

BIRTHINGS

A HOMEBIRTH ACCESS SYDNEY QUARTERLY PUBLICATION

www.homebirthsydney.org.au



*Birth Places
and Spaces*

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

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Elaine Odgers Norling

HONOURY LIFE MEMBERS

Robyn Dempsey
Jo Hunter

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

Autumn 2011	No 109	1 February 2011
Winter 2011	No 110	1 May 2011
Spring 2011	No 111	1 September 2011
Summer 2011	No 112	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

CONTRIBUTING TO BIRTHINGS

The strength of Birthings is all the thoughtprovoking, 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.



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Front cover photo of Elizabeth Criner and Delphi



Back cover image used with permission from: birthwithoutfearblog.com



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?

(Typing, fundraising, emailing, events, organising etc.)

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**

Contributors

Amanda Vella has two daughters, Jordan (9) and India (6 months) and is married to Ian. She is a K-6 teacher, writer and hatha yoga teacher. Amanda recently launched Illuminate Yoga and especially loves working with expectant women and mums and their bubs. She is passionate about conscious birth, healthy living and aware parenting. www.illuminateyoga.com.au

Anna Johnston-Buckle has been married to Luke for 10 years. She was a generalist K-6 teacher for many years, specialising in Art Education from time to time. She now specialises in being a Mummy to Gracie (14/03/08) and Darcy (14/05/10) and thinks it is her best job yet. She mainly pursues creativity these days with the sewing machine. She also teaches a few students literacy in her own home, gets involved with her church in various ways and is a volunteer Breastfeeding Counsellor with the Australian Breastfeeding Association.

Chelle Luke is married to Benjamin and is mother to Harper who was born at home under the wonderful guidance of Robyn Dempsey. Her pregnancy was planned but came a lot earlier than expected and was discovered a week after Ben, who is in the RAAF, left on his 4 month trip to Afghanistan. Chelle is a massage therapist, specializing in pregnancy massage, and is 2 subjects away from completing her degree in chiropractic science. But all that can wait as she loves her job being a full time mumma.

Elizabeth Criner is the founder of "Discover your True Beauty" workshops and retreats. She practiced Nutrition and Energetic Bodywork in Sydney for the last 10 years and recently moved to the country to start a family. She is passionate about assisting women through their personal journeys and is currently completing her Shamanic Midwifery Training with Jane Collings. She lives in the Seal Rocks area with her partner David and has recently hatched into motherhood. She gave birth to her first child, Delphi Willow Walsman, at home in September this year and is currently enjoying the beautiful beginnings of becoming a family. www.elizabethcriner.com

Esther Bailey is a committed environmentalist, an eco company director and super excited first time mother.

Jacie Whitfield is life partner to Gav, Mum to Brittany (20yo) and Indi-Lee (5 months). Jacie is a Wellness & Lifestyle Expert at Chiropractic Central, Lane Cove where regaining and sustaining health for life is priority. Jacie is exceptionally passionate about living a natural life, loves to read, write, research, cook, garden and serve the community. Jacie is a marriage celebrant and lives by a motto passed on to her by her (deceased) Mum; "the world is your oyster, great dreamer's dreams are never fulfilled, they are always transcended." www.chiropracticcentral.com.au/lanecove/

Maha Al Musa, of Palestinian / Lebanese heritage, is a mother of three beautiful children, dancing doula, and founder and facilitator of 'Bellydance For Birth - The Al Musa Method®'. She is passionate about empowering women to find their passion, strength and birthing heart. Her work of over 13 years in bellydance for pregnancy and birth is spreading worldwide as women and their birth carers embrace this wonderful birth preparation. She has released an award winning world first book and DVD 'Dance Of The Womb' showcasing her love of this birthing art form. www.bellydanceforbirth.com

Martina Kreznovic lives in the Illawarra region of Fairy Meadow. Having grown up around coastal areas, she enjoys spending her time outdoors with her daughter Imarli 9 months, and partner Dejan. Taking Sage the family dog (and Imarli's bestie) along with Imarli to the beach proves to be the perfect day. Prior to having Imarli, Martina had studied a Bachelor of Visual Communications majoring in fashion design. While on a year's break for a bit of a soul searching, she fell pregnant with Imarli and has since found it was just what the soul needed. Martina and Dejan both look forward to going on adventures with Imarli and sharing their passions in life with her.

Rachel Nixon is the mother of daughter Lily (4 years) and son River (10 months). She left Early Childhood Teaching to become a stay-at-home Mum, and lives on the Central Coast with her children, her husband Tim who is also a Steiner School Teacher, and their crazy Cocker Spaniel 'Ted'. Rachel is passionate about natural living. Birthing at home has flowed on from this, and has been one of the most beautiful experiences of her life.

Sonja MacGregor has been a midwife since 2001 and started attending homebirths in 2006. Her philosophy is that pregnancy & birth are normal life events, & that giving birth is an integral part of a woman's life. She firmly holds that each woman is unique & her care must reflect this. Sonja 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>

Sarah J Buckley is author of the bestselling book 'Gentle Birth, Gentle Mothering' and is a trained GP / family physician with qualifications in GP-obstetrics and family planning. She is the mother of four home-born children, and currently combines full-time motherhood with her work as a writer on pregnancy, birth, and parenting. Her personal interests and hobbies include yoga and meditation (which she has practiced for over 20 years), natural family health and healing, camping, bushwalking, hiking, swimming, world music, and dancing.

Virginia Maddock is fiancé to Dan and doting Mum to 22 month old Jetsun and 12-year old Yin Yin, her Burmese cat. She is Birthings editor and HAS Membership Coordinator, and hosts the Sutherland Shire & St George Homebirth Group at her house in Caringbah every Thursday. She is a doula, herbalist and nutritionist for her business 'Natural Beginnings' and runs 'Beer and Bubs' (childbirth education for Dads at the pub) at her local. Virginia and Dan are currently on detox to prepare their bodies for conceiving a sibling for Jetsun around the New Year and hopes to be up the duff by next issue! www.naturalbeginnings.com.au

Editorial

Welcome to our Summer edition of Birthings: 'Birth Places & Spaces'. I would like to extend a warm welcome to our new designer Daniel Crawford, an old buddy of mine who used to edit and design a little skate/snow/surf 'zine called 'The Unloved' about ten years ago, which I used to write a column for when we lived in Bondi. He has since moved back home to the UK and with the wonder of the internet, is lending us his creativity from across the seas. And again I would like to thank Petra Timmerman for getting us out of a bind last issue and doing a great job - we wish her all the best.

It has been a challenging month leading up to writing this, as our website has been having technical problems and undergoing upgrades which have left us offline for extended periods. We have not been able to send out our monthly e-newsletter since August, my email was also not working for a few days leading up to deadline which sent me into a bit of a panic, and Danny's email was also bouncing! But despite all this, we have fortunately managed to receive lots of great content from our faithful readership. We have some beautiful birth stories this issue which illustrate so wonderfully how people went to great lengths to set up a sacred space to birth their babies in, and found that home was the best place to be.

