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Autumn 2009
Issue 101
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BIRTHINGS

a HOME BIRTH ACCESS SYDNEY quarterly publication
www.homebirthsydney.org.au



sex

plus all our regular features
birth notices, letters, your stories and pictures
maternity services review update
& updates on our community activities

Autumn 2009 Issue 101

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 Sarah McLean at sarahmclean2092@hotmail.com
Photos and written submissions must be emailed. Prior notice to the Editors of your intention to submit work is not necessary, but can be helpful in planning content.

deadlines for submissions

Winter 2009 No 102—1 May 2009
Spring 2009 No 103—1 August 2009
Summer 2010 No 104—1 November 2009
Autumn 2010 No 105—1 February 2010

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 sarah-peak@hotmail.com

HOMEBIRTH ACCESS SYDNEY COMMITTEE* & OFFICE BEARERS	
HAS Coordinator*	Jo Tilly 02 9519 8524 jemimared@yahoo.com.au
Assistant Coordinator*	Alison Leemen 02 9665 1670 alisonleemen@gmail.com
Treasurer*	Felicity Gibbons 02 9481 7356 felicitygibbons@aapt.net.au
Secretary*	Anne Harris 0433 162 847 annehns@hotmail.com
Birthings Managing Editor*	Sarah McLean 02 9400 2386 sarahmclean2092@hotmail.com
Birthings Sub Editor	VACANT
Birthings Designer	Petra Timmermann 0414 805 410 petra.timmerman@acumenpublishing.com.au
Editor	Amelia Allan Heart to Heart page ameliaa@iprimus.com.au
Website	Leigh Holman 02 9590 4485 lhoman@flametree.com.au
Events	Helena Mooney 0424 096 546 helenamooney@gmail.com
Advertising*	Jenny Carleton 0412 970 183 jen@npsydney.com.au
Memberships	Sarah Peak 0401 408 942 sarah-peak@hotmail.com Virgina Maddock 0415 683 074 maddvirg@yahoo.com.au
Merchandising*	Sarah Peak 0401 408 942 sarah-peak@hotmail.com
Media Watch	Gill Fitzgerald 0416 034 811 zonarium@hotmail.com
Mail Officer	Akal Khalsa
Volunteer Coordinator	Jackie Bysouth jackj@deden.com.au
Librarian	Erika Elliott erikaswa@hotmail.com

*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

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BIRTHINGS

Sex

REGULARS

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Photo: Chris McNamara

Tara Darlington and her beautiful children

Membership

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

PLEASE SUPPORT THIS VITAL WORK BY SUBSCRIBING TO *BIRTHINGS*

- **3 year membership:** \$90
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 - **Midwives subscribing clients:** \$15 per client
- Membership entitles you to receive *Birthings* four times a year and satisfaction in knowing that your money is being used to keep the group alive in order to make it easier for families to birth at home.

Please send your completed form to:
HAS, PO BOX 66, BROADWAY NSW 2007

NAME	
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CAN YOU VOLUNTEER HELP? (eg typing, fundraising, emailing, events, organising)	

Please tick:

- New member
- Renewal

Please enclose:

- \$90 for 3 year membership
- \$40 for new membership (1 year)
- \$40 for renewal membership (1 year)
- \$15 for midwife client membership (1 year)

Include a stamped, self-addressed envelope if receipt is required.

Enquiries: sarah-peak@hotmail.com

Contributors

CHRISTEN CLIFFORD is a writer and performer in New York. She has written for *Nerve*, *Salon* and *Huffington Post*. She is a storyteller for the Moth and her solo show *BabyLove* ran for three months Off Broadway and was a critic's pick in *Time Out* and *New York Magazine*. She is married to writer McKenzie Wark and is the proud mother of Felix and Vera. christenclifford.com

FELICITY GIBBONS is mother to Maya (3) and Haile (now 10 months) both born at home. Wife to Paul. Member of HAS committee as treasurer. In her past life she enjoyed sleep and still misses it now but she gets to enjoy her new passions of birth and raising kids.

LEIGH HOLMAN is a SAHM while she studies to be a doula and childbirth educator. She lives with her partner Andrew and to her two mad sons Jack 4 and Hamish 2 1/2 in the inner west of Sydney. She is passionate about birth and parenting instinctively which is some days is a struggle and other days a delight.

VIRGINIA MADDOCK is a passionate herbalist, nutritionist and doula. Her business, Natural Beginnings, focuses on natural fertility, pregnancy, birth, post-natal and children's health. www.naturalbeginnings.com.au

ASHLEIGH MCHUGH is a 21-year-old single mum to Darcy from Port Macquarie. She has just completed her Bachelor of Nursing and hopes to study midwifery in the next year.

Birthings is designed by **MELINDA HOLME**

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.

- | | | |
|------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| Jenny Schellhorn | Beryl Truong | Helena Ugiagbe |
| Belinda Faught | Christina Nagle | Danielle Andela- |
| Belinda Green | Laura Brooks | Blackburn |
| Kate Chojnowski | Carla Cromie | Heather Crawford |
| Natalie Larter | Helena Mooney | Patricia Parish |
| Dagmar Pitleova | Sandy Bucknell | Melanie Gersbach |
| Dasa Pitelova | Catriona Kaminski | Amy Tyson |
| Petra Timmermann | Jaia Shanti Baer | Melanie Jackson |
| Shereen Rowter | Varvi Salgado | Caroline Cromlish |
| Regan Matthews | Melanie Lindenthal | Rachel Cracroft |
| Melanie Drummond | Nicole Ronay Sundin | Deb Greenwell |
| Sally Cusack | Mirna Hirnerova | Lisa Marshall |
| Amar Wehbe | Emma Wilson | |

Editorial



DANIELLE TOWNSEND
AND ALISON LEEMEN

It seems we are in a time of flux. The first thing you've probably noticed is the 'new-look' *Birthings* you hold in your hand. This smaller, black and white magazine is our solution to the loss of our major sponsor last year. The HAS committee heard your pleas to save the magazine and decided that we would find the funds to cover the printing of a simpler version—at least until a new supporter can be found. You will hopefully find the same high-quality content inside the pages.

Just when the homebirth community thought that we could not be less supported by our government, the report of the recent federal Maternity Services Review brings just that fear. Is it possible that homebirth midwives could be unable to get registration in July next year, making their practice illegal? For more information about what the review means and our response see pages 32 and 33.

There is no doubt there is more water to go under the bridge with the review and there is time for a better outcome to emerge. It is crucial that we continue to act as individuals to keep our voices in the media and in the government's ear. Once these changes have been legislated they will be so very difficult to reverse. Please keep an eye on your inbox to see what you can do to help us fight the criminalisation of homebirth, and if you don't receive monthly emails from us, please email one of our new memberships officers.

The HAS committee is also experiencing a period of change. While many of the faces remain the same, the recent AGM has brought some switching of the seats. Jo Tilly remains the HAS Coordinator and there is a full list of the new committee positions on the inside cover of this issue. We would also like to welcome some new committee members. Sarah Peak and Virginia Maddock will share the job of coordinating memberships, and Helena Mooney will be working on events. Petra Timmerman has taken up the challenge of designing *Birthings* and from the next issue you will see her work and that of the new editorial team.

We are still seeking women to join the *Birthings* editorial team. Sarah McLean has offered to take the role of Managing Editor, meaning she will organise contributions and all the 'traffic management' work of editing the magazine. She needs enthusiastic sub-editors,

proof-readers, contributors and information-gatherers for each section. You can contact her at sarahmclean2092@hotmail.com if you think you can help.

A big thank you is due to all the outgoing members of the committee. Sharon Dollimore and Amelia Allan have both contributed many hours of time to HAS and a great sense of camaraderie. A huge dollop of gratitude is also due to Melinda Holme who has been designing *Birthings* so beautifully and professionally for the past seven issues. Melinda is neither a homebirther nor a midwife and so she has been doubly generous with her time and creativity and we can not thank her enough.

With all this change about, it's no wonder our minds haven't been on sex. We had a record low level of submissions for this theme, but luckily those we did get were of a great standard. Leigh Holman's piece explores the complicated relationships we mothers can develop with our bodies, our babies and our lovers. Negotiating these relationships is not always easy, as Leigh's brave story explores.

Our 'foreign correspondent' this issue is Christen Clifford, who had a homebirth in New York last year. Christen is a well-known writer and actor who is married to an Australian. Her writing on motherhood is fresh and funny and always sexy. We are so pleased to be able to present you with a story commissioned especially for *Birthings*.

Virginia Maddock's story on her natural fertility journey is a great example of how homebirthers take great responsibility for their own bodies and fertility. Her journey is personal and you can flick through to Virginia's birth story later in the issue to see how the story ends.

As usual we also have more great birth stories which should leave you feeling uplifted and inspired.

It is time for us to say farewell in our capacity as editors of *Birthings*. We have both learned, worried, worked and laughed so much in this job and are sad to say goodbye. Thank you for your support and contributions. Please look after the new editors and keep sending your beautiful birth stories, notices, contributions and letters. We can assure you people *love* to read them.

— Alison and Danni

birth announcements



Simon, Sally and Ray welcome
Josephine Alela

18 June 2008
Born at home in Thornleigh

Josephine was born in the lounge room on a sunny winter's morning after a long night's labour. Her arrival still seemed a way off when all of a sudden Sally started to push, so Josephine was born on the couch, not into the lovingly prepared birthing pool on the other side of the room.

Josephine's birth was attended by our wonderful midwife Jacqui Wood, who cared for us with such skill and patience (thank you again so much, Jacqui!). Also present was Josephine's aunt Lauri (expecting her first baby only two months later) and grandmother Pam, who was thrilled to witness birth for the first time.

Josephine was caught by Simon with two year old Ray standing right beside him, exclaiming "Daddy caught the baby!" After having had Ray in hospital, we are so happy that we opted for a home birth this time. The whole experience was an incredible privilege for all of us.



Brian and Sandy welcome
Ruby Adelaide Nicholson

4 January 2009

As the kookaburras signaled the end of the day, Ruby Adelaide Nicholson started her journey into the world, arriving only a few hours after at 9:53pm weighing a healthy 9 pounds and being 53cm tall. She was welcomed by Brian and Sandy otherwise known as Mum and Dad, with Aunty Keta, brother and sister Jayson and Sian all in attendance providing support and care. She lit up the night and has glowed ever since and the kookaburras keep coming each morning to wish her good-day.

A special thanks to Jacqui for her amazing support, knowledge and gentle caring right up to week 42 of pregnancy and throughout the birth. She embodies the true meaning of the role midwife and to have had her as our guide on our journey with Ruby was indeed a blessing in all its glory. To have had Ruby guided into the world surrounded by that knowledge and understanding is something that all parents hope and wish for and we were lucky enough to experience first hand in the comfort of our own home.



Jennifer Kurowski and Michael Curran welcome
Noah Sage Curran

to the world; a beautiful little fellow, an old soul in a new body, and their first-born.

