to a lady's backyard with our caravan. None of these were particularly conducive to a home birth and we felt also a great need for the life giving energy of many trees.

As events so often happen for us, just at that last moment, just before you think it's all a bit too much, our 'house' happened. Perched on a rock ledge completely enveloped by eucalypts and marvelous natural bush, overlooking a deep tree-filled valley, a tiny hexagonal dwelling with huge windows in each direction, no doors, wood stove and hessian-lined walls. Amidst the planting of gardens, many herbs and organic vegetables,

we reveled in the vital energy of the place and knew that, with the aid of our beautiful midwife, Maggie, our lives would change in a wonderful direction, and we looked forward for the first time with a deep joy to our home birth.

At that stage there was no one else to help out at the birth, but once again, as time drew near, our PCA counsellor, Carol and her friend Stephanie, offered to be there with us, and I remembered my raised eyebrow when sometime earlier someone urged that we should not worry because things just happen when you least expect it—and they had. Jon and I had been most particular about who should be at the birth because we wanted the energy to flow well between everyone and we could not have wanted for a more gentle and loving team.

Closer:

After selling our wares at the local markets on Sunday 28 March [1982], Jon and I made our way home. It had been a great day, despite toting my towel with me—a constant companion since my waters began leaking, four days before.



Our midwife had suggested to carry on as normal—just not to take baths or make love, thus discouraging any infection. That was fine, our tank didn't hold to such luxury and nature took care of the rest. I was too darn tired these last few days anyway.

Some three weeks before this, baby decided to pop himself into breech position. I was really tense about it, but Maggie said there was lots we could do and with the aid of Moxa, special body positioning, plenty of long walks with Jon in the evening and a good talking to, he changed his mind within the week. Had he stayed breech, we all decided still to have the birth at home.

Market day again:

4:17pm I felt a crampy sensation low down. We waited and sure enough, six minutes later there was another the same. We timed a few to be sure then set to work showering ourselves, tidying the house and gathering things ready. It would have been funny watching us pretending to be cool, but with little smiles just

curling cheekily at the lips. By 5pm they were about three minutes apart so Jon rang Maggie, Carol and Stephanie who all arrived by 6pm (we live out of the way a bit). They left us to be together for a while and went off for a walk (in the rain).

When they returned the sensations had become strong enough to go into first stage breathing, and Jon, as he had throughout the classes, breathed with me. I'd been concentrating since the beginning on relaxing my pelvic floor muscles, "letting go" and visualising the cervix dilating. We had gentle music playing in the background, calming.

By 7:45pm I was nearly fully dilated and the surges of energy had increased a lot in intensity, so Jon guided me into a more helpful breathing. He was really fantastic and right there with me, in fact he was so enthusiastic in helping me that he kept hyperventilating and getting dizzy. My awareness became more and more centred on Jon to the exclusion of most everything else. Maggie thought my bladder

was full and holding up the works, so with immense effort everyone helped me onto our faithful billy bucket—after that things began to happen.

Fully dilated 8:15. When it came time to push, I found the Sheila Kitzinger method—the way I hoped—wasn't getting me there. Maggie helped me into a knees up position and then I really had to put more effort into it. Pushing was really vocal, but it helped and everyone kept up steady and firm support with marvelous hot towels low on my tummy, massaging cramps in my legs and bringing plenty of fruit juice iceblocks to suck.

This stage was definitely more difficult for me than I had expected, the head came up and receded time and time again (how I wished we'd found more time for those vaginal stretching exercises) and Maggie gently and patiently massaged the area for maximum elasticity. I still couldn't push him out, so opted for a small episiotomy, which I didn't feel, and with a great effort, the baby's



head made it through at about 8:50pm. I remember faltering at this point and hearing Maggie's voice encouraging. The strength and compassion behind her words showed me into the next couple of pushes and the rest of his little body slid quickly out. Maggie took a glance at the clock and said "8:56", and Jon told us we had a boy.

Sky had arrived into candlelight, was put on my tummy with Jon massaging him—no cries of distress, and looking particularly beautiful. Beaming faces gathered close, hushed, spellbound. When finally his cord stopped pulsing and his passages had been cleared, Maggie clamped and Jon cut the cord. We had originally wondered about bathing him, but it wasn't appropriate so what vernix there was stayed on his body and absorbed naturally—protecting and moisturising.

Jon cuddled Sky to his skin while the afterbirth was delivered, about 9:16pm, and Stephanie and Carol tidied and cleaned up before setting wearily homeward—they

had worked really hard. With them they took our washing, offering to take this worry off our hands for the next couple of weeks, and behind them they left an enormous box of goodies to see us through a few days.

Maggie stayed on awhile, checking Sky and me and helping him onto the breast, but he preferred to sleep. 7lb 3oz, no spots or blotches and already big hands like Jon's! It had been a tough time, but I was happy there at home with people so loving and caring. And finally there was Jon and Sky and me, together. We had so much to be grateful for—our place, each other, rain, water in the tank and now Sky—and a beautiful big window to look out upon the trees and sky next morning. The sky, after 'whom' he was named.

He slept between us that night, blissfully unaware of the many journeys and adventures his 'little' soul would soon encounter—but I wonder?

The sky has no limits.

DANNI TOWNSEND

Which is why Ros Taylor and Jon Woodland chose the name Sky for their baby boy, born at home in March 1982. That and the fact that the home in which he was born was little more than a simple dwelling with huge floor to ceiling windows looking out to the bush and sky.

"We were very alternate in our views in every way," says Ros. "Homebirth seemed the most natural thing to do. It was gentle and natural."

Though their home was an 'hexagonal dwelling' in the bush north of Sydney with a mattress on the floor and a 'billy bucket' as an inside toilet during the birth, in many other ways their birth story resembles those that have often appeared in the pages in

»



Birthings—beautiful, natural and in the presence of loving attendants.

"Even now I remember a magical aspect to the evening," says Ros.

Ros and Jon's midwife Maggie Lecky-Thompson has strong memories of the evening too. "Jon came out to meet me in my car and helped me carry in the gear in the moonlight of a lovely balmy night," she says. "They were early environmentalists."

"I remember Maggie's presence being firm—a real security—and nurturing," says Ros.

"Jon and I had met while we were involved in trying to set up an alternative community. Though he was so much younger, he taught me so much: how to be more authentic." Ros said that she and Jon meditated and asked for a baby, and then she became pregnant with Sky.

Maggie recounts her experience of the family, "They were so grounded and together,

so rich in their love for one another and their dreams for their child."

"I remember not being able to get back to see her the next day and being worried and guilty," says Maggie. "After a restless night's sleep I rang and said I would get there about midday. She told me not to be worried or feel I needed to come urgently. She explained that she had a dream and in the dream I came and sat by her bed and we just talked and talked and she couldn't remember what was said but that she woke up feeling great and said it felt so real to her; and now any concerns she had had completely dissipated. She was my first teacher about the Shamanic concept of dedicating ones sleeping hours to the healing of others."

Baby Sky is now a 26-year-old university student who lives in Brisbane, is studying mathematics and French and is passionate about the environment. "He is the kind of

person who will ring excitedly if he has seen a worm in his new compost!" says Ros.

"It all had a great bearing on Sky's life," says Ros. "He cares about life and about people. He has a passionate curiosity, is delightful and imaginative."

Ros and Jon are no longer together but Ros says that their bond is still strong and they keep in touch. The family also extends to Ros' daughter Suzanne, who was adopted out before Sky was born. Sky was involved in helping Ros reunite with Suzanne when he was in his teens, and they now have a close relationship, with Sky babysitting his sister's children, according to Ros.

"I'm not the free-spirited hippy I was then, but at the time, the homebirth had a huge impact on me," says Ros. ●



samadhi yoga

YOGA OF BIRTH

A five day intensive workshop focusing on conception, pregnancy, labour and beyond with Katie Manitsas.

Many women practice yoga during pregnancy, but not so many know how that practice can offer ancient wisdom for a woman and her support people for healthy conception, through labour and beyond. This workshop is open to pregnant women, partners, support people, doulas, midwives and yoga teachers. Please contact us for a detailed information pack.

Monday 16th - Wednesday 18th February 2009, \$350
(\$300 if booked before 22nd January)

Monday 16th - Friday 20th February 2009, \$500
(\$400 if booked before 22nd January,
Thursday and Friday for yoga teachers only)

MUMS & BUBS YOGA CLASS

Tuesdays 10am, drop in classes \$16

A class for mums to attend with their babies. A typical session includes baby stretches to take small bodies through a range of movements and postures-for-two which give mums and babies a new way to relate to each other. The main focus is on post-natal yoga, providing an excellent route to post-natal recovery in a way that is safe, gentle and energising for tired mums. The class also provides a wonderful opportunity to meet other new mums and share experiences.

PREGNANCY YOGA

Mondays 10am, drop in classes \$16

Learn the unique requirements in preparing your body for birth and develop a practice that will support your health and well-being throughout this time of great change on all levels.

These classes are run by experienced yoga teacher and mother of three Lynda Taylor.

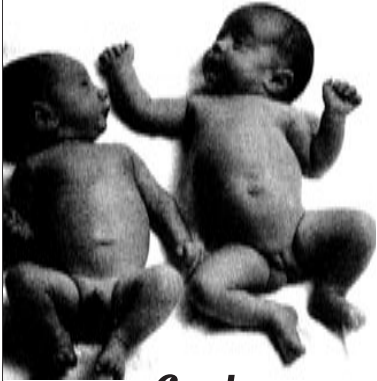
www.samadhiyoga.com.au

info@samadhiyoga.com.au 36 Lennox Street, Newtown (02) 9517 3280

heart to heart

The 100 issues of Birthings have featured a great many lovingly crafted poems, reflections and artwork. Here is a small selection.

POETRY AND ARTWORK



Carly

Sits on the floor
encircled by pillows,
reaches for a toy,
a shaft of sunlight,
a label,
quivers with the joy
of touch.

With a wrestler's thighs
holds feet to mouth,
and laughs
at adult fingers
which she carefully separates
and holds
to go to sleep with.

Carly
has a sense of humour
and two sharp teeth,
and likes the taste
of bath water
in her washer.

She
fondles the softness
of her mother's breast,
drinks the warm milk,
exchanging looks and kisses,
a gentle
love affair.

ROSEMARY LEWIS
(CARLY'S GRANDMOTHER)
23RD FEBRUARY 1984 (ISSUE #9)

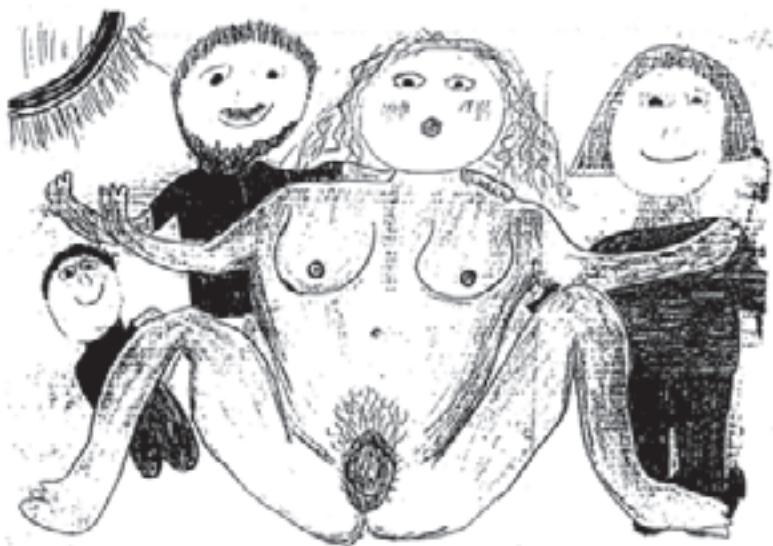


UNPREGNANT

**When she stops sucking at my breast
It will be truly over
Swollen breasts gone
Bulging belly no more
Left with war wounds
that spiral across my belly
I'm glad they are there
A sign of the warrior woman within**

Jo Hunter

(ISSUE #77)



Seth
 so soft
 sighing in your slumber
 so sound and safe
 little son.
 How is this joy to be born?
 The miracle
 of you silently slipping
 into a new
 forever.