In order to have a homebirth with the midwife of her choice, Elizabeth Criner had to temporarily move 4 hours away to a friend's place, bringing all that was special with her to recreate her home environment ('Creating A Sacred Birth Space'); Jacie Whitfield had an amazing waterbirth in her backyard spa by candlelight under the moonlit sky ('Moonlit Magic'); and Anna Johnston-Buckle found that home was the best place for her to birth when compared with the sterile hospital environment where her first baby was born ('Inner Space and Birth Place'). These and other features and birth stories make up another great issue that I am proud to be a part of.

I fully intended to birth my baby into water, in my lounge room. I had the birth pool blown up and filled with warm water, the blinds drawn to block out the very hot sun, and my pink Himalayan rock salt lamp glowing and emitting negative ions with my blessingway necklace draped around it. Jetsun, however, had a very different idea! He just did not want to come out into that pool, so after three hours of trying every different position, it was in the very place that he was conceived 40 weeks earlier that he finally came out - on the bed!

STOP PRESS: Just as we were sending this issue to print, we heard about the sad passing of Dr John Stevenson at 89 years of age. Dr Stevenson was a passionate advocate for homebirth and dedicated his life and work to supporting women to birth at home, resulting in his de-registration. Please check the next issue of Birthings for our tribute to him. May he rest in peace.

Letters to the editor



Dear Ed,
Please find attached our birth announcement for the next issue. I also enclose an image of my Blessingway necklace constructed from gifts from my favourite women from around the world as inspired by your last edition.

The local friends who attended the baby shower also made T shirts and singlets for our daughter using random fabric offcuts, transfers and embroidery; which make for ace commemorative gifts and made a lovely day for girls who don't normally consider them craft types! So thank you for the inspiration.

More generally, thanks very much for making us homebirthers feel part of a special community and for empowering women who choose to birth as nature intended with powerful female and family energies in natural relaxed settings. Great job. Our baby was born 2.5 weeks overdue, but perfectly ready to pop and in caul...

Best,
Esther Bailey

Sometimes our best laid plans go out the window on the day, but wherever we birth our babies, that place usually holds a special significance; and even in the event of birthing in a place that is not our own home, the room can be accommodated to emulate a homely environment, especially if the most important elements are present such as the midwife we trust and the people we love.

To this day, whenever I drive past the little unit in Cronulla where I birthed my firstborn bubba, even though we moved out due to noisy and inconsiderate neighbours which left a somewhat sour taste in my mouth, it will always hold that special memory of my son's birth place, and in years to come I will be able to point out the window down the driveway and say "Look Jetsun, you were born in that room!"

Our Autumn edition will be on the theme: 'Safety and Risk'. We invite you to submit articles on the issues surrounding safety and risk in birth, especially how this relates to homebirth which is usually deemed unsafe by the medical establishment... even in the absence of any risk factors! Or you may have the perfect birth story on this theme such as a homebirth after caesarean (HBAC), breech birth, twin birth or the birth of a big baby that you were told would be too big to fit through your "small pelvis". Submissions are due February 1st. Please email your letters, theme articles, birth announcement and stories to: editor@homebirthsydney.org.au



- Virginia Maddock

Birth Announcements

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



Little **Lucas Samuel Priora** was in a hurry to meet his two older brothers, Brendan and Cailen on Friday the 30th of July at 4.03am after a 43 minute labour. He shares his birthday with his oldest brother Brendan who helped Daddy cut the cord. It was such a special moment and afterwards when all 5 of us snuggled in our family bed!



Chelle and Benjamin present their little treasure, **Harper Benjamin Luke**, who arrived safely at home, in the water on the 2nd of August 2010. Big thank you to our birth team! Mum for carrying endless buckets of boiled water up the stairs when the hot water ran out, Amanda for your magic hands and soft words, and Harper's Daddy for being my rock. Just knowing you were right there with me every step made me strong. Special thanks to our midwife Robyn, for teaching me to believe in my baby and my body's innate wisdom to birth. Thank you for your support, love and cleverness. We're so grateful you chose us to be your family Harper... Welcome home little man!



Karen, Mark and big brother Darcy welcome **Calvin Trevor William Oakley**, born at home at 9.02pm on the 2nd of September 2010 in a beautiful, empowering and life changing waterbirth. Our little man measured 48 cm and weighed in at 2.85kg. It was such a blessing to have been able to get the birth I had always wanted and a beautiful and gentle transition earthside for our babe. I am eternally grateful to my fabulous midwife (and lucky charm) Sonja MacGregor for her friendship and calm, loving, unwavering support throughout my pregnancy, birth and beyond. Thank you to my friend and birth support Janet who challenged me and taught me so much and a huge thank you to my wonderful home birth community who were there every step of the way on my HBAC journey. Homebirth is awesome!



John and Naomi proudly announce the birth of **Silas John Green** on 27th August 2010 – brother to Ruby (4) and Ezra (2). Second baby to be born at home in water, with the birth attended by midwife and family friend of nearly 20 years, Melanie Jackson. We praise and acknowledge God for giving us this wonderful honour of raising Silas as part of our family.



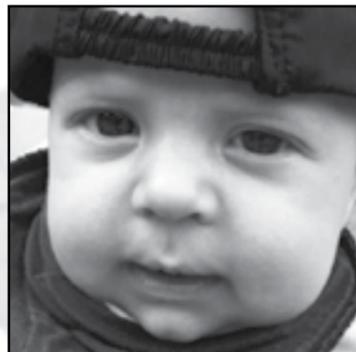
Delphi Willow Walsman was born into the loving arms of her parents in a warm birthing pool just as the sun was burning off a thick Sydney Harbour fog at 5:38am on Friday the 10th of September 2010. Our eyes locked on hers and time stood still, a spiral of love began to flow and we are all excited as to where we will be transported. Delphi and her parents would like to thank our amazing midwife Betty Vella for guiding us through this wonderful journey. Welcome to our beloved Delphi xx



Kit Heaney Taylor was born calmly in the water at home, caught by Silas at 6.45am on 2nd October 2010. What an empowering experience for the whole family! Thank you Robyn Dempsey (midwife), Susan Ross and Lucy (doula) for all your thoughtful, professional, pragmatic support. And to Nadine Richardson for your friendship, the wonderful Shebirths course and meditations. Jo, Silas and Tilly Taylor.



Brett, Ria, Belle and Frano welcome our beautiful "Baby Rainbow" (as named by her big brother and sister as soon as she was born). **Iris Ophelia Hirst** was born in water at home on 7 August 2010. Our midwife/doula team of Jo Hunter and Natalie Dash were just amazing and we are so grateful for the homebirth experience (after 2 previous Caesareans) – thank you Nat and Jo! Belle (5yrs) and Frano (3yrs) were excited to be a part of it all and adore their new baby sister. Tihei mauri ora!



