

BIRTHINGS

a HOMEBIRTH ACCESS SYDNEY quarterly publication

www.homebirthsydney.org.au



Ceremonies & Rituals

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

Spring 2010 Issue 107

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

contributions, photos, correspondence

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

deadlines for submissions

Summer 2011 No 108 -1 November 2010
Autumn 2011 No 109 - 1 February 2011
Winter 2011 No 110 - 1 May 2011
Spring 2011 No 111 -1 December 2011

back issues

Back issues of *Birthings* are like hen's teeth! But we will try to accommodate requests. Back issues cost \$4.00 - \$7.00 per issue. Postage is \$3.00 per single copy. A price for multiple copies can be arranged. The magazine is very valuable in that it contains many birth stories and information, plus give an insight into the homebirth movement and HAS activities.

change of address

Please notify any change of address to HAS, PO Box 66, Broadway, NSW 2007 or by email to the Memberships Coordinator at member@homebirthsydney.org.au

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

Contributing to *Birthings*

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

We also work with an editorial board, selected by the HAS executive, to reflect the range of people in our community. The founding board members are Maggie Lecky-Thompson, Adrienne Abulhawa, Jo Hunter, Sarah McLean and the current editor, Virginia Maddock. The role of the editorial board is outlined in the guidelines below.

Contribution Guidelines

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

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

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

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

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

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

LENGTH Please write your story in the amount of words you think you need. As a guideline, most birth stories work best when they are under 1200 words. Submissions on the theme should be under 1700 words.

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

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

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

If any major editing is recommended by our editors, we will contact you for permission and return a copy of the edited material for your approval. If our standard editing procedure is 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 it's members and the community,
- supporting the editors to make editorial decisions,
- providing a guide for the future direction of the magazine.

PROCEDURES Please provide your story as a Microsoft Word or equivalent document attached to an email and sent to Virginia Maddock at editor@homebirthsydney.org.au

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

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

HONOURARY LIFE AND FOUNDING MEMBERS

Maggie
Lecky-Thompson
Elaine
Odgers Norling

HONOURARY LIFE MEMBERS

Robyn Dempsey
Jo Hunter

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BIRTHINGS

Ceremonies & Rituals

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Front cover

Image of Karen Manning at her blessingway, courtesy of Amy Tyson.



Back cover

Drawing by Sian Campkin

www.homebirthsydney.org.au



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membership

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

PLEASE SUPPORT THIS VITAL WORK BY SUBSCRIBING TO *BIRTHINGS*

- **3 year membership:** \$90
- **1 year membership:** \$40
- **Midwives subscribing clients:** \$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 deposit correct money into our bank account:

Homebirth Access Sydney

BSB: 062 257

Acc #: 1017 2779

and email your details (as below) with receipt number to member@homebirthsydney.org.au,

or send your completed form with cheque or money order to

HAS, PO BOX 66, BROADWAY NSW 2007

* NAME	
* ADDRESS	
TELEPHONE	
* EMAIL	
OCCUPATION	
CAN YOU VOLUNTEER HELP? (eg typing, fundraising, emailing, events, organising)	

Please tick:

- New member
- Renewal
- Email receipt required

Please enclose:

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

Midwife's name: _____

*Note: Required entry for our database.

For receipt request and enquiries:

member@homebirthsydney.org.au

Birthings is designed by **PETRA TIMMERMANN**

contributors

EMILY BURNS is a second year PhD candidate at the University of Western Sydney, studying the experiences of home birthing women in Australia. She has two children, Roman (3.5) and Xavier (22 months), and is a home birth and breast-feeding advocate, living in the Blue Mountains. She is a devoted feminist, and this infuses and enriches all of her work.

ERIKA ELLIOTT is a doula and calmbirth practitioner living in Lilyfield with her family Gus and Jonathan. She is a passionate natural birth advocate, for both the parents and the baby in utero and spends her days (and nights!) gently guiding and supporting couples through their journey of birth as well as running regular calmbirth courses at the Sydney Pregnancy Centre. Erika's business 'MotherBirth' is all about providing education, preparation & support for pregnancy, birth and parenting. erikabirth@gmail.com

JO HUNTER is mother to Jai (14yrs, born at a Birth Centre), Bronte (11yrs), Riley (10yrs) and Maya (8yrs), born at home, and partner of Phil. She is an independent midwife who lives and works in the Blue Mountains. Prior to becoming a midwife she worked as a doula and childbirth educator. Jo was the previous convener of Homebirth Australia and past coordinator of Homebirth Access Sydney.

KAREN COCKBURN is a mother to 3 month old Jacob, 3 year old Lucas and wife to Greg. I love baby wearing and cloth nappies. Life is pretty hectic with my two boys, but I love being a stay at home mum and wouldn't have it any other way.

KATIE MANITSAS is the director of Samadhi Yoga, a busy yoga studio in Sydney's Inner West. Katie is the first Certified Advanced Jivamukti Yoga teacher in Australia and has also studied extensively with the Wise Earth School of Ayurveda under the guidance of Swamini Mayatitananda. Katie has trained in the UK, U.S, India and Australia. Her books, 'Spiritual Survival in the City' and the more recent 'Yoga Off the Mat' are on sale now and she is currently working on a book about yoga and birthing. Katie is mother to three-year-old Christos and 8 month old Ziggy who was born at home. She is also a trained doula (birth companion).

LIZZIE ROSE is a yoga teacher and sustainability educator. She works with kids in schools, building veggie gardens, runs community cheese making workshops and helps coordinate a local food co-op in her hometown on the south coast, where she lives with her partner Ness, son Harry and cocker spaniel Maisy.

MADGA JANSEN is a full time mother to Jonas (23 months) and Maggie (10 weeks). Where she can she supports her husband Neal in the music management and publishing business they started together. Magda moved to Australia from The Netherlands 4 years ago and loves her new home country. She hopes homebirths will continue to stay a women's birth choice in Australia.

MONICA RENAUD is mother to Louis 6, Pascal 5 months and married to Grant. She is a breastfeeding activist, artist & photographer, that has been shooting family life, and all the beauty that surrounds her for over 20 years. She & Grant love their lazy weekends with their boys by the sea as much as their adventures into town to the museums or cosy city eateries. You can see & read more at her BLOG via the website, www.studiofiftyseven.net

PAUL MANITSAS is a motor mechanic based in Newtown, Sydney. Paul is from a Greek background, which has taught him great family values that he appreciates even more now that he is a father himself.

RACHEL PREST is mum to Xavier (2 1/2). She has a degree in Education and experience as a Not-for-Profit manager, but left teaching and managing to embrace her new role as a stay-at-home mum. These days Rachel is busy juggling mothering, activism and managing her own business from home, her creation: 'Raid My Wardrobe', a quality preloved fashion event www.raidmywardrobe.com.au. In her spare time she loves uninterrupted conversations with her husband, walks along the beach and vegetarian cooking.

SONJA MACGREGOR is a homebirth midwife. She loves and feels honoured to be part of a woman's journey, and watching them grow throughout pregnancy, birth and with their new babies. <http://www.birthathome.com.au>

VIRGINIA MADDOCK is fiance to her gorgeous kiwi man 'Dan', Mum to 19 month old sign language extraordinaire 'Jetsun' and her 12 year old Burmese feline child 'Yin Yin'. She is editor for Birthings, HAS Membership Coordinator as well as a herbalist, nutritionist and doula for her business 'Natural Beginnings' www.naturalbeginnings.com.au. Virginia has also just begun doing Beer + Bubs in the Shire www.beerandbubs.com.au (childbirth education for Dads) at her local pub, but having recently begun her pre-conception detox, will not be partaking in any beer drinking herself... for a loong time!

editorial



VIRIGINA MADDOCK

WELCOME TO OUR Spring 2010 edition of Birthings: 'Ceremonies & Rituals'. I have been somewhat overwhelmed (in the best way possible) at all the submissions that have come in and have had the privilege to read – they certainly warmed my heart on the cold winter nights in preparing this edition. And I think we must have broken a record with all the birth announcements – 18 in total! What a gorgeous bunch of babies. One might be fooled into thinking that us homebirthers aren't such a minority after all! We are blessed to have found a cheaper printer so that we can expand the magazine to fit everything in. On the down side we have lost our designer Lou, who could not fulfil her duties at the last minute – fortunately our old designer Petra has stepped in to save us and we may have a new designer for next issue.

Many of you have honoured your pregnancies, births, babies and placentas in the most profound and touching ways, and putting these special occasions into a story for others to read can inspire others to celebrate their significant milestones in a sacred way they may not have considered before. This inspiration happened to me when I was pregnant, and much more recently.

I remember fondly my blessingway with my close women friends, and the beautiful beaded and blessed necklace that each person who attended (or posted) contributed to which I will treasure forever, as it was so much more meaningful than a mere baby shower would have been. My son Jetsun's Buddhist blessing ceremony also stands out in my mind as a sacred ritual that will live in my heart forever. You will find that story amongst the others in these pages. And a few days ago, I was inspired to finally take Jetsun's placenta out of the freezer, where it has lived somewhat unceremoniously in an icecream container, lying dormant for the past 18 months. When it was defrosted, drained and washed, I picked it up and inspected what sustained and nourished my baby for 42 weeks of his life's beginning, and felt a sense of sadness that so many people find theirs so disgusting that they have it thrown away without a second thought – I have discovered that even mentioning doing anything with your placenta makes the majority of people squeamish. I then made a beautiful placenta ink print on canvas that looks like a tree and now hangs on the wall in our living room – an artistic keepsake of his life giving 'twin' that Jetsun will be able to see, and that I can keep forever. Then on the weekend I had a ceremonial placenta burial with Jetsun, my partner Dan and I - another moment of turning the ordinary into the sacred. But that story will have to wait for another issue...

Our Summer edition will be 'Birth Places & Spaces' which will cover: Where did you birth your baby? How did you set up your special birth space? Did you plan on birthing in one place and then ended up in a completely different place? Did you birth anywhere unusual or unexpected? How does birth place affect labour and birth? Submissions are due November 1st. Please email your theme articles, birth announcements and stories to: editor@homebirthsydney.org.au

letters

SEND YOUR LETTERS TO EDITOR@HOMEBIRTHSYDNEY.ORG.AU

I meant to say earlier how much I enjoyed reading the latest edition of Birthings. I love all the birth stories, plus the other articles in there. Now that I'm a doula, they are even more interesting to me. Also - the front cover pic is brilliant - really captures those first precious moments after birth. You should feel very proud of your first edition. I hope the subsequent ones go a lot smoother for you.

Helena Mooney

My compliments on the new look of Birthings. Very pretty. I'd also like to let you know that I always LOVE receiving Birthings and immediately read it front to back. The birth stories are so inspiring that I lend my magazines to friends whether they're considering a natural (home)birth or not. So keep up the good work and thank you very much!

*All the best,
Magda Jansen*



birth announcements

Send your birth announcements with a photograph
to EDITOR@HOMEBIRTHSYDNEY.ORG.AU



My beautiful lotus **IMARLI SOLEIL KREZNOVIC SKURTEVSKI** arrived into our world on the 4th of March 2010. Born at home and in the water, straight into Mama's arms at 4.26pm, weighing 2.27kgs and 48cm long. Supported by her father, grandmother and friends Haley and Rachel, and also Sage my dog, who made sure everything was going smoothly! We thank Sonja MacGregor who came along on our journey and empowered me to believe and trust in my body and spirit. I am so thankful for her guidance and support during my pregnancy and Imarli's birth. It is a day that i re-live over and over again every time i look at my daughter. Imarli you are the best thing I have ever created!



HARRY JOHN ROSE graced us on Saturday December 12th, 2009 at 9.24am. After a long labour at home, he was born naturally and caught by his mumma Ness at Wollongong hospital. Welcome to the world H-man!



Beautiful baby boy **RIVER NIXON**, born at home in peace and love on the 17th February 2010. Son of Rachel and Tim, and brother to Lily. Thank you to our midwife Sonja MacGregor, for her support and absolute trust in the ability of our bodies to birth. She is truly 'with woman'.



STELLA BRONTE LOVE, born 17th May 2010, 11.32pm in a beautiful hypno waterbirth at home. Big sister Charlie joined Mumma, Daddy and Stella in the pool... Heaven! Mumma Doula Denise, Jo and Gaz were the best support ever, thank you! Such an empowering experience - I am woman, hear me roar!



JACOB JAMES COCKBURN born at home in water Monday 1st June 2010, 5.47am after a 6 hour labour, supported by my lovely midwife Jo Hunter, my great friend Pamela Keegan, and husband Greg and son Lucas were great support too. I am so proud to have gotten my HBAC. Jacob weighed 3.2 kg and was 54 cm long.



INDIA JADE WHEATLEY was born into this world on April 23rd 2010. After almost a week of early labour, she arrived at 6.33am on a Friday morning weighing a hearty 3.86kg. She was lovingly attended to by her big sister Jordan, who took some amazing action shots, and our wonderful midwife Sonja MacGregor. India's birth in our bedroom was an intimate, empowering event for our family and we can't wait to tell her all about it. Named India because of my love for yoga and Ian's love for cricket, Indi burst out into her Daddy's arms and he is proud to say she is his best catch to date! Welcome home little angel.

birth announcements



Michael and Karen Gallagher welcome **AALIYAH ROSE GALLAGHER**. Born on the 26th of April 2010, two weeks early at 10.55pm, weighing 3.45kgs and 50cm long. Born at home into the water during the calmness of night, to be greeted by two very excited big sisters. Thank you to my wonderful husband Michael, whose strength supported me during each and every contraction, my ever reliable, caring and insightful sister and best friend Joanne. Thank you to my fantastic, highly capable and encouraging midwife Hazel Keedle, who's friendship and wisdom gave me the strength to trust in my own ability. I am so very lucky to have had you all there with me as I experienced the most beautiful pregnancy and birth. Aaliyah Rose you complete our family. Welcome to the world little bubba lou!



Anna, Luke and Gracie (2yrs) are delighted to announce the arrival of their gorgeous boy, **DARCY SEBASTIAN BUCKLE**. On the 14th May, 2010 at 9:04pm, our 4.14kg lad, slowly but surely navigated his way into our bath at home, 15 days 'overdue'. A VBAC birth for a very small Mumma, his 38cm head proved beyond reasonable doubt to us, that anything is possible in the world of birth. There is not enough thanks in the world for our dear, selfless, calm and thoughtful friend/ birth support, Bek Deans. Akal Khalsa, our brilliant midwife, took us on a journey from the day we met her until now that has been enriching and life-changing. Big thanks to CalmBirth (especially Erika!) and David Vernon et al. who led us to have our own homebirth! What a contrast and what a joy!