Born at home in water on 14 October 2008 at 11:42am.
Birth weight 3 kg, length 49 cm

Lifelong thanks to our midwife and superhero Jacqui Wood, whose knowledge, guidance and support during Noah's birth was a blessing. Jacqui's help has since transcended Noah's birth, and we are all very grateful to her.



Sarah Mann and Daniel Frederiksen welcome

Oliver Jerarah Frederiksen

26 November 2008
Born peacefully at home in the water

Oliver Jerarah was born at home in the Blue Mountains at 8:24 in the morning, breathed out into the water and into his dad's arms. We were blessed by the guidance and support of Sonja (midwife), Natalie (doula) and Eleanor (sister and auntie) who lovingly held the space for us. We welcome our beautiful one into the world, we are so glad you're here.



Lorelei and Paul Barkley welcome their daughter

Carrera

Siblings: Trinity and Giselle
12 November 2008
Waterbirth at home

Our third daughter swam into her daddy's arms at her home waterbirth. With thanks to Sonja our midwife and Jo our doula.

Send your birth announcements with a photograph to sarahmclean@hotmail.com

Celebrations of love and life

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Suite 11 Quay West Business Centre
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letters

Oh Wow! What a super job of the 'Sky's Birth' article – breathtaking. I'm just so sad about the imminent changes to the magazine. Do hope you gals haven't hocked your homes to get this edition out! Seriously!

Thank you very very much for my copy.

My sincerest and warmest wishes for whatever you all decide to do next!

— Ros Woodlands

heart to heart

POETRY AND ARTWORK

I will be a bird in flight

My wings will reach the ends of imaginable space

And touch the beginning of unimaginable space

And that presence, heart-waking with it's magnitude of dancing love

Making utterly anew with its experience that I am that

Will feed back deep into my middle in this world

Until I know it such that everything else is a fairytale spread on the pages of a book

I will learn then to breathe in and out, from my human body to love-as-everything-always

And that will be the beginning

Of a new intersection running through this body

On the day I rise to birth this baby

— Amelia Allen



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coordinator's report



JO TILLY

Sometimes being involved in

community advocacy is very much like pregnancy and birth. At the very beginning it's just great fun and then you find yourself in what seems like endless months of waiting for something big to happen. And then when it finally does, you wake up one day with the dawning realisation that the drama of birth was just the beginning of a very, very long period of parenting...

In a similar way, after much anticipation, the Report of the Maternity Services Review (MSR) was finally released in the past few weeks. Organisations like HAS who have long been concerned about improving access and choice for women around birthing in Australia had been waiting eagerly.

But it now looks like the fight for homebirth may be just kicking off.

More than half the individual submissions made to the Review were from women and families advocating homebirth. And we were greatly encouraged by the directions proposed in the discussion paper.

However while the Report makes some good and important recommendations aimed at increasing access to midwife-led models of care for women in the public health system, HAS is deeply concerned at the outcomes of the Report and the recommendations which have been made about homebirth.

Not only does the Report fail to recommend public funding through Medicare for homebirth, the consequence of the Report's recommendations is to make professionally attended homebirth illegal in Australia by mid-next year, when the proposed new National Registration and Accreditation Scheme becomes effective.

To be registered under this new scheme, a midwife must have professional indemnity insurance. The MSR Report, while recommending Commonwealth-supported professional indemnity for midwives in collaborative team-based models, withholds such support where individual midwives offer homebirth.

There is a simple and fair solution to this problem—the Government could easily extend the Premium Support and High Cost of Claims Schemes, currently provided to GPs and obstetricians, to registered midwives.

Instead, by preventing independent midwives from accessing insurance, and at the same time making it a condition of registration, the government is effectively outlawing homebirth. By July 2010 uninsured midwives will be unable to obtain registration, and practicing midwifery as an unregistered practitioner is a criminal offence. There is no surer way to make homebirth unsafe.

Prohibiting homebirth will not stop women wanting it. But it will put women and their babies at grave risk of either choosing to birth without the assistance of any health care professional or receiving sub-standard care. This cannot in any way be seen as meeting the Review's aim of providing better maternity services to women.

Pregnant women and our families rely on registration to ensure that they are choosing a skilled and professional carer. To remove this indicator of quality away from consumers puts women and babies at risk. There can also be little doubt that more women will birth unattended—an issue which the MSR Report claims to be concerned about. To create incentives for women to birth at home alone, without professional care, is simply dangerous.

What is perhaps even more frustrating is that a huge number of submissions not only sought professional indemnity support for homebirth midwives, they also sought public funding. This, too, has been rejected by the MSR Report, for as the sole reason it appears that "professional groups" have expressed "concern about moves toward homebirthing".

Reading between the lines, this means that the views of the Australian Medical Association and the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists about homebirth seem to have trumped both the bulk of submissions and the weight of evidence to the contrary.

When the Report admits that "at the current time in Australia, homebirthing is a sensitive and controversial issue" and that "the relationship between maternity health care professionals is not such as to support homebirth as a mainstream Commonwealth-funded option" consumers can be left in no doubt that the reason homebirth has not been publicly funded and midwives' insurance supported is that the Review team has placed the industrial protectionism and ideological hostility of the AMA and RANZCOG ahead of women's right to choose their carer and place of birth.

We are incredibly disappointed that it appears the Review team has accepted the submission of the few over that of the many; one group of service-providers over that of consumers; and the views of a powerful, wealthy lobby group over that of the birthing mothers who should be at the centre of the entire maternity services system. We are particularly disappointed when we had hoped for stronger leadership from the Labor Government in this regard.

We need your help to win this fight. Please write to the Minister for Health Nicola Roxon, contact your local federal MP, write letters to the newspaper. The message is simple—homebirth is a safe and legitimate choice and women and their babies deserve a system that supports that choice and safeguards our health and welfare. Help us to make sure that the needs, preferences and welfare of birthing women are put back to the centre of this debate.

Yours in birthing—Jo

Body Image, Babies and Sex

LEIGH HOLMAN

When motherhood changes a woman's body and mind, sexuality often needs some renegotiation.

Recently I have had an awakening. I have started to figure out how to assimilate myself as a mother with myself as a sexual being. It has been a long process that has lasted two births, lots of introspection and a few very honest and slightly uncomfortable conversations with my partner.

During my life I had often felt like the girl that was slightly overweight, that never quite looked as slim as my friends, that had a few more jiggy bits, and filled out my bikini a bit more than they did.

That feeling of the fat girl all changed when I was pregnant with my first child. As my belly grew I felt more sensual and beautiful than I had ever before. I was so at peace with my body that I started feeling comfortable stripping off in the swimming pool change room along with all the old ladies that did my aqua aerobic classes with me, wearing little midriffs with my belly on full view, and sunbaking topless at the beach.

This also cascaded down to the way I felt with my partner. I have always been very comfortable sexually but my newfound sensuality moved our sex life into a new and more connected place. I felt more comfortable about myself and my body and because I felt so sensual on the inside, I was able to relax without ever thinking about myself or my imperfections.

Even during labour I remember thinking that I felt very sensual and even sexy while I lay in the bath between contractions.

In the days after the birth, with huge, milk-filled breasts and the feeling inside that I had finally become a woman because I had birthed my baby, I still held onto that feeling. And although, with a significant tear to my perineum and hot swollen boobs that shot milk up to a metre without warning, being sexual with my partner in any way was not of interest, I still felt incredibly sexy on the inside.

Then weeks passed, the tear healed but penetration hurt, the scar was so sensitive that any pressure upon my perineum felt like it was going to tear again. The sexy feeling I had about my huge breasts had also worn off. I felt like I always smelt like off milk, I would have a let-down if a breeze passed over my nipples or any time I had a sexual thought and milk would squirt everywhere.

Another shock was the way I felt about my post-partum body. In just a few weeks it went from feeling round, blossoming and sensual to floppy, empty and altogether unattractive. I hadn't put on a lot of weight in pregnancy but I started piling it on as my body stockpiled fat to make sure I could keep up my massive milk supply. So as focus came off my new babe for a moment and I looked at myself in the mirror, I saw the fat girl was back.

I enjoyed motherhood; I felt like I had finally become who I was meant to be, but as I gave myself to my child I felt less able to give myself to my partner. Between the pain, my weight and the milk jets, having sex was interesting me less and less. And of course inevitably, if I could get to the point where I felt like I wanted to have sex, our

son would wake in the middle. This really put the two versions of me (mother/lover) far too close together. Anyone that has ever had to stop making love to their partner to go and breastfeed their child back to sleep will know what I mean. The result for me was that sex started to feel wrong. I felt like I couldn't be that sexual and sensual being I had been because I was a mother. For the first time in my life, sex felt dirty.

I am blessed with a very understanding partner who didn't ever pressure me, but even within his understanding I could see that I was not able to give him what he hoped I would. Sex became something that needed to be quick, before the baby woke up, before I felt too tired; quick because as much as I wanted to want to make love, I didn't actually want to make love right now.

I once heard someone say that "when your sex life is working, it's 10% of your relationship, but when your sex life isn't working, it's 90%" and that's how it started to feel. I felt that I couldn't give myself or my partner what we both needed and that we started to feel disconnected from each other.

To make matters worse, we were co-sleeping and so we had to more actively try and approach each other, we had a baby between us in bed and before long we had another baby between and then to get some sleep we started sleeping in separate beds. Now don't get me wrong, none of this was bad for our sexual relationship on its own, but with me feeling less and less inclined to want to have sex at all, the fact that we no longer just started playing footsies under the covers meant that we started having sex less and less.

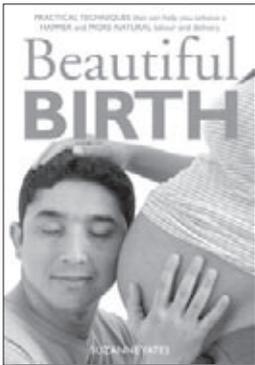
I have spoken to a lot of mothers and I know that we weren't alone. In fact, most of the mothers I spoke to said that sex was less comfortable and less desirable once they had children. That knowledge was good, but I felt that we were on a slippery slope. I didn't want to feel the way I felt about sex. I didn't want to not be able to enjoy that part of our relationship and I wanted to be able to share myself with my partner.

So I continued to talk to other mothers. What did they do? How did they feel? And how did they move forward? I also started to look into myself about why I felt this way. And what I felt we, as a couple, needed. I spoke to my partner about what he needed and we had a few very open and hard conversations about our needs and wants and how we could find a way of coming back together.

I can't tell you exactly what changed. I think it was a combination of my youngest child breastfeeding less, of my partner making a more conscious effort to give to me both sexually and emotionally, of me deciding to work on my feelings about myself and my body, and maybe just deciding that this wasn't the direction I wanted our relationship or my sexuality heading. But things have changed. It's still very much a work in progress and I often wonder if I will ever feel as sensual and beautiful as I did with that first pregnancy. I will continue to learn to accept myself and to get the mother/lover balance.

book review

REVIEWED BY SARAH MCLEAN



Beautiful Birth

BY SUZANNE YATES

Published by Carol & Brown Limited (2008)

Beautiful Birth is a highly

comprehensive manual on techniques to use during pregnancy and labour to assist women and their partners achieve a natural birth, which would be both satisfying and empowering. The book provides the “tools”—touch, breathing, visualisations, postures and physical preparation—to ease pain and promote progress. The book has a strong Shiatsu Massage focus with clear illustrations and explanations on the different techniques for each stage of labour. The only critique of the book is the amount of information and positions available! I could imagine to the first time pregnant woman, the book may overwhelm and focus on the mechanics of birth and the number of positions you should ‘do’ rather than on the experience as a whole.