Deb (Mummy) and Claire (Mumma) and Geoff (Daddy) and Tate (2&1/2yrs) are delighted to welcome **Jarvis Dixon Heggaton Klenner** to our family. Jarvis was born on the 7th of August – a healthy 3 & 3/4kg – loves his milk and is maxing out the scales! Jarvis is a big talker and his laughter is delightful. He has recently started sleeping through the night and his mummies are thrilled – now he can move in with his brother! Our midwife, Sonja MacGregor, was an invaluable support and great fun too! Thanks for everything Sonja!



With great pleasure we announce the arrival of our little **Victoria Julia Chojnowski**. She was born at home, in water on 10/10/10 at 14:54, weighing 3510g and 51cm long. She was warmly welcomed into this world by loving Mum, Dad, 18 month old brother Jonathan (also born at home), our wonderful midwife Jane Palmer and great friend / Auntie Elizabeth. Big thank you to my wonderful husband for his love and support on the daily basis and especially during these special moments of our lives. Jane, thank you for the journey with us through the pregnancy and birth. Elizabeth, thanks for being there for us! We would never change the way our babies were BORN!"



Our **Zoe-Angel Tigerlily Severn** was born in the water at home on Monday 11th October at 41 weeks. Sister to big brother Ziggy Rhett. A beautiful, powerful, healing birth. Thank you amazing midwife Jane and wonderful support people Becca and Alison. Mama Bron and Daddy Lee are thrilled.



Brad and Esther are overjoyed to welcome their daughter **Imogen Sunshine Coates**. She took her own sweet time to join us, being 2.5 weeks overdue and causing Mum and Dad some anxiety that we would have to give up our dream of a natural home birth and enter the hospital system with an induction. With the support and insight of Betty Vella our amazing midwife we stayed the course and held on for her: she was worth the wait. Our daughter was born, in caul on Thurs 21st Oct after a 6 hour labour, into the serenity of the home birthing pool in her bedroom and was caught by her father. The whole experience was as perfect as we could have dreamed of. Home birthing rules!



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.

2011 workshops

Pregnancy - The Inner Journey Workshop

February 26, 27, 11am-7pm
Pregnancy + Parenting Wellbeing Centre
Baulkham Hills, Sydney
Teas catered, non-residential \$350
bookings: Tara Darlington
support@npsydne.com.au

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 5, 6, 7, 2011
Oyster Cove, Hobart, Tasmania
Fully catered, non-residential \$450

Moonsong

July 8, 9, 2011
Oyster Cove, Hobart, Tasmania
Fully catered, non-residential
\$350 or \$250 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



LEANNE CLARKE

Committee Member Profile:

Joined HAS: 2010 and signed up for the HAS committee role almost immediately. I wanted to support the homebirth community and give something back, as I feel I have received so much in life with the gift of my three beautiful children.

Family: Husband Daniel, son Josh (7) and daughters Katelyn (5) and Sarah (just turned 1!).

Life before birthing: I am a clinical psychologist and have always been passionate about infant mental health and supporting mothers and families during pregnancy and early parenting. My ideas about the power and importance of natural birth and natural parenting have crystallised since the birth of my first child.

Why homebirth? My first two beautiful children were born in a private hospital, where I was cared for by a gentle, warm obstetrician, who supported me completely in having the natural birth experience I so desired for my children. This wonderful man told me that it was his honour to be present at my children's births, but that if I were to have any more babies I should have them at home! Birthing my third baby at home in the presence of her brother and sister was the most amazing and connecting experience of my life. I believe strongly that the way we birth impacts on every aspect of our lives and the lives of our children, and that empowering, natural birth puts us on a journey of love, confidence and connection that is a true blessing in every way.

Heart to Heart

Frida Lila Angelstar

BORN: 10TH AUGUST 2010 AT 8.10PM
DIED: 10TH AUGUST 2010 AT 10.10PM

I nurtured you inside of me for 26 weeks
and three days
you felt my laughter
and koko blowing raspberries
on my belly
I felt you wriggling inside
a beautiful, creative pregnancy

They said you'd never make it
in this world that we call home
you felt my tears, my anguish
I felt you wriggling inside
the harsh reality of life and death

You came to us suddenly
tiny, serene, silent
an intense and traumatic birth
we held you in our hands,
in our arms, to our chests, skin to skin.
a lifetime of two hours

We sang to you
and kissed you a thousand times and more
knowing that you were slowly slipping away
further and further into the night
still cradled in our arms

You are a part of us now
that goes wherever we go
you are our daughter
and we love you
Frida, Frida, Frida

– Jocelyn Lewis



Coordinator's Report

JO TILLY

Does where we have our babies really matter? What about all the homebirthed babies who were planned to make a gentle entry via the birth pool and end up on the kitchen floor and the babies that were going to appear in a candlelit bedroom with Enya playing softly in the background, that take their first breath hanging over the toilet bowl?

Midwives and doulas talk about 'holding the space' for women, which is about the atmosphere surrounding the mother and her birth, as much as the physical space itself.

Of course it's possible to have a great birth anywhere – although I'm not sure that I'd be very impressed about ending up on the back seat of the car on the way to hospital. And while we all want to avoid interventions, sometimes the best medical technology is the only way a mum and baby are going to make it. Under those circumstances, a masked obstetrician and the bright lights of an operating theatre start looking like pretty good surroundings.

Women deserve to have the best birth we can possibly have. With the people we love there to support us and see us through the hard bits, until we've finally got that tiny baby in our arms. And importantly with carers who respect us and listen to what we want. Carers who share their expertise and help us make the decisions that need to be made during our pregnancies and births.

Perhaps in some ways it is the people that make the most significant difference to our births, rather than where they actually occur.

I am sitting here writing this on November 1 – the first day of the new regime for midwife led care. It should be a day of celebration because – in theory – women in Australia will now get to choose a midwife as their lead carer for their pregnancy and birth. But despite the newspapers describing the changes as "one of the biggest reforms to be implemented by the Rudd-Gillard governments" and the Health Minister, Nicola Roxon, telling us it is 'momentous'... and a great day for patients who will be able to claim a rebate, and benefit from better access, closer to home in a wider range of settings", many mothers and midwives just feel let down.

Under the new arrangements midwives will be able to provide antenatal care, delivery and post-birth services for benefits ranging from \$23.35 for a short antenatal service up to \$543.60 for a birth. But whether any can actually do so, given the restrictions on midwives having to provide evidence that are part of a collaborating team with a doctor, remains to be seen.

So what next? It seems like homebirth families – and most other mums looking for a midwife to be their lead carer – will just have to suck it and see. Midwives may or may not take up the option to make their services eligible for Medicare and doctors may or may not start collaborating with midwives as part of a woman's maternity care team (I'm not holding my breath for that one!)

One of the important roles for HAS is to take the views of homebirthing families and our midwives to the policy makers and politicians so we need to hear from you about what impact these changes are having on your choices for pregnancy and birth. Please let us know if you or your midwife is experiencing difficulties with the new arrangements and what you think should be done to make the system work better for you. Contact us by email at: info@homebirthsydney.org.au

Have a great summer and all the best to you and your family for the new year.