Geoff, Claire and Isabelle are elated to announce the arrival of **ANNIKA ROSE JOHNSTON-HALL**, born on her Grandfather's birthday, 5th June 2010. She was born in water in our living room after an amazing labour which really took off just after breaky and was all finished by morning tea. I lifted my precious girl out of the still, clear water at 9:37am and still can't believe how beautiful the experience was. I have to thank my fabulous husband Geoff, who laboured with me every step of the way, and our wonderful midwife Jacqui Wood, for journeying with me through the trauma of my first birth to a point of healing where I could experience birth in such an incredible way.



INDI-LEE BURSTON 8lb 9, born to Gavin & Jacie on 3rd June 2010 at 11.50pm, with support from the wonderful Jane Palmer (midwife). Indi was born in a magical outdoor water setting, heralded by light rain and basked in candle and moon light. Indi is thriving and already receiving birthday party invitations! A true chiropractic baby, Indi has super spinal health and is building her immunity naturally.



Chris, Sarah and big sister Katelyn welcome **BENJAMIN BRUCE HAINES**. Born on the 16th of June 2010. Ben arrived on his due date after a speedy 1 1/2 hour labour. He was born in water (just!) and his midwife Jane arrived when he was 10 minutes old to help with his placenta. He weighed 3600g, was 51cm long and his head was 36cm. Thank you Jane for your loving care throughout the pregnancy and postnatal period.



Our beautiful baby girl **ARABELLA SYBIL SEALY NEWELL** was born at our home in Balmain on Wednesday 16th June. Everything was perfect and it was the most amazing experience ever! We're so thrilled to have had a home birth and our baby girl is so calm, happy and healthy. A huge thank you to our wonderful midwife Akal Khalsa who was amazing throughout the whole experience.

birth announcements



Mama Magda Jansen, papa Neal Hunt and big brother Jonas are very excited to welcome our daughter and little sister **MAGGIE CORALIE HUNT**. She was born at home on the evening of the full moon and half moon eclipse on Saturday 26th June 2010 at 7.12pm - an evening suitable for such a special event as a birth. After a six hour labour and four pushes, Maggie was lifted out of the water of the birth pool by her mama. Our big little one weighed 4.66kg and measured 56 cm. We'd like to thank Jane - we feel so lucky to have you as our knowledgeable, experienced, calm and fun midwife during both our pregnancies and births. Maggie, welcome to our family, enjoy the world!



Debbie and Owen Hollott welcome **SHIVARN ZACHARY HOLLOTT** born by water birth at home, 9.25am on 29th June 2010. Weighing 3.4kg and measuring 52 cm; he becomes the baby brother to Jamai, Nataya, Taniesha, Corey, Tahlia, Hannah and Nathan. Debbie would like to pass on a big thank you to Jo Hunter (midwife) and Natalie Dash (doula). What a fantastic experience you both helped us create with my first home birth. Thank you so much Jo and Nat for your help and support both before, during and after the birth of Shivarn. I could never have asked for more wonderful people to have travelled on such a special journey with me.



LUCIAN ELLIOTT CARINGTON was born in water at home, 5:08am on Friday the 30th of July 2010. Lucian and his mother Amie worked hard through a posterior labour with the support of her partner and Lucian's father James, our incredible midwife Sonja MacGregor and doula Natalie Dash. We are eternally grateful for their support and guidance. We are overjoyed and our lives now feel complete with the arrival of our first child. Our hearts burst with love upon seeing our child emerge into the world. Homebirthing was a wonderful initiation into the journey of parenthood, and was a magical and empowering experience for us as new parents.



Joei and Krystal De Lima welcome **AURORA ALICE DE LIMA**, born safely and happily into water at home on 4th July 2010 at 10.25am, weighing 4.6kg. She decided to start her journey earthside at just the right moment - babies really know when to choose their own birthday! We would like to thank Sonja and Natalie for their loving support and calm reassurance throughout the pregnancy and birth (and beyond) - such wise women and we are glad to have shared this wonderful experience with them. Home Birth Rocks!



We thank God for the new addition to our family, **ELIZABETH ZOE DAY**. Born at 5pm on the 24th of June 2010 to the delight of her parents Stephen and Carolina, and brothers Oliver and Matthew. A huge thank you to our wonderful midwife Jacqui Wood, for her guidance and support over the last few years (two births and one miscarriage). Our homebirths have been such beautiful experiences, giving birth in the calm and comfortable environment of our own home. Welcome to the world little Elizabeth!



Jade, Glen and Jett Alexander welcome **MOSTYN GLEN ALEXANDER**, born 26th July 2010. Mostyn was born in the water surrounded by people who love him - his dad, brother, Nannie and midwife Jo. It was a fantastic experience, one that none of us will forget. It was a great way for both brothers to start bonding. He was 4.1kg (a whole kilo heavier than his brother!) and 53cm long. A big thank you to Jo for her fantastic support and encouragement.

Committee Member Profile



HAS MEMBER -
SANDY BUCKNELL
 (Birthings calendar girl)

Joined: In 2008, signed up by my midwife Jacqui Wood while pregnant with Ruby. Took an active role a few months after Ruby was born as I wanted to give to the Homebirth community.

Family: Partner Brian, son Jayson 12yrs (previous marriage) two daughters Sian 8yrs

(previous marriage) Ruby 20mths, and two Burmese cats: Boss and Cleo .

Life before birthing: Worked as an international supermodel and brief stint as a rock star!

Why homebirth? I do not view pregnancy and birth as an illness so I have never seen the need to go to a hospital for such a natural part of life. Birthing my children in the warmth comfort and safety of my own home, surrounded by loved ones has been the most amazing and empowering experience of my life.

POETRY & ARTWORK

heart to heart

WE INVITE YOU TO SHARE YOUR BIRTH-INSPIRED CREATIVE EXPRESSIONS WITH OTHERS BY SUBMITTING YOUR PIECES TO AMELIAA@PRIMUS.COM.AU. THE EMPHASIS IS IN THE SPIRIT OF SHARING AND CONNECTION RATHER THAN IN ARTISTIC PERFECTION!

I wrote this the day after Harry was born...

*Before I lose myself in the new snuffle scents of you,
 let me linger suspended in a world that has been
 repainted.*

*You have dipped your toes in magic paint my Harry
 and everything is brighter, more shapely, there are
 colours everywhere*

*and as you sleep right now I miss you,
 hungry for the next sniff of your powder soft belly.*

You seem to have come from the stars.

*This love I have for you is raw, elemental and
 gluttonous.*

*You are more than I imagined. Right now you are
 everything.*

I am drunk with the potency of a new love blooming;

*I am giddy and coated in the delicacy of birth that
 came so sweetly and so gently*

*after such a monumental, yet somehow calm and
 peaceful ride.*

You have already changed the world forever Harry.

Lizzie Rose 13/12/2009

Here's the placenta poem that we read when we buried Tasman's placenta. He was almost three when we buried it, on my birthday, a fortnight before his baby brother Banjo was born. Peter read the poem as I was too teary to read aloud. Tasman tipped the placenta into a pot to nourish a cumquat tree. A cockatoo came to visit during our little ceremony: the birds had visited when Tasman was born so it was beautiful to see them return on such an important occasion: they knew...

Sally Dillon

At the beginning of your world, I was part of you.

*Made of the same luminous fabric, flesh of your flesh, of our father
 and mother's being.*

*As we grew, we were separated but united. I fed you, breathed for you, became a pathway
 for the flushing currents of our mother's blood.*

As you slept, I was your cradle and your guard, when you awoke I was your companion.

*Together for that last day I leashed you the very limits of our linking line before releasing
 you to the touch of others—lovers, yes—but surely none will hold you as nearly, as sweetly
 or as softly as I did.*

As our connection was severed you wept for me once, then were gone.

*Carry me deep in your heart as you bury me in the soil of our home, for
 I am the earth of your making.*

Kate Alice, July 2002

[taken from the website: <http://novamidwife.org/information/placenta-poem/>]



coordinator's report

JO TILLY

THE BIG KIDS have just headed off to school, still in recovery from yesterday's sugar-induced birthday party high. Number one son turns 6 this week and celebrated with his little friends with ten pin bowling, a treasure hunt, a game of pin-the-watch-on-Ben-10 (my own 21st century boy's version of pin-the-tail-on-the-donkey), and the consumption of lots and lots of junk he's not normally allowed to eat. It was a ripper of a party and everyone slept like the dead last night.

I'm not really much of a ceremony and ritual kind of girl. I really like the idea in theory, but birthday parties are about as close as I get. I loved devouring books like Jane Harwicke Collings Ten Moons, and Birthing from Within while I was pregnant. Pregnancy is such a dreamy, contemplative time when everything is full of such possibility. But even in the midst of all that, I never really got into formalising rituals in my life. Perhaps it's a hangover of the embarrassingly short marriage I jumped into at 19, but my subsequent adult life has featured no further weddings, christenings, anniversaries or significant birthday celebrations.

Now, you could suggest that this means I am either shallow or disorganised... But putting a kinder spin on it, I reckon that formally marking the passage of life, just isn't really my cup of tea; which isn't to say I don't frequently feel incredibly thankful for my blessings. Lying in the sunshine with the baby in my hammock, or seeing one of my pot plants throw up a new flower spike, bike riding to the Sunday markets with the kids, or even getting to read the morning paper and drink my coffee while it's hot in the morning are things that fill me with joy. Some days a line full of clean washing will do the trick! Finding happiness in the everyday stuff makes the patterns in my life.

Every year when the cherry blossom comes into bloom I remember vividly being at home in the last of the winter chill, waiting for my second baby to make an appearance. So every year I tell my son about the flowers that remind me of when he was born. And whenever I watch fireworks I remember standing on the 6th floor of the maternity ward at the old King George Hospital holding my brand new baby girl, knowing that I would never forget the exact feeling of that moment (which was, incidentally, wonder at her birth and an incredible sense that my life was about to change forever). So my eldest daughter now hears that story at every time we see fireworks. Pippi isn't big enough yet to remember my stories about the special things that are part of her life, though she no doubt will.

And all of them - baby included - love a story and a song and pats at bedtime. Even though it's always preceded by the usual chaos that accompanies bedtime, it's so nice to be able to slow down, take a deep breath and appreciate how lucky we all are at the end of the day. There is a beautiful poem about this lovely time:

*Now, by the small body of my sleeping son
the hidden river in my chest flows with my son's
and I time my speech to the rhythm of his breath

joining my night with his, singing his night song
as if those waters underground
were secret rivers washing through the soul

bringing out the untold life
which is the stream he'll join in growing old,
in silent hours when his sureness

of his self recedes. There he'll find
the rest between the solid notes
that makes the song worthwhile.*

David Whyte
from "Looking Back at Night"
Where Many Rivers Meet

In our family, I think the stories and the things we say to each other have taken the place of ritual. There is comfort in repetition and the shared threads that weave our family life together; even if Jemima often says "I know!" in a slightly exasperated tone of voice, and Red says "You've said that a thousand million times!" when I tell him how much I love him. But I'm confident that no kid ever suffered from being told how important she is to her mother's life story or was told he was loved too much.

Our homebirth community is made up of so many different kinds of people, with different families, cultures, politics, and spiritual lives. But we all share a common desire to nurture our families and give our children a great start in the world. Let's try and remember the good fortune we share and the things that bring us together.

New & renewed members

HAS WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE FOLLOWING NEW & RENEWED MEMBERS FOR THEIR SUPPORT:

Chrissy Grainger
 Rachel Prest
 Jaclyn Saunders
 Carolyn Galbraith
 Cait Vieira
 Natalie Baucher
 Louise Demanuele
 Jackie Haywood
 Keira McEvoy-Vales
 Sophia Cece
 Alicia Mintzes
 Esther Bailey
 Elizabeth Criner
 Simone Harris
 Esther Bailey
 Rochelle Luke
 Jo Taylor
 Sunshine Estivo
 Dominika Ferenz
 Louisa Smith
 Cindy Alchin
 Petra Timmermann
 Naomi Green
 Amantha McGuinness
 Tiffany Schaafsma
 Sheryl Sidery
 Silvia Granelli
 Adriana Daley
 Olesia Filorenko
 Faye Southcombe
 Zeeanne Flowers
 Lisa Mount
 Larissa Chapman
 Addye Kalmar
 Rachele Meredith
 Jenni Ridley
 Kate Chojnowski
 Jacqueline Blanc
 Kylie McWhirter
 Peta Oliver
 Kathy Obierzynski
 Jean Watanabe
 Naomi Parisi
 Natalie Mohajerani
 Amanda Kane
 Judi Martini
 Kathleen Brewster
 Akal Khalsa



secretary's report

GRETA WERNER

I'VE NOW BEEN HAS secretary for over a year, and recently became Treasurer. I'd like to provide you with an overview of the main HAS activities and how we support them organisationally and financially.

Networking is one of the most important functions of our incorporated association. HAS holds regular meetings open to all members, and keeps in touch with it's members through it's regular email newsletters, Birthings magazine and our website. Other events such as the homebirth picnic, Birth Choices Expo, seminars and stalls at Parents Babies and Children's expo have helped to give homebirth a public profile.

Because things are changing so fast for homebirthing right now, we want our members to have the most current news so we can respond as a group to any issues as they arise using the email newsletter.

Our co-ordinator Jo Tilly, obtains much of this information through regular contact with our midwife members and organisations related to HAS and homebirth.

Over the last few years we have been working hard to let the government and the general public understand the importance of homebirth as a safe and viable option. This has involved lobbying politicians and their advisers in Sydney and Canberra, and printing and distributing flyers, posters and banners.

HAS therefore provides a strong voice for homebirth consumers.

Virginia Maddock is the Birthings and newsletter editor, and Memberships Coordinator. She compiles and sends the newsletter every month, or when important news needs to be communicated.

The HAS website provides members and the general public with access to information with a local focus and to homebirth specific merchandise, such as birth pools. Jenny Carleton is the web mistress and can be contacted if there are any technical or content issues.

HAS raises most of it's revenue from

- Merchandise sales
- Advertising space in Birthings, the website and the newsletter
- Memberships
- Donations
- Events including the Birth Choices Expo

Unfortunately HAS no longer has the capacity to produce events, due to the lack of an Events Coordinator on the committee. Each of the current committee members is filling several roles, so our activities have been limited.

Birth Choices Expo was started in 2005 by midwives and HAS. It is being taken over by a different group, and will continue to provide a forum for homebirth and natural parenting families. HAS is still in need of an Events Coordinator in order to produce other events.

Jenny Carleton organises the advertising sales, which are increasingly important in supporting HAS activities.

Our merchandise sales are strong, and we are always on the lookout for more homebirth related products. Please contact our merchandise manager, Sarah Maclean, if you have any great ideas for things we can sell through the website.

I would like to extend a warm welcome to Keira McEvoy, our new Assistant Coordinator, and Leanne Clarke: Fundraising and Sponsorship Coordinator. We are still in need of filling some roles, and anyone who is interested in getting involved, please contact us or come along to our committee meetings. I am sure we can find a use for your particular talents [ed: particularly an Events Coordinator!].