Elisabeth Crawford
 August 1983

(ISSUE #18)



Poem

Time has stopped
 Flung into the black waters of pain
 I am consumed.
 There is nothing else.
 The world is gone.
 The void sucks me into her bottomless depths
 I struggle against loss of self
 attempt to resist the momentum of inevitability.
 The will of life is strong
 I finally surrender to its greater strength.
 I am swept into the cosmos
 I return to the beginning of time
 the birth of the world.
 I am the mother of all mothers
 The universe labouring in harmonic resonance
 The Goddess ecstatic in her miraculous state
 Actively breathing power from every cell.
 Guttural, primordial sound
 Propels me back into the moment of searing pain
 and roars from my mouth
 like a lion, a wolf, a bear
 the accumulative expression of woman
 singing her discordant birth chant
 through my quivering lips.
 Then all is still.
 My baby is here.

KYREN LEWIS-JONES

(ISSUE #60)



Honoring The Sacred Feminine Path in a Woman's life

2009 Workshops

May 9, 10 • **Moonsong**

The Dandenongs, VIC

Participants bringing lunch to share, morning and afternoon teas provided, non-residential, \$400

May 20, 21, 22 • **Pregnancy - The Inner Journey Workshop**

Southern Highlands, NSW

Fully catered, non-residential, \$450

May 2nd weekend • **Moonson**

Southern Highlands, NSW

Fully catered, non-residential, camping available

\$350, or \$250 for two family members

June 2, 3, 4, 5 • **Moonson 4 day retreat**

Benny Hill, TAS

Details TBA

June 18, 17, 18 • **Pregnancy - The Inner Journey Workshop**

Devon Bay, NSW

Fully catered, non-residential, \$550

October 24, 25 • **Opening Gathering**

School of Shamanic Midwifery - Course 1.

Southern Highlands, NSW

November 11, 12, 13 • **Pregnancy - The Inner Journey Workshop**

Melbourne, VIC

Fully catered, non-residential, \$550

November 14, 15 • **Moonson**

Melbourne, VIC

Participants bringing lunch to share, morning and afternoon teas provided, non-residential, \$400

November 18, 19, 20 • **Pregnancy - The Inner Journey Workshop**

Southern Highlands, NSW

Fully catered, non-residential, \$450

November 21, 22 • **Moonson**

Southern Highlands, NSW

Fully catered, non-residential, camping available

\$350, or \$250 for two family members

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

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



The School of Shamanic Midwifery - for midwives, doulas and birthkeepers commences in October 2009.

Contact me jane.collings@bigpond.com if you would like to receive my seasonal newsletters.

To book for a workshop or for further information email me or phone: 0408155008

JANE HARDWICKE COLLINGS

birth stories

Nathanael's Birth Story

CLAIRE BROADBENT

A baby boy chooses the full moon for his peaceful entry to family life.

Nathanael John Broadbent was born at 5:49am on Friday 20 June 2008. It was a full moon.

We celebrated the full moon the night before with our traditional family ceremony. Our oldest son Benjamin had laid out the Balinese Kris (a ceremonial dagger) and some other ceremonial pieces on John's sarong—candles, crystals, feathers, an Amazonian head-dress, a Shamanic eagle and emu feather stick from Uluru, and we lit all the beautiful coloured candles left over from Benjamin's naming ceremony—the first time they'd been lit since 6 weeks after Benjamin's birth on 25 June 2002.

We each lit a candle and invited our baby into our family, placing our candles in a circle on the sarong as a sign of lighting his way in. We played a CD of beautifully serene flute music and enjoyed the sacredness of the moment as three was soon to become four.

From 2:35pm (precisely!) that afternoon I'd been having mild contractions every 15 minutes. They were regular and different to the cramps and Braxton Hicks I'd been getting on and off for the previous 10 days. I was excited now and could feel the difference in these signs, as I watched the clock out of the corner of my eye for the rest of the day, loving their regularity.

At the end of the afternoon I felt there was still something unfinished, and so called one of our support people. I needed to ensure she was okay with the possibility that I might not need her to come over and take care of Benjamin, which she was, and to let her know that Benjamin might just stay with me and John but I'd ring her if I needed to. I felt a huge sense of relief at having made the call, whatever happened next was now entirely up to me and I was positive now that there were

no expectations from anyone and because of that there was much more space for me to focus on what I needed to do.

I had a very strong nesting urge at about 5:30pm and got very frustrated as I went about cleaning up, as Benjamin seemed to be making more and more mess and doing the opposite of what I needed! We talked about it that night and I realised he could sense that our time as the three of us was in its dusk and that my relationship with him was about to change dramatically. Benjamin and I then had our nightly bath together and the contractions stopped. I was a bit disappointed but not surprised as I'd heard of that happening in warm water.

John and I enjoyed the quiet of the house after Benjamin had gone to bed, and went to bed ourselves about 9:30pm. For the previous 10 days, I'd been going to bed with the excitement I'd felt as a child going to bed on Christmas Eve, with all the anticipation and excitement of what lay ahead, and tonight was no exception, except this time I felt more magic in the air. I slipped into sleep. I had restless dreams and was dreaming about Benjamin and other close friends being our baby's Godparents when I woke up. I instantly knew my waters had broken. Relief! It wasn't going to happen in the frozen peas section of the supermarket after all. This was it! Could it really be? Yes! It was 1:20am. I got up and went to the loo, and then went back to bed. A sneeze and I felt more, a cough a few minutes later and more again, to dispel any possible doubt in my mind about the fact that this was it; it was really happening! I woke John up saying, "Darling, I think my waters just broke!" and he got up with me. I remember looking at him and seeing a most peaceful expression

on his face. I wondered how he could look so calm and awake when minutes earlier, he'd been fast asleep. Contractions started again very gently just after the first sensation of my waters breaking, and they were gentle enough for me to get dressed into a sarong and loose top, with my dressing gown on top to keep me warm.

I didn't quite know what to do first, but instantly felt grateful it was the middle of the night so there was peace and quiet in the house, and I didn't have to worry about who was going to take care of Benjamin as he was sleeping deeply and restfully. The question of who was going to take care of him had been one of my major concerns as it meant inviting others into my birthing space, and now that we were in that space I simply wanted to be alone with John and Benjamin. At Benjamin's birth I'd had our two wonderful midwives, Robyn Dempsey and Jane Palmer, and three other people at the side of the pool supporting me and John, as well as several people in the lounge room and two people in the kitchen. Although that was what I'd wanted then, this time I wanted to be alone with my family. I got out Jane Hardwicke Collings' book *Ten Moons* and took it down to our lounge room to have another look through as I knew there'd be something in there for me which would help me in labour. I felt very safe having some of her knowledge there with me, as I could feel her strength, wisdom and essence through her printed words. I'd reconnected with my own wisdom and strength after being on one of her awesome Pregnancy Workshops a month earlier, and wanted to stay in that powerful space in myself where I knew what to do and how to birth my baby. With a reminder to go into the feeling of each contraction and to sing



'Om' during contractions I was ready.

The contractions started to intensify, still manageable though, enough so that I was able to send a text to friends who had been at my Blessingway, and also my sister, to let them know our baby was on his way. It was a funny thing, being practical took my mind off the waves of pain, yet to John walking into the room he just shook his head in disbelief that I would even be entertaining the thought of using my mobile at a time like this! I wanted my friends to know that their thoughts and the beads on the bracelet they'd made with their blessings were helping me and that now was the time to light their candle, if they were awake (which I doubted as it was 2am, but you never know!).

As the contractions intensified and got closer together, John asked me if I wanted him to call Robyn yet. It was 3am. I was a bit hesitant as I didn't want to wake her too early, however I knew she could make that decision for herself based on what information John gave her. I was kneeling on our South American rug, which I'd laboured on during Benjamin's birth, leaning over the sofa near our full moon ceremony circle and by the light of the candle altar. It was a very beautiful and sacred space. As the contractions came, I saw in my mind an eddy of energy in a whirl of water, and the way to get through them was for me to focus on the very centre of the energy, to go with the flow of its swirl and to swim with the energy rather than observe and be overtaken by its strength. I wondered whether this was what Jane meant about going into the pain, and I tried as much as I could to simply focus and surrender.

The pain intensified even more and the image changed in my mind—what I kept seeing was the end of a didgeridoo, its circle and sound was my cervix, and in the centre of it was a flame. John had changed the music by this stage to music from Uluru and there was a deep, earthy resonance of the didgeridoo which seemed to fill the house, it was a very grounding and comforting sound. Focusing on the image of the candle and the shape of the opening was very comforting, it helped me to focus on opening my cervix, allowing me to open naturally to birth my baby. I was vaguely aware of the front door opening and when the contraction subsided I looked around to see Robyn quietly coming into the house. I felt such reassurance that she was there, and much as I wanted to birth this baby myself, I was happier because of her presence, knowing she was right there for me if I needed her. She eased into my birthing space and I was aware a little while later of her putting her hands on my back and stroking the pain away. At another stage, she put her hands right in the middle of my back. It was as if she had got right to the centre of the pain, of that eddy of energy where it was all coming from. Oh, the relief in that moment of those wonderful Reiki hands!

A little while later I heard the door open again and looked up to see Jane coming in. I was very reassured by her solidity and knew that meant that we were serious now: there really was a baby coming!

More waves came and I started to feel nauseous, which took me by surprise as I hadn't expected that. At the peak of another contraction I thought, 'I now know why women

choose caesarean births', as the pain was so intense. Jane was upstairs with John filling the pool, while Robyn found a large bowl in the kitchen and brought it over. I didn't need it in the end, as I started to see the image of the warm filled pool, reassuring myself that I could get into it soon. When I said I wanted to get into it, Robyn told me it would be good if I could hold off a little while longer. Suddenly the image of it was overwhelming and my need to get into it much stronger, and so it was time. After a contraction I got up and moved to the bottom of the stairs, looking up them feeling as if I was a climber looking up at Mount Everest. I wondered how I would ever make it, yet I did, all in one go. I stripped off—I was so very hot—and got into the pool, though to my surprise the water felt too hot for me. I stood for a while until it cooled a little, then got in. Instant heaven, such relief from the intensity of the pain and pressure on my knees as I could squat and lean on the side of the pool. I looked down and saw someone had placed a mirror underneath me. Shortly afterwards I was aware of Benjamin sitting on the futon, gorgeous and sleepy-eyed in his Spiderman dressing gown. He'd come into the room and was looking at me in wonder and curiosity. We'd often talked about this moment but nothing could really give him what it was like without actually being in the experience, and I felt so proud of him and that he was handling it so well. A little while later he disappeared, putting himself into our bed as he said he was, "tired of hearing Mama going 'Ooooooh'!" There was a lot of torchlight shining behind me and a different sort of pain

now. This was the most difficult part, and it was almost more than I could bear. I couldn't understand why this pain continued to feel like it wasn't getting us anywhere, why I couldn't yet feel my baby's head with my hand and why it was so agonising, and then I remembered I could ask for help. I prayed to my angels and guides and asked them to help me with this part as I felt I couldn't do it on my own. Suddenly the pain decreased (Jane thought that there might have been a final bit of lip of my cervix in the way) and with this something within me seemed to click. I felt much less uncomfortable, less stuck and the urge to push was much stronger.