Secretary's Report

GRETA WERNER

I had my first baby in hospital and the subsequent two at home. Being in my own space at home allowed me to feel free to do whatever I felt I needed to do. I was going to write it made me feel 'in control', but it was really more 'in surrender'. Despite my best efforts, I found it harder to surrender to the experience of labour in the hospital rooms. The shiny, hard surfaces and unfamiliar faces made it harder to relax.

People are all different, and I'm sure there are those who find it easier to relax in hospital. This is why there needs to be a variety of options open to women and families if we want to achieve the best maternity outcomes.

Unfortunately the medical establishment seem to disagree, and are busy trying to make homebirth look unsafe, even though there is lots of evidence to suggest it is as safe as hospital birth. Time and again obstetricians are publicly making claims that homebirth is unsafe, referring to studies which have already been shown to be problematic and unscientific(1). In the face of what seems to be blatant lies, HAS is continuing to work in the hope that the lies will be exposed, and that the labouring woman will be put at the centre of the maternity health system.

HAS provides a voice for homebirth consumers, by networking, publishing Birthings magazine, making information available to the general public and lobbying.

HAS raises most of its revenue from

- merchandise sales
- advertising and sponsorship
- memberships
- donations
- events

Since the last edition of Birthings we have produced a great and very comfortable new homebirth T-shirt. Have a look in the merchandise section of this magazine or online to check it out.

The Birth Choices Expo on the 15th October went well. HAS had a table at the expo. See the article elsewhere in this magazine. The next expo is on the 11th April 2011.

On the weekend of 6th and 7th November HAS participated in the inaugural Eco Baby Expo. It was held at Luna Park. The location should have lured masses of North Shore eco-aware parents, but unfortunately they either did not know about it or had something else to do, so the expo was very quiet. The booths were mainly product based, but the Australian Doula College was also there, at the booth next to us. Our booth looked great, complete with birth pool, a rack displaying our t-shirts, a TV with in-built DVD player, and the usual books and magazines displayed.

Despite the quiet turn out, I hope the reciprocal web advertising and HAS inclusion in the eco baby handbook will help to raise our profile.

New and renewed members

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

- Leanne Clarke
- Jenny Schellhorn
- Loulou Anderssen
- Diana Dundas
- Nadine Johnston
- Melodie Glass
- UTS Library
- Christina Nagle
- Felicity White
- Megan Airey
- Natalie Wareham
- Kim Ryder
- Trudy Thomas
- Monika Habicht
- Penny Bayl
- Mimi Fong
- Laura Wythes
- Patricia Twaalfhoven
- Katharina Logan
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BIRTH SPACES

By Sonja MacGregor

BEING A MIDWIFE I HAVE SEEN MANY BEAUTIFUL BIRTH SPACES. SPACES WITH ALTARS, MOBILES MADE FROM BLESSING WAY GIFTS, CANDLES GALORE BURNING – GIVING A WONDERFUL SOFT LIGHT, AND TINY BATHROOMS WITH NOTHING BUT THE GORGEOUS LABOURING WOMAN. SOME BIRTH IN LARGE OPEN ROOMS, OTHERS NEED SMALL INTIMATE SPACES. BIRTH SPACES ARE AS UNIQUE AS EACH WOMAN.

Each woman births in the area that is right for her at the time. I have been with women who have moved rooms, as they have felt “stuck” and then birthed beautifully. Others have used the “magic toilet” to move the baby down and then birthed in the bathroom as they don’t want to or can’t move to another area. Women who have planned water births and then get out of the pool, and others who are adamant that they are not having their baby in the water and then refuse to get out.

My favourite place for women to birth is in a room that they “live” in. It may be the lounge room, bedroom, bathroom or kitchen. These rooms are filled with their things, their family and their life. The whole family is at ease in these rooms. It is wonderful to see new life arrive in the midst of their usual living space, amongst the family.

I have yet to see a woman birth in the kitchen though. That may say a lot about the wonderful women who invite me to their births. Maybe they try to avoid the kitchen as much as I do!



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HOW BIRTH PLACE AFFECTS LABOUR: Hospital Vs Home

Dr Sarah J Buckley



Adapted from the article 'Pain in Labour: your hormones are your helpers' with permission from Dr Sarah J Buckley. For more about hormones in labour, and all references, see 'Gentle Birth, Gentle Mothering: A Doctor's Guide to Natural Childbirth and Gentle Early Parenting Choices' (Celestial Arts, US 2009) available at www.sarahbuckley.com.

IMAGINE THIS. YOUR CAT IS PREGNANT, DUE TO GIVE BIRTH AROUND THE SAME TIME AS YOU ARE. YOU HAVE YOUR BAGS PACKED FOR HOSPITAL, AND ARE AWAITING THE FIRST SIGNS OF LABOUR WITH EXCITEMENT AND A LITTLE NERVOUSNESS.

Meanwhile your cat has been hunting for an out-of-the way place: your socks drawer or laundry basket- where she is unlikely to be disturbed. When you notice, you open the wardrobe door, but she moves again. Intrigued, you notice that your observation- even your presence- seems to disturb the whole process. And, wish as you might to get a glimpse into the mysteries of birth before it is your turn, you wake up the next morning to find her washing her four newborn kittens in the linen cupboard.

Why does birth seem so easy to our animal friends when it is so difficult for us? One obvious difference is the altered shape of the pelvis and birth outlet that is caused by our upright stance; our babies need to twist and turn to navigate these unique bends. Even our nearest cousins, the great apes, have a near-straight birth canal.

However, in every other way, human birth is like that of other mammals- those animals that suckle their young- and involves the same hormones- the body's chemical messengers. These hormones, which originate in one of the oldest parts of our brain, cause the physical processes of labour and birth, as well as exerting a powerful influence on our emotions and behaviour.

Researchers such as French surgeon and natural birth pioneer Michel Odent believe that if we can be more respectful of our mammalian roots, and the hormones that we share, we can have more chance of a straightforward birth ourselves.

Labour and birth involve peak levels of the hormones oxytocin, sometimes called the hormone of love, and prolactin- the mothering hormone, both well-known for their role in breastfeeding. As well as these, beta-endorphin, the body's natural pain-killer, and the fight-or-flight hormones adrenaline and noradrenaline play an important part in the birth process. There are many more hormonal influences on birth that are not well understood.

All mammals seek a safe place to give birth. This "nesting" instinct

may be due to an increase in levels of prolactin, which is sometimes referred to as the nesting hormone. At this stage, as you may have observed with your cat, interference which the nest- or more importantly with the feeling of safety- will stall the beginning of labour.

Even after labour has started, there are certain conditions that will slow, or even stop the process. If the fight-or-flight hormones are activated by feelings of anxiety or fear, contractions will slow down. Our mammalian bodies are designed to give birth in the wilds, where it is an advantage to postpone labour when there is danger, and to seek safety.