Finally, a big thank you to everyone who has sent in stories and other content to Birthings magazine. It is the members' contributions that make the magazine so valuable to the homebirthing community.



Workshops with
Jane Hardwicke Collings Midwife, Author of *Ten Moons - the Spiritual Journey of Pregnancy*

Exploring, Honouring, Celebrating & Healing Our Sacred Feminine Path

Moonsong

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

Pregnancy - The Inner Journey

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

Contact me janecollings@bigpond.com if you would like to receive my seasonal newsletter.
To book for a workshop or for further information email me or phone 0408 035 808.

2010 workshops

Pregnancy - The Inner Journey Workshop

November 17, 18, 19, 2010
Southern Highlands, NSW
Fully catered, non-residential \$450

Moonsong

November 20, 21, 2010
Southern Highlands, NSW
Fully catered, non-residential \$350 or \$250
per person for two family members

Pregnancy - The Inner Journey Workshop

November 24, 25, 26, 2010
Gaia's Garden, Kew, Melbourne, VIC
Fully catered, non-residential \$550

Moonsong

November 27, 28, 2010
Gaia's Garden, Kew, Melbourne, VIC
Non-residential, Fully catered
\$400 or \$300 per person for two family members

2011 workshops

Pregnancy - The Inner Journey Workshop

April 6, 7, 8, 2011
Southern Highlands, NSW
Fully catered, non-residential \$450

Moonsong

April 9, 10, 2011
Southern Highlands, NSW
Fully catered, non-residential \$350 or \$250
per person for two family members

Pregnancy - The Inner Journey Workshop

April 27, 28, 29, 2011
Bellingen, NSW
Fully catered, non-residential \$550

Moonsong

April 30, May 1 2011
Bellingen, NSW
Fully catered, non-residential
\$400 or \$300 per person for two family members.

Pregnancy - The Inner Journey Workshop

July 2011
Tasmania
Fully catered, non-residential \$450

Moonsong

July 2011
Tasmania
Fully catered, non-residential
\$400 or \$300 per person for two family members.

Moonsong

October 1, 2, 2011
Southern Highlands, NSW
Fully catered, non-residential
\$350 or \$250 per person for two family members

Pregnancy - The Inner Journey Workshop

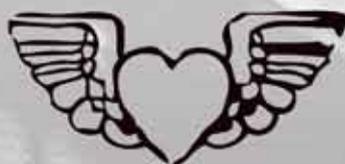
October 5, 6, 7, 2011
Southern Highlands, NSW
Fully catered, non-residential \$450

Pregnancy - The Inner Journey Workshop

November 9, 10, 11, 2011
Queensland TBA
Fully catered, non-residential \$550

Moonsong

November 12, 13, 2011
Queensland TBA
Fully catered, non-residential
\$400 or \$300 per person for two family members



The Blessingway Ceremony

ERIKA ELLIOTT

AS A DOULA and birth educator I have attended and facilitated some beautiful Blessingway Ceremonies over the years and wonder why all women wouldn't want to have this wonderful experience. A Blessingway Ceremony is an ancient Navajo tradition and one of their most sacred ceremonies surrounding pregnancy and birth. There are many rituals that can be performed at a Blessingway, but the most popular one is the stringing of a necklace. This is done by the guests as a gift for the mother to wear, hold or look at during labour, so she can draw on the love and strength of all her female friends. It is meant to hold the birthing wisdom of all mothers, daughters, grandmothers and granddaughters throughout time who have birthed before her. Another ritual I love is for all the guests to sit in a circle and meditate on the mother-to-be and in turn, share all the qualities she possesses to be the perfect mother for this baby and talk about the energy of the baby and what dynamics it will bring to the family.



Another ritual is for the mother to tie a piece of string around each guest's wrist to symbolise a universal umbilical cord, connecting them to each other in thought and love until the baby is born. The string or cord shall remain intact until they hear of the baby's safe journey.

The ceremony is one filled with laughter, tears, love and compassion, (not to mention tea, champagne and lots of cake!) as the guests bless the way and honour the journey this mother is about to take. At the end of it all, the mother is filled with enthusiasm and joy and is left with the most beautiful and original necklace that can be woven into the tapestry that will be this new baby's life.

Placental Rituals

SONJA MACGREGOR

MANY WOMEN HAVE rituals around their placenta. Some eat it, some request homeopathics and pills to be made, others bury it and others collect them in their freezers. I have seen necklaces made from cords, and beads threaded onto cords at the baby's 1st birthday.

What occurred to me once is that some women don't want to do anything with their placentas, or have a lack of space to bury their placentas. It was only after speaking with an aboriginal woman who informed me of the importance of returning the placenta to the earth in one way or another.

After this discussion I have offered women who do not want their placentas or have nowhere to put them, the possibility of me burying it on my farm in the orchard.

I plant a fruit tree over their placenta and name the trees after the woman. I currently have 4 happy, healthy fruit trees planted over placentas, with a further two in the freezer, waiting for my next opportunity to get to the farm. Whilst the trees are still young and yet to bear fruit, I do think of these women when I am checking on the trees.

I also look forward to eating the fruit one day and thinking about it being that woman's pear, apple, apricot or peach. I have a couple more placentas in my freezer waiting for me to bury and plant a fruit tree.

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Birthing Rituals & Ceremonies

EMILY BURNS

RITUALS AND CEREMONIES flourish in every culture, and have done so throughout history. Perhaps the two most ritual-inspiring events are birth and death, events that are steeped in culture, mysticism, religion and local custom.

Rituals for the promotion of labour abound the world over. Some tribes in central Africa believe sexual embarrassment of the pregnant woman will promote labour, and customs include the father of the baby exposing his genitalia to her. In parts of Jamaica it is customary to promote labour by giving a pregnant woman a sweaty shirt to smell. In parts of India, a jar of grain is broken in front of a heavily pregnant woman in the belief that she will see the grain spill before her and her body will respond likewise.

Ancient Egyptians also incorporated rituals and ceremonies as an integral part of the pregnancy and birth experience. Meskhenet was a Goddess associated with the place of birth, and respect for her was essential for a normal birth. These women also held a great fear of blood, especially blood associated with menstruation and childbirth, and thus performed ritual cleansings of mother and baby after birth.

Around the world, one of the more prolific birth related rituals involves the placenta, and if we think blood has negative connotations for people today, the placenta conjures associations that are even more off-putting. For most women giving birth in a hospital in Australia, the placenta is a mere afterthought, and many do not even see it at all. The disposal of the placenta is part of the ritual for staff in these settings, the ritual of cleaning up and disposing of birth's waste. In a home birth environment, considering the placenta waste is almost unheard of, the placenta is given respect and ceremony, be that through its burial in the yard, honouring it through art, or valuing its healing properties by consuming it.

The placenta is given so much power in various parts of the world that the rituals associated with it can mean the difference of life or death for a newborn and his/her family or village. The mythology surrounding the placenta brings ritual and ceremony to the fore of the birth experience in many cultures. In Northern Sumatra for example, local mythology holds that in the placenta, rests one of seven souls the newborn child possesses, so great care and respect is taken in its treatment. For women in Hungary who wanted no more children, it was customary to burn the placenta and place the ashes in her husband's drink, while in Javanese culture it was believed eating the placenta would increase a woman's fertility. In Austria and parts of Italy, it was believed that the blood of a fresh placenta held great medicinal properties, for everything from the removal of birthmarks to the cure for epilepsy.

Placenta burial is common among home birth experiences in Australia. I have heard many women say this practice respects the placenta as a life-giving organ, and burial respects that by allowing it to enhance the life of another living organism. Placenta burial is a common ritual for many cultures, and the mythology behind these practices can include the belief that evil spirits can enter the home or village of a newborn child through the placenta, so it is quickly buried to reduce this risk. Some cultures like some Native Hawaiian, Navajo and Maori tribes believe by burying the placenta in the homeland, the child is bound to the land and his/her ancestral heritage. In Thai culture the placenta is salted, jarred and buried under a tree that corresponds to the symbol of the Asian year of the child's birth.

Lotus birth too, forms part of a ritual and ceremony, many believing the spiritual connection between the placenta and the baby should not be artificially broken. Indeed, among the Kikuyu in Kenya, the placenta and the umbilical cord are believed to symbolise the attachment of the child to the mother and its roots in the traditional society. Many of the women I have spoken with about lotus birth experiences have mentioned the moment the umbilical cord separated the baby and the placenta. Each of these women remembered that moment, and it seemed to be an impromptu ceremony of sorts, symbolising the end of the baby's transition from her body and into the world.

Another of the rituals associated with birth in the West is the swaddling, or wrapping of newborns, said to make them feel secure. This practice dates back to second millennium BC in Egypt, where infants were swaddled to protect them from malevolent spirits; the swaddling disguised the baby as mummified, to fool the evil spirits that lurked the neighbourhood after the birth of a baby. The wrapping also symbolised the god Ptah, a God of protection and healing. In the Tudor period in England, traditional Catholicism encouraged the practice of crossing the child after swaddling, and sprinkling it with protective salt.

Throughout the World

For many of us living in Australia, the idea of enacting rituals as part of an ordinary pregnancy and birth may sound strange, as we are often removed from spiritualising our experiences. Modern pregnancies, labours and births however, are filled with ritualised encounters. While these encounters can enrich our experiences, taking a closer look can help us understand the underlying ideologies and cultural messages these rituals convey. As part of my PhD research into home birth experiences in Australia, the rituals undertaken by women and families are of great interest to me, and one of the first many undertake is the pregnancy test.

The modern pregnancy test symbolises more than just 'proof' of pregnancy. Some tests, for whatever reason, we are happy to undertake, and others we decline. Irrespective of the reason, undergoing testing involves being part of a bigger belief system and ideology. For most of the women I have met during my research, doing a pregnancy test comes with the disclaimer 'I already knew I was pregnant...but I did the test to be sure.' This ritual legitimises pregnancy in our culture, but also reinforces an ideological message that says you cannot trust your own body, for it's messages may not be 'real', while a medical test however, can tell you the truth. Tests gives clear-cut answers, and we are so accustomed to trusting test results of all kinds that doing them provides the kinds of answers we can listen to.

It is not all cynical though, I am sure many of you can recall looking at that positive pregnancy test for the first time, and the myriad of emotions that swell through your body. I can still remember the heart palpitations and cold sweat I had when looking at my first positive pregnancy test – I was terrified! And elated, excited, giddy and amazed, but what is interesting is that until I took that test, all I felt was nauseous. The ritual of the pregnancy test provided me with a means to experience my body in a new way. Rituals, whether positive or negative, impact on our experiences, and they have the power to do this because of the mythology imbued within them. If I gave no power to my pregnancy test, and regarded it as useless, not only would the positive result mean nothing to me, but I probably would not have used one in the first place. Some of the women I have spoken with about their experiences did not use a pregnancy test, but instead trusted the messages they were getting from their bodies.

While the pregnancy test is a contemporary Western example of ritual, it is not hard to imagine the fear associated with blood in ancient Egypt, for today one of the most popular questions asked of home birthing women is, "but what about the mess?" Blood, especially women's blood, is still taboo in Western culture, a classic symbol of pollution. Cleaning or the disposal of blood and birth by-product is also a ritual, symbolising the return to order, and an abating of anxiety around disease, filth and of course death.

Rituals and ceremonies form an integral part of pregnancy and birth. They anchor our bodies and our experiences to a 'bigger picture', usually the cultural beliefs and values behind the rituals in question. It is easy to take for granted the rituals and ceremonies of Australian life, because we are a part of them every day. We can learn a lot about our core values by the enactment of our deepest belief systems through ritual, and connect ourselves with our histories, ancestors and the line of women who came before us.



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Of Blessing Ways & Baby Moons

LIZZIE ROSE

IT WAS ONE of those glorious balmy days that draws Spring to a close and Summer two steps closer.

22 women bearing bountiful gifts of lemon trees, blueberries, mango and papaya. Handmade craftiness of origami cranes, an embroidered felt hanging bird, softies and hand written songs for our much anticipated son - each person clutching a piece of recycled fabric to become part of the trail of flags that hangs in our living room.

We began the blessing with an unexpected smoking ceremony conducted by a close friend. She'd gathered local tea tree and natives to smudge the perimeter of our house as a seal of safety for the impending birth.

Inside, busy casting a circle, Harry's ultimate Aunty cleansed the space. She called upon the goddess and silently wove her magic, leaving the room in which I was to labour, buzzing and ready for us all to gather.

I was 34 weeks pregnant, my belly swollen and ripe for a dose of support from my fellow sisters. Today I remain blown away by the enormity of love that unfolded the day of Harry's blessing. As we went in a non circular way around the room; women offered song, music, poetry, words of advice, encouragement, readings from books, and a great dose of energy to sprinkle across the room that got me through over 30 hours of labour.

The blessing was informal, it was profound. I was incapable of holding back tears as I felt my little one kick in the warmth of a great blanket of support. I knew I was getting ready for birth. It was the first time I felt I could do it. I felt excited. The anticipation of meeting our son was overwhelming that day and as I met my partner Nessa's gaze across the room, it felt as though we had cast the last remaining piece of the spell that helped us both so enormously once labour had begun.

We closed a powerful circle with a round of song and afterwards as we feasted in the garden, the sewing machine hummed along making what has now become Harry's bunting. It is a magnificent string of flags that I laboured beneath in the birth pool. Each flag is so special and I remember looking up at them between contractions, drawing upon them for help. We are going to add a flag each year on Harry's birthday and he can have them for life - string them in his own place one day, take them overseas or even wrap himself in them, who knows!

Probably one of the highlights of the blessing was the interpretive dance my mates did, dressed in a chicken and cow costume, throwing themselves about to a medley of songs such as 'Push It' by Salt 'n Pepa. It's always good to include a bit of humour in these kinds of ceremonies!

Having a blessing way was an important ritual for me as it allowed me to enter a space in which I needed to feel comfortable and grounded in order to birth Harry. Ness and I hovered in the trail of the blessing for the 6 weeks lead time to the birth, and whenever it all felt too overwhelming, scary or seemingly impossible, we would sit under the flags or I would meditate in the morning beneath them with my hands on my belly, knowing I was safe with the ever remaining atoms of love floating around.

This is a thank you to all our wonderful female friends that shared themselves on that day. For us, having a baby moon seemed to hold hands with having a blessing way. It felt implausible to do it any other way.

Once our boy had landed, we drew up the majestic draw bridge we had envisioned extending from our house. We attached





a hand painted magical sign to the gate with all the essential birth info – weight, time, sex, and then we padded around softly in candle light, music and that heavenly billow of cloud that comes when a new being arrives.

A handful of close friends, like angels crept up the driveway for the first 14 nights leaving gourmet meals on our doorstep. If we were awake they would come in and share in the softness of Harry, if not we would find nourishing dinners waiting for us outside. We banned our families, we didn't answer the phone. We checked out of the world and snuggled into each other to enjoy the miracle of our son finally here. For 2 weeks we indulged in a baby moon and only Ness and I held Harry as we hoped to make his transition into the world a safe and confident one.