REVIEWED BY JULIE CLARKE

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Out of control, falling in love

CHRISTEN CLIFFORD

It was the orgasm that did it. The second one. I'm sure.

But I'm getting ahead of myself. In late September 2008 I was 34 weeks pregnant with my second child, in a cab on my way home from a "non stress test" at the hospital. I called one of my two midwives. Martine was concerned about the frequency of my contractions.

She laid it out for me: modified bedrest for at least three weeks. "I really want you to take it easy. You can get out of bed, but just for a walk to the corner. No subway, no swimming, and no sex."

"Am I allowed to have sex by myself?"

"We don't recommend putting anything into your vagina." How did she know what I had planned?

"I can still have an orgasm though, right?"

"No, Christen." Martine could hear the silence on my end. She sighed, "I'm sorry, but I wouldn't do it. Orgasm releases oxytocin and can induce labor. We want to keep this baby inside for just a few more weeks, okay?"

I knew what orgasm and oxytocin could do to a pregnant woman. But I was one of those horny pregnant women.

"You want me to lie in bed for weeks on end and not masturbate?!?! What the hell else am I supposed to do?"

"Read a book Christen," Martine deadpanned.

And I did know what orgasm could do. I'd read Ina May Gaskin. I fantasized about giving birth at The Farm. I'd dreamed of staving off the pain of contractions with my Hitachi. I had planned a hippy happy sexy home birth and I wanted to orgasm all the way through.

She continued, as my belly rode the potholes, "You've had a previous premature birth. If we can keep this baby in until 37 weeks, then we can have the birth at home. Even at 36 and 1/2 weeks. But any earlier than that and you are going to be in the hospital again. You don't want that, do you?"

No, I didn't. I was pregnant with my second. I was too chicken to have my firstborn at home, though I considered it. Five years ago, I had planned for Felix to be delivered in a freestanding birth center, but my water broke at 34 weeks, and the midwives sent me to the back up hospital. The doctor wanted to induce me right away, but I was hoping to get labor started naturally, so I asked them to give me some time and asked Ken if he wanted to fool around. The Ina May canoodling way to induce a baby.

Ken climbed into the hospital bed. I was in a medical gown, an IV for liquids in my hand and a fetal monitor strapped to my belly. He kissed me and put his hand down my disposable underwear. This was good. This was very good. This was like making a baby and it just got better and better and I had to concentrate really hard on my clit to block out the beeping noises but I was gonna do it, o, yeah, and I was spiraling up, up, up towards the white-out white noise of orgasm and

then—a nurse rushed in and said, "The baby's heartbeat is rising!"

We froze. She noticed how sweaty we were and how stuffy it was in the room. She cleared her throat, came over to the bed, adjusted the monitor on my belly and left. After getting interrupted two more times we gave up. I never got that orgasm but I did get a pitocin drip an hour later.

So I didn't want to be in the hospital again. We were prepared for our home birth. The living room was full of birthing supplies—a birth pool, birth ball, shower curtains, old blankets, stained sheets, rubber gloves, flashlights, thermometers, extra towels, waterproof pads, iodine, Vitamin K drops, a container for the placenta, a scooper for birth and fecal matter, labor tea, baby clothes, diapers. We had the best midwives ever, Martine and Karen from JJB Midwifery.

I wasn't going to masturbate and fuck this up. I stayed completely celibate for over three weeks. (It was during the lead up to the US presidential election so I watched Jon Stewart on my laptop and obsessively googled this new Sarah Palin person.)

And then on October 14, 2008 I was exactly 37 weeks pregnant. Full term. Finally.

That day, my midwives Martine and Karen said I could start being a little more active. "Don't over do it though," Karen cautioned, "we still want that baby to be fully cooked."

So I didn't overdo it. I got out my Hitachi and I masturbated, once. Okay twice. Then I took a cab to the pool and swam really gently for 15 minutes and then I took a cab home and met Felix and his babysitter at our local café Espresso 77 and then we went home and there I was, at 5:30 pm, sitting on the couch with Felix, all of the sudden thinking, "Am I wetting my pants?" Why do I always think I'm pissing myself when I'm about to have a baby?

I called Ken and got his voicemail. "Ken, honey, my water broke, so please come home. We're having a baby!"

I got out the butternut squash. The books say you need something to do while you are in labor, it can take a long time, so I planned to make butternut squash soup to serve to my midwives and doula and also make a flourless chocolate cake for my gluten free husband Ken. Our son Felix loves treats, so I figured a chocolate cake would help soften the blow of a new sibling. I started getting the ingredients ready. I chopped one butternut squash in half. Fuck! The contractions were starting.

I went to the bathroom and looked at myself in the mirror. I'm having a baby! It was like a big exciting secret.

Felix was on my laptop in the living room. "Felix honey, mommy's getting ready to have to baby soon."

"Okay mommy!" He didn't even look up from pbskids.org.

A New York writer gives us her funny, sexy and angry take on homebirth.



Ken came home and the contractions were getting worse. He started timing them. They were five minutes apart and very intense. I called the midwives. "We're coming over."

"Really?" I said, still thinking that I was going to make that soup.
"Really?"

I went into the kitchen and tried to cut the squash. The skin was tough and I kept having to stop and bend over, leaning on the counter, trying to make sense of my uterus and back. After every contraction I got searing pain in my lower back, and then just a brief reprieve.

We were just playing catch up from there on in. Ken ordered Peruvian chicken from Pio Pio. He and Felix ate it at the table while I writhed around on the floor, leaned on the couch. Ken was nervous: trying to get Felix to eat his dinner and get the birth pool inflated while I was moaning in pain. Felix helped, pumping up the pool, his feet on the bottom upside down "T" of the pump, his little 5 year old arms working hard. He's so big! He's helping. I love him so much. Arrgggghhh!

The midwife Karen arrived. She changed into scrubs, spread something underneath me. She put the Doppler on my belly to check the baby's heart rate. She watched me.

"I don't feel like I'm a getting a break."

"I don't think you are going to get a break," she replied. "Ken, I think you should fill that pool."

I got into the tub, and crouched in the corner, away from everyone. The doula arrived, the second midwife Martine arrived.

"I can't do it, I just can't." I was moaning to myself. It hurt like a motherfucker and there was no way I was going to make it.

Martine said, "Yes, you can, you can."

Karen said, "It's happening. You don't really have a choice Christen."

They were playing good cop bad cop.

"ARRRRGGGHH! Oh, god, I feel like I'm going to throw up and take a shit all at the same time."

Karen said, "That's not shit, that's the baby. You can push, when you feel the contractions."

Martine said, "If you feel like pushing, just go ahead."

"ARRRRGGGHH! O, help me...help me..."

Karen said, "The only way we can help you is if you start pushing."

"You fucking push. I'm not pushing. It hurts." I couldn't believe they were going to make me do this.

Karen reached around and checked the baby's heartbeat with the heart monitor thingy, the Doppler. She roamed my belly under water to find it.

I was still pissed off, but suddenly worried. "Is it okay, is the baby okay?"

It made me worried every time she checked the heart

[*"I was spiraling up, up, up towards the white-out white noise of orgasm and then—a nurse rushed in and said, "The baby's heartbeat is rising!""*

rate. She did it a lot. Every time I felt like I was doing something wrong. That the next time she was going to say, "The heart rates going down, we going to the hospital, stat! Get out the knives we're gonna have to cut her open right here, stat!"

I was about to have an anxiety attack in the middle of my labor and said, "I feel like this is bringing out all of my deep seated neuroses."

"How so?" Martine said in a gentle voice. She was still the good cop; I moved to her side of the pool.

"I can't do it, I'm not good enough, everyone else would be doing this better than me, I'm too fucked up..."

Ken moved in close in close and whispered in my ear, "You are wonderful, baby. I love you. You can do it."

Oh, Ken. Yes, my husband. And where had he been this whole time? Rubbing my back, applying pressure to my hips or rubbing



"They were all celebratory but I was muffled inside, happy, calm, tired. My soul was soundproof."

my face with a washcloth soaked in ice water. Or taking care of Felix, playing with him, making sure he was okay, getting him a Diego DVD after he bored of his websites. Ken didn't rest for a minute.

I looked at him. I was worried that we'll never get over our issues--money, time, art, work.

"Are we going to be okay?" I asked.

He knew what I meant. Are we going to make it, not get divorced, will we be okay with two kids, will you still love me like you used to at the beginning?

"We are going to be fine," he reassured me.

"Are you sure?" I am going to die O my god I am having another baby and then next year he'll leave me—

"I'm sure." His voice was soft and strong and I believed him.

"Tell me you love me," I begged him.

"I love you. I love you."

Then Martine said, "Kiss! Kiss, you guys. Come on, lots of tongue."

I knew she was trying to get a little sex going because of it helping labor and my labor was getting a little stuck and slowing down and I know I had this idea that sex during labor would be a good idea but—really? Really? Now?!?!? I didn't feel like kissing, I wished I did, I knew this process was sexual, but fucked up sexual.

We kissed a little, a little tongue, neither of us into it. Another contraction thankfully interrupted us. "ARRRRGGGHH!"

"Ok, maybe it's time for you to try squatting."

"ARRRRGGGHH!"

Karen leaned in, her voice low, trying to switch roles, "Okay maybe you should check and see where you are. Just put your fingers inside—"

"I'm not putting my fingers in there! You put your fingers in there!"

Karen reached into the pool with her gloves on, and put her fingers in my vagina, "She's right there, Christen, you can feel her. Your daughter is right there."

"Oh how sweet—eet, she's right there," I said with a fake smile.

I took a well-timed pause. "Fucking Bitch!" They laughed.

"Just wait til she's 18," Martine said, as if she were a vaudeville star.

"ARRRRGGGHH! O, god, o god, o god." I was pushing and holding in at the same time, which until then, I hadn't known was possible.

"You're doing it, you're doing it, you're doing it!" Now Karen's the cheerleader. I couldn't take it anymore.

"Fuck you!!! FUCK YOU ALL!"

Suddenly I noticed the doula. She was wearing a T shirt with a picture of a kangaroo that said "Australia" on it. You're wearing an Australia T-shirt because my husband is Australian? You think it's cute to dress up for my fucking birth, bitch?

Now I was out of the tub, a roving Neanderthal, they wanted me back in, but I couldn't. I squatted, I tried a million positions. At one point I was on my side on the floor and I wanted the Australian T-shirted doula to put my leg on her shoulder so I could rest and have it feel supported between contractions. She kept holding my leg in her hands. I kicked. I started to really kick. I didn't care if I hurt her. I was like a horse. "Shoulder!" I shouted. "Ankle, Shoulder, Ankle!" She didn't understand me at all. We had no symbiotic relationship. The midwives understood me and told her what to do.