Gripping John's hand with all my might, I felt we were so very close now. Jane got Benjamin out of bed and brought him through, as with a massive push I felt our baby's head crown. I was aware of Robyn using the Doppler on my tummy a few times and had been reassured that all was well, and at this point to finally feel the top of his head felt like a major victory. I remembered the image Jane Hardwicke Collings had given me of the 100 candles on the birthday cake and blew them out one by one with short tiny breaths. With my hand on baby's head I saw an image of an erupting volcano, the intensity of the burning pain taking me by surprise. I said, "I need a bit of help", and so with Robyn encouraging me to take "a really big push now" and Jane's hand with mine, I felt myself gather every ounce of strength of every woman I had ever been in the past, and of all my female ancestors who had ever birthed, and with this gave an almighty push. Out came baby and as Jane and I lifted him onto my chest I finally saw him for the first time. What a beautiful head of hair, I thought! A towel appeared to cover him up and I was aware of Benjamin looking at us in awe. It was 5:49am and here was our new baby!

We had decided not to see straight away whether baby was a boy or girl and so took a few moments in that blissful space to simply be with our baby. A strong contraction came and I held onto him for a moment, then decided it was time to look. The moment that I discovered he was a boy, I instantly heard the name 'Nathanael'. It took me by surprise that we had a boy because almost everyone had told me they felt the baby was a girl and so I had almost begun to believe it for myself. We'd had a girl's name in mind but no boy's name (other than the Leonardo or Raphael names Benjamin had suggested, after the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles!) and so hearing

his name was totally out of the blue. We didn't know anyone with this name, nor had we ever discussed it. I said to Benjamin, "Guess what—you have a baby brother!" and he was ecstatic. He gave a mock victory movement with his arm and said "Yessss, I always wanted a baby brother"—which made my heart sing even more! Our baby had told us his name.

I handed Nathanael to John and birthed the placenta in the pool after a couple of contractions. We wanted to have a lotus birth after getting the message very clearly about one month before Nathanael's due date that this is what he wanted. I'd sewn a beautiful deep red corduroy bag lined with soft white felt for the placenta and the umbilical cord, and had bought bags of salt and some lavender oil in preparation. A big bowl came into the pool and we placed the placenta into it, staying there for a while in the birth water, simply gazing at Nathanael and enjoying the sacredness and newness of that moment.

I got out and had a bath with Nathanael to wash off the blood of the birthing water, after which I walked down the corridor to our bedroom. Someone with a practical mind had lain out some towels on the carpet which lead into the bedroom, so with careful tread I made my way into our bed. Jane and Robyn measured and weighed Nathanael and filled out their paperwork, then went downstairs for a cup of tea as we connected with Nathanael. He was a little cold, as we'd slightly overstayed our time in the pool and bath, and so needed some oxygen waved just under his nose to try and calm his slightly-too-fast breathing. As she left us to our new family of four on her way to get a well earned cuppa, Robyn suggested we talk to Nathanael and invite him in, which we did and which seemed to help with his breathing. All the while he rested next to his placenta and attached to me in his first attempts at breastfeeding, with his daddy and big brother looking on. His breathing was still quite fast, however he seemed to be more present after a while and when Jane and Robyn came back in they checked on him again, with the eyes of the utmost caring professionals and beautiful women and mothers they both are. They left us to enjoy our babymoon together as we started heralding the birth of Nathanael, truly our 'Gift from God'.

We had discovered—also from Jane Hardwicke Collings—a placenta remedy we could make, which would be a great help constitutionally for Nathanael and so I asked Robyn if she could make it up for us. She let



Nathanael know what she was doing and spoke to him as I took a tiny thumb-nail size piece from his placenta which John and I had chosen as the piece to take. Robyn told Nathanael that she would be bringing it back and he seemed to totally understand. He had a grizzle when I took the placenta piece out and calmed when hearing it would be returning.

We'd decided before Nathanael's birth that John would be the one to take care of the placenta, and so that night he carefully wrapped it in a cloth nappy which had lavender oil sprinkled on it, and placed it inside the placenta bag. I was very careful to keep it next to Nathanael as close as I could and spoke to him to reassure him that I was taking good care of it. I'd been pre-warned that it could be very difficult to see the lotus birth through to the end, because it could become cumbersome and mentally very challenging when dealing with it and all the needs of a newborn. This warning was the best thing that could have happened as I was prepared for a difficult time. Our journey was not to be like that, though. Nathanael stayed attached to his placenta for three days, and on the third day I had a strong sense that it was transition day. I used some Bush Flower Transition Essence on myself and Nathanael, and went into the bathroom to get something. When I came out I noticed that Nathanael seemed ever so much more present, his eyes were wide open and he seemed very chirpy. I looked down to see the umbilical cord between his toes and realised that he had pulled it out and separated from his placenta. Nathanael's birth process was complete. He was most decidedly present and ready for life. ●

Jonas' Birth Story

MAGDA JENSEN

A mother's determination to have a homebirth leads to the beautiful birth of the latest in a family of Sunday babies.

When my husband Neal and I found out I was pregnant, I started looking into the Australian health care system. Coming from The Netherlands, this was all new to me and I suddenly learned a lot about pregnancy and birth in Australia. Soon I discovered that the 'regular' path wasn't for me, since I really wanted a homebirth. But because Neal was a bit reluctant at first—not really knowing another way to give birth than in the hospital, we looked into a hospital birth as well.

After reading about doulas I was convinced of the benefits, especially since a birth in the hospital was still an option and I wanted someone to basically protect my wishes for a natural birth. We had a meeting with Nicole Sundin and really wanted her to be our doula. She suggested I looked into the St George homebirth facility.

First I phoned the Royal Women's Hospital to ask about their birth centre saying that I actually wanted a homebirth. The midwife also mentioned the homebirth program of St George Hospital. Before I phoned them, Neal and I went on a tour of the birth centre of the Royal Hospital for Women. While Neal thought it was a very pleasant option, I cried with the thought of giving birth there. Time to call St George!

Since I live outside of their area and they were understaffed, they weren't sure if they could take me. I had to wait a few weeks before they could give me an answer. Luckily I was accepted. Neal was very supportive of my choice and after we went to the HAS waterbirth meeting, he was convinced giving birth at home in the water was the best way.

The pregnancy went very well with no morning sickness. When I was 21 weeks, we went to The Netherlands for six weeks to show my pregnant belly to my family and friends. During this time I finally started to show, which I was very happy about. When

we got back in Australia I met our midwives Jaclyn and Jane regularly.

At 34 weeks, Jane noticed that our baby was in breech and advised to start some acupuncture or other therapies to try and turn it. For four weeks I tried just about everything possible: acupuncture, moxibustion, chiropractic, foot reflexology, homeopathic, different yoga positions, hot packs, cold packs, sweet music, loud music, talking to the baby, visualizations... it was stressing me out. I started reading about vaginal breech birth and Caesareans, which I found quite upsetting. We even went to see a private obstetrician, hoping he would assist in a vaginal breech birth. Well, he wouldn't and after catching him on a flat-out lie, we knew he wasn't the guy for us.

At 38 weeks we tried turning the baby with an ECV (external cephalic version) in the hospital and it worked! No pain or trouble at all. I was so happy. My plans for a homebirth could go ahead.

The next few weeks I was getting bigger and bigger. While before people had said I looked small, people were now saying that I was huge. My neighbour (jokingly) even used the word 'monster'. My due date (September 8) passed and nothing happened. My brother and his partner who were visiting from The Netherlands, went back home again without seeing the baby.

I thought our baby might be born on the Saturday after my due date, since my brother, my sister and I were all on born on a Saturday. But the day passed and I hadn't gone into labour, let alone given birth. That night I woke up at 12:30am with a contraction. I got up to go to the room we made into our birth room to be able to breathe through the contractions with some noise, so Neal could still get some sleep. Neal woke up and I said to him that



it was starting and I thought my waters had broken since I had leaked a bit.

During the night the contractions were about 10 minutes apart and I could still breathe through them while lying down. I even fell asleep in between. By the time Neal got up at around 7am the contractions were getting stronger and closer together. We half slept half laboured together in the birth room in the morning. We started using heat packs and a hot water bottle. During the contractions I couldn't lie down anymore. At 11:30am Neal called Nicole to ask her if I could start using the TENS machine. She said that was a very good idea. I'm not sure if it really made the pain less, but it definitely gave me something to focus on during contractions and the 'BOOST' button became a very close friend. I remember putting some lavender oil on the oil burner and really enjoying the smell, but I never managed to refill it.

Later, Neal called Jaclyn and we kept in touch during the afternoon. Contractions were much closer together now and I was getting rather noisy, with some swearing too. They weren't getting longer though, never longer than 30 seconds or so. In prenatal class we learned that by the time they're about one minute long, things are getting serious. Around 7pm Neal called Jaclyn to ask her to come by just to see how we were going and if we were doing the right thing. We were a bit uncertain since we were waiting for these minute long contractions and I was also dealing with them quite well. (Don't get me wrong, it was very painful and I was saying things like, "I don't want to do this anymore!" and "I can't do this!". Luckily Neal never took this too seriously.) Just before, Nicole had called us and I asked her to come round, since I felt like we could really use her now. The TENS was starting to annoy me and I didn't want

anything or anyone on my body during contractions anymore. I just wanted to be completely still.

By 7:30pm Jaclyn had arrived and examined me and listened to the baby's heart beat. While she was doing a vaginal exam, a contraction started and I was wailing, but could still hear her say to Neal that he better start filling the birth pool. I was already 8cm dilated! Soon I was in the pool sitting on my knees and Nicole and Jane arrived. Since we didn't have enough hot water, Neal and Jane started to get busy with pots and pans, while Nicole helped me through contractions, remembering to keep my breath low.

For a moment, I was feeling really scared and Jaclyn reminded me that it was normal and I was just in transition. I started pushing and was getting really tired of this whole labour thing. I kept saying "I want it out! I want it out!" and "It's taking so long!" Then Nicole and Jaclyn suggested I tried to feel the baby's head with my finger. I felt the head and thought that was great. It was only about half a centimetre away. When I still kept saying that it was taking so long, I was invited to try and feel the head during a contraction. This was fantastic, because I could really feel some progress and was getting confident I could do it again.

After 50 minutes of pushing, at 9:20pm on Sunday 14 September our baby came out in one contraction. I was so happy and relieved. Jaclyn directed it between my legs and I lifted our baby out of the water. The cord was around the neck two and a half times and Jaclyn had to take some time to get it off. Only then could I turn our baby to have a look. "Oh! It's a boy!" I said when he was facing me. The most beautiful boy in the world was lying in my arms with his eyes wide open looking at the world. How amazing and what a miracle!