This 2 week stretch helped me heal without stress, we felt like we really got to know our boy on our own terms. We were so well cared for by our friends that it meant when we did open up the house to visitors, we were grounded enough to deal with the swell of excitement that can sometimes be overwhelming for new mummies and bubs!

A baby moon in our society can seem selfish and often family and friends feel rejected or hurt for not being included from the start. We avoided this by giving people warning that this was what we planned to do when Harry arrived. The forewarning seemed to work and although there were a few cheeky drop-ins, we mostly resided in our bubble of new tiny fingers and snuffles for long enough to come back from the other world birth takes you to.

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The Yoga of Birth

KATE MANITSAS

ANCIENT RITUALS FOR MODERN TIMES

AS A LONG term yoga teacher and practitioner, when I became pregnant with my first son I was very interested to learn about what the teachings of yoga had to offer, beyond the benefits of preparing my physical body for birth. Two children later and I've discovered the philosophical teachings of yoga and Ayurveda have an abundant wealth of support and nourishment to offer pregnant women. In my own experience, I found the rituals practiced around birthing and particularly those surrounding the 120th day of pregnancy and the 40 days after birthing, very beautiful and nurturing. I'd like to share with you some ideas around those rituals here and offer some suggestions for how they may be adapted to suit your lifestyle.

'Sadhana are the wholesome everyday practices observed in accordance with the cyclical rhythms of nature. They are spiritual practices that awaken the power of awareness and health and promote a joyful response to life.'

Mother Maya (Swamini Mayatitananda)

The word sadhana simply means 'conscious spiritual practice'. A sadhana is any practice that is done for the upliftment of self and others in a mindful, meditative way. Pregnancy is a particularly beautiful and pertinent time to practice the art of sadhana. Many modern women are disconnected from the impending birth of their child but sadhana can help to heal this disconnect.

120 DAY BLESSING ... WELCOMING A NEW SOUL TO THE WORLD

According to yogic tradition (particularly in the Kundalini Yoga communities), the 120th day after conception is a very important time for the baby in the womb, when the soul will enter the growing baby and a shift in consciousness takes place. If you know when your 120th day is, be sure to celebrate and keep it as a special day for honouring the soul you are nurturing within, or as close to the 120th day as you can. There is a special mantra which can be chanted throughout your pregnancy, but particularly around and on day 120, to encourage health and happiness for you and your baby:

*Adi Shakti Adi Shakti Adi Shakti Namó Namó
Sarab Shakti Sarab Shakti Sarab Shakti Namó Namó
Prithum Bhagwati Prithum Bhagwati Prithum Bhagwati Namó Namó
Kundalini Mata Shakti Mata Shakti Namó Namó*

Primal power, all power created through Divine Grace; I feel the Mother Goddess and her primal protective, life generating energy.

There are many beautiful recordings of this mantra available. If you have a circle of like minded friends, invite them to a small gathering where you can chant together and honour the baby before his or her arrival. I have done this 120 day 'ritual' gathering for both my children and found it to be a beautiful and precious sadhana that I will never forget. Friends can bring a small gift for you or your baby; you can chant together and share a sacred meal. For me this has been a wonderful alternative to the traditional baby shower.



STAYING IN THE NEST ... REFLECTIONS ON THE ANCIENT RITUAL OF KEEPING YOUR HOME A SANCTUARY FOR 40 DAYS AFTER YOUR BABY IS BORN

In many traditional cultures, the ritual of families staying at home for a number of days after a new baby is born is followed. Practicing Muslims, Jews, Orthodox Christians, Hindus and many other Asian cultures all have their versions of this ritual and is a widely practiced rite of passage across the world. It seems a little odd to me then that the Western approach after having had a baby is to pressure the new mother to 'get out into the world' as quickly as possible. It's almost as if we are in some kind of competition to see who can get back to 'life as normal' with the greatest speed. I'm sure there is a link between this ludicrous expectation and the high rates of post-natal depression in our culture. We just put ourselves under so much pressure as new mothers!

Of course the yogic tradition stems from India, and all the major faiths that are practiced in India (amongst them Hinduism

and Sikhism), encourage a 40 day rest at home period after birthing. This practice is also referenced many times in various Ayurvedic texts. In Vietnamese culture, it is encouraged and known as the 'laying in'. The Vietnamese particularly emphasize that by staying home with a new baby and resting, the mother is rebuilding her energy in such a way that will serve her all the way into old age. The Orthodox Christian Church recognizes that after giving birth, both mother and baby need a rest and some time to bond and recover their strength. That is why they are both excused from attending services for the next 40 days and encouraged to stay home and rest.

'In our families, as given to us from the ancient teachings, we observe forty days of sacred privacy and quiet for mother and baby. It is a time for rest, rejuvenation and bonding. In this time the intimacy of the magnetic field between mother and child is confirmed and the deepest core values of security are transmitted. These forty days can be an incredible time in your family's life. In the Old Testament it rained for forty days and forty nights. It took Noah forty days to build the Ark; the Christians observe forty days of Lent. There are forty days of Ramadan in the Muslim faith. The physical body renews all the cells in the bloodstream every forty days.' Gurmukh (Kundalini Yoga teacher).

My own personal experience was that I had a double motivation to stay home for 40 days after having my son. Firstly, my son's father is Greek Orthodox and I married into that church when I married him. I was strongly encouraged (and very much supported) to follow the 40 day ritual by both my husband and his mother. Obviously I also endeavour to live my life according to the teachings of yoga philosophy, so I was keen to observe the 40 day ritual for that reason too.

40 days at home may simply not be practical for many new mothers. For this reason I often suggest that even staying home for a few days is better than not staying home at all. It is absolutely vital that you have lots and lots of support measures in place for this time. It's not supposed to be a time when you silently struggle on your own, trying to figure out how to care for a newborn baby. You should not feel isolated or lonely and if you do, I would suggest seriously reconsidering your choice to stay home. This time should be restful, nurturing and gentle in its vibration.

Your new baby is already used to the sounds and vibrations of your home, from the time in the womb. Your newborn is even immunized to a certain extent to your home environment (again due to indirect exposure in the womb). For example if you have cats or dogs, your new baby is adapted to being around animal hair via you! So your home really is the safest place to be for the first few weeks of life. If you have a homebirth – even better – there is no need to cause any disruption or go anywhere.

There are many different ways of following the 40 day ritual. In strict Orthodox and yogic culture the new family will have no visitors at all for 40 days and will live in a relative 'bubble'. I personally found this idea a little restrictive so we chose to compromise. I encouraged visitors and had lots and lots! I was concerned about getting bored when I planned my 40 days at home, but my experience was far from boredom. Between sleeping a great deal, spending time with visitors and getting to know my son, the days passed effortlessly and I remember these days as very precious moments in my life.

I just felt a very special bond developed between us by not being separated at all during this time.

HERE ARE SOME TIPS FOR MAKING WHATEVER VARIATION OF THE RITUAL YOU CHOOSE, WORK WELL FOR YOU:

- Be prepared: before your baby arrives, prepare your home for your 40 day ritual. Buy items like washing powder and food staples in bulk. Do some cooking in advance and preserve or freeze some of your favourite meals.
- Do not be afraid to ask for help. Take the time to explain to friends and family what you will be doing when the baby is born and why this ritual is so valuable for you both. Ask family members to visit and to bring you a nourishing meal or to help with cleaning and other household tasks. You will be amazed at how happy people are to help at this special time.
- Let this time be one of sacred rest and nourishment. Don't worry too much about whether it is day or night – be willing to sleep at any time, to light a candle and chant or pray at any time. Give thanks for the blessing of your beautiful child. Life will be busy again soon enough so enjoy this slow paced time when there is no agenda.
- your home with flowers and beautiful fragrances. Enjoy your home as a retreat sanctuary at this time, as you create a cocoon with your new family. Minimize television and other disruptions, cultivating a pure and gentle environment as far as you possibly can.
- If you have children already, plan carefully for friends or family members to support you staying home, by taking your older child to school or to the park for example. I must admit I found it much, much harder to stay home with my second child. Although we avoided getting in the car or making longer journeys; with a two year old around it was difficult to stay at home all the time.

At the end of your 40 days, or however long you have decided to stay home, you may wish to hold some kind of celebration. You may wish to hold a small gathering in your home and invite friends and close family members to come and share wholesome food and offer their blessings to the baby.

WISHING YOU MANY BLESSINGS AND ALL JOY ON YOUR JOURNEY AS A MOTHER.

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The Buddhist Blessing of Jetsun Bodhi

VIRGINIA MADDOCK



WHEN I WAS pregnant, I attended a Buddhist meditation class every week, hosted by Tibetan Buddhist nun 'Venerable Dawa Yangchen'. So after my son Jetsun was born, I wanted to celebrate his birth in a unique way and have him blessed in the Buddhist tradition, and asked Ven. Yangchen to conduct the ceremony. I thought it fitting to hold it twenty one days after his birth, as twenty one is an auspicious number in Buddhism, and I had some close women friends and my yoga teacher come along to celebrate with me.

I was so pleased when Yangchen chose to bless Jetsun under 'Chenrezig', the Buddha of Compassion, as I really wanted Jetsun to have that quality in his personality, especially as I am such an animal lover and want him to be too - For this reason I am a vegetarian and am bringing him up to be too, so I figure if he has a lot of compassion then he won't feel the need to rebel against this part of his upbringing (as so many people insist that he will!)

Yangchen started by telling my guests the meaning of Jetsun's first and second name. 'Jetsun' is a title given to high Buddhist lamas, and means noble, learned and good. His second name 'Bodhi' means enlightenment as attained by a Buddha. Yangchen laughed that he certainly has a lot to live up to! I chose those names because I really liked the sound of the name Jetsun, after reading a fascinating story about my favourite Buddhist saint, an ancient Buddhist hermit they called Jetsun Milarepa, who underwent many hardships and trials before becoming enlightened – he lived in the forest and is depicted as green due to his skin turning that colour from surviving on only nettle tea. And I love the name Bodhi because it is what they called the tree that Buddha sat under for 3 days of meditation before attaining enlightenment – I have visited the very spot in India where the Bodhi tree (or at least it's successor) resides, and I have a strong connection to trees after studying horticulture and being a gardener for a number of years.

Yangchen gave a copy of the Buddhist practice to my guests and I. We said the prayers and the blessings of Chenrezig and she led us through a meditation. She showed us how to hold our hands and fingers in a 'mudra' while we did a visualization practice and imagined ourselves to be the Buddha of Compassion, Chenrezig. The reason for this is that by replacing the thought of yourself as you, with the thought of yourself as Chenrezig, you gradually reduce and eventually remove the fixation on your personal self. This expands



your loving kindness and compassion toward yourself and toward others, and your intelligence and wisdom becomes enhanced, allowing you to see clearly what someone really needs and to communicate with them clearly and accurately.

We then said the mantra of compassion "Om Mani Padme Hum" twenty one times. It is said that the entire Dharma, the entire truth about the nature of suffering and the many ways of removing it's causes, is said to be contained in these six syllables. By saying, thinking or reading the mantra, it invokes the powerful benevolent attention and blessings of Chenrezig, so that his love and compassion are within us and we can come to realise our own true nature is the same. The Dalai Lama (who is believed to be the reincarnation of Chenrezig) says: "Thus the six syllables, Om Mani Padme Hum, mean that in dependence on the practice of a path which is an indivisible union of method and wisdom, you can transform your impure body, speech, and mind into the pure exalted body, speech, and mind of a Buddha."

I was then asked to carry Jetsun (who was asleep in my Hugabub) around Yangchen in a clockwise direction while she chanted the mantra twenty one times. To finish off, she blew gently on his face to pass the blessing on to him, then placed a white Tibetan ceremonial scarf called a 'khata' around his neck and gave me a certificate. We then had tea and cake!

Jetsun has grown to be a very loving little man, although I have wondered in recent times whatever happened to his compassion when he has found delight in pulling his feline big sister's tail, but fortunately this has been just a passing phase and now he loves giving her her dinner with a nice pat!

[*"I was so pleased when Yangchen chose to bless Jetsun under 'Chenrezig', the Buddha of Compassion, as I really wanted Jetsun to have that quality in his personality"*]



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Honouring my Valentine's babe's placenta

RACHEL PREST



PLACENTAS HAVE ALWAYS held a special significance to me. I'm not totally sure where this has come from, but it is something operating at a deep sub-conscious level, a spiritual level. I had always thought that I would honour my babe's placenta by returning it to the earth and burying it under a significant tree. During my pregnancy, when I first read about lotus birth in Sarah J Buckley's book 'Gentle Birth, Gentle Mothering', it resonated with me and I thought how wonderful would it be if each and every one of us had the chance to let go of our placenta, 'our twin' when we were ready, in our time.

I had planned a homebirth for the birth of my first child and although we were at home for most of my labour, I ended up transferring and having an assisted birth at the local hospital. The circumstances surrounding this transfer were very traumatic for me and I have endured much physical and emotional trauma from the last events surrounding his birth. My wishes for a physiological third stage and intact placenta and cord were not to be. My son's cord was cut by his father, not right near his navel, but a lot longer as I had requested. His placenta was then placed in a bag for me to take home. After we had had time to bond with our babe, his cord was cut a lot shorter (closer to his navel) by the hospital midwife. I had requested his cord be placed with the placenta, but had found out when we were ready to go home that the midwife had thrown it out as waste. I was deeply hurt for a long time after that, that someone could act so callously with a sacred organ made from cells of both mine and my son's tissues, which had allowed me to nourish and keep him alive for the past 10 months.

As the months went on and I become more comfortable with mothering my baby, I realised that I needed to heal from my experiences surrounding his birth. This healing has taken me back and around again on a challenging journey. As his first birthday approached and his placenta still sat frozen in the freezer, I knew that I was not ready to honour his placenta by burial yet. A friend had suggested placenta printing, so I took it upon myself to research this technique. Then one day I decided to de-frost his placenta. That night I lit a candle and explored his sacred organ. I sponged paint onto it and as I pressed down a sheet of art paper and slowly peeled it off, there was his 'tree of life' in all its richness and beauty. Lots of tears flowed that night, especially as I examined the cut cord and his blood oozed out - blood that was rightfully his. This was a very healing exercise for me.

As time went on and I continued my healing journey, his second birthday approached. It was then that I decided that I was at a point to honour his placenta. On his 2nd birthday I decided to have a 'healing ceremony' that was attended by my close women friends. I honoured the four elements: fire – burning of my notes and lit candles, water – bowl of water to wash my hands, earth – soil

“... I shed tears as we covered it with soil, but knew that this is what I wanted and knew it was the right time ...”



to cover the placenta and air – helium balloon to be released. Before the ceremony I defrosted his placenta and sewed a purple ribbon, symbolising his discarded cord, from one end of his intact cord to the dry navel cord from his belly button.