Then I was exhausted. It had been hours, I started moaning, "I'm so angry, why am I so angry?"

Perhaps this wasn't the time to start psychoanalyzing myself.

They got me half sitting on my bed and really working. The midwives were pushing on my feet to give me leverage for my back pain. I wanted Felix's door to be closed but he wanted it to be a little open. The lights were bright in the bedroom, instead of dim like in the dining room. I was becoming more effective. I was ready. I pushed tentatively at first; then I knew I could take it.

I roared. They could see the baby's head. Karen said, "Wow. The membranes are there. She's in the sac!"

Ken said, "What?"

"See there, that's the membranes."

Ken, "Yea!"

I felt the same as when Felix was born, so WHAT if you can see the head, I KNOW I'm having a fucking baby!

I reached down only because I could feel the front of my labia stretched or caught and I was worried it might tear. Then Karen said, "Take your hand away, you are holding the baby in!"

When it was the ring of fire Karen told me to stop pushing.

Stop pushing! What the fuck! I was flailing, head thrashing back and forth, mouth open, unbelieving.

I knew she wanted me to stop because she didn't want me to tear but Fuck! She gave me the go ahead to start pushing again. I was a lion again, a few more pushes, the head came out and then popped back in.

Karen cupped her hand over my vagina and said, "Push into my hand" and when the head was out I expected the wiggle of the body to come out like with Felix but then they told me to push again. What the fuck! I had to push twice more for the shoulders and a final push for the body. I couldn't believe how angry I was.

Then they put her on my belly. She's so big and pink and healthy. Anger to love in neutrino-time, billionths of a second. Suddenly I was so happy.

"Born in the caul and on a full moon!!!!" Martine

cheered. They were all celebratory but I was muffled inside, happy, calm, tired. My soul was soundproof.

We guessed 7 and half pounds but they said 8.6. Hello baby! We eventually named her Vera. For truth.

My favorite photo from afterwards shows Ken and I looking at each other, eyebrows raised, happy, expectant, questioning.

I just held her and tried to get her to latch. "It's okay, you don't have to do anything you don't want to do." That was the first real thing I said to her, and it wasn't even true. I wished it were true. Maybe it was a reaction to me being so out of control, or telling her right away at her birth that she would never be raped, or sexually misused, or any of those things that I associate with being particularly female. I want her to not have that in her life. I'd read that birth can bring up all sorts of emotions, especially for women with any type of sexual trauma in their past.

The doula made me pasta and I liked her again. She said, "Women that choose home births are either determined to have everything very natural or very controlling." I guess I'm a bit of both.

Everyone left around 1 am. We couldn't believe they were going to leave us alone with this brand new baby. As they walked out the door I wanted to say, "We'll pay you a thousand dollars just to sleep on the couch!"

That night, I only slept for 45 minutes. I was afraid of smothering her. I was shocked that we had had a homebirth, a delayed reaction of fear: something could have gone wrong! As if I was retroactively trying to protect the baby from myself. I kept thinking about how angry I was.

I called my therapist a week later. She said that all births are a ripping open. The only way to be okay with that is to be okay with being ripped open. Most people are not okay with that. That anger is primitive, protective. That makes sense. But I think it might have been more about acceptance of events beyond my reach. That baby was coming and there was nothing I could do about it.

I thought that by having a home birth I could control it. I mean, I bought the tub and the birth kit; I arranged everything down to the straws I was going to drink through and the hole-y underwear I was going to wear the next day. I think that feeling of doing everything made me forget that the pain of the actual birth was going to be diabolical.

Homebirth was supposed to be a freedom from the external control of birth: free from being tethered to a hospital bed, free from doctors not willing to trust my body, free from unnecessary medicine and free from that chance of an unnecessary Caesarean. But homebirth could not free me from my own internal restraints. During Felix's birth at the hospital I had pitocin and no painkillers: the pain was so intense and sudden that I was in shock, I couldn't think. This time I was aware of everything and it felt like I was face to face with myself: all of my self loathing and neurosis was right there with me. I could not step away from that nor in retrospect would I have wanted to.

It certainly wasn't the Zen birth I imagined, but it was still kind of great. I mean considering that I had to push an 8 and half pound baby out of my cunt.

The best thing about the home birth was the afterwards. For Felix, Mommy didn't go away for a few days and then come home with a baby. He was in the next room; he was a part of it. We were just home, living our lives: reading a friend's new graphic memoir, eating big Argentinian steaks in our big bed, Ken drinking Earl Grey and me drinking Mother's Milk tea, breastfeeding, listening to Miles Davis, watching the Daily Show on one laptop and putting the baby's picture up on Facebook on another, cuddling, napping, reading to Felix, figuring out how to grow our family. We were all out of control and falling in love. ●

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Natural Fertility — a personal journey

VIRGINIA MADDOCK

At the time of writing this, I am slightly overdue to give birth to a baby that was planned, conceived and grown on a natural fertility program. Fertility was not a known issue for me or my partner, but the decision was made to undertake the program to dramatically increase our chances of a healthy baby, due to a genetic disorder that I carry.

Here is my story...

When my mother was pregnant with me, she was told she would probably miscarry due to her heavy bleeding throughout the pregnancy. She also suffered terribly with nausea and so was given a drug called Debendox (or Bendectin) which was later taken off the market due to birth defects.

I was born with some mild deformities that include half of both thumbnails being absent, arms which cannot fully straighten at the elbow and quite a widow's peak hairline. Despite seeing numerous specialists for different things during childhood, nobody ever diagnosed the condition and I lived with what I thought was a totally isolated deformity. There has never been a proven link to what my mother took, but I have always been certain that it was the cause.

In September of 2006, I injured my knee bike riding, which put me on crutches for a few days. I went and got an X-ray and MRI but the radiologist didn't pick up anything unusual. So I made the life-changing decision to send them off to my brother-in-law, Paul, who is a sports physician.

A few days later, on the evening of 22 September 2006, my life changed forever, with a phonecall from my sister, Caroline. She asked, "Are you sitting down?" I replied, "Why, do I need to be?" and she advised that I should. She then told me the news that I probably have a condition called Nail Patella Syndrome.

Apparently, Paul noticed from my knee X-rays and MRI, that my patella (or knee cap) was hypoplastic, or slightly underformed. He showed them to a fellow colleague and mentioned my other symptoms, and his colleague said that he vaguely remembered something he studied at uni called Nail Patella Syndrome. They looked it up and it documented all my own symptoms—the nails, the arms, the hairline and the kneecaps. When I looked it up on the internet myself, I found out there were other possible associated problems which include kidney problems and glaucoma, and more serious skeletal and joint problems, which thankfully I do not have. The condition affects 1 in 50,000 people worldwide.

I had always assumed that, due to my healthy lifestyle and the hopefully more dominant genes of my partner, my children would not suffer the same fate as I. But the worst thing I found out was that I had a 50% chance of passing this on to my children, because it is a dominant genetic condition. This is what bothered me most of all!

From that day on, I got more testing (including X-rays to show my iliac spikes—little bony

protrusions on my pelvic girdle that is characteristic of the disease) and a confirmed diagnosis from a genetic counsellor at RPA hospital.

Underneath I felt relief to find out my condition had a name and that other people in the world shared the very same condition, and relief that I had a comparatively mild form of it. But I found out that if my future child did inherit this disease, there were no guarantees that they would not suffer a more serious case than I did.

Soon afterwards I discovered that one way of ensuring I did not pass this on to my children, was to undergo IVF and PGD (pre-implantation genetic diagnosis), in which they test the three day old fertilised eggs for the disease and only implant the healthy embryos. I was determined that this was going to be what I did, despite the high price tag.

But before I could attempt this, I had to get my DNA tested in the USA to find the genetic mutation so that they knew exactly what they were testing the embryos for, but there was a 15% chance that they wouldn't be able to locate the mutation in my DNA. I happened to be one of those 15% and my DNA test came back negative.

So my other option was to go natural and undertake a natural fertility preconception health program for me and my partner, Dan. At first I was really upset that the IVF option of a guaranteed genetically healthy baby was taken away from me, but I was soon relieved that I was taking the more natural and healthier path, which better suited my beliefs and lifestyle.

The aim of natural fertility is to ensure that both our bodies are at super optimal health, to try and increase our chances of producing a healthy baby in which the genetically mutated genes do not switch on and become expressed.

Being a herbalist and nutritionist myself, I knew all about the program and had successfully guided others through it, but decided to see another practitioner so as to remain objective, and I knew Dan and I would be stricter if taking guidance from an outsider.

It is a little known fact that despite a woman's lifetime supply of eggs being produced before birth, the one that ovulates is susceptible to genetic damage for 100 days beforehand, and it takes 116 days for a sperm to form, develop and be stored, ready for ejaculation. So this length of time is also a vulnerable period for the sperm, which is the other half of a baby's DNA.

So the program, which includes a healthy organic diet and lifestyle, nutritional supplements and herbal medicines to help with detoxification, regulate hormones and boost fertility, is undertaken for a minimum length of four months to ensure the best possible chance for optimal health of egg and sperm, and thus healthy genetics!

Studies have shown that this program not only boosts fertility, but dramatically decreases the risks of miscarriages, stillbirths and a host of health problems including malformations. I was also very enthusiastic and positive after reading up on epigenetics—the science of a healthy environment having a bigger influence on gene expression than genetics alone. (Bruce Lipton's book, *The Biology of Belief*, goes into this in more detail.)

After going through all the required tests to see if there were any potential problems, it was found through hair mineral analysis that Dan had very high levels of mercury and arsenic, which could negatively affect the DNA of his sperm, and hence the overall health of the baby.

So he had his dental amalgam filling safely removed and had to undergo chelation therapy which involved him taking some sulphur based pills for three days every two weeks, followed by urine testing to see what his levels were. Due to the difficulty of removing mercury from the body (especially for men as it's excretion is inhibited by testosterone, yet promoted by oestrogen), this lasted for four

months, which was much longer than we anticipated. At the same time he was also taking extra minerals and using other detoxification therapies such as detox foot patches which he wore at night. Once we were happy with his levels, we had to wait a further four months so that whatever toxicity was excreted did not affect his sperm.

Meanwhile I had also been taking herbs and lots of supplements, which extended my short cycle of about 24 days to 29 (with less period pain), and I had been religiously taking my temperature every morning to chart my cycle and pinpoint my ovulation.

Finally, after about nine months of waiting and preparing, it was time to get down to the fun stuff of trying to conceive.

Our first month was March of 2008. I had built up in my mind for so long that this was going to be such a special and romantic occasion for making this baby. However when the time for ovulation occurred, my loving partner, after a particularly stressful day at work, fell way short of my high expectations in the romance department, which made me go through the motions in a somewhat resentful mood. The next few days, I came down with a nasty bout of thrush.