We took our time and after Neal cut the cord, I birthed the placenta. When I got up out of the bath, I fainted. Even though it only lasted for a second, I felt like I was really far away and dreaming deeply. I lay down on the mattress and Neal and I took turns in holding our little boy Jonas. When I tried to get up to go to the toilet, I almost fainted again. Lying down was fine, but getting up wasn't possible.

Jaclyn then decided to give me a drip. After a litre of fluid and some food, I tried getting up again, but unfortunately I still couldn't. By now it was about five hours after the birth and Jaclyn said it would be better to go to the hospital just to be sure. Since I couldn't get up, we had to phone an ambulance.

When the two much-stressed ambulance guys marched into the peaceful birth room, one of the first things they said was, "Nope, stairs are too small, stretcher doesn't fit, we can't get you down, we have to call the fire brigade, get her out of the window". I really thought this was one of the funniest things ever. I really couldn't care what they wanted to do, I was just so happy. In the end they gave me another litre of fluid and some oxygen. The oxygen really helped me and I was able to walk down the stairs and climb onto the stretcher.

When we got to the hospital I was feeling so much better. I was checked by the same doctor who had done the successful ECV and he said I could go home. By then it was around 5am and I decided to stay to wait for Jonas' cord blood test results and have my anti-D shot, so I didn't have to go back to the hospital within 72 hours. I finally had time to call my parents and my exited mother told me that both she and my dad were born on Sunday. So I guess Jonas is just the first of another generation of Sunday babies. ●



Vera's Birth Story

SONIA GREGSON

A 'go with the flow' approach to birth and a surprise ending.

When my husband Christopher and I confirmed that we were pregnant again we knew straight away what our plan would be. Having had a perfect first pregnancy and a wonderful birth at home into water with our son Riley, our first call was to book Betty. She was almost as excited as us.

Having a busy 18 month old to play with, I was a little more tired in the first trimester and was therefore more affected by the morning sickness. Apart from that it was another great pregnancy.

Once again Betty came to see us every month, bringing her experience, knowledge, books, videos, DVDs, and friendship. During these visits Betty did all the usual checks on our growing little one. Riley especially liked listening to the baby's heart and made sure he was close by to help.

As we reached 30 weeks, Betty came to see us every fortnight and then every week from 35 weeks. With Betty's gentle guidance we confirmed our 'go with the flow' birth plan and I felt re-educated and prepared.

We educated Riley about birth and read stories like *There's a House Inside My Mummy*, *Daisy and The Egg* and *Hello Baby*. He also sat with me and watched many of the DVDs of women giving birth and would sometimes ask to watch the 'baby coming' DVD.

I felt that this baby might come early so Grandma Metcalfe (my mum) came down to be with us two weeks before the date. It was such a beautiful nurturing time as I was able to rest and relax, while Riley thoroughly enjoyed having his Grandma on tap!

Our baby decided that now that I was relaxed it would like to enjoy being tucked up floating in my over stretched tummy. So when one week after my due date I felt some mild twinges mid-morning, I was nervously excited that our baby might have decided it was time to join its family on the outside.

I was able to go about my day normally until about 1pm, when I decided I should call Betty and give her an update. I was still able to talk freely through each contraction and although they were short, they were very regular. In between contractions, I was still able to talk to Riley and laugh about his wanting to read *Daisy and the Egg* (a lovely book on loan from my sister about waiting for ducklings to hatch) for the 500th time.

Betty asked to be called again when I had to concentrate on each contraction. I began to move and walk around our little house from room to room and found myself on my knees when the contractions intensified. At about 2pm, Christopher called Betty.

During this time, Christopher and Grandma had started to fill the pool and Riley played



happily, coming and going from his room and back out to check on me at various times. He was absolutely amazing and when I began to become more vocal offered me his 'wrap' (security blanket) saying, "here you go Mum, this will make you feel better".

At around 3pm Betty arrived, exuding her calmness and was happy that things were going so well. As I paced the room or moaned on all fours, I took my thoughts to a beautiful waterfall near our house and told myself that I could do this, that I had done this before. However, as things progressed my faith in my body and baby began to get a little shaky; the thought that I was entering transition didn't even cross my mind.

At some point, I got into the pool and was glad to feel the water surround me and enjoyed the change of space and physicality. Christopher was constantly in contact with me, always offering his unwavering faith, quiet confidence and supporting touch.

During the labour there was only one point when I asked Christopher to have Grandma take Riley into another room for a short while. As he is so clearly able to communicate his needs I was not worried about him being present for the birth but felt I needed some time to just focus and be with Christopher.

I began to feel too hot in the pool and wasn't relaxing enough in between

contractions. I felt there was still some time to go so got out of the pool to cool off and try different positions. However not long after I had got out of the pool, I found I wanted to be sick, go to the toilet or both. I managed not to be sick and told Betty it was too soon to push.

Betty suggested I get back into the pool but I was still feeling too warm. She gently asked me why it was too soon to push and I told her the baby wasn't there yet.

Even though we had talked about the possibility of a shorter labour, I couldn't quite believe that it was time. With Betty and Christopher's gentle guidance I began to push with the next contraction. Suddenly I knew our baby was ready.

I could feel the head crowning and told everyone with excitement and nervousness that the baby was coming. With only a few contractions and long pushes our baby was amazingly born completely in the caul at 5:40pm.

Betty passed our baby through my legs I was awash with joy and almost disbelief that it was over. I lay back in Betty's arms and Christopher announced to us all that we had another little baby boy.

Our new baby then decided to wee and poo all over me, and due to being born surrounded by the sac, was very slippery. I decided to hop back in the pool and wash us

both. When I moved the cord from between the legs (a good 20 minutes after the "It's a boy" announcement) we discovered we actually had a little girl!

About 45 minutes after her birth, Christopher cut the cord and she was ready for a special cuddle with her eager Daddy. I then delivered the placenta in the pool and had a shower to warm up. Vera lay across my bare chest while Betty did the necessary stitches.

We all sat together in the early evening light and enjoyed a small glass of champagne to celebrate the arrival of Vera Abigail.

The wonderful support, education and love from Betty, my sisters, sister-in-laws, mum and mum-in-law were invaluable and I thank them all for making Vera's birth and Riley's birth such special, yet natural normal experiences.

I would also like to say a thank you to all the women and men who continue to campaign tirelessly (regardless of whether they have finished having children or haven't even started) for better birth choices, education, recognition and financial support, for homebirth and midwife-led care. We knew what we wanted: continuity of care, a comfortable, peaceful environment to birth in, to birth in our own way and time and to know the people who would be with us during this extremely unique time. All of this was possible and we wouldn't want to birth any other way. ●



Araminta's Birth Story

NICOLE CHRISTENSEN

A family of big brothers gave this little girl a welcoming happy birth day.

We had been debating having another baby for some time. Our hearts dearly wanted another baby but our heads had reasons why we shouldn't.

Luckily, Araminta made the decision for us—much to our surprise I found out I was pregnant with our fourth baby days before my 36th birthday.

As with our three boys, I just loved being pregnant. We felt pretty good at making boys, so assumed that this one would be another roly poly baby boy and were very content with that. I never even contemplated that it just might be a girl.

Our two beautiful midwives were able to be there for our care and our second homebirth, which made it all the more exciting. Our first homebirth was something we continue to savour—just divine. Our visits throughout my pregnancy were long chats, afternoon teas and lunches, rather than just a 'check up'. Our boys were included, involved and made to feel important and our midwives became as close to us as family.

On the morning of Tuesday 12th of August, I discovered a slight show on my many trips to the toilet. I also had a couple of bouts of diarrhoea. Despite this being our fourth baby, I never felt convinced I was in labour and remained rather deluded until it really hotted up much later.

I took the boys to the park at lunchtime and decided to powerwalk some laps around the tennis courts while the boys rode their

bikes to get labour started if this was to be the day. In 30 minutes, I had two strong 'Braxton Hicks' contractions (or so I thought), but remained unconvinced this was it!

Once home, I noticed my 'Braxton Hicks' appeared to be occurring every 15 to 20 minutes or so. By 2pm, I decided to actually record how often they were happening and it was jumping from 18 to 13 to 7 to 11 minutes apart, and so on.

I let Ronnie know what was happening, but assured him that nothing was urgent and to continue working until I contacted him. I called him at about 3pm and he was home—very excited—by 4pm. I managed to get a hold of our eldest son, Tiernan (16), and told him to come straight home—and forget soccer training.

Mum was alerted once Ronnie was home and gauging by my irregular contractions, I told her there was no rush, as contractions were far enough apart and I thought that it wouldn't be until the late evening. We would contact her once our midwives arrived.

By then our midwives had finished work and were on their way up the mountain.

At 4pm—my diary entry "I think we will have our baby tonight! Contractions have been every 20 minutes up until this point—now they seem around 15 minutes. They feel strong but manageable (just stopped and had one then!) Baby still moving. Feeling very excited!"

Our midwives arrived at around 4:30pm. I was managing my contractions well,



continuing on as normal in between, even deluding myself that I was to continue making the veggie burgers that I had planned for dinner that evening! (Luckily, I had two soups made earlier for everyone to eat later on!). The boys asked when the baby would come and the consensus was at about 9pm. Still a long way to go, I thought.

By now the boys were as excited as they get at Christmas time—there was a real buzz in the air. At 5pm, Tiernan arrived and this is when my contractions really kicked in. Pat and Nicky later said that my body was waiting for him to be there.

Nicky started filming with Nemiah (7) and Ezra (5) introducing the film by exclaiming into the camera, “we’re going to have a baby tonight!” and “we’re very excited! We’ve got lollies and chocolate biscuits for after dinner!”

My contractions instantaneously sped from 14 minutes to 6 minutes and we rang Mum so she could make her way to the mountains from the coast. During and around contractions, the boys, armed with our midwives’ stethoscopes—would poke and prod me, all excited. Contractions remained manageable, although strong, and I began to use the ever faithful and favourite method of pain relief—the hot water bottle—standing, rocking and breathing during each contraction. In between, I still fluffed around, tidying, lighting candles and giving Tiernan instructions in the kitchen.

By 6pm, contractions were really gaining my attention and building in intensity, coming

every five to six minutes and lasting 50 seconds.

At 6:30pm, contractions were four to five minutes—a lot stronger now. I moved over to the birthing ball, leaning and rocking with my contractions, aware of the household activity around me and quietly loving it, the boys bouncing around me, Ronnie and Pat having a casual conversation with me rocking in between them, Nicky on the video camera, Tiernan feeding himself in the kitchen and the Olympics on the tele in the family room. Contractions were really intense and painful now and I began to spontaneously groan during my breathing.

The boys were very snap happy with their disposable cameras—using most of the pics up on my labour!

Ronnie and I were our little birthing unit, me rocking on the ball and Ronnie holding my two hot water bottles against my back and belly. The rest of the household was up at the table eating the soup organised by Tiernan.

All of a sudden my waters broke with a huge gush at 6:50pm and everyone flew up from the table and helped me pull my pants off and began to lay down the plastic sheeting and towels. Things suddenly accelerated rapidly.

In my usual transition manner, I kept asking—pleading—with Pat, “is the baby coming now?!”; “I want the baby to come now.” I don’t recall what Pat said at that moment—

she could have even spoken another language—as the mere tone of Pat’s calm voice was like my own personal relaxation tape.