Many women have had the experience of their labour stopping when they entered the unfamiliar surroundings of a hospital, and some women can be as sensitive as a cat to the presence of an observer. Giving birth away from our natural environment can cause the sorts of difficulties for us that captive animals experience when giving birth in a zoo.

Even hunger, which also causes the body to release fight-or-flight hormones, can stop labour from progressing. It makes sense, therefore, for women to eat if they are hungry in the earliest stages of labour. Unfortunately many hospitals have a policy that prevents labouring women from eating once they are admitted.

Oxytocin is the hormone that causes the uterus to contract during labour. Levels of oxytocin increase throughout labour, and are highest around the time of birth, when it contributes to the euphoria that a mother usually feels after an unmedicated birth, and to her receptiveness to her baby. This peak, which is triggered by sensations of stretching of the birth canal as the baby is born, does not occur when an epidural is in place. Administration of an epidural has been found to interfere with bonding between ewes and their newborn lambs by interfering with the oxytocin system.

Synthetic oxytocin is often given by drip- that is, directly into the bloodstream- when labour contractions are inefficient. Oxytocin given in this way does not enter the brain, and so does not contribute to the post-birth "high", and in fact can interfere with a mother's own oxytocin system. Nipple stimulation is sometimes used to stimulate contractions because, like breastfeeding, this causes oxytocin levels to naturally increase.

Oxytocin has another crucial role to play after the birth. Oxytocin causes the contractions that lead to separation of the placenta from the uterus, and its release as the "after-birth". When oxytocin levels are high, strong contractions occur that reduce the chance of bleeding, or post-partum haemorrhage.

Putting your newborn baby to your breast is the easiest way to increase oxytocin levels, but privacy is also very important during the hour following birth. This gives the opportunity for uninterrupted skin-to-skin and eye-to-eye contact between mother and baby - conditions that optimise oxytocin release.

Oxytocin helps us in our emotional, as well as our physical, transition to motherhood. Oxytocin contributes to the glow of new motherhood, giving us calm, connected feelings with our baby and those around us. Oxytocin also optimizes digestion and has a generally beneficial effect on other bodily processes: ideal for a breastfeeding mother.

The fight or flight hormones- also called catecholamines (pronounced cat-e-kol-a-meens), or CAs- can counteract oxytocin's beneficial effects on the mother's uterus during labour and after the birth. However they do have a positive role to play in the second stage of labour, which is when birth actually occurs.

Early in second stage, when the laboring woman's cervix is fully open but the urge to push is not yet strong, a woman can feel the need to rest for some time. This is known as 'transition' - or the 'rest and be thankful' time. After this, she may quite suddenly experience the dry mouth, dilated pupils and sudden burst of energy that are all characteristic of high levels of CAs.

This burst of CA's gives a mother the energy to push her baby out efficiently; when unmedicated, women usually want to be upright at this time. Some traditional cultures have used this fight-or-flight effect to help women having difficulty with the delivery by surprising or shouting out at this stage, triggering a rapid birth. Threats of a caesarean or forceps delivery have been known to trigger this CA reflex for modern women.

CA levels drop quickly after the birth, which can make a mother may feel cold or shaky. At this stage a very warm atmosphere is essential to keep CA levels low, and to allow oxytocin to work effectively to prevent bleeding.

The other major birthing hormone, prolactin is most noteworthy for its effects after the birth. Prolactin is the major hormone of breast milk synthesis. Suckling by the newborn baby increases prolactin levels; early and frequent suckling from the first days makes the breast more responsive to prolactin, which in turn helps to ensure a good long-term supply of milk.

Like the other hormones, prolactin has effects on emotion and behaviour. Prolactin helps us to put our babies needs first in all situations, and increases our vigilance, keeping us watchful and alert for our baby's wellbeing. When prolactin is combined with oxytocin, as it is soon after birth and during breastfeeding, it encourages a relaxed and selfless devotion to the baby that contributes to a mother's satisfaction and her baby's physical and emotional health.

Beta endorphin (pronounced beet-a en-door-fin) is one of the endorphin hormones that are released by the brain in times of stress or pain, and is a natural equivalent to painkilling drugs like pethidine.

During labour, beta-endorphin helps to relieve pain, and contributes to the "on another planet" feeling that women often experience when they labour without drugs. More poetically, some cultures say that the labouring woman goes out to the stars to collect the soul of her baby and bring it back. Levels of beta-endorphin are reduced when drugs are used for pain relief.

Very high levels of beta-endorphin can slow labour by reducing oxytocin levels, which may help to 'ration' the intensity of labour according to our ability to deal with it. Moderate levels of beta-endorphin help us to deal with pain in labour, as well as encouraging us to follow our instincts. As part of the hormonal cocktail after birth, beta-endorphin plays a role in bonding between mother and baby, who is also primed with endorphins from the birth process.

Beta-endorphin also switches on learning and memory, perhaps explaining why we often remember our labour and birth in such amazing detail. Like oxytocin, endorphin hormones can induce euphoria and are also released during lovemaking and breastfeeding. In fact endorphins are actually present in breast milk, which explains the pleasure that babies can get after a breastfeed. After a natural labour, the new mother has high levels of beta-endorphin in her early milk, helping her baby with the stressful transition to life outside the womb.

So there you are, at the door, with your bag in your hand and a strong contraction. You remember the oxytocin and endorphins, which you also carry with you, and with your next relaxed breath, you breathe out all of your fear and tension. You've packed your new nursing bra, and you know that prolactin will come to your aid as well. As you take a last look around the house, you notice your cat.

She's lying down as her kittens attach to her nipples, and as you catch her eye, she winks at you.

For more of Sarah's writing and to buy her book, see www.sarahbuckley.com

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Birthing River

IN OUR HOME

by Rachel Nixon



OUR BIRTH SPACE WAS PREPARED IN JOY AND EXCITEMENT, WITH THE ENTHUSIASTIC HELP OF OUR 3 YEAR OLD DAUGHTER LILY, WHO HAD BEEN JUST BUSTING TO SEE THE BIRTHING POOL UP AND IN ACTION!

I treasure the photo of us preparing to birth, taken by my husband Tim. Lily is dancing around in anticipation with her floaties on, ready to jump into the pool, and Sonja our midwife is laughing. Mum is filling up the pool and I am working with the initial contractions, doing hip circles on the exercise ball. It is such a happy and relaxed environment, our home that River was born into.

I had 2 beeswax candles burning on the dining table, filling the room with their warm glow and the air with negative ions! A friend had lent me her precious statues of Quan Yin and the Venus of Willendorf, and these also sat on the table, bringing their blessings.

The pool was set in the middle of our living space, the place where we relax as a family, eat our meals, and where our daughter plays with her toys at her shelf. Lily was involved all throughout the pregnancy, an eager participant in all of Sonja's antenatal visits, and so she was just as much a part of the birth. Being at home, it felt so natural and just another part of our family life...as I felt the need to push and called for Sonja, she was just finishing up 'feeding the dog, Rachel!' River was gathered into my arms, surrounded by our family, in love and peace.