I put this down to my body, being so used to using condoms for almost five years, freaking out at having this unfamiliar substance injected into my nether regions. Then when I saw my acupuncturist, she asked me if I had been angry when I had sex, to which I said that I had. She said this can cause thrush due to 'liver heat', which made perfect sense. Fortunately, I did not conceive that month in those less than ideal conditions!

The following month was April and according to my calculations, if I had conceived then, I would've been due dangerously close to Christmas Day. Having my own birthday within two weeks of Christmas, I did not

“We moved house during that month, which I had heard from a couple of friends was a great stimulus for conceiving, as it is a new beginning to encourage the new little soul to incarnate.”

wish this upon my child, so the control freak in me dictated to skip trying that month, (much to Dan's dismay at having to undergo another month of no alcohol!). We moved house during that month, which I had heard from a couple of friends was a great stimulus for conceiving, as it is a new beginning to encourage the new little soul to incarnate.

When we were nicely settled in our new home where I also planned to birth our baby, and May's ovulation timing approached, I was sure I felt the egg release once on a Friday night and again on the Sunday night. So Dan and I had a busy, sexy weekend. Fortunately this time around, trying to conceive with Dan was everything I had hoped it would be!

Then, 13 days later, the day before my period was due, I took the test and found out I was pregnant, after only our second try.

Now, 39 weeks after conception, after a very healthy and trouble-free pregnancy, here I am, waiting to birth this longed for and hopefully perfectly healthy baby. I had chosen to have no ultrasound scans to further reduce any kind of risk from the exposure, and also because I trust that we have done absolutely everything in our power to ensure its good health.

So only time will tell. And we don't have long wait to find out. . . ●

[See Virginia's birth story on page 28–Eds]

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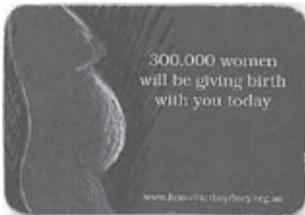
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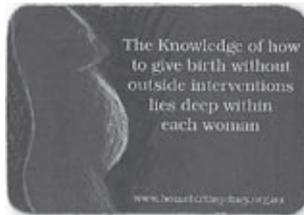
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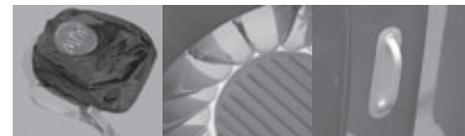
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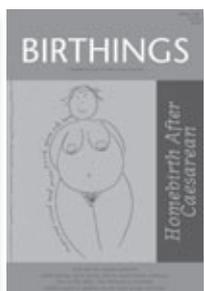
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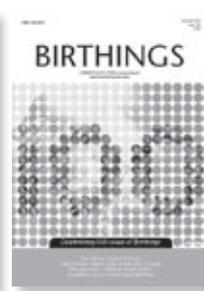
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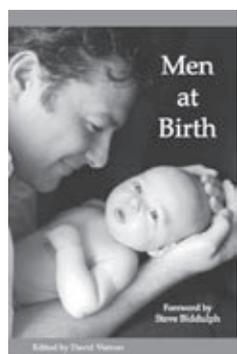
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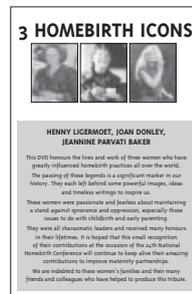
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Haile's Birth Story

FELICITY GIBBONS

Felicity and Paul welcome their new son with laughter, joy and his big sister's favourite puzzle.

Haile's due date was Thursday 8 May

2008, but I always felt he was going to arrive early, and as I got closer to the date I felt more certain of this. With a week to go, each day I woke surprised that I had gone another day.

I assumed that I would, once again, have a baby in the middle of the night. I couldn't imagine having contractions in the middle of the day, although this time I was thinking what would be best for my toddler, Maya, now 2 years and 5 months. I thought a night labour with a birth for the morning when she woke would be nice.

So six days before my baby was due I had a mammoth day of nesting, my mother-in-law was taking care of Maya that day and I frantically did a few loads of washing, including the sheets, and went shopping to buy some clothes for the baby as I had realised that I had no small winter baby clothes, and also to do the grocery shopping.

I felt the baby's arrival was imminent and called Paul to say that he should consider each day at work his last for two weeks. He sent me a text a short time later saying, "I'm ready and excited. So ready when you are! XO!"

I was fairly exhausted by the afternoon. I had my monthly book club meeting on that night which I didn't want to miss as I knew it would be my last for a few months and I

really enjoyed the book. So off I went to book club, which takes me 45 minutes to drive to. I left book club about 10:30 pm and as I said goodbye to the other women we talked about the impending birth and my hopes for the birth, little did we all know that it would be a matter of hours later when my labour started.

After a few hours sleep I was woken with my waters breaking at 4 am. I jumped out of bed to save the mattress from getting ruined and called out for Paul to get me towel. But no response... Our room is pitch black at night and there is often some bed swapping going on. Tonight, Maya had got a cold in the few hours I was out and Paul was spending his time cuddling her and wiping her nose.

Once my waters were under control in the bathroom with a towel I went into Maya's room to let Paul know the baby was on its way. Maya woke too so we all went back to our bed and here I lay with Maya on one side, my baby moving inside me and Paul on the other side, starting to have contractions. It was such a nice reminder of what labour and contractions are all about; to lie in bed with my most treasured and have contractions was beautiful.

I had called my mum to let her know my waters had broken and to be on standby. She was three hours north and was to be Maya's support person, so she needed a bit of extra time.



After about 30 minutes of contractions and some visualizing of waves, I needed to get moving during the contractions and Maya was tossing and turning and I wanted her to get some more sleep before the baby arrived. So I went into her bed and got in the yoga resting position and rocked a little during the contractions.

I looked up my old antenatal class book to see what it had to say about waters breaking and figured I could have a day to go before contractions start so was surprised when they started after only 30 minutes. I called Betty, our midwife, to let her know but to not come around yet. I had hoped to not call her until the morning and it was 4:30 am now.

By 5 am I called Betty back and told her the contractions were two minutes apart. I had been trying to time them but just couldn't remember each time a contraction came what the last time was, and eventually Paul woke and helped me to remember how far apart they were. Betty thought I'd said they were 10 minutes apart on the last phone call and was hesitant about coming over as she felt I might feel pressured by her presence—no they were two minutes apart. Calmly, she said, "well, that's a bit different". She was heading over.

Now Paul and I were up and awake, I went to the lounge room and made myself comfortable leaning over a couch with my knees on the floor. I started to groan during the contractions. I think I was visualising waves again.

Paul started to set up the pool. He had a bit of trouble with getting the taps sorted and was

stressing a little, but I figured he'd work it out, it wasn't my stress.

Betty arrived at 6 am. She gave me a cuddle, we had a chat but then stopped for the contraction. She asked if they had been this long each contraction. I had no idea. I think she was perhaps a little surprised how far along I was.

By this stage, I was now leaning over the couch with cushions under my knees and rocking and moaning during the contractions. I was worried that the baby was posterior as Betty had mentioned it might be on the phone, since I had no contraction before my waters broke. She reassured me it wasn't, based on the position I was in and the noises I was making. Betty thought perhaps my waters broke as a sign to call my mum to give her enough notice to get here. I cried and gave Betty a hug.

Betty is an excellent hugger and this was one of the many times that I have cried on her shoulder, not only through this pregnancy, but also the last one, when Maya was recently sick and in hospital and in the pre-natal appointments. She allows me the chance to let go, to be me, to breathe, to relax, to recognise that I was about to have this baby.

Maya then woke at 6:40 am and came and joined us in the lounge room. She was a little grumpy from having a bad night's rest and her nose that was constantly running. Paul was trying to keep her happy whilst still filling the pool. We quickly decided to call my sister, Steph, as she was the back-up plan for Maya's support.

I called her, she answered with a disgruntled, "It's 7 am you know." This quickly changed when she found out I was in labour. She arrived promptly an hour later.

I was just in my own zone by this stage. Paul, Betty and Maya did whatever they had to do with the pool and also help me at the same time. I now wanted to be massaged on my lower back for each contraction, so they would take turns in that.

I must admit I preferred Betty's massage. She knew the exact spot at the base of my spine and the right amount of pressure to apply. I think Paul had his mind being torn between the pool, Maya and me. But I was fine as we had Betty too.

By the time my sister had arrived at 8 am, things had started to heat up, my groaning naturally got louder with the intensity of the contractions and I now wanted to get moving a bit more, leaning over the couch was no longer good enough.

I stood in the middle of the lounge room and said "hold me" for each contraction, and either Betty or Paul would massage my back at the same time.

Maya was fine with the whole experience, she was just taking her cues from Paul and Betty. They seemed to be calm—not worried about Mummy moaning and groaning—and therefore so was Maya. We had talked a lot about having the baby and read a few children's homebirth books, so she was aware of what was going on. She gave me energy drinks and stroked my head just like her daddy. She is a very empathetic little girl so it was



lovely to have her around caring for me.

At one stage I was having a contraction, standing in the middle of the lounge room leaning over Paul and Maya went and got her favourite puzzle and put it in between us on the floor, tipped it over and said “cubby house—Maya do puzzle in cubby house”. It was very sweet.

At one point I walked around in a circle trying to figure out what position to go into, and my moaning changed, it became deeper and I kept saying, “I remember now”, it wasn’t a bad memory but I just remembered the sound I made when giving birth. I asked—well, told—Betty that this must be transition, as I was just not comfortable any more and was starting to lose focus.

I found with this labour that it was just so short, that I didn’t have the time to do the meditation that I did last time. At first when I was having contractions in the bed I was imaging being on a wave but that didn’t last too long. I guess I was in a meditative state but it just came without thinking too much about it this time. I was definitely in my birthing zone.

Betty asked if I’d like to hop into the pool and I just didn’t know—or more couldn’t be bothered to take my clothes off—so I asked Betty if she could do that.

As soon as I got in I started to push, the moan changed and I’m sure got louder. I feel so good making so much noise. I only pushed for about 20 minutes this time, compared to two hours with Maya. Betty even suggested at one point that I didn’t need to push so hard, that I could have a rest, so I slowed the intensity of

the push.

I was on my knees leaning on the side of the pool, with Paul’s face against mine and Maya popping her head up in between the two of us. I think Maya looked a little concerned when my moans became louder but she just checked it was ok with her daddy and then accepted it.

I was giving a commentary of what was happening, “here it comes”, “stinging”, and I asked if someone was ready to catch. Paul said Betty was out in the other room, I became quickly agitated as the baby was going to come out any second and I wanted Betty there to catch as Paul was up at my face. Then I was told she was just on the phone—I panicked as I thought there was something wrong with the labour and she was calling Jan (another midwife) or someone for help or advice. I had no reason to think anything was wrong but thought that would be the only reason Betty was on the phone. Betty came in moments later and I snapped, “Who were you talking to?” She just had to call home to cancel some plans for her day.