At the ceremony I shared my birth story and then I went around the circle with each woman hugging me in silence – that felt so wonderful. After that we shared some food and when everyone had left, my husband, son and I buried his placenta in a private ceremony under one of our backyard fruit trees. I shed tears as we covered it with soil, but knew that this is what I wanted and knew it was the right time.

The lemon tree is flourishing and I am so grateful to my son who has helped me to realise and discover my 'true self'.



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Encapsulating Placenta

JO HUNTER

IN THE WORLD of homebirth and natural birth, placenta encapsulation is becoming more common. Some midwives offer this as part of their service to their clients. Some women prefer to encapsulate their placentas themselves. Humans are the only mammals who do not usually consume their placenta.

PLACENTA IS RICH in iron and protein, is full of oxytocin and oestrogen and packed with other vitamins and minerals. There is anecdotal evidence that suggests that placenta pills assist with recovery after birth.

It is believed that placenta pills:

- Assist the uterus to return to its pre-pregnancy state
- Replenish depleted iron
- Reduce postnatal bleeding
- Regulate hormones
- Boost energy levels
- Prevent postnatal depression
- Assist milk supply
- Assist with the symptoms of menopause

Some of the benefits according to women I have worked with:

"I just felt so much better in the weeks after this birth than the others"

"I had so much more energy than I expected"

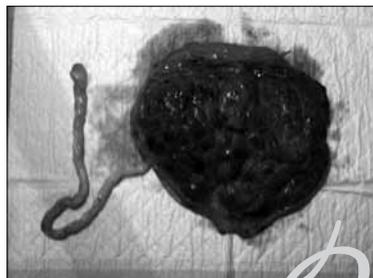
"They helped on days which were particularly emotional. I took a few of the placenta pills and they made me feel better"

"I wish I had of known about placenta pills for my previous pregnancy"

FOR THOSE INTERESTED IN MAKING PILLS FROM THEIR PLACENTA, I HAVE PUT TOGETHER A PHOTO DIARY OF THE PROCESS.



Placenta and membranes



Wash the placenta under running water to remove excess blood. Cut off membranes and umbilical cord



Place the placenta in a steamer, pop on lid and steam on the stove top for about 20 mins



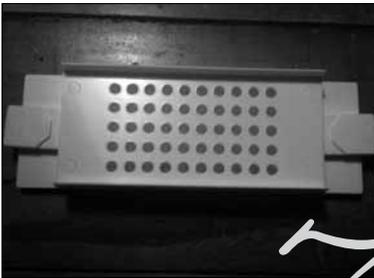
Cut up steamed placenta into thin pieces



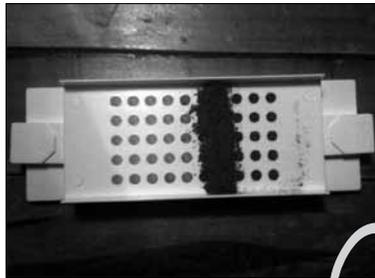
Place in a food dehydrator on 45 degrees C for at least 6 hours. You can also dry out the placenta on a baking tray in your oven. Put the oven on the lowest temperature possible and place the placenta in overnight.



Grind the dehydrated placenta pieces in a coffee grinder. You can also use a pestle and mortar.



Place the larger half of the capsules into the 'cap 'm' quik'



Fill the capsules with ground placenta



Place the top part of the capsules onto the bottom part of the capsules



Voila, you have placenta pills!

You don't need to have a 'cap 'm' quik' machine. I purchased one because it makes the process a lot quicker and I am making these pills regularly. You can also just fill each pill by hand.

Depending on the size of the placenta you will get between 150 – 250 pills. It's recommended to take 2 pills, twice a day for 2 weeks postpartum.

If you choose to, you can keep the remaining pills to use during menopause.

Mama Is... 'Woe Is Me'

HEATHER CUSHMAN-DOWDEE



MAMA-IS.COM

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



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REVIEWS BY VIRGINIA MADDOCK

DOCUMENTARY FILM **review**



'Throwing out the lies with the birthwater'

BY RANI O'KEEFFE

THIS FANTASTIC DOCUMENTARY centres around Michelle King and the care she receives while planning and having a homebirth, as well as the Blue Mountains homebirth community that supports her. It examines the changes to the law which threaten every woman's right to choose this safe and gentle method of birth. In the opening scene Michelle rightly says is "It's a birth and it's happening and there's nothing to do. You just gotta be there!"

Michelle's midwife is Sonja MacGregor, who does a great job at challenging the misconceptions (and lies!) of homebirth safety and tells us why she loves her career so much, a vocation that is under threat from these new law changes. She says so many wise things but I had to laugh when she said "If I go to a birth, I would not have a clue if they've had a Brazilian. I'm not one of those midwives who feels the need to stare at vaginas!" – a testament to the hands off style in which she works!

We get a glimpse of the local radio station Blu FM which hosts "Birth Hour", and hear the local 'Umbilical Sisters' Amy Bell (an independent candidate who ran for the Senate in the election), Alicia McGee & Sarah Brooks talk about homebirth and the associated politics. We see the Blue Mountains Homebirth Group surround Michelle with love and support, and her close women friends who give her such a great Blessingway, complete with a beautifully painted belly cast!

The protest which follows the closure of the Blue Mountains Maternity Unit is featured, which highlights even more the need for homebirth as an option, as women are forced to travel long distances through traffic chaos to Nepean hospital during labour – one woman tells her story of giving birth in the ambulance en route!

Michelle's waterbirth of her daughter Keanna shows us how special

homebirth really is, as we see her family and her support team get involved, each with their own role to play to support her every need - the children bake a cake, Sonja keeps an unobtrusive watch, the doula Jo and Natalie and her husband Brett give physical and emotional support; all in the dimly lit, comfortable surroundings of her bedroom. This scenario just cannot be replicated in a hospital!

The film then crosses to the Homebirth rally in Canberra (was that really a year ago?), and shows the passion and enthusiasm of the three thousand + strong crowd, protesting the government's anti-homebirth law changes in less than ideal weather. I was excited to see a split second glimpse of my own banner in the crowd, as I'm sure many others who watch this will see theirs or themselves too!

This documentary is a great cross section of the personal and political aspects of homebirth. To those who know how great homebirth is, it is wonderfully affirmative; and to those who are yet to realise the benefits, this film may just go a little further to help convince them (if they're not sucked in by all the lies from the AMA and the media!) We can only hope that this newly elected government will return our rights, and that our choice to have a midwife at our home birth will not be restricted in any way, shape or form. It should be every woman's right to have the kind of midwife and the kind of birth that Michelle and her family are fortunate enough to have had!

This documentary is now available to purchase on DVD, or to hire out for public screening. Contact Rani on raniokeeffe@yahoo.com.au or through the website: www.frogmouthfilms.com.au

Rani is currently making a 2nd documentary from the men's perspective and is seeking interest from homebirth men who would like to contribute.



BOOK **review**

'Simply Give Birth'

BY HEATHER CUSHMAN-DOWDEE

THE CREATOR OF our favourite comics 'Hathor The Cowgoddess' and 'Mama Is...', Heather Cushman-Dowdee has released a compilation of homebirth stories that is sure to captivate and inspire. As the title suggests, her aim is to show the reader that birth is a simple and natural life event (without the drama that we've come to expect from the media).

The 33 stories were chosen out of 70 submitted, for their simplicity and their focus on the woman at the centre of the story, the birthing mother. For this reason, most of the births are unassisted with just the woman and her partner or immediate family involved.

Heather has edited the stories accordingly to exclude less important details (for the aims of this book) such as the process of making the decision to birth at home or unassisted, the lead up to the birth and whatever happens after the placenta is out. Each story starts with the arrival of labour and continues until just after 3rd stage, with the focus on the mother's raw experience and her instincts alone that help her push her baby out into the world, often along with how her partner or

family participates in the experience. The reader is then able to share in the amazement and empowerment of the actual birth process without the extra fluff.

There are some funny stories with many involving mishaps with the birth pool; empowering moments of overcoming fear and pain, and heart-warming moments involving partners and siblings at birth. I think this book would be particularly helpful for those who have any fear and doubts about giving birth so that they can view birth in a way that is free of negativity, as they all end on a very high note.

Birthing without a midwife is not something most women in the homebirth community would choose (in part because they would miss out on that special mother/midwife relationship that many of us cherish), but you have to admire the women in these stories who just get on with it and have absolute trust in the process of birth, like countless generations of women have done through the ages and throughout the world.

BOOK review

'Cheers To Childbirth'

BY LUCY PERRY

'CHEERS TO CHILDBIRTH' is a newly released book written by Lucy Perry, experienced doula and the founder of the highly successful childbirth education sessions for dads at the pub called 'Beer + Bubs'.

Lucy begins with the birth stories of her three children, the younger two who were born at home – the second of which is an amazingly quick birth at her own crowded Christmas party (a very entertaining read!).

The book is divided into three sections with each chapter divided into two parts starting with Lucy's great advice then a birth story from a man's perspective: Part One covers the practical aspects of childbirth such as 'What to say and what not to say during childbirth' and 'Practical ideas for pain management'. Part Two covers the physiology of each stage of labour, after the birth, and caesareans. Part Three covers 'Life after birth' and 'Breastfeeding for blokes'.

There is some great advice for men like "Leave your phone turned off", "Don't invite your mother" and "Don't stink!" Lucy also shares some great anecdotes of the many births she's attended over the years – many of which have given her the very reasons why she felt it necessary that men needed this kind of advice in the first place! There is also valuable input by other birth professionals, including Lucy's homebirth midwife Akal Khalsa!

The second half of each chapter is a birth story written by a famous or prominent Australian man who has been through it all and come out the other side wiser and with some insight or advice to the expectant father. The men include world boxing champ Danny Green, champion surfer Mark

Occhilupo, the (in my opinion very hot) news presenter Mark Ferguson, neurosurgeon Dr Charlie Teo and TV presenter Adam Spencer, to name a few.

'Cheers To Childbirth' is both informative and entertaining and should be read by all men who are soon to become fathers, whether it be for the first time, or if they want to improve their role in the birth process for subsequent babies. I think it could also be a good read for doulas to brush up on their skills as there are so many great tidbits to improve your birth support bag of tricks. Despite there being no birth stories by homebirth dads (and I am told it was not through lack of trying to find one who was well known and keen to contribute, to no avail), and some of the advice is directed towards the hospital setting, there is still much in the book that can be learnt for births at home.

For men who run a mile when their partners ask them to read boring textbook style birth books, this one is an easy read and in parts will no doubt have them laughing out loud. When finished they will be well equipped to be the very best birth support partner they can be, making what can be a daunting process, into an experience which is much more bearable for their women!

'Cheers To Childbirth' can be found in all good book stores and sold at all Beer + Bubs sessions (held around the country and in Mona Vale, Glebe and Caringbah in Sydney). For more information: www.cheerstochildbirth.com.au & www.beerandbubs.com.au

Cheers to Childbirth is written specifically for Australian men to prepare them for a hands-on role in the birth of their baby. It also features the birth stories of some well-known Australian fathers including boxer Danny Green, TV and radio personality Adam Spencer, neurosurgeon Charlie Teo and rower James Tomkins to name a few.

This book is long overdue. Cheers to Childbirth tells men what to expect from birth, the early months of fatherhood and the new status quo in their relationship.

Dr Charlie Teo, neurosurgeon

This book busts the myth that men are helpless onlookers when it comes to childbirth and gives them the tools they need to make birth easier, faster and more rewarding for their partner. It's also a very entertaining read with quite a few laugh-out-loud moments!

Akal Khalsa, midwife



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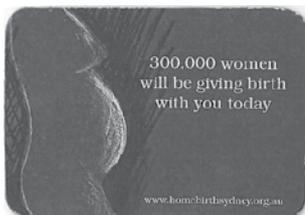
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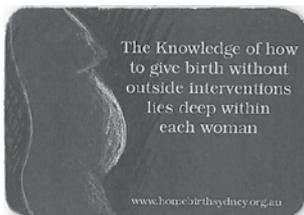
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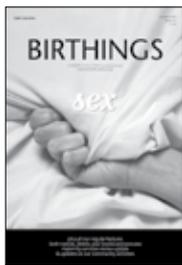
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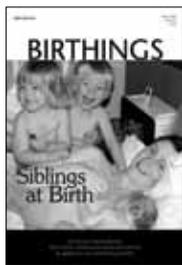
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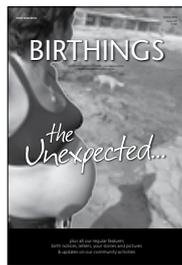
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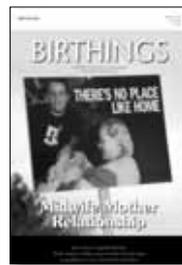
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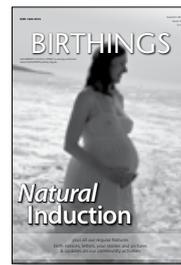
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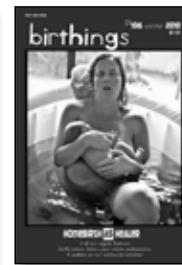
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Chrissy Butler

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Pascal's Birth Story

MONICA RENAUD

ON THE 28TH of March at about 2am, some mild period pains awaken me. Both Dadda & Louis are asleep beside us. By 3am, I have to get up to go to the toilet after breathing and observing these mild pains. That's when I saw 'the show', some mucous with blood, and knew you were on your way! We missed out on our little friend Sol's first birthday party, having lied to the gang about the likely labour we were hoping for that day. We stayed home & just rested as much as we could.

By 5.30 that afternoon, the surges that had been gradually intensifying throughout the day, needed more of my attention. We let our midwife Betty know and I busied myself with looking up which essential oils to have going and lighting candles in my favourite room, our bedroom. I pulled out all of the towels and drop sheets I had been gathering whilst 'nesting' to have all ready to go. Grant cooked dinner and we ate our last family meal together as 3.

By about 7pm the surges started to show a pattern. I wasn't frightened at all, but excited. So far so good, and I focused on your little plump body smiling contentedly inside of me. Grant and I had finally also found the perfect position to labour in. I stood astride towels to catch any blood and leant back into Grant's perfectly supportive chest. It was time for Louis to go to bed with a story and I was fine to continue on my own. By now, 8pm or so, I remember giving up on my note taking. These finer timing details ceased to be important as the contractions needed too much of my attention. I wanted to use all of my energy focusing on you and letting the surges do their job. I was so proud of myself for keeping it together! I was so glad I had read Ten Moons. I was so glad that we were doing all of this at home, our way.