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Moonlit Magic

by Jacie Whitfield

adventurous to embrace this birthing choice until I saw the women of Russia giving birth in the warm waters of the Black Sea and others in orgasmic trance-like states who barely wince during their births. Regardless, the more we thought about a home birth, the more it resonated with us.

We were fortunate enough to be renting a home with a large spa bath in the backyard which was surrounded by 10ft conifers and beds of gardenias. We started heating the spa about a week before our baby was due to ensure that with the outside temperature dropping, we would have a warm, relaxed and natural environment in which to birth. I had prepared all the recommended labor supporting tools and remedies: arnica in cream & tablet form, dolomite and ribena ice cube blocks, oxygen, heat packs, ice packs, Swiss ball, relaxation and affirmation CDs, candles, birthday cake ingredients, raspberry leaf tea, mini meditation birth cards, 1st and 2nd stage labor massage blends and rescue remedy. These were packaged up in a basket with red and white gingham check – something that looked a lot like the basket I remember Red Riding Hood taking to Grandma.

On the afternoon of June 3rd, several hours before our birth, Gav erected a tarp squarely around the spa area so that we had some privacy. He thoughtfully (and I'm sure painfully) managed to keep as much of nature within the tarp so I could feel like I was outside and not tented in - labour makes me slightly claustrophobic so I wanted to be able to see trees and stars. The erecting of the tarp took my mind off any discomfort I was experiencing because poor Gav was out, battling the elements to create the perfect birth space for me. Some of the heaviest rain threatened our plans and our Staffy pup thwarted what other efforts were made, by tugging on the ends of the tarp Gav was trying to hang. It was quietly comical to see a 6ft2 man of Schwarzenegger proportions attempting delicately to give me some type of roof, while pools of water formed in every dip and curve which then ended up either over Gav or collapsing the make-shift roof completely. Almost as soon as it had started, the rain stopped and Gav was able to get some semblance of a room made.

We decided to get out for a walk and upon returning I had an obvious show and called Jane to let her know I believed tonight would be the night. She reassured me that she was on stand-by if labour started to progress and suggested I get what rest I was able to. Gav and I ate, showered and at around 9pm decided to attempt some sleep. On lying down, I started to feel increasingly uncomfortable and maneuvered into several different positions before finding that rocking on all fours was the most comfortable. I had put on the Calmbirth CD and was listening to the affirmations on my head set with Gav snoring beside me. After 30 minutes I decided to get up. I was feeling calm yet excited and in a total place of trust in my body - something that was definitely helped by listening to the CD. I had only been watching TV for 15 minutes when a deeper surge came over me. I was calling them surges rather than contractions after participating in the Calmbirth class, to minimize attraction to the visual negative image and associated painful experience of a contraction. A surge, in my visualisation is much more bearable, less tension invoking and more in tune with being open, relaxed and in trust of your body.

I texted Jane to say I had progressed to having surges and that I was going to shower. On moving, I felt another great wave ride over me. In the shower I noticed that there was definitely something going on "down there" and I was able to feel a slimy, hard ball between my legs. I woke Gav up to have a look, as obviously being able to see "down there" was now impossible with such a belly. Gav was startled awake and told me to lie on my back so he could have a look. I said "I can't, you'll have to look from underneath". He cursed that he couldn't see much in the dark and raced to get his torch. With flashlight in hand he declared "There's something olive there, call Jane!" I waddled to the kitchen and phoned Jane calmly stating that I thought I may have been crowning. She said, "Ok, I'll come over". By this time it was 10pm, Gav had the spa simmering and was busily lighting candles while I submerged myself in the heat of the bubbling water. I remember floating to the four sides of the spa, looking up at what had now become a clear night sky, and gazing at the stars

which seemed brighter than usual. I started to concentrate on the breathing techniques I had learnt and focused on visualizing the birth I wanted. I think 10 minutes had passed and my feelings of peace, trust, readiness and control were intensifying. Gav came to the side of the spa to see how I was doing, brought me some water and the most delicate mist of rain started to fall on us. I have to say that I wrote an extremely comprehensive birth plan, however even I couldn't have imagined how utterly idyllic the setting was. Jane arrived at around 10.20pm and I recall thinking "I hope she tells me I'm 10cms dilated because I don't know if I can move through too many more of the surges that were starting to come!" Jane readied her kit and assisted me when I stated that I wanted to use the bathroom. We waddled together hand in hand down the hallway to the toilet and on sitting I was overcome by an almighty surge. I gripped the door handle and groaned. Jane said "Good Jacie, just one more push!" I immediately sparked up and said "I am not having this baby in the toilet, that wasn't in my birth plan. Get me back to the spa!" So I waddled, Jane with hands cupped under me, and Gav trailing behind back to the spa. Gav said to Jane "What should I do?" and Jane retorted "Get in the spa; you need to catch this baby!" So Gav jumps in, pyjamas and all.

Back in the spa we somehow manage to slow down the urgency of birthing and enjoy some kisses, cuddles and meaningful exchanges with each other and with our baby. Jane respects these intimate moments and Gav holds me through the surges, through the membranes rupturing and through the head crowning; and in the downtime I look up to the sky and let the rain gently fall on my face. The technique of breathing my baby to birth seems to be working and when I tell Jane "It's stinging!" she encourages me and I give one almighty nudge to release our baby. Gav is absolutely glowing; he is overwhelmed at being able to touch our baby's head, at seeing a live birth, in our home by candlelight under a glorious moon lit sky. With that final nudge, our baby is thrust towards the bottom of the spa and into Gav's big, strong arms. He cradles her body and gently allows her to come to the surface, placing her in my arms. It's 10.50pm and our precious baby is born. We both are so engrossed with the beauty and love pouring between the three of us that we actually forget to look and she what we have. We take a peek and to our absolute joy, we know we have our baby girl, 'Indi-Lee'.

In our opinion, we experienced a perfect birth place and space. All the elements of our dream birth were met. The only sigh I breathed was for all the amazing tools and supporting remedies I had on hand, yet didn't get the time or opportunity to use. I guess that's a tradeoff I can live with!

BEING MY 2ND BABY, I WAS FEELING RELATIVELY CONFIDENT, HOWEVER WITH A 20 YEAR GAP IN BETWEEN AND A GREATER UNDERSTANDING OF PREGNANCY, BIRTH AND BEYOND, I ALSO HAD MANY ANXIETIES AND A THIRST FOR NEW KNOWLEDGE, PRACTICES AND STRATEGIES TO ENSURE A HAPPY AND HEALTHY TIME FOR MY BABY, MY PARTNER AND MYSELF.

My 1st birth at 18 years old had been fast so we were expecting another quick labour. It had also been in a hospital, my waters had been intentionally broken at 8cms dilation and I gave birth on my back, ankles in stirrups totally in the hands of the hospital team, their beliefs and birth plan strategy. Thankfully I had no time for any interventions although there definitely was manual pulling and twisting on my baby's fragile spine.