By this stage, the boys were beside themselves with excitement and anticipation. They were assuming the commando position behind me as I was bent over the birth ball, a camera in one hand and a torch in the other. Pat told me they looked like little miners behind me, Nemiah exclaiming “Its AWESOME!!” and “you’re doing VERY well!”. Tiernan calmly continued to swap between our digital camera and video camera.

At 6:50pm I had an overwhelming urge to push during my contractions. “C’mon baby!” I said, with Pat replying “you’re doing beautifully!”

By 7:00 I was really starting to get the sniffles—I felt sulky and wanted the baby to come NOW. Pat’s reassurance and calm voice brought me back. Nemiah came around from his commando post and put his arm around me and said, “You’re doing very well!”

The feeling of pressure was becoming unbearable—at this stage the urge to push and the urge to get this baby out were intertwined and very strong. I didn’t feel I could do it anymore.

The boys decided nothing was happening, so went to the table to make and draw cards for the new baby. Through my loud groaning, grunting and pushing, the boys remained remarkably unphased—so much so, it was as if it were a normal day. I could hear them chatting away, discussing aspects of their



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calmbirth® is a childbirth preparation programme developed by Australian midwife, Peter Jackson, which supports the belief that pregnancy, labour and birth are normal life events. In our modern day life, a vast majority of women do not have the opportunity to support other women in birthing their children as we used to in earlier times. Therefore, birth is a great unknown for many women outside of the stories they are told about birth and the impressions they glean from the media. Needless to say, by the time most women are pregnant, they may feel anxious about giving birth and wonder how they can prepare for a positive birth experience.

The calmbirth® programme was developed to bring women back to a place of balance where they can begin to realize what we used to understand in years past: that women's bodies are marvelously designed to give birth to their babies. The purpose of the programme is to eliminate the fear, anxiety and tension that many women experience and support them towards rediscovering the wonder and joy of birth. calmbirth® recognizes the role of the father or birthing companion as vitally important during this time in a woman and baby's life. Therefore, during the calmbirth® classes, both the mother and her partner or support person will

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drawings to each other—it was incredible.

At 7:15pm, I moved onto my side. I just wanted to grunt and push until the baby was out, regardless of a contraction or not. I became very primeval.

With my next contractions, the head became visible but (as with my other births) slid back up again—but this time, only briefly. Pat turned to the boys and said, “it’s nearly here—we could see a bit of the top of the baby’s head.”

As baby’s head started to emerge/crown—I felt the familiar stinging as I stretched further—instinctively opening my mouth wide...slowing it down...head emerging... Ezra yelling “there it comes! It’s head’s there.”

I put my leg up over Pat’s head (the things our midwives do for us!) with Nemiah encouraging me, “you’re doing very well Mum—you’re doing very well!” and Ezra finishing “VERY VERY well!!!!!!” My Ronnie calming me with, “you’re almost there.”

I reached down and felt our baby’s head... all emerging so very slowly, saying, “baby come out ...baby come.”

Pat encouraged us to reach and grab our baby. In our awkward position, Ronnie managed to grab her, then my hands soon found her and we both gently lifted her out of my body as she entered the world ever so slowly, calmly and peacefully, giving a little cry en route to my breasts.

Araminta Willow was born at 7:25pm with her left arm wrapped around her neck like a scarf.. I immediately said “what is it?” and we

both looked and Ronnie proclaimed “IT’S A GIRL!!!!”.

I could honestly not believe it. “Oh my god! It’s a girl! It’s a girl!” I said over and over.

Ezra immediately leapt up and shouted “yay! I got what I wanted!”.

Tiernan, whilst still filming, said “congratulations—YOU DID IT MA!”

My eyes met Pat’s and I exclaimed, “I did it! I did it!” Pat returning “you DID it!”.

I continued my delirious euphoric shock, declaring over and over again, “I’ve got a girl! I can’t believe it! I’m in shock!”

The boys all come over to drink in their new sister. Pat assuring me SHE looked great—and I continued in my utter shock, “it s a she!”

Ezra was demanding a name and we declared her Araminta Willow (surprisingly, we never did decide on our boy’s name—but we always had a girl’s).

Araminta started to open her eyes. Nemiah instructed everyone to turn off their flashes, saying “no more pictures!” Already a protective big brother!

Araminta peacefully looked around, her eyes looking deep into our souls, the boys spellbound, touching her gently.

I thanked everyone and our midwives returned and said “thank YOU.” Mum arrived. She has been there for all our babe’s births, yet because Araminta’s birth was surprisingly quick, sadly she arrived only minutes afterwards, and cried both because she missed the birth and also because she was a girl. (I console myself in that she was there to witness Araminta’s first

few moments.)

The cord was cut by all three big brothers and the placenta soon followed. The three big brothers each had a cuddle, then snug up on the lounge, Araminta had her first breastfeed.

Pat showed the boys the wonders of the placenta and umbilical cord—met with much enthusiasm and amazement and LOTS of questions! The boys looked on intently and touched it, also—with Nemiah exclaiming it was the “softest thing ever”.

Tiernan helped Pat clean up—he was never asked but did everything automatically, I was so proud.

Nicky weighed Araminta and then examined her on her lap. This moment was rather remarkable, as Araminta calmly looked straight back up at Nicky and even smiled (see picture). She hasn’t stopped smiling since.

Mum then dressed her new granddaughter and we gathered around to sing Happy Birthday to her, then shared her birth cake, whilst the boys hoed into the biscuits and lollies (Ezra later vomited all over Ronnie as he had gorged himself silly!).

The boys received gifts from Araminta and we gave our two beautiful midwives theirs—but what a gift they gave us (again).

Everyone left at 11pm, the boys then asleep and it was just me and Ronnie, quiet and alone, sitting on our lounge, drinking in this beautiful, amazing and precious being we had created, in amazement, wonder, disbelief, excitement and love—such pure bliss. Our most exquisite surprise ever. ●



The Birth Album

Share your birth experiences with pregnant women to help promote homebirth.

Stories and images of birth are powerful ways to communicate an experience that almost defies description. For first-time pregnant women, they are an eye-opener and perhaps the first 'real' insight into what birth might be like for them.

Gayle Enkelmann is compiling an album that will contain photographs, stories and newspaper clippings for people to flip through. The album will float around our community to pass on our experiences to those who can benefit from them—for example, at the HAS stall at expos or conferences. What a great way to see your photos and story beautifully presented.

Gayle is a homebirth mother to eight children. She is donating her time, album materials and including her own stories. You just need to print a few favourite photographs and/or prepare a story. Gayle can travel to you to help you prepare your pages for the album.

For details, please contact Gayle on 02 9386 4928 or genkelmann@optusnet.com.au

Thank you

Homebirth Access Sydney warmly thanks

- our new postage sponsors, **Nature Nappies** and **Nature's Child**, for delivering *Birthings* to your mailbox
- those **midwives** who continue to support HAS by kindly giving each of their clients a year's subscription to *Birthings* magazine
- our **contributors** for taking the time to share their wonderful birth stories, professional insights and beautiful photographs
- our generous designer, **Melinda Holme** who does all the layout and design work in her own time without charge
- and the following **websites**, which provide us with community listings free of charge (visit their websites to view our listings)
 Birth | www.birth.com.au
 Natural Parenting | www.naturalparenting.com.au
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 With Foreword by Ian May Eadie

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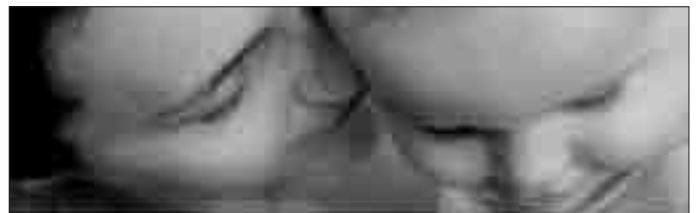
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The Midwives Academy and Retreat

JO HUNTER

On the weekend of 25 to 27 July, Homebirth Australia ran an Academy and Retreat for midwives and midwifery students with a keen interest in homebirth. Sixty women from around Australia gathered and braved the freezing temperatures of Katoomba to share, learn and inspire. It was truly wonderful to see so many midwifery students there and gives much hope to the future of homebirth in Australia.

Shea Caplice, Lisa Barrett, Sheryl Sidery, Robyn Dempsey, Jane Palmer, Maggie Lecky-Thompson, Betty Vella, Jan Robinson, Hannah Dahlen and Jane Collings shared their extraordinary wisdom on topics such as fear, facilitating breech birth, attachment parenting, homebirth midwifery apprenticeships, honouring the third stage of labour, post-partum haemorrhage, sharing knowledge, twin birth at home, shoulder dystocia, care of the perineum and ceremonies and rituals for pregnancy, birth and beyond. All speakers were truly inspirational. We also included some relaxation and fun activities and participated in birth art, drumming and dance, song writing and ritual and ceremony.

The idea behind the weekend was to not only gather with a group of like minded professionals, but to also fill the gap in the current education of midwives. As a midwifery student myself, I feel there is a large hole. Students are unable to attend homebirths due to a lack of insurance and the education around managing emergencies is not covered in the home



environment but rather in the hospital, where at the press of a red button on the wall an obstetric team are available within minutes. Facilitating breech birth and twin birth is also not covered as in the guidelines these are seen as not within a midwife's scope of practice. As a midwifery student who plans to set up an independent midwifery practice, this is most disappointing.

The birth art workshop was very telling. Many beautiful pieces of art were created. However, when we discussed what the symbols and signs within the art meant to us, many of the women shared their stories of being traumatized during their clinical placement due to the 'things' they were made to witness and 'do' to labouring and birthing women.

All in all, the weekend was filled with information, education, laughter, networking, tears, friendship, inspiration and a common goal to support women to birth in their way.

Thank you to all the wonderful speakers who volunteered their time to share their wisdom. ●

HAS in the Community

Birth Choices Information Evening – Friday 31 October 2008

Between the 14th and 17th centuries, women who supported other women during birth or possessed healing abilities were some of the first suspected of witchcraft and burned at the stake. So it was very appropriate that this year's Birth Choices Evening was held on Halloween. Within the vibrant and engaging crowd, one of the 30 stallholders' little girls was even dressed as a witch after an evening of trick or treating.

The night was a huge success with organisations like the RPA Birth Center, St George Homebirth Group and the Australian Breastfeeding Association attending. There were also naturopaths, acupuncturists, doulas, cloth nappy and baby wearing stalls, as well as a lot of Sydney's independent midwives.

Women with blossoming bellies came with partners, friends and parents. Couples who were trying to conceive or were parents already and other birth workers were more of the over 200 people who walked in the doors.

The Inner West Steiner group fed everyone with a sausage sizzle, home made vegetable soup and some delicious cakes and there were cold drinks for everyone to rehydrate after unseasonably hot day.

At the end of the night we drew the winners of the lucky door prize, generously donated by Susan Ross from BirthRight, and raffles from the Nappy stand, HAS and the ABA. All guests took home a sample bag stuffed with goodies—thanks to Jen Carleton of Natural Parenting in Sydney for sponsoring the bags. All in all it was a very successful night, and so wonderful to have a room filled with people who were passionate

about natural unhindered birth.

Thanks to all those who attended the evening, and thanks to the stallholders: Australian Breastfeeding Association, Australian Doula College, Birth Right, Concord Yoga, Frangipani Baby, Kindred Magazine, Natural Parenting Sydney, Weleda, Herbalwell, Making Mothers, Cloth Nappy Association, Yoga In Daily Life, Transition to Parenting, St George Birth Centre, Natural Birthing Centre RPAW&C, Birth Partner, Natural Beginnings, Independent Midwives, Pregnancy Birth & Beyond, Power Chiropractic, Blue Dakini and Steiner Inner West.