By 10pm or so, we texted Betty for updates and she suggested hot towels as I begged for the pool. We now circled our hips together as Grant cradled piping hot handtowels around my lower belly. As my legs grew tired and wobbly from standing, I rested between contractions on a chair. I longed for the pool. Grant called Betty to ask her opinion. "No pool just yet"... Bummer, I wished for the support & comfort of the warm water. Hours pass, although I am unaware of the time. I knew by now that I wanted Betty with us. She arrived close to midnight and Louis woke up to meet her and witness some of the night-time action as they readied the pool and kept the hot towels coming. Louis dutifully caressed my hand, patted me and even kissed me as I rested between contractions on our bed. I was quiet so he wasn't scared at all. He seemed proud to be able to assist.

The contractions became a little irregular, so we decided to see for the first time how I was really progressing, dilation wise. Only 2cms, but lovely, soft and ready to go. Still not ready for the pool but they did begin to fill it, (yippee!) a positive with a down moment. Yes, I was now a little disappointed.

I asked Betty how long could this really take? The exciting film we were in soon became a documentary, as Betty softly and encouragingly whispered, "It'll just take as long as it needs to take, we'll go through the night..." I knew I couldn't stop and think. I had to keep focused. I began repeating to myself, "It's only pain, it won't kill me." I saw you in there smiling, eyes closed and content. Your heart rate was always great and so if you were happy I would be too.

Betty kept gently feeding me water and apricot nectar, and the hours passed. It was now about 2.45am, and we all rested, Betty & Grant sharing the duties between them to allow each a sleep.

I endured a couple of very painful contractions whilst lying down and I just had to get back up. Oh but I just wanted to sleep... The rest must have been your way of helping me, the calm before the storm I suppose, as once back on my feet, the pain and quality of the contractions intensified and the pool was reheated. 4.30am or so I slipped into the pool. OMG, what an immense comfort! The warm water hugged my tired body and I was delirious, maybe in heaven? The sun came up without me noticing, but I was by 6am "over it"... and by about 7am I hopped out of the pool to





see what was happening. Onto the bed with great difficulty to see how far I was now dilated.

Only 4cms! F*** me, this is serious! Your little body wasn't in the best position, as you had been during the latter weeks of the pregnancy, but I did know how to turn you. I had to lie back down... 'Oh no, not that again!' But I knew if we could get you to turn, all would get going again. So we tried and I endured a major contraction on our bed and I felt you come down.

Was I imaging it? The next wave came soon after and pop, my membranes ruptured with enormous relief. Oh my god it worked! Again I was just so proud, excited, relieved, almost tears of joy, and I knew you were helping Mumma and looking after me, along with the universe. ...

Within less than an hour I had opened to 8cms and I was able to get back into the pool. It was now after 8.30am. Within another hour I began to feel pushy, and 2nd stage is noted from approximately 10.15am. Now pushy is not a term I would use. I was surprised how 2nd stage really felt. For me, it was as if my whole body was trying to vomit, and my vagina was the mouth. I hate to vomit. You gag a little and then that almighty uncontrolled expulsion occurs that you couldn't stop if you tried. So you often gasp for breath and cry once that bit is done, as you get ready for the next wave to hit you. And this is how 2nd stage was for me. Exactly! My contractions by now were working alternatively. One big one with the uncontrolled body gagging and then one gentler one that kept things moving but gave me a slight rest. Was nature planning this? Was this normal? Should I push with it or just let it go? I had so much to ask but I couldn't bloody speak! So instead I just moaned, I think I had been quite vocal all morning, and I listened to Betty and Grant as they just let me be, to do what I had to do. It was like I was alone with my body and you, although I knew I had love all around me. Betty asked me to yell through my bottom rather than my mouth and I was encouraged to use my fingers to feel inside where I touched your little head for the very first time. That was amazing. I knew we would meet you soon.

A little while more in the pool and we all decided that I should pop out and go to the toilet to help bring you closer down. I was finding it hard to get into a good position in the pool for pushing. The toilet helped immensely. It was much more intense out of the water, but I truly understood that the more powerful the contractions, the closer we were to meeting you. It was now about 10.45am.

So we just kept going, then back into the pool at 10.55am. My whole body was trying to expel you, and I knew you were close. My ever present and observant Grant realised I was doing better more upright so he got me up onto my knees where he faced me and I grasped his thumbs tightly to pull down against as I pushed. I didn't want to waste the bigger contractions, as these almighty surges which I couldn't control were still alternating and doubling up. I decided the next one would be it!

At 11.01am you were born. Bang, crying, big balls ablaze, shiny, long, and you were passed to me once I legged over your cord. I sat back onto my stinging bottom to hold you. Slowly I

came back into the room as I left that place you go to during labour and birth. Grant and Louis' eyes welled and we were done.

Wow! I was a little in shock, maybe disbelief. We had just had a baby, through my vagina, into water, in a pool, in our lounge room. Betty hugged my face and told me how clever I was. The sun was shining, you were screaming. Grant madly took photos and Louis stared in wonderment, not at you at first, but at the blood in the water and whatever else he could observe and take in.

I too then wondered where all the blood was coming from as it bellowed around me like clouds into the clear water. Tearing didn't bother me. There was no way I could have let that hard brick wall feeling keep you from me any longer. A few stitches seemed miniscule compared to that discomfort. And I couldn't speak to ask for Betty's advice anyhow. It was all up to me, and this was empowering.

Grant cut the cord with Louis looking closely on. You were measured and weighed as I rested in the pool. We were yet to deliver your placenta. Dadda held you tightly as Betty helped me during a quick and soothing 3rd stage. She then helped me from the pool and I dried off to lie in bed for Betty to check everything was ok.

And so I did tear. But Betty fixed me and before long I was tucked up into bed, headachy and tired, but relieved, overwhelmed. You were here, healthy and happy, suckling right away and we were still at home. Grant served me tea and then got back to cleaning everything up with Betty and Louis. By now Mum had also arrived. We had let all of our family & friends know the news via text and they were now all calling. I was so happy that by being at home I could be with Louis, my little man and best mate for all of these years. I couldn't imagine him missing out on such an amazing experience, such a momentous event!

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Maggie's Birth

MAGDA JANSEN

ON MY DUE date, Friday 25 June 2010, I bought some cakes for my husband Neal and I. I said to him, we'd better celebrate this day because this baby is never going to come out. I had expected our second baby to come early, but when it was still inside on that day, I was joking to my husband that I would make the family fortune by appearing on Oprah with 'The Baby That's Never Born'. We had thought the baby would be born the Friday before (my guess), the Sunday before (my mum's guess), or even the Monday before (my husband's guess), all significant dates for us.

The next morning things were bubbling in my belly a bit and at 1.07pm I decided to time contractions. They were just under 10 minutes apart, not very painful, but they seemed pretty regular. Yes, this could be it! Our son Jonas was having his afternoon nap and we decided to call my brother to come over, who was going to look after Jonas at his place. He was close by and arrived around 1.45pm, just after Jonas woke up. At this point I still wasn't sure if labour had really started. After all, I was going on Oprah! My contractions became weaker and weaker. I knew that my brother was a bit worried about seeing me in labour, afraid of seeing me screaming and naked. I could tell he was very relieved that I was (still) myself and not screaming or naked or worse, both. I thought maybe my brother could just take Jonas to the park for an hour and we'd see how things progressed. Luckily Neal was very sensible and asked my brother to take Jonas to his place. As soon as they closed the door behind them, my contractions picked right up again. How amazing how the body and mind work.

From then on the contractions became stronger and closer together. Neal called our midwife Jane from the St George Hospital homebirth service, to tell her not to plan anything for that evening. I found it hard to get comfortable and tried different positions on the couch in our living room. Then I knew I had to sit on the toilet. We laboured for a while with me in some awkward-looking sideways position on the toilet. The heat packs and hot water bottle were helping me through contractions. I pressed them hard against my lower back and belly and stood up leaning into Neal or on the edge of the bath. We also put the TENS on. That



[*“... Woohoo! I was so happy it was over. I lifted our baby out of the water and saw she was a girl, our little Maggie Coralie ...”*

gave me more relief than I remembered from last time (with Jonas). In my notebook I see that I stopped timing my contractions at 4.01pm, when they were about 6 and 7 minutes apart. At 5.14pm Neal started timing again and the contractions were only 3 minutes apart and getting longer in duration. So labour really went into gear in that hour or so. I remember wanting Neal by my side so much and feeling so much love for him during the contractions. I'm so grateful he was there with me. In the mean time Neal had also called our midwife again and asked her to come over.

Jane arrived around 6pm. When she came into the bathroom – I hadn't moved an inch- I felt like crying. She asked me if I wanted to push and I said I had a vague urge to push. The contractions were really full on now and I was grunting loudly. Jane then said she'd better call the other midwife Erin and asked her to come over. Neal had started filling the birth pool in our bedroom and I really wanted to go in. I kept asking Neal if it was full yet. After a few times he simply said "I'll tell you when it's full enough!" Around 6.15pm I could finally slide into the pool. Oh, that felt so incredibly and wonderfully soothing! I couldn't believe how good that felt. As soon as I kneeled into the water my contractions became very gentle. I could just sort of puff through them with still only a very vague urge to push. I was also quite chatty in between contractions. Erin had also arrived when I was in the pool. The gentle contractions lasted for about 45 minutes. Even though this break was very nice, I was getting enough of being in labour.

Then suddenly, one contraction after losing the mucus plug, I had a HUGE contraction that almost launched me back against the edge of the pool. My waters had broken. From then on it went very fast. With the next contraction I had a massive urge to push and the baby almost shot out. It went back in again, but with the next contraction the head was born. One more push and our baby was out. 7.12pm. Woohoo! I was so happy it was over. I lifted our baby out of the water and saw she was a girl, our little Maggie Coralie.

The contractions continued and the after-pains were actually quite painful. After a while, Neal cut the umbilical cord and it was time to birth the placenta. We had decided I should get out of the pool for that, but when I tried to stand up I felt so faint I had to sit down again. Jane asked Erin to get the syntocinon out of the fridge. It was important to speed up the birth of the placenta because I had lost a lot of blood with Jonas' birth and ended up going to hospital. I was fine with using the syntocinon as I very much wanted to stay home this time. When Erin came back into the bedroom, I suddenly 'knew' what to do and birthed the placenta without any help. It turned out to be a very big placenta, too big for the bowl the midwives had brought with them and it spilled over the edges.

I could now step out of the pool and lie down on our bed for some rest, cuddles with Maggie and phone calls to my family. Jane and Erin weighed and measured Maggie. She was 4.66kg and 56cm. What a whopper! I guess that big placenta had provided Maggie with a lot of nutrients. We all talked for a while and discovered it was full moon and the evening of a half moon eclipse. So despite our predictions, Maggie had chosen her own beautiful day for a birth.



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Jacob's Birth

KAREN COCKBURN

AT 9.00PM OR so I had about three or four contractions that were pretty sore and I needed to pee with each one. They were maybe five minutes apart but I assumed it was pre-labour which I'd already been having for weeks, so I figured they would stop. I sent an SMS to my midwife and my friend who was coming as my support person, to let them know, just in case. But they did stop so I tried to sleep.

At 11.00pm I felt a trickle and I was like "Hmm..." so I jumped up and by the time I reached the toilet it was a full on gush. It just kept coming into the toilet and it was pink tinged so I knew that was all good. I also realised it meant that labour would be starting soon so I got excited. It was really weird; I sat on the toilet for maybe 30 or 40 minutes while I rang my friend and my midwife, and I told them I'd let them know when I needed them.

I decided not to bother trying to sleep (yeah bad idea I know!), so I got up and tried to watch *Desperate Housewives* and post on 'Nappy Addicts' while bouncing on a fit ball. I was managing the contractions and although I didn't time them, they seemed pretty regular to me.

Around 12ish I sent Pam a message saying if she wanted she could come hang out, as I felt I needed someone else around then. I think Greg did get up at some point too. The contractions started to get really bad and they seemed close together to me, although I remember Pam saying they were about 3 or 4 minutes apart. I think Greg rang Jo around 2.00am or so and she arrived at maybe 3.00am.

I got into the pool at this point. I was managing the contractions while reclining in the pool but it was very hot and I was sweating a lot. I got out of the pool and tried to walk around, but had to lean over something with each contraction and really concentrate on breathing through them. I was still wondering to myself if this was just early labour. Pam was putting the

heat pack and pressure on my back during contractions, which was awesome. It helped a lot.

After some more walking I needed to get back in the pool, and kneeling over the side was what helped at this point. I was managing a little rest between some of the contractions while in the pool. The time between contractions seemed to change to me; it seemed I'd get some on top of each other and then some with a longer break, so I didn't know what was going on.

Somewhere around here Jo arrived, but I wasn't really noticing what was going on around me by this stage. I got out of the pool again; I was quite restless and unsure what to do. I tried kneeling on the couch over the arm but it didn't really help much. I managed what seemed like a really long sleep on my side, but Jo said it was only about 5 minutes. I am guessing this is when transition was happening. The next contraction after this was awful and it made me vomit a few times.

During this time I was trying to walk to the toilet and I think I had about four contractions walking the short distance there. Then I had another at the toilet door and another once I sat down. I couldn't pee but really needed to. I had many more contractions, which seemed right on top of each other in our kitchen and I kept saying I couldn't do it.

In between contractions I was asking Jo for a vaginal exam. I really thought I couldn't do it anymore. These contractions were indescribable; so, so painful. I just wanted to know how much longer I had to go. Thankfully





Jo talked me out of it as she knew it wasn't what I really wanted. But after the next contraction I completely forgot I was asking for a vaginal exam.

I made it back to the pool and practically dived in. Jo and Pam had been adding more hot water and blowing it back up, as it had a slow leak which Greg had tried to repair. The next contraction in the pool was different. My body was pushing and I told Jo what was happening. I couldn't believe it; I didn't think it was going to happen so soon, each contraction making me push. It was so intense I could not have stopped it or slowed the pushing down.

After a few of these contractions I checked and I could just feel his head not far in, and that spurred me on. I couldn't wait to get him out and make the pain be over. It took 20 minutes for him to emerge. That ring of fire people talk about was insane! Even in the pool it really burned. Once his head was out, his body just shot out. Jo had to remind me to pick him up as I was just so stunned.

That first cuddle was so amazing; it was so different to not being able to touch Lucas for hours after his birth. Not long after this, I told Lucas he could get in the pool, but that didn't last long because I was worried he was going to drink the bloody water, so I got Greg to get him out!

It took another 20 minutes for the placenta to come out on it's own. For some reason during this 20 minutes, I was really anxious to get out of the pool. I think I was just worried about how it was going down and I could just see the bloody water going all through the house! I asked Greg to start emptying it as soon as possible.

From then I moved to the couch and got covered in towels and gave Jacob his first feed. I was a bit shocked and shaky so I was given a cup of hot sugary tea. I think I was just stunned by the whole experience. I still can't believe I did it. I've felt pretty good since his birth and so happy with how it went.