I co-own and manage a corrective chiropractic office in Lane Cove and am therefore well aware of how traumatic even a natural birth is for both mother and child. I had also read and watched documentaries on how birth-assisting drugs cross the placental barrier, affecting a baby's ability to participate fully in birth, so I was openly seeking ways to minimize the need for any type of medical interventions. I was blessed to meet a patient in our office, Naomi, an "attachment parent" who introduced me to her midwife, Jane Palmer, who went on to become my midwife. Through Naomi & Jane, I was introduced to concepts such as lotus birth, natural infant hygiene, baby-led weaning, water birth, the continuum concept, attachment parenting and conscientious objection (to vaccination). These concepts certainly appealed to me because our entire health philosophy at Chiropractic Central is based around providing your body with what it needs to naturally be healthy, to express life to your full potential and trust in your innate intelligence.

I am one of those fortunate women with a partner who supports, trusts and believes in me and my decisions. He knows my expertise is in health and wellness so wholeheartedly embraced my "alternative" birthing ideas, parenting philosophy and choices.

Our decision to have a homebirth was almost as shocking to me initially as it was to so many of the people we told who warned us against it, however as a reader and researcher, we watched, reviewed and interviewed greatly and felt a deep sense of calm and faith in home birthing. We hadn't considered a water birth, however yet again, after much watching of DVDs, speaking with other home birth mums and reading, we decided that this was the way for us. I thought I was unusually brave and



INDI LEE'S FIRST CHIROPRACTIC ADJUSTMENT





INNER SPACE AND BIRTH PLACE:

My journey from hospital to home

By Anna Johnston Buckle

I HAVE TWO ADORABLE CHILDREN. GRACIE ARRIVED ON THE 14TH MARCH, 2008 AND DARCY ON THE 14TH MAY, 2010. THEIR BIRTHS COULD NOT BE MORE DIFFERENT AND, TO ME, THEY ARE A LASTING LEGACY OF HOW A WOMAN'S INNER SPACE AND OUTER SURROUNDINGS HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO SET THE PATH OF BIRTH IN A PROFOUNDLY POWERFUL WAY.

There are three factors that stand out as integral players in shaping my birth experiences – the emotional space I was in, the physical place I selected for birth and the relational connections that formed the support around me.

My entry into motherhood was not straightforward and my emotional response was far from robust. My first daughter was born after a two and a half year struggle with infertility, fertility treatment and a molar pregnancy – a horrible and potentially dangerous cause of miscarriage involving stressful follow-up for at least 6 months after miscarriage. Luke and I received the news of our next successful conception with absolute jubilation, but tempered with fear and anxiety that something may go wrong. With those emotions running high from the outset I think I chose a place of ignorance and medicalised birth as a way of coping with the precarious emotional state I was in. I wanted a natural birth in theory and I hoped it would all work out smoothly. In my mind, a hospital labour ward was the accepted place to birth.

Hospital turned out to be a place I never wanted to enter for a birth again. The misery began with the car trip, which was somewhere I never wanted to be during labour again, but it seemed an inevitable part of the deal for a hospital birth. Deep into the first stage of a posterior labour, I remember standing beside the car wondering how I would even get in there, let alone stay in there all the way to hospital! As it turned out, the car trip was the relatively easy part. Once I arrived at hospital my waters broke. My labour continued but I was not dilating as quickly as I had been at home. It is no surprise when I consider the environment I was in. It was neat, clean and clinical but a place totally foreign to me. Deep in my subconscious, I did not feel safe or relaxed while in such a vulnerable place. An epidural was ordered and at almost full dilation my obstetrician declared my progress too slow and the risks too great. The spinal block failed and so my baby was born under the bright lights and sci-fi machinery of an operating theatre as I lay asleep under general anaesthetic.

When I woke up in recovery I initially had absolutely no idea why I was there and what had happened. Eventually, I met my stunning daughter (the major highlight of the hospital experience!) but the first five days of her life were for me, tainted with searing pain that for a long while would not fade with even the strongest medication; patronising, over-worked midwives who had no sympathy for me and the insanely annoying hospital buzzer that buzzed every minute for all five days I was in hospital. This buzzer ensured I remained utterly sleep-deprived even as my baby slept. When we left hospital with our daughter, I felt like I was being released from a five-day jail sentence. Then, from the moment I stepped inside the front door of my house, I embraced motherhood with bliss! I was home.

During that hospital labour, I had a spiritual experience. I have a strong personal faith in God and for the first time in my life I clearly heard God's voice. It was while I was getting the epidural. In that busy labour room, everything went silent and a gentle voice reassured me that He would not allow any harm come to my baby. In the months following the birth, I had a deep sense of emotional healing and came to a place of acceptance and confidence that birth was God's design and I needed to surrender my fear of death to Him, because life and death were in His hands.

Out of my newfound healing grew a desire to allow my wonderfully made body to be allowed to do what it was made to do next time, and home seemed the most likely place this would be successfully facilitated. For my second birth I was in a space of hope, confidence and excitement at the discovery that I was created perfectly for birth without any intervention. By stark comparison, our second birth never involved any trip in the car, beginning and concluding in the total tranquillity and safety of our home.

It was a beautiful, sunny Autumn day. Our very open-plan home had been transformed into an over-sized choose-your-own-adventure nest. There was a mattress on the floor, the sofa was laid out into

a bed, there were cushions and a couple of sturdy lounge chairs, a birth ball and a table laid out with all the bits and pieces that I potentially needed for a smooth labour. Flowing translucent curtains depicting a photographic series of an opening blossom hung from our high ceiling between our kitchen and lounge area for privacy and as a visualisation reminder for me. We opened our French doors and the curtains swayed gently as a soft, warm breeze wafted into our loungeroom. Our spacious bathroom became the birthing suite and I spent the final few hours of labour ensconced in our bath, floating in heavenly warmth.

There was something far more significant about that home environment that made my home birth completely different to the hospital birth. It was the people that surrounded me; the understanding of the roles that we had during labour and most importantly the shared value we placed on empowering me to birth in safety, security and confidence. This complex connection took months of preparation. Our midwife, Akal Khalsa, was always clear that I was the one to be actively in control of my birth, with her as my professional guide. Luke was my greatest support in this journey. During pregnancy she gained our trust and encouraged us to be as educated as we could possibly be about how birth works, risks and all! We knew we needed someone else to support us both during labour and we approached a very dear friend, Bek, whom we'd both known since school. She is a Mum and a midwife. She seemed almost the only choice of support for us. My parents were assigned the role of toddler-carers, which also put my heart at ease.

In the months leading up to birth I spent hours working through my fears and hopes, and in conversation with Luke I worked out my goals. He supported me fully. We continued to work through and then re-work every last niggling thought in discussion with Akal (and sometimes Bek) right up until that first surge began. I felt completely confident that each member of my 'birth team' supported me and knew me. No matter what happened during labour, I would have their wisdom and care to see me through in my most vulnerable moments. We all knew what we were doing.