And then I gave a mighty push and the baby’s head came out and for the next push Betty suggested that I put my hands between my legs and catch the baby. She gave it a little push to make sure he went in front of me not behind and I pulled him out and into my arms. It was delightful, my most treasured moment of this birth. My eyes were closed and I can still feel him now, his wrinkly skin over his head, his arms and legs stretched out searching for his mummy like a little slippery frog. I hadn’t hoped to catch him but I’m now so glad I did.

And after such a short labour I wasn’t exhausted or in shock like I was with Maya, I was laughing with joy, I was just so ecstatic to have a baby.

And almost immediately I wanted to have a look in between his tightly closed legs and see what we had—a boy, little Haile Ashwin!

My sister was sobbing at the sight of seeing her first birth. Maya was so excited and happy and so was Paul, who shed a tear. I don’t think I cried. I was too excited to cry.

My mum arrived about 15 minutes after I gave birth, which I think was for the better, as this meant my back-up, Steph, got to be there and Mum ended up staying for the day and helping with Maya and food.

I stayed in the pool for about 30 minutes with Haile in my arms. Maya kept touching and stroking him and when I thought I might give him the boob, I gently pulled him a little closer and he naturally started to suck. Maya thought we might need some help so she grabbed my boob and put it in Haile’s mouth. She’s 2½ so she knows what you’re supposed to do!

After the feed, my afterpains continued and I was keen to birth the placenta. I was happy to get it out.

Paul now had his chance to hold our little boy. And of course Maya couldn’t wait to have her first cuddle.

We finally drank the champagne we bought for Maya’s birth and we ate. I was starving.

Haile’s birth has reconfirmed my love of having babies. ●



Darcy's Birth Story

ASHLEIGH McHUGH

I was 20 years old, in my final year of the Bachelor of Nursing course and keen to continue studying midwifery the following year, when I discovered I was pregnant. My relationship with my partner broke down shortly after and he chose not to have anything to do with us. Luckily, I was living at home with my parents and brother, all of whom were tremendously supportive and excited about the new arrival.

I was eager to investigate my birthing options, but living in a rural community it seemed a hospital birth was my only option until a friend of mine told me about a local private midwife, Victoria Jones. I contacted her soon after and we discussed my birthing options. I really wanted a waterbirth but Victoria informed me that the local hospital did not have a policy for waterbirths and that therefore they didn't allow it. I was extremely disappointed until Victoria explained that she does homebirths. In all honesty, I was hesitant at first after finding out that independent midwives do not have indemnity insurance, however after our initial meeting I was positive that a waterbirth at home was for me. I knew at this point that it was the best start I could give my baby—a smooth transition into the world.

I chose to find out what I was having and was delighted to know I was expecting a boy. I remained very healthy throughout my pregnancy and in the weeks preceding his birth I prepared my body using raspberry leaf tea and the Epi-no which is a device that stretches the perineum. In addition, the week before his birth I had used evening primrose oil on the cervix to soften and prepare it—apparently this worked!

So it was three weeks after completing my university course and 11 days before my due date when my little boy decided to arrive. It was Friday 31 October 2008 and I was supposed to go in to help my mum at her coffee shop. When I woke up at about 9:00 am, I had initially thought I had wet myself and ignored the idea that it might have been my waters as we certainly weren't expecting an early baby. I was still enjoying being pregnant and assumed I would go over my due date.

I sat at the breakfast table with Mum, my brother James and his girlfriend Elle, not mentioning anything to them. However, a couple of bites into my weetbix I felt the need to go to the toilet again, followed by a trickle down my leg as I ran up the hallway. Sitting on the toilet and realising the reality of what was starting to happen, I called Mum from the kitchen and told her I wouldn't be able to go into work. Her confusion and concern was quickly overtaken by excitement as I told her we would have a baby sometime soon.

There was a buzz of anticipation and enthusiasm by everyone, but I remained calm and relaxed as I expected this to be a long and lengthy process, presuming my baby would arrive the next day. For this reason I encouraged Mum to go to work but she refused to go as she wanted to stay with me for the early part of labour. We rang Victoria and although I didn't need her to come around, she said she would drop in on her way out to lunch to listen to the baby's heart rate and see how I was going.

James and Elle went out for the day so that I had more privacy and Mum and I relaxed at the table as I sorted through pregnancy photos and wrote a list of things for Dad to bring home that afternoon—all the essentials like phone credit, a frozen coke and non-alcoholic champagne to celebrate with after the baby's arrival. When Victoria arrived at 11:00 am, I was only experiencing mild cramping as I had for the few weeks beforehand. We confirmed with the amnicator that I was leaking amniotic fluid so there was no turning back. The baby's heart rate was great and it was at this time when I started to feel the discomfort intensify. Although I didn't mention anything, Victoria had said to mum that I looked scared—this was probably the point where I realised that I was actually going into labour and had a long journey ahead of me.

Once Victoria left for lunch, I set up in front of a music DVD and Mum began making pikelets because we were predicting a long wait. However, only a couple of songs later I was rocking on the fit ball on my bed and noticed a pattern of contractions every eight to ten minutes. I made a conscious decision to remain forward facing and upright as Victoria's palpation found that the baby was slightly lateral and I surely didn't want him to turn posterior. Mum and I began setting up our labour equipment in the wide hallway beside the bathroom where I had planned to have the birthing pool. We used my labour aromatherapy blend which included clary sage and myrrh to stimulate and enhance contractions. I pulled out my birthing affirmations and read one: "I welcome my labour as the perfect one for me and my baby." Needless to say, I never had a chance to look at any more.

After everything was in order, I returned to the lounge room floor, swaying and rocking on the ball with the contractions as they increased



in intensity after having walked around. It was around 1:00 pm and I was at the stage where I needed the TENS machine but unfortunately I was experiencing all my discomfort in the front, so the TENS didn't help. Mum prepared hot nappies for my tummy which were an incredible relief. I still didn't want to call Victoria as I was sure the birth was a long way off—I was expecting him to arrive overnight or the next day. Mum was an unbelievable support as she knew just what I wanted. She had everything ready and was present for every contraction, leaving only to grab things that I needed.

By 2:00 pm the contractions were about five minutes apart and becoming stronger. Mum wanted to call Victoria but I insisted on waiting. However, after a couple of contractions I changed my mind. I thought about how I would judge the situation if I were the midwife and considering I was unable to speak during contractions, swaying, rocking and becoming vocal, I thought it would be best for Victoria to come around, even just to observe me and decide whether she should stay. As I began to fade away into focusing on my relaxation, Mum called Dad, inflated and began filling the birth pool. I had previously felt it would be bad luck to do this before I was sure that I was past the 'half way point', but fortunately, Mum began doing this without me realising.

Victoria and Dad arrived simultaneously at 3:00 pm. Dad slipped into the background and I hardly noticed his presence as he quietly assisted behind the scenes. Victoria observed a few contractions and was in absolute shock that I was the same person she had seen four hours earlier. She suggested I hop into the birthing pool but I didn't want to until she had checked that I was at least 5cm dilated to prevent slowing the labour. I was apprehensive about this because I didn't want to be disappointed if I was not progressing, however

Victoria insisted that I was probably further along than I thought. On examination she declared I was already 7cm! I loved those words and felt a sense of achievement and relief. I just about jumped up and dove into the pool but as soon as I was upright and on the toilet I felt a deep, intense contraction that almost scared me. Victoria calmed me and reassured me that it was just gravity working and that the pool would help. She was right—I got in the pool about 3:30 pm and it was instant relief. I had stripped naked, become uninhibited and didn't notice the fuss and commotion that was happening around me. Dad prepared the video camera in the corner and Mum stayed with me through the contractions while Victoria set up her equipment. James arrived home and sneaked up the hallway, hiding in his room until after the birth.

My time in the pool seemed to flash by in an instant. Between contractions I was still, hands unclenched, jaw relaxed and body unbelievably motionless. There was not a ripple in the water and the room remained silent and almost tranquil. During contractions was a different story—I was thrashing about in the pool like a dying fish but looked more like a crazy whale. I moaned and groaned from areas of my lungs I didn't know existed. They were deep primal noises that were powerful and loud. After an hour in the pool my moans became more productive and Victoria asked if I had the urge to push. I didn't feel it initially and it wasn't until after a few contractions later that we realised I had been pushing, almost involuntarily, for some time. It was about 20 minutes of this pushing on my knees, leaning over the pool holding Mum's hand, when I touched between my legs and felt his head. I asked Victoria to sit behind me and guide my pushing as I couldn't see for myself. During this last stage it was a relief to push through the contractions and feel the progress. Mum

recalled that although I was holding her hands I was not squeezing them—all my effort was focused on birthing my baby.

I listened intently to Victoria's guidance and after a few pushes, his head was out followed by his vernix covered body. He was passed through my legs and I sat back, bringing him onto my chest. Darcy James Oliver McHugh was born into water at 5:04 pm with his proud grandparents looking on. We enjoyed long moments of cuddles, bonding and exhaustion as Darcy experienced his calm transition into the world. He was so relaxed that he didn't cry, just a small whimper and back to sleep. Given that he was also covered in vernix and his skin tone was difficult to see, but slightly blue, Victoria gave him some oxygen, which improved his colour. He still didn't cry, but was breathing well and just happy to be in the warm arms of his mummy. We wiped the vernix from his eyes, he gazed at me and we soaked each other in. It was the most intense emotion I had ever felt but couldn't and still can't find the right words for it.

After a few contractions, the placenta came away and was delivered into the water—still attached to Darcy. I cut his cord, signifying his entrance to the world as his own little person. Following this we had a quick breastfeed and shared a shower together to get rid of the excess vernix.

Nanny, Poppy and Uncle James then shared cuddles with the newest addition to our family and we celebrated his birth day with champagne and pikelets in bed. My labour and birth really was perfect—I never once wanted pharmacological pain relief as I viewed my contractions as necessary for my baby's birth—they were an integral part of the transition into motherhood and I could only accept the pain rather than fear it. I couldn't have done it without my incredible parents and amazing midwife, Victoria. ●



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

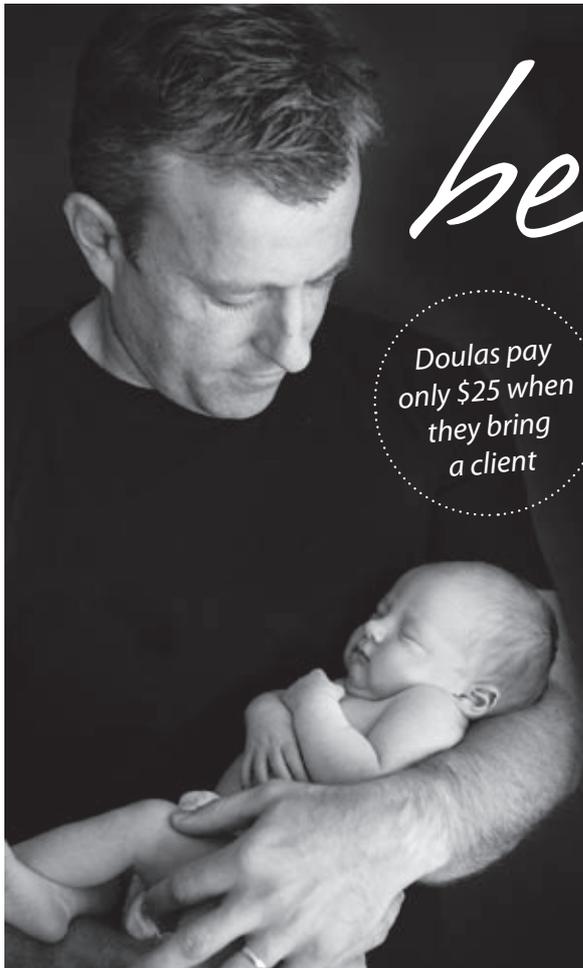
Contact me jane.collings@bigpond.com if you would like to receive my seasonal newsletter.