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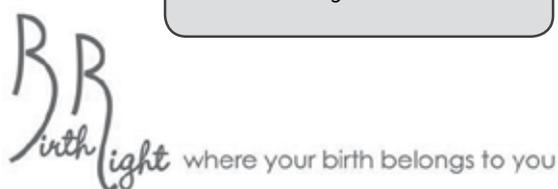
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Harry's Birth Story

LIZZIE ROSE

This is the story of life beyond the uterus and how Harry came to be.

MY PREGNANCY WAS so very welcome! The magical dipstick of fetal knowledge stared at us for a full day before we really believed it to be true. It was as though we were a heterosexual couple and the news of pregnancy was a complete surprise - not two mumma's who planned the whole event with a dear friend/donor for many months!

I rode my pregnancy pretty well. My belly swelled, my mind expanded and I spent the last few weeks writing unrealistic 'to do' lists and waking up at 4am for baths and sunrise adventures. Life swung between Braxton Hicks contractions and a heightened sense of the world's beauty in the lead up to Harry's birth.

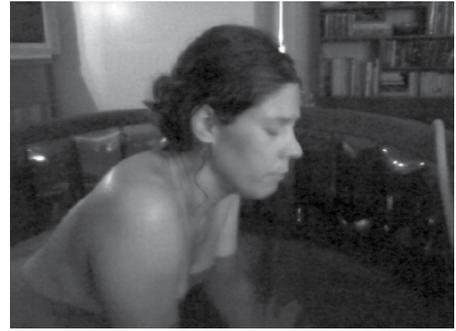
Waiting for labour to start was like chasing dandelion wishes in the breeze. I'd catch glimpses of breathing in new life, then just as quickly it would tumble away and change direction. It didn't take me long to realize I had no control over when the great day would arrive. Harry was due on the 10th December, so I was sure I wouldn't go into labour then, who does? I spent that day busy; installing a car seat, stocking the cupboards, walking our dog Maisy and generally not stopping, as I thought I could relax and rest in the evening. Harry had other ideas. At 7pm, I got my first pre-labour contraction. It was powerful enough to stop me mid sentence, my energy all of a sudden went inwards and a minute after it passed I looked up at my partner Ness and without saying anything, we both knew it had started. The night of the



10th was lovely, we stayed close, we stayed soft. We had a bowl of miso soup and kept staring at each other, engulfed by the cloud of anticipation that accompanies the first signs of an impending birth. I rode the beginning waves with excitement and we went to bed smiling, knowing we would probably wake soon with the start of labour. By 3am, I'd been awake on and off all night with fairly strong contractions, painful enough to make me throw up. We rang our most wonderful midwife Sheila to let her know things had started and by 7am she had arrived.

I had strong contractions until 11am when I threw up again and active labour began. By this time the only position I could tolerate the pain in, was leaning forward or in the pool. I became addicted to the pool, hopelessly addicted and found it almost impossible to get out of. I knew that being upright and walking would speed things up, but I actually didn't feel in a hurry to birth Harry or for labour to be over. The journey was slow and steady. The day passed - I squatted and rocked, walked bare foot around the garden, knelt openly in the warmth of the pool. I cried, I moaned, I smiled, I drank tea. I vomited, I got cold, then hot. I glued myself to Nessie and kept going, limpet like with her by my side. By 4pm on the 11th, Sheila asked me if I wanted an internal examination, I said yes. It was then that my waters broke and she realized Harry was posterior. I was 5cm dilated, only half way there. I had a shower, reluctantly walked around the pool with Ness supporting me over and over again. It hurt being upright. By 7pm I was going through transition (it had been 24hrs since the first pre-labour contraction). This was difficult. I was lost momentarily in the





vortex of intensity, wondering if I could make it through. On the other side I experienced a strange out of body sensation and I almost began to dance in the pool, spiraling upwards and smiling. I was taken back to a monastery I spent time at in the Indian Himalayas. For a moment I was high in the buckled folds of sacred mountains, up there with the eagles, the monks, prayer flags and butter tea. I could do anything at this point. Then something strange happened and by 8.30pm I slipped into a latent rest period and had micro sleeps as I anticipated the urge to push. It didn't come.

At midnight, Sheila did another examination, I was 9cm dilated. Harry was still posterior and in a position that prevented full dilation at this stage. The whole time, since the very beginning, his heart beat was 140, very stable throughout.

Our house was beautiful. The glow of candles reflected in the pool which was directly below special bunting made by women at my BlessingWay. I remained calm. I remained committed to having a home birth. It was at this point though that Sheila began to list our options, one of which was transferring to hospital. I said no. I wanted to wait to see if Harry would turn.

At 3am Sheila did another examination, I was dilated but there was still a cervical rim and Harry hadn't turned. I still chose to stay at home. We tried a few options. I lay down in a position to prompt the turning, we walked around the block under the moon in the early hours of the morning doing high lunge kicks. Stopping periodically to lean on neighbours' nature strips to have a contraction.

By 4.30am I knew we had to transfer. I was tired. I felt for the first time deflated and defeated. At 5am on the 12th, we caught a taxi to the hospital and I sat in the back in labour, terrified that I was about to enter into a caesarean. But at the same time by this point I was so exhausted, I caved into the idea and declared I was OK to have a caesarean. Sheila looked at me and calmly said, 'You know you will be considered high risk for your next baby if you have a caeaser'. That's all I needed to hear to kick start me again. I was determined to birth Harry naturally. I'd been going for so long by this point, all I'd had was rescue remedy and peppermint tea with honey. I wasn't going to give in just yet.

The taxi driver drove like a lunatic, flying over roundabouts and corners. I held my belly, held Nessa's hand, rode the contractions and prepared myself for a world so far away from the soft glow of my living room. We got to hospital by 5.35am, I was administered oxytocin almost immediately and examined at 6am, I was fully dilated and Harry had turned, at last. I think the bumpy taxi ride did the trick! I kind of went into battle at hospital and with Sheila helping me decode the hospital language, I managed to deflect the obstetrician, reject antibiotics, convince them I was OK without the hideous seatbelt-like strappings of the fetal monitor on continuously. I said no to the heart beat monitor chip being placed internally on the top of Harry's head and somehow I found a way to block out the hospital and enter the space in which I knew I could birth Harry. Then it came, the much anticipated urge to push. Finally I had that wonderful, involuntary and amazing feeling to birth my baby.

I had a whole new sense of energy all of a sudden and with the inability to do anything but ride the great dragon of birth, I was pushing and sweating and drinking water at every pause. For an hour I knelt on all fours, Ness in front of me eye to eye, 3 midwives behind me. I was surrounded by women and with their help and the conviction in Nessa's face, I birthed Harry naturally at 9.24am on the 12th December.

Nessie caught our boy and within seconds he was on my chest, skin to skin. My smile was as wide as the earth and a few minutes after birth Harry wiggled his own way down and latched on for a huge first feed of colostrum. I felt mammalian and very primal with my little marsupial boy having figured out by himself how to feed. We said no to a Vitamin K shot, no to Hep B, no to a bath and no to cutting the cord until it had stopped pulsing. I birthed the placenta after an hour and with the unimaginable softness of skin only hours old, we three began staring at each other with miraculous newness of a tiny life unraveling. By the afternoon we were home in the dappled light of our bedroom. I 'almost' had a homebirth!





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Ziggy's Birth

KATIE & PAUL MANITSAS

Ziggy Paul Manitsas. Born 8th December 2009

THE NEW MOTHER understandably writes most birth stories, but this one is a little different and is written by my husband about the birth of our second son at home. Ziggy Paul Manitsas was born on the 8th December 2009 at around 5pm at home in Sydney's Inner West. I am a writer and yoga teacher by profession and had intended to write this birth story myself but as I was sitting down to do so one evening, Paul my husband showed interested in what I was doing (this is highly unusual when I have a laptop in front of me!) and offered the birthing story in his words. Paul is a motor mechanic by trade and took some convincing that a homebirth was for us, but as you'll learn he was won over in the end by the perfect entry of our son into the world. The following account is his, completely unedited, and although my version of events for the same day would be rather different, and I remember very different things about the birth, it was very precious for me to hear how he remembers this special day for our family:

'I was at work and I got a phone call at three in the afternoon. Katie told me the birth is happening. Automatically I started to stress, thinking 'Here we go, running around, is everything going to be OK?' I didn't know what to expect. I raced home and my wife was having contractions, leaning against the kitchen table. I asked her if she wants a drink and I get myself a drink of orange juice. Katie asked me to ring the midwife. The midwife asked me a few questions which I answered and she said she would be with us within 15 minute, but not to worry, everything is going smoothly. She asked me to start putting warm water into the birthing pool, which was set up on our deck outside. I started filling the birthing pool while playing with our two-year-old son. I was telling him we are filling a swimming pool. At this point I was still feeling very anxious, thinking that there was going to be some sort of complication, and in the back of my mind I was anxious about 'do we have everything?' I was filling the pool; I got Katie some juice and the midwife turned up. My son and I snuck around the corner and started playing with a remote control helicopter. The midwife looked over and laughed at us.

The contractions started to get more intense and the midwife told us the baby is coming soon. A friend came to take care of our son and they disappeared into the house, playing games. In the back of my head I thought 'Wow I could start a barbeque and have a beer at the same time!' I didn't suggest that, but I was starting to feel more relaxed and that's what I thought.



["... when the baby came out I was so happy and so comfortable to be home. Everybody was there; our first son was there. The only one that wasn't happy was our jealous dog! "

Throughout the whole time, I was ready to drag my wife into the car and race her to the hospital. But while I was holding her hands, the baby's head popped out into the water of the birth pool. Just when I thought 'There's a problem' the midwife said 'Give one more push' and the baby came out. He wasn't clean. Within forty minutes of that we were all in bed in our home. And then I went and got us our favourite take out food. Katie slept, the baby slept, we all ate. I cleaned the pool and threw the liner out; the deck was clean by the next day. There were a few dirty towels. We put the placenta in a bag in the deep freeze and four days later I planted it under an olive tree on the footpath verge outside our house.

The moment when my second son was born, I felt very happy. The whole time I thought there would be complications and when the baby came out I was so happy and so comfortable to be home. Everybody was there; our first son was there. The only one that wasn't happy was our jealous dog!

For me, having a home birth was something I was initially against because I didn't trust that we didn't need a doctor around the whole time. But now knowing that my son was born in this house, it is such a beautiful thing. The hospital I was born in has been knocked down now, so to me it's such a beautiful feeling that Ziggy was born in this house. Since then I've found out that our next-door neighbour was also born in his house and now he is 90 years old. When I first met the neighbour the first thing he said was 'I was born in this house 90 years ago.' And he was really proud of that. I hope our son will have a feeling like that one day too.'

We would both like to thank our midwife Jutta Wohlrab (www.elementsofbirth.com) who has since moved back to Berlin from Sydney. She was a wonderful guide and support throughout our whole journey and has become a good friend.

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Media Watch

SARAH MCLEAN

Even if you are not an avid news hound, you probably would not have missed the beating that Homebirth has taken over the past couple of months with one issue after another, reaching mainstream headlines. My 'Google media alert' I set up for 'homebirth' has been going crazy with international stories as well as local ones.

1 June 2010

ABC News and the SMH reported on a coronial enquiry into the death of a baby born at home in South Australia. A legal ruling needed to be made to determine if the baby was alive at birth or a stillbirth to determine if an inquest was appropriate.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/06/01/2915072.htm?section=justin>

7 June 2010

In the SMH, it was reported that Roxon was 'optimistic' about the homebirth future. She thought the federal government's decision to support professional indemnity insurance for private practice midwives could help those offering homebirth services down the track. Despite the insurance not covering homebirths, Ms Roxon said the move is a significant step forward.

8 June 2010

Herald Sun reporter Susie O'Brien said that homebirth should be banned as it was putting babies' lives at risk. Talk back radio also ran with this angle.

9 June 2010

SMH highlighted the difficulty that homebirth women would face in accessing prescriptions and tests, and this is forcing mothers to give birth in hospitals or putting lives at risk. About 10 women say they were turned away from doctors' offices after asking for prescriptions for vitamin K, pain relief or syntocinon, a drug that prevents haemorrhaging after birth. Some had also requested ultrasounds to check the positions of their babies. All had engaged private midwives to help them deliver at home. <http://www.smh.com.au/lifestyle/wellbeing/homebirth-mothers-being-refused-prescriptions-20100608-xtr7.html>

13 June 2010

THE AGE reported that the number of home births in Victoria is on the rise, with a publicly funded program using midwives from Sunshine Hospital gaining popularity. Since the pilot scheme was launched in January, hospital midwives have overseen seven home births. A pilot home birth program is also being run in Casey, with the first birth due soon. If the trials are deemed successful by the Department of Health, the programme may be expanded to other Victorian hospitals.

20 June 2010

THE AGE ran a fantastic essay titled, 'Hard Labour' about our risk adverse culture and the impact it has on all women's ability to make choices when it comes to birth.

<http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/hard-labour-20100619-yo2p.html>

1 July 2010

Media from the UK, Europe, US and Australia all picked up the story about a study published in the American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology which researched more than 500,000 births in North America and Europe and found death rates for babies in planned home births were double that of those in planned hospital births. But the risk was still low, at 0.2%. UK doctors said the evidence needed to be taken into account, but a midwives' body questioned its relevance. Researchers looked at data from nearly 350,000 planned home births and more than 200,000 planned hospital deliveries. Crucially, it looked at where the woman had planned to give birth, rather than the actual birthplace. The main causes of death were breathing problems during birth and failed resuscitation after delivery. The quality of the data and the use of statistics from many countries with different health care systems made the analysis flawed.

8 July 2010

If you didn't already know – Danni Minogue had a baby boy! If you didn't know she was planning a homebirth, we certainly found out after she was transferred to the hospital for a 'complication'. Media reported widely and internationally on such a hot topic. Ted Weaver from RANZCOG's dubious statement that said up to half of all first-time mothers attempting a home birth had to be transferred to hospital due to complications. "It is better if first-time mothers don't attempt a home birth or, if they do, they should be counselled about their risks and needs for transfer," he said. As this data is not even collected, I am not sure where he got his information from, however as usual, a number of papers picked up that little pearl to add to the misinformation and scare mongering out there!

11 July 2010

SMH reported that homebirth midwives have been left out of the federal government's maternity care changes in an omission experts believe will lead to an increase in the potentially dangerous practice of unassisted childbirth. The changes, introduced this month, require midwives to have indemnity insurance to practise under the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme but private midwives are not covered for home deliveries.

27 June 2010

A letter published in the British Medical Journal by Cochrane Database researchers and professors, disputed the findings of the meta-analysis titled "Study shows higher rates of neonatal mortality with planned home births". The study reported that a meta-analysis has linked planned home births with a twofold higher rate of neonatal mortality compared with hospital. Cochrane database said the quality of studies in any meta-analysis is critical, but no assessment was reported. Studies were observational with many not matched adequately for confounders. Neonatal mortality came mainly from small studies, with most weight from one larger retrospective study on birth registry data for Washington. Unplanned home births are more likely to have poor outcomes, and some may have been misclassified as planned home births because birth certificates did not distinguish between them. Differences arising from comparatively small numbers should be interpreted with caution.