The evening was run by HAS's volunteer committee, led by the inimitable Anne Harris, whose organisational skills are such that she could probably raise her tribe while running a small country very efficiently. Here's some of the feedback we received about the night:

A huge congratulations for everyone involved in the organisation. I was so proud of HAS and think we did a great job. A special thanks to Anne, whose lists and management kept us all 'on task'. The vibe last night was very excited and engaged. I think there were lots of walk-ins off the street as well as people in our general orbit. One woman came and told me she had a great birth all because she came to our meetings. —Danni Townsend

I thought it was fantastic—a good mix of exhibitors—there was something for everyone, a great location and venue (although possibly a touch on the small side, or would having a row of tables down the middle work??), the food was a Godsend. —Nicole Ronay Sundin

I'd like to say I think the evening was a huge success. The different venue made it much easier for stallholders to get their products on to display, without having to climb stairs. I think the canteen was a good idea too, and hopefully made a little money for those doing it. I think that's the third one I've been to, but definitely the best one. —Robyn Dempsey
The organisers did a fantastic job with the Birth Choices evening. Having been involved with this event since its inception, I can say without any fear of contradiction, that this was the best one yet. Many thanks and a multitude of accolades go to the HAS committee and everyone who put in such a sterling effort. The change of venue worked well, as did having food available. It was a good mix of stallholders so there would have been something of interest for all the attendees. —Akal Khalsa

The atmosphere in the room was very warm and open and it was clear that the people who came felt comfortable and engaged in the information and people around them as they came and stayed for a while—they didn't just come and go. It was wonderful for networking and I appreciated being able to put faces to names and see some of the people I have only been in email contact with. —Melissa Maimann

Evening Community Meetings Series: Homebirth After Caesarean

On Tuesday 23 September, Akal Khalsa led a discussion on homebirth after caesarean to a group comprised almost exclusively of pregnant women who'd had a prior caesarean, along with their support people. It's great to see people coming along to our meetings because they need specific information that they're not able to access other places, whether they're planning a homebirth or not. This extends our reach into the broader community. Tara Darlington, who has had two homebirths since her caesarean, did a fabulous job of telling her birth stories and inspiring the women present with her courage, compassion and clarity.

2009: WILL YOU RUN THE EVENING MEETINGS FOR HAS?

We have received extremely positive feedback on our evening

community meetings, with several women or their partners becoming informed and inspired enough to arrange homebirths based on their attendance, and one woman reporting back recently that she attributed her great birth to having attended the meetings. We see them as a fantastic way of reaching beyond our existing homebirth network into the general community, providing an unequalled community service in terms of accessible, free information and support to pregnant and birthing women, and also strengthening our community network with the social interaction, sharing and ongoing learning they encourage among mothers.

Sadly, however, our resources are overstretched. At the time of printing, these meetings will not run in 2009 because we do not have enough people to organise and run them. The meetings, which have been run approximately every six weeks, take about 2½ hours, including set-up and pack-up. An initial planning session at the beginning of the year and a small amount of admin in the fortnight leading up to each meeting is the only other time commitment. If you want to see this important community work continue, and you can spare some time to take over the responsibility, please contact Alison or Danni (details inside front cover).

Secretary's Report

SARAH MCLEAN

Well it has been a busy couple of months with many events and planning sessions.

- Firstly there was the Birth Choices evening on the 31st October which was a huge success and saw a great turn out bringing together the natural birthing and parenting community in one event (see report).
- Our Birthings magazine as suffered a blow as Kimberly Clark which had been printing the magazine are no longer able to. Our tireless editors Alison and Danni have been searching for a solution (whether short or long term). Anyone with any contacts in printing or publishing who think they may be able to assist with this dilemma please contact Alison or Danni to discuss.
- Our community evening meetings are currently being reviewed for 2009 as we need a new team to co-ordinate these events. We shall be starting a regular event in the northern suburbs in Beecroft hosted by Sharon Dollimore and shall keep you posted about what sessions will be held in Bondi and the inner west for 2009.
- We are also in the planning stages for a Homebirth Booklet that can be sold to members and interested parties outlining most of what you need to know to coordinate a homebirth in Sydney. If anyone has any experience in publishing, photography or design and would be interested in writing or assisting in this project, please contact anyone on the committee for more information.
- The 2008-2009 AGM is planned for Friday 27 February (see page 59 for details) where we will elect committee members and sign off on the activities of the year as well as our financial accounting responsibilities as an incorporated association. All elected committee members will report on their activities for the year. We shall incorporate this event into our annual picnic and make a day of it! Everyone welcome.

the personal is political

NSW: Delivering Health Care Out of Hospitals

In September 2008, the NSW Auditor-General delivered the report into Delivering Health Care Out Of Hospitals. The report concluded that NSW Health needs to play a stronger role in extending Out of Hospital programs. The Audit only considered four programs, and did not address maternity care.

Since maternity care is the single largest user of hospital beds in the state, providing some maternity care out of hospitals—that is, making homebirth widely accessible as an option for healthy pregnant women with normal pregnancies, and allocating public funding to homebirth as well as to hospital maternity wards—is therefore the obvious high-impact solution to the hospital demand problem. However, it was not considered by the Auditor-General. HAS is pursuing a dialogue with NSW Health on homebirth.

NSW: Special Commission of Inquiry into Acute Care

In November 2008, Commissioner Peter Garling SC delivered 139 recommendations regarding NSW Health, following a 10 month inquiry. Commissioner Garling described NSW Health as “on the brink” and recommended radical reforms, including closing eight emergency departments across the Sydney, Illawarra and Hunter regions and creating a new culture “which sees the patient’s needs as the paramount central concerns of the system”, not the “convenience of the clinicians and administrators”.

In the area of maternity services, the Commissioner recommended that NSW Health determine whether area health services could enter into “fee for service” contracts with midwives, including facilitating through Treasury the professional indemnity of midwives. He further recommended that NSW Health identify which hospitals would be appropriate for the introduction of caseload midwifery. And he recommended that NSW Health only offer birthing facilities for “low risk” mothers in hospitals which have an adequate number of health professionals qualified and trained to assist with the birth (midwives or visiting medical officers) and where the hospital has, or is within a 30 minute transfer of, emergency caesarean section capabilities. The report also recommended that acute care services for newborns and children be taken over by a newly created body to be called NSW Kids. The government is expected to respond by March 2009.

Primary Maternity Services Framework

In April 2008, the Australian Health Ministers’ Advisory Council released a document titled Primary Maternity Services in Australia—A Framework for Implementation, which is endorsed by the Health Ministers of each State and Territory. The document notes that “The underpinning philosophy of primary maternity services is that birth is a normal but significant physiological event and that different women have different needs in relation to pregnancy and childbirth.”

The approach of the Framework is sympathetic to the homebirth model of maternity care, endorsing the concepts of continuity of care, providing the right balance between primary care and medical expertise, maximising the potential of midwives and other health professionals and enabling women to make informed choices about their care and feel in control of their birth experiences. The Framework represents the

first time that all Australian Health Ministers (via the Maternity Services Interjurisdictional Committee or MSIJC) have endorsed this kind of approach in maternity services.

Several models of homebirth are noted as satisfying several of the “desired features” of maternity care (especially continuity of care and culturally appropriate care), such as the Aboriginal Midwifery Access Program, WA’s Community Midwifery Program, the Northern Women’s Community Midwifery Program, and NSW’s public homebirth services available through Hunter New England Area Health Service and St George Hospital.

There’s now work to be done by each state and territory in setting targets to give effect to the principles in the document, but they have five key projects in place to help make it happen in practice:

1. Definition of core competencies and development of an educational framework for maternity service providers. This is a joint project between the MSIJC and the Health Workforce Taskforce. A consultant has recently been appointed to undertake the project which will involve detailed engagement with all maternity services/professions.
2. Documentation of a framework for implementation of primary maternity services in Australia. This document expands on the principles that underpin the MSIJC’s work by providing concrete examples from all jurisdictions of how these principles are reflected in existing service models.
3. Development of the National Evidence Based Guidelines for Antenatal Care. Stage 1 of this project was commissioned by the Child Health and Wellbeing Subcommittee of the Australian Population Health Development Principal Committee (APHDPC) and undertaken by a consortium led by Women’s Hospitals Australasia. Stage 2 involves the development of the previous guidelines under the auspice of the National Health and Medical Research Council. An expert Advisory Committee has been convened to direct the guideline development. The MSIJC is now a co-sponsor of this project.
4. Establish a core set of national maternity care performance indicators. The Information for Quality Maternity Care Project is funded by the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (ACSQHC). The MSIJC has contributed to a draft set of indicators, and is now working with the ACSQHC to consider how the indicators should be piloted and subsequently implemented in a national framework to measure outcomes of perinatal care.
5. Data definitions in accordance with National Health Information Agreement (NHIA) arrangements. The aim of this project is to ensure national data supports implementation of performance benchmarks, ensure data definitions enable appropriate and valid data collection, support electronic maternity records by ensuring specific and clear definitions and to provide national data on primary maternity care. It is expected that this project will be delivered as part of the core indicators pilot above.

Maternity Services Review Update

Thanks to all of you who made submissions to the Maternity Services Review. The Review received 900 submissions, available at <http://www.health.gov.au/maternityservicesreview>. We wait with bated breath... ●

ANNUAL HOMEBIRTH ACCESS SYDNEY FAMILY PICNIC

ALL MEMBERS AND THEIR FAMILIES WELCOME

11am-2pm,
Sunday 8
February 2009

Jubilee Park
Glebe

It will be huge!

Come along and connect with the extended homebirth family of the greater Sydney area. A great chance to catch up with old friends and make new ones.

BYO picnic fare, blanket and drinks.

Meet at the corner of Eglinton & Northcote Rds, Glebe, near the play equipment.

(Short walk from the Jubilee Park light rail stop.)

RSVP AND QUERIES TO

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Birthings Editor/Designer: position(s) vacant

If you have been looking through Birthings and brimming with ideas about what you'd like to read in it, or regular features that would take your fancy, here is your chance!

From issue 102 (Autumn 2009) the position of Editor/Designer of *Birthings* will be vacant. HAS is looking for a keen and motivated person or group of people who would like to take on this exciting challenge.

The job involves collating stories, coordinating all the submissions and contributors, checking the stories and laying out the pages of the magazine and preparing it for print. A full job description or more information can be provided if you are interested by emailing Danni on dannit@bigpond.net.au.

The role of *Birthings* editor or editors has always changed to suit the person who is in the hot seat. You can make it your own. It's a great way of meeting and working with lots of people in the homebirth community and making a huge contribution to future and current homebirthers.

Expressions of interest can be emailed to HAS Secretary Sarah McLean at sarahmclean2092@hotmail.com by 20 February 2009.

ALL HAS POSITIONS VACANT

At the Annual General Meeting on Friday 27th February 2009 all positions within the HAS committee become vacant and volunteers will be sought to fill those positions. Some of the existing committee members will not be seeking re-election for their positions. These jobs include:

- **Assistant Secretary**
- **Merchandise Coordinator**
- **Memberships Coordinator**

If you are looking for an exciting new challenge in 2009 and would love to be part of our tight-knit community please contact HAS Secretary, Sarah McLean at sarahmclean2092@hotmail.com by 20 February 2009 for more information and to express your interest.