To book for a workshop or for further information email me or phone 0408035808

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

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





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The Birth of Jetsun Bodhi

VIRGINIA MADDOCK

Saturday 7th February 2008

Knowing that I was approaching the two week overdue mark, I suggested to Dan earlier that day that we should go out for dinner as it may be our last together alone for a long while, and I would eat a hot curry to see if it helped to start my labour. Then later I changed my mind as I knew it was forecast to be another very hot day the next day and I didn't particularly want to labour in the heat (and I was looking forward to going to the homebirth picnic which was on that day). So I decided we would go the next night as there was going to be a cool change for Monday, a much nicer temperature for birthing!

Dan and I went to bed at around 11pm and he gave me some perineal massage (and an orgasm) to see if it might get things going. I started to feel some Braxton Hicks then went to the toilet and saw that I was getting the bloody show. It didn't take long to realise that these were more than just Braxton Hicks, they were the real deal.

I left Dan in the room to get some sleep in preparation and soon after he called out "Are you sure this is the real thing or a false start?" I replied that I am sure this is it and told him to try and get some sleep because it could be all night or a few days before the serious business of birthing began. I should've told him it was a false start because he told me in the morning he didn't get any sleep from the excitement.

Sunday 8th February 2008

I busied myself for a few hours with preparations like making some Labourade (which I didn't even like the taste of when I tried to drink it later) and put some music on my mp3 player which I thought I might like to listen to later on. Then I lay down on the couch to try and get some sleep in between contractions, listening to my Hologync meditation CD (with the sounds of chimes and heavy rain) and the Gyuto Buddhist monk CD (with the sounds of them chanting a healing ceremony). I used a TENS machine on my lower back which was absolutely gold for getting



straight to the source of the pain during contractions, as well as a heat pack on my lower belly while I breathed slowly and calmly, as taught in my Calmbirth classes.

Dan got up at about 5am and came out to the loungeroom, so I got up too and then things started to get more intense as I remained upright. I texted my midwife Jacqui to give her an update, then gave her a call at 7am to make sure she was at the ready. I was really stoked that despite my baby facing posterior for the last four weeks, he must've turned during the night and I didn't get any of the signs of a posterior back labour! Throughout my labour I concentrated as best I could on keeping every muscle in my body as relaxed as possible while Dan assisted me with rubbing my back, giving me drinks and supporting me in different positions.

At about 10am Dan called Jacqui again when I was at an intense bit and feeling emotional and teary, which I am guessing was the 7cm mini-transition period.

Jacqui arrived at around 11am. I was over the intense bit and was a bit worried she would think I had been a drama queen for nothing, as the contractions had slowed down a bit when she arrived. She checked to see how dilated I was and found me to be 8cm. I felt so elated I had got so far already, as I was worried I'd be disappointed at lack of progress. She also gave me the good news that he had finally moved down lower into the pelvis, as he had been floating around and unengaged for about the last six weeks, which was a worrying sign that perhaps things wouldn't happen, and medical intervention and hospital procedures might be needed if I went too far overdue or labour didn't progress. I high-fived her and said excitedly "I'm having a homebirth!" She said she was so pleased for me as she'd started having her doubts that I would be able to, after the lack of progress in this late stage of pregnancy.

Dan started filling the birth pool and I got in. I was pleasantly surprised at how comfortable the pool was because it was blow up and very soft, unlike the hard porcelain baths I had seen in the hospital birth centres when I attended other births as a doula. Hours passed and I felt that I was handling the pain quite well. In between contractions I was quite alert and chatted with Jacqui while Dan did an awesome job of supporting me with drinks and ice cold muslins on my face and back (it was a very hot day of about 36 degrees!), and pressing his thumb into a point on my lower sacrum.

Then everything changed really quickly and I went into a really long and intense transition and all conversation with me

stopped as each wave crashed over me with little break in between. This must have gone on for about an hour or so. Despite getting teary, I never felt that I couldn't handle the pain as I remained calm and used my breathing and low moaning sounds while I lay my head on the side of the pool. I asked Dan to get me some Bauhinia flower essence which I took to help me move into second stage as I felt it was taking too long.

I then went into second stage at around 3pm. I felt inside myself for his head but as the waters hadn't broken yet, I could only feel the squishy bulging membranes, which gave me a slight urge to push as they were in front of his head. Then it gradually got more and more intense and he descended very, very slowly. I tried every position in the pool and out, and as the hours passed I thought I couldn't go on due to sheer exhaustion. We ended up going into the bedroom and tried some lunges and crouches. Jacqui did the pelvic squeeze without success as we thought he might be stuck at the shoulders, but she later felt inside and knew he wasn't. During one of the contractions my membranes ruptured and splashed all over poor Jacqui.

As he moved further down, Jacqui realised that I had a very tight band of muscle in the right side of my birth canal which just wouldn't give way around his head. I remember reading about this possible scenario in women who did yoga or other sports in the book *Gentle Birth Method* by Gowri Motha. I used to do a lot of skateboarding and this is the same side of my body that I used to push the board with my foot, so next time I plan on using her method of inserting an oil soaked gauze a few hours before perineal massage to help soften and loosen it.

I begged for Jacqui to cut me so he would get out quicker, but as his heart rate remained strong throughout she wouldn't do it because there was no emergency reason to do so (which I'm glad of now or I'd be nursing stitches!). Instead she massaged it till it gave way and I could see the top of his wrinkly head in the mirror.

For a while I was so exhausted I lay on my back on the bed with Dan holding one of my legs up. Then when I gained enough strength I got into the position that finally got him out which was crouching on the end of the bed with my bum hanging off the edge. I was instructed to push with all my might and use grunting sounds which parched my throat. I was thinking at the back of my mind that the neighbours must've been hearing it all, but apparently they didn't hear a thing! The thought also crossed my mind that I could

never attend another birth or contemplate studying midwifery, but I don't know why I thought that now.

After about 45 minutes of crowning, his head came out but I didn't even realise for a minute as I didn't hear Dan tell me. Then when I was made to realise, I was so stoked to see his squashed up little face in the mirror. In another contraction his body came sliding out with a gush of more blood and amniotic fluid at 6:08pm, after three hours of intense pushing. Dan said later that the room looked like someone had been murdered in there!

We lay him on the bed and I said "It's a boy... Hi Jetsun!" We rubbed his body for a few moments to make him breathe and Jacqui used the squeeze bag also while I said "Breathe, Jetsun!" and encouraged Dan to do likewise. Then he burst into life and cried for a good five or ten minutes. I got Dan to grab the Emergency Essence and I put some drops on Jetsun's wrist pulse points to help him overcome the shock of birth. I apologised to him that it wasn't the gentle waterbirth I had planned for him, and I certainly didn't breathe him out like I imagined I would, but his Apgar scores were 7 and 10, so that was a good outcome! (He weighed 3.95kg.)

Dan and I lay on the bed with him between us and I remembered to check his thumbnails to see if he had been born with Nail Patella Syndrome, a genetic disorder which he had a 50% chance of inheriting from me. I was greatly relieved to find that he had beautiful complete nails on all of his fingers, and I realised that all the hard work we had put in with our natural fertility programme had been a huge success. Despite the utter exhaustion, it was one of the happiest moments of my life!

After a few moments of recovery, I decided to get back into the birth pool to calm him down and birth my placenta. I cradled his head so he could face belly down, which I had learned they like much better than belly up, and he seemed to really relax in the warm water. It took a good half an hour for my placenta to come out, then Jacqui tied the cord with a gold thread I had saved especially for the occasion, and Dan cut the cord. Jetsun was free of our physical connection but our non-physical bond continues to deepen as each day passes and I am so in love with our little man!

I have been pretty sore since then but Dan has been fantastic at helping with everything from changing nappies and doing the washing to preparing my dinner. He makes such an awesome Dad and I feel so happy to have such a wonderful family!

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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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Loving Birth® was created out of Regina Power's belief that birth can be an empowering and joyful life event for families. As a certified doula, calmbirth® practitioner and Master's level counselor, Regina has felt privileged sharing her knowledge with pregnant couples. Regina's beautiful homebirth experience with her daughter Maia last year further supported her belief that calmbirth® does make a positive difference for women, their partners and most of all for babies who are seeing the world for the first time.

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Update on the Maternity Services Review

The keenly anticipated report of the Maternity Services Review was released on Saturday 21 February. We had heard rumours that our lobbying had been successful, that all your letters were not in vain, that we were on the cusp of Medicare rebates for independent homebirth and Commonwealth-supported professional indemnity insurance for midwives.

But we were let down yet again.

Yes, the report recommends increase midwifery-led care; yes, it suggests provision of Medicare funding for midwife care; and yes, it recognises that midwives require Commonwealth support to obtain professional indemnity insurance. But none of these things will be extended to midwives attending homebirths.

This is despite the fact that 53% of the individuals who sent submissions to the review had personally experienced a homebirth and were calling for the government to support their birth choices.

Why exclude homebirth? Because of the "concern" of the "professional groups" about "moves towards homebirthing" (page 4). Because the AMA and RANZCOG have succeeded in depicting homebirth as "a sensitive and controversial issue" and insisted that "the relationship between maternity health care professionals is not such as to support homebirth as a mainstream Commonwealth-funded option (at least in the short term)" (page 21).

The report does recommend a program to provide professional indemnity insurance for midwives. However it suggests that professional indemnity cover support for a Commonwealth-funded model that includes a homebirth setting "would be limited, at least in the short term. It is likely that insurers will be less inclined to provide indemnity cover for private homebirths and, if they did provide cover, the premium costs would be very high" (page 21).

So the review has not delivered any of what we had dared to hope for. But worse than that, it has actually outlined a very short term future in which homebirth becomes outlawed and unsafe.

In July 2010 midwives will move from a state-based registration system to the new National Registration and Accreditation Scheme. To be registered with the national scheme requires that midwives provide evidence of their indemnity insurance policy. So if independent midwives can't get professional indemnity insurance before the scheme is introduced, they can not be registered.

It is a criminal act to practice midwifery without being registered, thereby making it illegal for them to attend homebirths.

Where does this leave us? With an ever more urgent need for vocal consumer protest to dissuade the government from adopting the Review's recommendations (as they pertain to homebirth), and to demand a seat at the table in negotiating the terms of any Commonwealth-supported professional indemnity insurance.