Strangely this story was not picked up by the media!

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 Elliott to collect books from Lilyfield 0425 217 788 or erikabirth@gmail.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
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Genevieve David 0408 213 030 genevivedavid@redtent.com.au
Naomi Abeshouse 0413 690 861
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www.homebirthmidwives.com.au

Birth With Gentle Choices

Offering continuity of midwifery care during pregnancy, birth and postnatally. Birth is a natural, and empowering experience that is part of a normal life journey rather than a medical event. Providing support for women and their families and encouragement to believe in herself and her ability to birth instinctively.

Betty Vella (Gymea) 9540 4992
bpvella@optushome.com.au

Homebirth: a natural choice

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 (Southern Highlands to Sydney; Woolongong to Nowra)
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 (Dundas Valley)
9873 1750
jane@pregnancy.com.au
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 (Sydney, Central Coast, Southern Highlands, Blue Mountains and Illawarra)
melissa@essentialbirthconsulting.com.au
www.essentialbirthconsulting.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 Birth Centre on 9113 3103.

Midwife

Jane is a shamanic midwife and a priestess of the Goddess. Her midwifery practice reflects these world views and is based on her facilitating women to take responsibility for their life journeys and the self-realisation opportunities of pregnancy, birth and mothering. Author of Ten Moons - The Spiritual Journey of Pregnancy, Preparation For Natural Birth, Jane facilitates 3 day women only workshops called Pregnancy the Inner Journey and also teaches the spiritual practice of menstruation and the wisdom of the cycles.

Jane Hardwicke Collings (Southern Highlands, but will travel)
0408 035 808
jane.collings@bigpond.com
www.moonsong.com.au

Elements of Birth

Jutta Wohlrab (Inner West)
0431 201 877
elementsofbirth@hotmail.com
www.elementsofbirth.com.au

Jo Hunter: Homebirth Midwife

I believe that women should be placed at the centre of their own experience, supported to empower themselves with knowledge and skills, given time and encouragement from their midwife, as well as being surrounded by those they love and people who believe and trust in their ability to birth. It is the midwives role to have patience and trust in the innate ability of women and babies and to be comfortable and confident to support this process in any setting the woman chooses. Pregnancy, birth and postnatal care up to 6 weeks is provided in your home. I live in The Blue Mountains and service local families,

inner west and western Sydney.
Blue Mountains, Inner west and Western Sydney (02) 47519840
jophil@aapt.net.au

Hazel Keedle

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

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

The Ella May Centre

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

Sonja MacGregor

A wholistic midwife who empowers and trusts a woman to birth her own baby in the comfort of her own home, surrounded by love. I provide a full antenatal, labour, birth and postnatal service in collaboration with the woman. Appointments are attended in the woman's home, with the inclusion of family and support people if the woman desires. I service Sydney, Blue Mountains, Southern Highlands, Illawarra, Central Coast & Newcastle.
Sonja MacGregor 0419 149 019
sonjamac@bigpond.com
www.birthathome.com.au

With Woman Midwifery Care
Rachele Meredith (Illawarra, Sydney, Shoalhaven and Southern Highlands)
0421 721 497
rachele@withwoman.com.au
www.withwoman.com.au

GUIDE TO CHOOSING A MIDWIFE

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

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

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

QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

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

PHILOSOPHY AND ATTITUDE

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

COLLABORATION/TEAM

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

PRACTICAL MATTERS**Legal, contractual, financial**

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

Timing

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

SPECIFIC ISSUES...**...during pregnancy**

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

...during labour and birth

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

...during the postnatal period

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

WHERE TO GO WITH CONCERNS ABOUT YOUR **MIDWIFE****FOR MONEY MATTERS**

NSW Department of Fair Trading
Lodge a Complaint **13 32 20**

FOR MATTERS OF CONDUCT

Health Care Complaints Commission
How To Make a Complaint **1800 043 159**

Midwives & Nurses Board NSW
mail@nmb.nsw.gov.au **(02) 9219 0222**

**WHICHEVER PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION
THEY ARE A MEMBER OF:**

Australian College of Midwives (NSW Branch)
admin@nswmidwives.com.au **02 9281 9522**

Australian Private Midwives Association
info@privatemidwives.net.au

Australian Society of Independent Midwives
midwife@ozemail.com.au **(02) 9888 7829**



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Photo by
Lucy Perry

Lighting a Candle

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Hamlin Fistula Relief and Aid Fund proudly presents
a new documentary about the work of Dr Catherine Hamlin,
the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital and the new
Hamlin College of Midwives in Ethiopia

Lighting a Candle documentary screening • Tickets \$25
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To book phone 8007 7435 or visit hamlinfistula.org.au

Homebirth Access Sydney (Inc)

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

HAS Policy Statement

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

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

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

For online advertising please email Jenny advertising@homebirthsydney.org.au

HAS ABN 75 947 458 113

YOU ARE WELCOME TO ATTEND **Homebirth Access Sydney (HAS) Committee Meetings**

10.00am–12.00 noon

last Tuesday of every month

AUSTRALIAN DOULA COLLEGE

422 Marrickville Rd Marrickville

Bring a plate or something to nibble.

Children welcome.

Please call to confirm Virginia Maddock 0415 683 074

NEXT MEETINGS:

31 August, 28 September & 26 October

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.

CALENDAR



DIARIES & PENCILS AT THE READY, PLEASE. IT'S TIME TO GET INVOLVED!

September

EVERY WEDNESDAY Inner West Homebirth Support Group

Time: from 10am

Location changes every week so please email your details to Greta or call to find out where we are meeting.

Contact: Greta gwerner@circleinteriors.com 0402035069. Bring a healthy snack if you like.

EVERY THURSDAY Sutherland Shire / St George Homebirth Support Group

Time: From 10.30am - 12.30ish pm

Location: Virginia's house at 5 Balfour Ave Caringbah (North)

Contact: Virginia 0415 683 074 maddvirg@yahoo.com.au

Whether you're pregnant or have babies or kids in tow, come on over, let the kids run amok and enjoy a cuppa and some fresh baked delights with some like-minded mamas.

THURSDAY 9th Blue Mountains Homebirth Support Group

Time: 10am-12pm

Location: Mid Mountains Community Centre, 3 New St, Lawson

Cost: \$2- \$5

Contacts: Alicia 4759 2336 or Sara dave-sara@bigpond.com Bring a healthy snack to share if you get a chance, if not come anyway. School Holidays is a casual catch up (played by ear). All welcome.

**MONDAY 13th
Illawarra Birth Choices**
Topic: Brain development & interpersonal neurobiology

Guest speaker: Penelope Sands

Time: 10.30am -12.30pm.

Location: Russell Vale Community Hall, corner of Keerong Ave & Channon St, Russell Vale

Contact: Sonia on 0424 051 246 or find out more at www.birthchoices.info

THURSDAY 16th Pregnancy & Parenting Network meeting

Theme: Introducing solids, nutrition, food additives and food intolerances

Time: 10am-12pm

Location: Jane Palmer's house, 27 Hart St, Dundas Valley

Contact: 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.

THURSDAY 23rd Blue Mountains Homebirth Support Group

Time: 10am-12pm

Location: Mid Mountains Community Centre,

3 New St, Lawson

Cost: \$2- \$5

Contact: Alicia 4759 2336 or Sara dave-sara@bigpond.com Bring a healthy snack to share if you get a chance, if not come anyway. School Holidays is a casual catch up (played by ear). All welcome.

TUESDAY 28th HAS Committee meeting

Time: 10am-12pm

Location: Australian Doula College, 422 Marrickville Rd, Marrickville

Contact: Virginia 0415 683 074 info@homebirthsydney.org.au All welcome including kids.

October

EVERY WEDNESDAY Inner West Homebirth Support Group

Time: from 10am

Location changes every week so please email your details to Greta or call to find out where we are meeting.

Contact: Greta gwerner@circleinteriors.com 0402035069. Bring a healthy snack if you like.

EVERY THURSDAY Sutherland Shire / St George Homebirth Support Group

Time: 10.30am - 12.30ish pm

Location: Virginia's house at 5 Balfour Ave Caringbah (North)

Contact: Virginia 0415 683 074 maddvirg@yahoo.com.au

Whether you're pregnant or have babies or kids in tow, come on over, let the kids run amok and enjoy a cuppa and some fresh baked delights with some like-minded mamas.

MONDAY 13th Illawarra Birth Choices Group

Time: 10.30am to 12.30pm

Topic: Book reviews by IBC members.

Location: Russell Vale Community Hall - corner of Keerong Ave and Channon St Russell Vale.

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

THURSDAY 14th Pregnancy & Parenting Network meeting

Theme: Open forum

Time: 10am-12pm

Location: Jane Palmer's house, 27 Hart St, Dundas Valley >>

Contact: 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.

**THURSDAY 21st
Blue Mountains Homebirth Support Group**

Time: 10am-12pm.
Location: Mid Mountains Community Centre, 3 New St Lawson.

Cost: \$2- \$5.

Contact: Alicia 4759 2336 or Sara dave-sara@bigpond.com Bring a healthy snack to share if you get a chance, if not come anyway. School Holidays is a casual catch up (played by ear) All welcome.

**TUESDAY 26th
HAS Committee meeting**

Time: 10am-12pm
Location: Australian Doula College, 163 Livingstone Road, Marrickville
Contact: Virginia 0415 683 074 info@homebirthsydney.org.au All welcome including kids.

**EVERY THURSDAY
Sutherland Shire / St George Homebirth Support Group**

Time: 10.30am - 12.30ish pm
Location: Virginia's house at 5 Balfour Ave Caringbah (North)
Contact: Virginia 0415 683 074 maddvirg@yahoo.com.au

Whether you're pregnant or have babies or kids in tow, come on over, let the kids run amok and enjoy a cuppa and some fresh baked delights with some like-minded mamas.

**THURSDAY 4th
Blue Mountains Homebirth Support Group**

Time: 10am-12pm
Location: Mid Mountains Community Centre, 3 New St, Lawson

Cost: \$2- \$5

Contact: Alicia 4759 2336 or Sara dave-sara@bigpond.com Bring a healthy snack to share if you get a chance, if not come anyway. School Holidays is a casual catch up (played by ear). All welcome.

**THURSDAY 11th
Pregnancy & Parenting Network meeting**

Theme: Birth Techniques
Time: 10am-12pm
Location: Jane Palmer's house, 27 Hart St, Dundas Valley.
Contact: 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.

**MONDAY 15th
Illawarra Birth Choices Group**

Time: 10.30am to 12.30pm
Topic: Chiropractor – Melissa Downie.
Location: Russell Vale Community Hall - corner of Keerong Ave and Channon St Russell Vale.
Contact: Sonia on 0424 051 246 or find out more at www.illawarra.birthchoices.info/index.html

**THURSDAY 18th
Blue Mountains Homebirth Support Group**

Time: 10am-12pm.
Location: Mid Mountains Community Centre, 3 New St Lawson.

Cost: \$2- \$5.

Contact: Alicia 4759 2336 or Sara dave-sara@bigpond.com Bring a healthy snack to share if you get a chance, if not come anyway. School Holidays is a casual catch up (played by ear) All welcome.

**TUESDAY 30th
HAS Committee meeting**

Time: 10am-12pm
Location: Australian Doula College, 163 Livingstone Rd, Marrickville
Contact: Virginia 0415 683 074 info@homebirthsydney.org.au All welcome including kids.

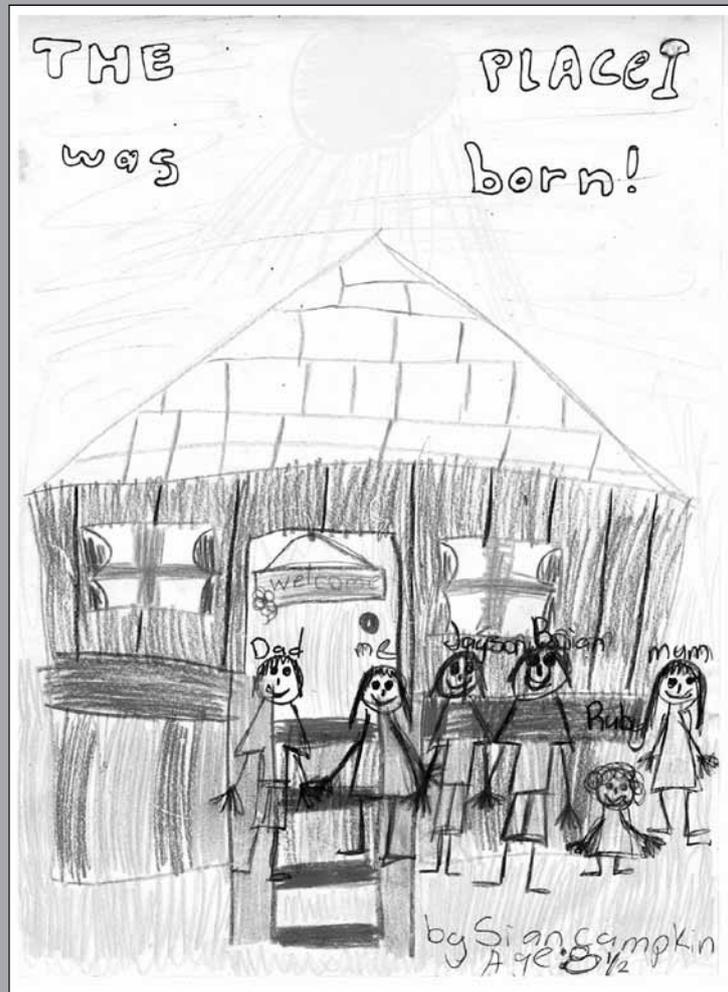
November

**EVERY WEDNESDAY
Inner West Homebirth Support Group**

Time: from 10am
Location changes every week so please email your details to Greta or call to find out where we are meeting.
Contact: Greta gwerner@circleinteriors.com 0402035069. Bring a healthy snack if you like.



The topic for the next issue is
Birth Places & Spaces



Submissions are welcome on how you set up your birth space;
and the special, unusual or unexpected place where you birthed your baby.

As always, we welcome your birth announcements, birth stories, letters, art and poetry.

Reminder Please ensure we have your current email address so you can receive your membership expiry reminder,
as well as all the important homebirth updates in our e-newsletter.
Email: member@homebirthsydney.org.au

BIRTHINGS is your magazine. **Please contribute.**
Submissions are due by November 1st 2010.

EMAIL THE EDITORS AT EDITOR@HOMEBIRTHSYDNEY.ORG.AU