Media Watch

Midwifery care reduces miscarriage

The distinguished medical review organisation, The Cochrane Collaboration, has released an analysis of 11 trials involving more than 12,200 women in four countries. The analysis showed that women who are cared for by midwives rather than GPs or obstetricians are less likely to lose their babies within the first six months of their pregnancies, according to the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 10 October 2008.

According to the SMH's report, "The analysis, which is the largest undertaken in the world, also found that women in midwife-led models of care were less likely to be admitted to hospital during pregnancy, have instrumental deliveries, episiotomies or require analgesia and were more likely to have spontaneous vaginal births, feel in control during labour and better able to initiate breastfeeding."

Spokeswoman for the Australian College of Midwives, Hannah Dahlen, was quoted in the SMH as saying, "If this was a tablet, it would be mandatory that all women have it, but instead we have to deal with all this shroud waving by obstetricians. Now we know the evidence for their claims just isn't there."

The analysis also showed there was no significant difference between the two groups when it came to foetal deaths after six months gestation, length of labour, induction, intervention, premature births and admissions to neonatal intensive care units.

Doctors deny safe homebirth

6minutes.com.au – an online medical news service has reported on October 31 that

doctors are encouraging 'unsafe freebirths' by not supporting Medicare funded homebirth programs.

Public health researcher and member of the Australian Maternity Coalition, Lareen Newman says that obstetricians and government agencies are unwilling to acknowledge the evidence showing homebirth as a safe option for low risk women.

Ms Newman is quoted as saying that "in the absence of publicly funded homebirthing programs, women who cannot afford private midwives are increasingly opting for unassisted homebirths."

Mother turned away – and baby born by the road

A Blue Mountains woman gave birth in an ambulance by the side of the road after being turned away by hospital staff and forced to go to Nepean Hospital.

The *Sydney Morning Herald* reported on October 22 that the 35 year old woman gave birth beside the Great Western Highway in Glenbrook.

The woman went to Blue Mountains District Hospital by ambulance with contractions one minute apart but was assessed as high risk and sent to Nepean more than 50km away.

The *Herald* reported that she was turned away as there was no anaesthetist available and a senior health official admitted in hindsight it may have been the wrong decision.

"Labor's failure to properly staff the Blue Mountains maternity unit when it was 'reopened' shows they are prepared to lie and put women's and babies' lives at risk," the Opposition health spokeswoman, Jillian Skinner, said.

"Revisiting my son's birth has made me angry."

A writer's reflection on her invasive hospital birthstory was published in the current issue of *Adbusters* magazine.

Shonagh Strachan recounts how her birth was a Normal Vaginal Delivery but left her feeling far from normal.

She writes that she was deemed to not be progressing 'correctly' and given oxytocin to speed up the process, then pain relief followed by an epidural.

She started getting angry when her parents were not allowed to visit her and was really angry when the hospital ignored her requests to see her child after he was born.

Ms Strachan writes about the 'active management' program employed by the obstetricians at the hospital she attended. She later discovered that 55% of women were declared to have failed to progress at the hospital that year and were given oxytocin, pain relief and epidurals.

The full article can be read at www.adbusters.org/magazine/80/industrial_childbirth.html

Too many babies, not enough staff

The *Sun Herald* reported on 24 October that overcrowding at Royal Prince Alfred Women and Babies is compromising patient safety.

The hospital is expected to deliver up to 5500 babies this year whilst only being built for 4000.

During one 24 hour period in mid-October, 24 babies were born in facilities built for 14.

Some mothers are being turned away and being sent to other hospitals.

One midwife raised concerns about staff not being able to provide adequate care given the rising numbers of births in the hospital.

New South Wales Opposition health spokesperson Jillian Skinner says the Government should have foreseen the baby boom and planned for it.

"This maternity unit was supposed to be for the future. When a government plans a hospital, they should be planning for the next 20 to 30 years," she said.

"In this case, clearly that's not happening."

Two happy homebirthers

The *St George and Sutherland Shire Leader* reported about two happy homebirthers on November 4.

Amy Tyson and Sonia Gregson both enjoyed welcoming their babies into the world in their own homes with the assistance of midwives from the South Eastern Sydney and Illawarra Health Homebirth Service, run from St George Hospital.

The paper reported that the Midwifery and nursing co-director of women's and children's health, Deb Matha, said there is no evidence to suggest that homebirth is unsafe.

"It is a safe, affordable, and satisfying option," she said. "Women describe a sense of control a feeling that birth at home is very much a family event."

Ms Tyson whose baby was the 50th newborn welcomed through the St George homebirth program told The Leader that she was in "good hands" and found her homebirth a more enjoyable experience than a hospital birth.

PRE-NATAL SERVICES

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Contact Brook for an appointment on 1300 85 84 90.**Other enquiries: 043 000 6496****info@acupunctureeast.com.au****visit the website: www.****acupunctureeast.com.au.**

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Rebecca Gouldhurst:**93864243 0415304369****counsellor@doula.net.au**

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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.

Also starting in Spring 2009

"The School of Shamanic Midwifery"—a women's mysteries school for doulas and midwives

Jane Hardwicke Collings:**48882002 0408035808****janecollings@bigpond.com****www.moonsong.com.au****www.placentalremedy.com**

SUTHERLAND/ST GEORGE

Calmbirth® preparation course

The calmbirth® course is an amazing course, it 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. 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 9544 6441 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.

Julie Clarke: 0401265530**9 Withybrook Place Sylvania****(just 20 mins south of the airport).****julie@julieclarke.com.au****Natural Beginnings**

—Herbal Medicine, Nutrition & Birth Support

I have a very personal interest in treating preconception, pregnancy and children's health, naturally. Having my partner and I prepare our bodies' health naturally for a conscious conception, I am currently enjoying a trouble free pregnancy, also with the help of herbs and nutrition. 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 pregnancy health conditions
- preparing your body and mind for a better birth
- 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****85440057 0415 683 074****1/97 Elouera Rd Cronulla****www.naturalbeginnings.com.au****Transition into Parenthood**

Childbirth and Parenting Preparation

Wonderful, comprehensive courses focused on natural active birth including waterbirth, including practicalities of baby care. Participants receive professionally presented well organised course notes. Very suitable for homebirth, birth centre and delivery suite.

See Julie's website for more details, birth stories and pictures, information www.julieclarke.com.au

Julie has a great sense of humour and a very gentle approach, she is supportive and flexible in her teaching approach. Good variety of courses to choose from: 6 wk course 1 night per week or 2 Saturdays condensed or 1 Sunday super condensed.

Reasonably priced and discount available.

Julie Clarke: 0401265530 9544 6441**9 Withybrook Place Sylvania (just****20 mins south of the airport).****julie@julieclarke.com.au**

BIRTH SUPPORT SERVICES **DOULAS****EASTERN SUBURBS/
CITY/INNER WEST****Australian Doula College & The
Centre For Spiritual Birth &
Development**

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

31 Brighton Street

Petersham NSW 2049

2 9560 8288 2 9568 3116

www.australiandoulacollege.com.au

moreinfo@australiandoulacollege.com.au

Erika Elliott

I believe every woman and baby deserves to be supported through their journey of labour and birth. Every couple blanketed as they work together during this sacred time. I am a dedicated mother, doula, calmbirth educator, birth photographer and blessingway facilitator. My passion lies in inspiring couples to find their voice and follow their hearts as they bring their babies peacefully into the world. Whatever kind of birth you dream of or have, I will support you through this transformative time.

Erika Elliott:

9810 3034 0425 217 788

erikaswa@hotmail.com

**We want to list your
services as a Doula**

To list on this page, please contact the Advertising Coordinator at birthingsadvertising@yahoo.com.au.

HILLS DISTRICT**Adrienne Abulhawa**

Holistic Birth

Care and support for pregnancy, birth and baby. Homebirths, birth centre or hospital births. Also pre-natal and post-natal care, mother and baby massage, birth preparation, meditation and relaxation, birth planning and breastfeeding support.

Adrienne: 0416 511 118

adrienne@holisticbirth.com.au

www.holisticbirth.com.au

**HORNSBY/HILLS DISTRICT/
NORTH SHORE/NORTHERN
BEACHES****Jacqui James**

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

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

References available.

Mob: 0418 445 653/

jacquij@people.net.au

HOMEBIRTH SUPPORT GROUPS**SYDNEY (HAS)****Evening discussion meetings
in Sydney**

Public meetings on topics related to homebirth in Bondi Junction and Petersham. Meetings run 7:00 to 9:00pm and feature a guest speaker and theme topic, a birth story and time for tea and socialising. All welcome. Details of upcoming meetings in the Calendar.

Homebirth Parents' Group

For HAS members, meeting the 2nd Wednesday of each month at Amelia Allan's house, 5 Warner St, Gladesville. Details of upcoming meetings in the Calendar. Bring a piece of fruit for the children and a little something for our morning tea (if you are empty-handed, still welcome!). Indoor and outdoor play space, plenty of toys.

Call Amelia with any questions

on 9817 4512 or 0414 895 910.

NEW SOUTH WALES**Birth Central (Far south coast)**

Cindy (02) 6494 0131

www.birthcentral.org.au

**Blue Mountains Homebirth
Support**

Gatherings fortnightly on a Tuesday at 10am.

Natalie Dash (02) 4757 2080

nataliedash@optusnet.com.au

Clarence Valley Birth Support

Laena Jongen-Morter

(02) 6649 4271

Far North Coast NSW

Jillian Delailie (02) 6689 1641

Illawarra Homebirth Support

Karen Sanders (02) 4225 3727

**Mid North Coast Homebirth
Support Resource & Referral**

Berry Engel-Jones

(W) 6652 8111 (H) 6655 0707

**Mothers and Midwives of the
South (Southern Highlands)**

Jane Collings

(02) 4888 2002 or 0408 035 808

We meet every month in the Illawarra

area. Contact Jaia on 0431 709978

or jaia_shanti@yahoo.com.au for more

details. Everyone welcome.

INTERSTATE & NATIONAL**Homebirth Australia**

Jo Hunter (02) 4751 9840

homebirth.australia@bigpond.com

Queensland

(07) 3839 5883 | email info@homebirth.org.au

org.au

Darwin Homebirth Group

(09) 8985 5871

darwin.homebirth@octa4.net.au

**Homebirth in the Hills
—Dandenong Ranges**

Melinda Whyman (03) 9754 1347

mwhyman@bigpond.net.au

**Homebirth on the
Mornington Peninsula**

Kim (03) 5987 0657

HAS Library

*HAS is re-establishing its library
of books that have been generously
donated for our members to borrow.*

Borrowing: Please email or call Erika to collect the books from Lilyfield. 0425 217 788 or 9810 3034 or erikaswa@hotmail.com

Returning: You can either deliver or mail the book(s) back to me.

Happy reading! If anyone has any more titles that they are done with and would like to share around, we would love to have them in our library.

Please find the list of current titles below.