The report hints that this might all be just a "short term" problem, but if homebirth is illegal by July 2010, the deadline for resolving this is very short term, so that women becoming pregnant can arrange continuous maternity care and midwives needing to run their practices can take on clients. The time for action is immediate.

We have written strongly worded letters to, and sought urgent meetings with, the Minister for Health and the Minister for the Status of Women. Committee members have also had letters printed in major daily papers, had articles printed in online opinion pages, and spoken with and been photographed by print, radio and television journalists in order to get the story in the public eye (see page following for details).

We *will* need your help, though at the time of going to press it's not yet clear exactly what form it will take – whether it's more letter-writing, or joining a public demonstration to vent your anger, signing a petition, or getting the story in front of the media. To keep abreast of the developing situation, make sure your details are current with our membership officers and read any emails we send out. You might also check our website regularly, once the new site is launched during March. If you would be interested in being available to speak to the media or you have any suggestions of media contacts, please contact Alison at alisonleemen@gmail.com to let us know.

Be assured that we will continue to speak up and make representations to ensure our rights to birth in the place of our choice with professional midwifery care.

Media Watch

This month, a special Media Watch tracking coverage of the Maternity Services Review.

2 February

The Australian ran a story "National rules threaten midwife insurance crisis", in which Barbara Vernon, executive officer of the Australian College of Midwives and panel member on the Maternity Services Review, said the federal government was looking at ways of solving the problem of scores of self-employed midwives being denied re-registration next year when the national registration scheme is introduced, due to their lack of indemnity cover. The potential solutions being examined by the government included underwriting the midwives' insurance, according to Dr Vernon. She said that women and their midwives had been left in legal limbo for too long, and they should be given the same sort of insurance lifeline offered to doctors when they faced an indemnity crisis early this decade.

21 February

The report of the Maternity Services Review was released. Coverage included the *Sydney Morning Herald* article "Midwifery reborn in birth review", featuring a photograph of midwife Sonja McGregor and client Chloe Coulthard, both HAS members, with Chloe's newborn son. Despite the picture, the article revealed that the Maternity Services Review report did not recommend Medicare for homebirth or government-backed indemnity for homebirth midwives, even though Medicare and government-backed indemnity were recommended for midwives working in collaborative team-based models.

22 February

The AMA hit out, scoring a headline in the *Sunday Age*, "Furore over midwife report as doctors go on the attack". This because Health Minister Nicola Roxon said that the report brought better maternity services "one step closer", a statement AMA President Rosanna Capolingua called "gung-ho".

25 February

A letter in the *Daily Telegraph* from Alison Leemen highlighted the back-door criminalisation of attended homebirth and called it a "radical and dangerous step". The letter itself seemed a minor press blip, but it was picked up by other media outlets, led to enquiries from the 7:30 Report and helped sustain interest in the story.

26 February

A similar letter from Alison Leemen was published in *The Age* and again noticed by journalists in other media outlets. It's important that these letters are flowing from a lot of us and that different names are seen in the media.

27 February

ABC *Unleashed* online published an article by Alison Leemen, "Homebirth ban" outlining the consequence of the Maternity Services Review report and taking issue with the farcical public consultation process that preceded it.

30 February

The Australian ran a front-page article, "Homebirths may have to be secret" featuring a photograph of and interview with HAS committee member Sarah McLean, focusing on the indemnity crisis and the consequences for women who wish to homebirth. Caroline Homer, professor of midwifery at the University of Technology Sydney and Andrew Bisits, director of obstetrics at Newcastle's John Hunter Hospital, both made comments supportive of a government-backed solution to the indemnity crisis. The article also revealed that between 2003 and 2006, the government spent \$54.39 million subsidising doctors' insurance premiums.

The continuing story

The 7:30 Report has shown interest in following this story, having made contact with several of our consumer and midwife members, and at the time of going to press has interviewed and filmed some people. Keep an eye out for this story's screening, which has not yet been slated.

Radio coverage has included 666 ABC Canberra, 2CC Canberra and 2UE Sydney.

And on Tuesday 10 March, SBS's *Insight* program is on maternity services and we expect it will feature some of our members, both consumers and midwives.

HAS in the Community

Since our last issue in December, we've all been taking a

well-earned rest. Our annual picnic, on 8 February 2008, was on a day with searingly hot forecast temperatures, despite which several families braved Jubilee Park at Glebe to socialise and celebrate homebirth.

Our community information evenings, which we had been unable to run this year because of lack of woman power, look like starting up again. Helena Mooney has joined us and is keen to provide this service, since she attended the meetings last year when pregnant with her first child and directly credits them with the fabulous birth she managed, and within a hospital setting too! Watch your inbox for details of the information evenings once Helena settles into her role.



Secretary's Report, including our AGM

SARAH MCLEAN

- It has been a hot and busy summer for the committee and our recent AGM has brought some new faces as well as a change of roles for current committee members. Please see the inside front cover for the full listing and note that we have new contacts for Assistant Coordinator, Secretary, *Birthings* Editors & Designer, Website Coordinator, Events and Memberships.
- Please also note that we desperately and urgently need a volunteer to take over the well-established, beautifully organised and extremely important Merchandising role, currently vacant. Contact anyone on the committee if you can help out.
- We also need more *Birthings* editors. Sarah is taking over as Managing Editor, but she needs section editors, line editors (proof readers) and contributing writers. Contact Sarah if you can help out.
- The committee has commissioned Melissa Baker to redesign our website and logo and so work started on that in December and is nearing completion. The web team of Leigh Holman and Jenny Carleton have done a fantastic job pulling together the copy and working closely with Melissa to get the best possible website we can!

« All the HAS Committee and some of our kids helped compile the last issue of *Birthings*, stuff it into envelopes and get it in the post to you, after the withdrawal of our corporate print sponsor.

Carol Flanagan



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Rebecca Gouldhurst

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

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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 Witherbrook 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 Witherbrook 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

MotherBirth –

birth as nature intended.

Prepare for the birth of your baby with grace & ease with an holistic, enjoyable & informative approach. As you become the guardian and nurturer of new life, my soul's focus is to be there to gently guide, support and help create a calm and loving birth experience.

I am a mother, doula, calmbirth® educator & massage therapist offering all services in the privacy of your home.

Erika Elliott:

0425 2177 88

erika@motherbirth.com.au

**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:

27 March, 24 April, 29 May

calendar



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

March		May	
Tues 10	Blue Mountains Homebirth Support Group. 10am-12pm. 22 David Street, Wentworth Falls. Cost: \$5. Bring a healthy snack to share if you get a chance; if not come anyway. All welcome. Contacts: Alicia 4759 2336 or Sarah ama.bya@gmail.com	Fri 1	Birthings Winter submissions deadline. The theme is Siblings at Birth . Send your articles, birth stories and photos to Sarah McLean at sarahmclean2092@hotmail.com. Birthings Winter advertising deadline. Contact Jenny Carleton on jen@npsydne.com.au.
Tues 17	Sutherland Shire and St. George Homebirth Group. 10am, Gunnamatta Park, Cronulla. Call Sally on 0425 751 900.	Tues 5	Blue Mountains Homebirth Support Group. 10am-12pm. 22 David Street, Wentworth Falls. Cost: \$5. Bring a healthy snack to share if you get a chance; if not come anyway. All welcome. Contacts: Alicia 4759 2336 or Sarah ama.bya@gmail.com
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.	Thurs 14	Pregnancy & Parenting Network meeting. Theme: Waterbirth. 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 24	Blue Mountains Homebirth Support Group. 10am-12pm. 22 David Street, Wentworth Falls. Cost: \$5. Bring a healthy snack to share if you get a chance; if not come anyway. All welcome. Contacts: Alicia 4759 2336 or Sarah ama.bya@gmail.com	Tues 19	Blue Mountains Homebirth Support Group. 10am-12pm. 22 David Street, Wentworth Falls. Cost: \$5. Bring a healthy snack to share if you get a chance; if not come anyway. All welcome. Contacts: Alicia 4759 2336 or Sarah ama.bya@gmail.com
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.	Fri 29	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.
April		June	
Tues 7	Blue Mountains Homebirth Support Group. 10am-12pm. 22 David Street, Wentworth Falls. Cost: \$5. Bring a healthy snack to share if you get a chance; if not come anyway. All welcome. Contacts: Alicia 4759 2336 or Sarah ama.bya@gmail.com	Early	Birthings Winter issue in letterboxes.
Thurs 9	Pregnancy & Parenting Network meeting. Theme: Baby's development including play ideas and sleep. 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 2	Blue Mountains Homebirth Support Group. 10am-12pm. 22 David Street, Wentworth Falls. Cost: \$5. Bring a healthy snack to share if you get a chance; if not come anyway. All welcome. Contacts: Alicia 4759 2336 or Sarah ama.bya@gmail.com
Tues 21	Blue Mountains Homebirth Support Group. 10am-12pm. 22 David Street, Wentworth Falls. Cost: \$5. Bring a healthy snack to share if you get a chance; if not come anyway. All welcome. Contacts: Alicia 4759 2336 or Sarah ama.bya@gmail.com	Thurs 11	Pregnancy & Parenting Network meeting. Theme: Vaccination. 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 24	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.	Tues 16	Blue Mountains Homebirth Support Group. 10am-12pm. 22 David Street, Wentworth Falls. Cost: \$5. Bring a healthy snack to share if you get a chance; if not come anyway. All welcome. Contacts: Alicia 4759 2336 or Sarah ama.bya@gmail.com
		Fri 26	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.
		Tues 30	Blue Mountains Homebirth Support Group. 10am-12pm. 22 David Street, Wentworth Falls. Cost: \$5. Bring a healthy snack to share if you get a chance; if not come anyway. All welcome. Contacts: Alicia 4759 2336 or Sarah ama.bya@gmail.com
July			
		Thurs 9	Pregnancy & Parenting Network meeting. Theme: Baby wearing and slings. 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 14	Blue Mountains Homebirth Support Group. 10am-12pm. 22 David Street, Wentworth Falls. Cost: \$5. Bring a healthy snack to share if you get a chance; if not come anyway. All welcome. Contacts: Alicia 4759 2336 or Sarah ama.bya@gmail.com
		Tues 28	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.
		Fri 26	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.

» Our new Events Coordinator, Helena, is keen to re-start the popular evening community information nights, which she found so valuable in preparing for her own birth. However, no details were available at the time of going to press, as Helena has just joined the committee. Please watch our soon-to-be-launched new website for updates and look out for our monthly members' email. If you're not receiving our emails, please email maddvirg@yahoo.com.au or Sarah-peak@hotmail.com to stay in the loop.

» A Sutherland group meets regularly at Gunnamatta Park in Cronulla. Please call Sally for details on 0425 751 900.



*The topic for the
next issue is*

Siblings at birth

Submissions invited on preparing siblings to attend a birth, your stories about your children's experiences, stories and pictures from siblings and anything else you'd like to share.

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

Reminder Update your membership details by email at maddvirg@yahoo.com.au or sarah-peak@hotmail.com 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 Friday 1 May 2009.

EMAIL THE EDITORS AT SARAHMCLEAN@HOTMAIL.COM