Books:

• *The First 12 Months of Motherhood*
Susan Hassebrock, 1996

• *100 ways to calm the crying*
Pinky McKay, 2002

• *Parenting by Heart*
Pinky McKay, 2001

• *Birth Stories*
Katrina O'Brien, 2005

• *Face to Face with Childbirth*
Julia Sundin, 1989

• *The Waterbirth Handbook*
Dr. Roger Lichy & Eileen Herzberg, 1993

• *The NappyBag Book, resource guide
for parents* 6th Edition, 2005

• *Better Birth, the definitive guide to
childbirth* Lareen Newman & Heather
Hancock, 2006

• *The natural way to a better pregnancy*
Francesca Naish & Janette Roberts,
1999

• *Magical Beginnings, Enchanted Lives*
Deepak Chopra, 2005

• *Your Baby & Child*
Penelope Leach, 2003

• *The Choice Guide to Baby Products*
Choice Books, 8th Edition, 2003

• *Helping Your Baby to Sleep*
Anni Gethen & Beth Macgregor, 2007

• *Your New Baby*
Dr Miriam Stoppard, 2002

• *Up The Duff*
Kaz Cooke, 1999

• *Yoga for Pregnancy*
Amber Land, 2003

• *Special Women, the role of the
professional labour assistant*
Paulina Perez & Cheryl Snedeker, 2000

• *Labour of Love, tales from the world of
midwives*

Edited by Amanda Tattam & Cate
Kennedy, 2005

• *The Magic of Sex*
Dr. Miriam Stoppard, 1991

Magazines/newsletters:

Various back issues of:

• *Communique*, Australian Society of
Independent Midwives

• *Nurture*, quarterly journal of natural
parenting, Melbourne

• *BirthChoice* NT

• *Down to Birth* QLD

• *Tummy Talk* NZ

• *Midwifery Matters*

• *Birthing Beautifully* WA

• *Kindred*

BIRTHING SERVICES **MIDWIVES****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: 9540 4992
(Gymea)

bpvella@optushome.com.au

One to One Midwifery Care

If your expectations are of having a natural birth, less intervention, shared decision making and continuity of care with your own midwife in a safe environment then this service is for you! Women can choose to have their babies at home or in a natural birthing centre. A tailor-made pregnancy plan is offered together with medical liaison if required or requested.

Jan Robinson: 0418 117 560
midwife@ozemail.com.au

www.midwiferyeducation.com.au

Sydney Homebirth Practice

Akal Khalsa has been offering her individualised midwifery care to women in Sydney since 1979. She will provide experienced, comprehensive and personalised care throughout your pregnancy, birth and the postnatal period. With Akal as your midwife you will be assured of professional care and full and accurate information throughout this vital time. She is available by phone, 24 hours, 7 days a week. Akal has over 30 years experience as a midwife and childbirth educator and will help you and your partner prepare emotionally, mentally and physically so you can approach the birth of your baby with joy and confidence. She has many years experience with water births, lotus births and vaginal after caesarean births.

Akal Khalsa: 9660 2127
www.ourmidwife.com.au

Birth From Within

Personal holistic midwifery care during your special time of pregnancy, birth and parenthood. My philosophy is one of nonintervention, working in partnership with you and your family. I live in the Nowra/St Georges Basin area.

Robyn Borgas: 4443 2509
paul.borgas@bigpond.com

New Beginnings Midwifery Practice

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: 9888 7829
(North Ryde)

www.homebirthmidwives.com.au

Homebirth Midwife

Pregnancy and birth is a normal, healthy life experience. As natural as it is to conceive your baby in a loving, safe and intimate environment, labouring and birthing at home, in your own relaxed setting, gives you the freedom to follow your body's instinctive knowledge of birthing naturally, without restrictions.

As a Midwife, I have immense passion for my career and gain great professional and personal satisfaction from it. I offer a holistic approach to midwifery care, providing care throughout your pregnancy, labour and birth (a birthing pool is available for water birth) and postnatal care up to 4 weeks after the birth of your baby. All care is provided in your home.

Jacqui Wood: 0430 109 400
(Sydney and surrounding suburbs)
www.homebirthmidwife.com.au
jacqui@homebirthmidwife.com.au

Wholistic Midwifery

I take a wholistic approach to pregnancy and birth, as well as to general health. I am a nutritionist and herbalist as well as a midwife, so my service can include these tools in your care. I provide full antenatal and postnatal homebirth care, as well as providing postnatal care for women who have birthed in hospital but return home soon afterwards. I practise in the Southern Highlands area.

Victoria Kleeberg:
48 615 744 0404 489 484
kleeberg@bigpond.net.au

Pregnancy, Birth & 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: 9873 1750
(Dundas Valley)
www.pregnancy.com.au

Essential Birth Consulting

Offering midwifery services during preconception, pregnancy, birth and postnatal. Homebirth, hospital birth support, childbirth education, birth debriefing and consulting services are available. I practice in and around Sydney, as far as Blue Mountains, Wollongong and Camden. Essential Birth

Consulting recognises you as being the most important person in the birthing experience, and homebirth assists you to have the healthiest birth possible. Essential Birth Consulting's home birth service focuses on your needs for confidence, choice and convenience in birth, with all visits provided in your home. Waterbirth and VBAC are supported. Journal subscriptions are available as well as access to a library.

Melissa Maimann: 0400 418 448
MBA RM RN BN Grad Dip Midwifery
melissam@idx.com.au

Sonja MacGregor

A wholistic midwife who empowers and trusts a woman to birth her own baby in the comfort of her own home, surrounded by love. I provide a full antenatal, labour, birth and postnatal service in collaboration with the woman. Appointments are attended in the woman's home, with the inclusion of family and support people if the woman desires.

I service all areas west/south west of Sydney, the Blue Mountains, Southern Highlands and Illawarra.

Sonja MacGregor: 0419 149 019
sonjamac@bigpond.com
www.birthathome.com.au

Birthing Babies

Birthing Babies is the private midwifery and antenatal education practice offered by midwife Victoria Jones. Victoria is an independently practicing midwife in Port Macquarie, on the mid-north coast of New South Wales. Birthing Babies conducts antenatal education weekends for women who want the latest information and education about pregnancy and birth in a fun, friendly, and supportive workshop format. We also offer birth support for women who plan to birth at home.

Victoria Jones: 6581 4695
(Port Macquarie NSW)
www.birthingbabies.com.au
midwife@birthingbabies.com.au

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 midwives at the Birth Centre on 9113 3103.

Homebirth Access Sydney (Inc)

HAS Policy Statement

- 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 all 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.

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

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

MAGAZINE ADVERTISING RATES		
	Single (1 Issue)	Annual (4 issues)
Service Pages		
Doula Listing	n/a	\$25
Services Listing	n/a	\$35
Colour Advertisements		
Business Card Display	\$20	\$70
Quarter Page Display	\$30	\$110
Half Page Display	\$40	\$150
Full Page Display	\$65	\$250
Coming soon: ONLINE ADVERTISING		
For details, please email jen@npsydne.com.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.

YOU ARE WELCOME TO ATTEND

Homebirth Access Sydney (HAS) Committee Meetings

10.00am–12.00 noon
on the last Friday of every month
At the home of Jo Tilly
50 Victoria Road, Marrickville

There is an area for children to play while we meet
Bring a plate or something to nibble

Please call to confirm meeting as there are sometimes late changes:

Jo Tilly 9519 8524

Next meetings:

30 January, 27 February (AGM), 27 March

calendar



Diaries & pencils at the ready, please. It's time to get involved!

January		March	
Tues 20	Sutherland Shire and St. George Homebirth Group. 10am, Gunnamatta Park, Cronulla. Call Sally on 0425 751 900.	Early	Birthings Autumn issue in letterboxes
Thurs 22	Pregnancy & Parenting Network meeting. Theme: Birth Stories. 10am-12pm, Jane Palmer's house, 27 Hart St, Dundas Valley. Please let Jane know you're coming so she can let you know if she has to cancel to go to a birth: 9873 1750 or jane@pregnancy.com.au. Please bring a plate of food to share. All welcome.	Tues 17	Sutherland Shire and St. George Homebirth Group. 10am, Gunnamatta Park, Cronulla. Call Sally on 0425 751 900.
Fri 30	HAS Committee meeting. 10am-12pm, Jo Tilly's house, 50 Victoria Road, Marrickville. Please call Jo to confirm beforehand as there are sometimes late changes: 9519 8524. All welcome.	Thurs 19	Pregnancy & Parenting Network meeting. Theme: VBAC. 10am-12pm, Jane Palmer's house, 27 Hart St, Dundas Valley. Please let Jane know you're coming so she can let you know if she has to cancel to go to a birth: 9873 1750 or jane@pregnancy.com.au. Please bring a plate of food to share. All welcome.
February		Fri 27	HAS Committee meeting. 10am-12pm, Jo Tilly's house, 50 Victoria Road, Marrickville. Please call Jo to confirm beforehand as there are sometimes late changes: 9519 8524. All welcome.
Sun 1	Birthings Autumn submissions deadline. Send your articles, birth stories and photos to Danni Townsend at dannit@bigpond.net.au Birthings Autumn advertising deadline. Contact Jenny Carleton on jen@npsydney.com.au. Please note advertising is now also due on the 1st of the month, not the 15th as in the past.		
Sun 8	All Members Annual Family Picnic. 11am-2pm. Jubilee Park, Glebe. Meet at the corner of Eglinton & Northcote Roads, Glebe, near the play equipment. (Jubilee Park light rail stop.) Partners and children welcome. Please BYO picnic fare, drinks & blankets. A great social opportunity for all homebirth families and Greater Sydney to come together. For more info, and to RSVP, please contact Leigh Holman. ALL WELCOME		
Tues 17	Sutherland Shire and St. George Homebirth Group. 10am, Gunnamatta Park, Cronulla. Call Sally on 0425 751 900.		
Thurs 19	Pregnancy & Parenting Network meeting. Theme: Introducing Solids. 10am-12pm, Jane Palmer's house, 27 Hart St, Dundas Valley. Please let Jane know you're coming so she can let you know if she has to cancel to go to a birth: 9873 1750 or jane@pregnancy.com.au. Please bring a plate of food to share. All welcome.		
Fri 27	HAS Annual General Meeting. See notice of meeting below. Jo Tilly's house, 50 Victoria Road, Marrickville. All members welcome.		

Notice of Annual General Meeting

All members of Homebirth Access Sydney are invited to the 2008-2009 Annual General Meeting to be held at Jo Tilly's house, 50 Victoria Road, Marrickville, on Friday 27 February 2009 from 10am onwards to:

- » confirm the minutes of the last AGM
- » receive from the committee reports on the activities of the association during the last preceding financial year,
- » elect office-bearers of the association and ordinary members of the committee,
- » receive and consider the financial statement to members, and conduct other business of which notice has been given to the members.

For directions to Jo's house or to let her know you'll be attending, please call 9519 8524.



*The topic for the
next issue is*

Let's talk about SEX...

This is your opportunity to get talking and here are some ideas...

Natural fertility, unnatural fertility, conception, sex during pregnancy, sex after birth, orgasmic birth, using the Ina May Kanoodling method of induction, sex and co-sleeping, sex and breastfeeding, and anything else that tickles your fancy. (And yes, anonymous contributions accepted!)

As always, we welcome your birth announcements,
birth stories, letters and book reviews.

Reminder Update your membership details by email to Amelia Allen at ameliaa@iprimus.net.au to ensure you continue to receive *Birthings*, as we may be switching to electronic format following the withdrawal of our sponsor.

BIRTHINGS is your magazine. **Please contribute!**
Submissions due Saturday 1 February 2009.

EMAIL THE EDITORS AT DANNIT@BIGPOND.NET.AU