My hospital birth completely lacked this team of trusted people who were all committed to my capacity for empowered birth. For that birth, my husband was the only person with me throughout the full 29 hours of labour, doing his best as the rather ill-equipped (and eventually very tired and traumatised) supporter of the love of his life in agony! Midwives we had never met and an obstetrician, who we got to know during brief appointments throughout the pregnancy, surrounded us. During labour, our obstetrician made decisions with midwives via the phone and in the end, did not support or respect the goals I had set out in my appointments with him. The inevitable institutional rhythm of the hospital overtook the intimate and personal complexity of my labour, meaning the expediency of a caesarean delivery won out.

My second labour blossomed while I was at home, initially with just my relaxed and excited husband for company. As first stage took on a firm rhythm, Bek arrived. As each surge rose up, the three of us calmly transitioned into 'surge management' using heat packs and a TENS machine. I would gaze into my husband's smiling face, fully connected with him as my intimate strength, leaning on him, rocking my hips, breathing calmly. Bek thoughtfully pressed heat packs on my hips from behind. She calmly cooed words of encouragement and care, checking in every now and then with how I was feeling and what I might like to do next. As surge management escalated to hot nappies then a blasting shower and finally the bathtub, I opened up gracefully and Akal arrived as we headed through transition.

Second stage was immensely challenging and required quite a series of positions and gymnastic tricks! Akal quietly watched as my body surged and pushed my baby down, but it seemed to be very incremental progress. Surges came and went. Sometimes I had a little sleep between surges. After one surge, Luke said 'I just saw an ear!' so I knew we couldn't be far off now! I threw my heart and soul into every surge and focussed with all I had on remaining calm and keeping on top of my breathing, allowing each surge to do its own work. We were all so tuned-in that after one particular surge I just thought, "Right that's it. I'm going for it next push. I reckon I can do it!" and Akal said, as the surge rose up "Go Anna! Go, go, go! Keep on going!" And out came my baby's head. Akal got Luke to help deliver our baby's shoulders. One more surge came and I felt my baby's body slip out into the warm water. I leaned down and instinctively picked my baby up and out onto my chest, all the while gasping with amazement along with everyone in the room. Luke grabbed the camera and I lifted our little one up to discover we had a boy!

Second stage took almost five hours. My little 48kg, five-foot body had birthed our 4.14 kg baby with a head circumference of 38cm! A much bigger baby than Gracie had been! Akal was grinning like a Cheshire cat and doing a little jig. Bek and Luke were genuinely staggered. I was completely exhilarated and the proudest I have ever been.

The immensely powerful simplicity of birthing Darcy with my own body in my own home has brought me to a pinnacle of inner strength and confidence. Of course, if I'd known what I know now about birth, Gracie's birth would have been very different but in many ways I am really thankful for what her birth taught me. Her birth led me out of vulnerability and fear to a place of confidence and trust that I was made to birth naturally. Every day we are thankful for our beautiful daughter and our new gorgeous son, Darcy.



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CREATING A SACRED BIRTH SPACE By Elizabeth Criner



ONE OF THE REASONS I CHOSE TO HAVE A HOMEBIRTH WAS BECAUSE I WANTED A SACRED BIRTH SPACE AND I DIDN'T FEEL IT WAS POSSIBLE TO CREATE THAT EXPERIENCE IN A HOSPITAL. I BELIEVE THAT CREATING A SACRED BIRTH SPACE IS ONE OF THE FUNDAMENTAL ELEMENTS OF MANIFESTING YOUR INTENTION FOR A WONDERFUL BIRTH. IT IS IMPORTANT FOR A WOMAN TO FEEL SAFE AND HELD IN A LOVING ENVIRONMENT IN ORDER TO BIRTH IN LOVE. I FEEL THAT A MAJOR PART OF CREATING THIS IS CHOOSING TO BIRTH AT HOME, WHERE YOU HAVE ALREADY DONE THE WORK FILLING THE SPACE WITH YOUR ENERGY. WITHOUT A VISION OF THE END RESULT OF THE BIRTH WE TRULY WANT, WE CAN NEVER ACHIEVE THAT WHICH WE TRULY DESIRE. THE SACRED EXPERIENCE OF BIRTH SHOULD BE HONOURED WITH A VENUE THAT IS PREPARED IN A MANNER THAT REFLECTS ITS DIVINE NATURE.

My situation became challenging when I was told by each of the midwives I was referred to that I live too far away for them to travel. We moved to the Seal Rocks area 2 months into my pregnancy and I felt like I had landed in a black hole as far as a homebirth community went! After speaking to almost 10 different midwives and spending months searching for a solution, I was beginning to feel like my dream of a homebirth was becoming impossible.

About 5 months into my pregnancy I was soaking in the bath and decided to call a dear friend. She said to me "Lizzy, what do you really want? This is your birth and you can have exactly what you would love. Just go for it!" In that moment I realized I had

attended her birth with Betty Vella as her midwife and I really want Betty as my midwife but she is in Sydney, 4 hours away! She told me not to worry about logistics, just call Betty! So I did, and we began the process of finding a way to have her as our midwife. We eventually decided to ask my partner David's parents if we could use their apartment in Milson's Point to have our baby in! It was wonderful that they were so generous in saying yes, but it was far away from my vision of being snuggled up in our beautiful country home, walking through the forest during labour! This choice involved a lot of driving back to Sydney for visits with Betty, then moving there for the final month to birth our baby. It also meant being up on the 14th floor in a city

apartment far away from the earthy experience I was hoping for. Then having to pack up and make our way home 4 hours drive north once our baby girl had been born. It was an interesting decision but we instantly felt like it was right.

As the day of birth grew closer I began to think about the incredible task of packing. Oh my... what does one need when you are off to birth your first baby and recreate the sanctuary of your own home in a small city apartment? I had never done that before!! Being very much about creating sacred space with my many alters and sacred items around the house, it became my mission to find a way to take this energy with me.

I packed everything but the kitchen sink! Crystal lamps, statues, Tibetan Wall hangings, blankets, crystals and the list goes on. David kept saying, what is all this stuff? My answer was... I am going for my dream, a sacred birthing space. So the day came for me to pack the car and leave our home to go have our homebirth! It felt kind of strange and I experienced every emotion possible as I drove away with a car full of stuff... sacred stuff that is! I felt like a pregnant snail, carrying my home on my back and my baby in my belly. I waved good bye to the magnificent trees and the beautiful lake. I decided to take the spirit of the land with me as I drove away into the unknown.

I left a few days before David, as his sister had organized my Blessingway for that weekend. I arrived to the apartment and slowly dragged everything up to level 14 and unpacked. I fell onto the bed in tears; I had made it... after all of the doubts along the way, I felt I was one step away from creating my birthing nest. It was good to arrive and settle in. I felt relaxed in knowing that I was there just in case my baby decided to come early. I was overwhelmed as I held my hands on my belly and spoke to the little girl within me. I told her we had arrived and that I was now creating the space we needed to feel held and supported in her journey to join us earth side. I fell into a deep sleep and had very powerful dreams.

The following morning I awoke, had a long bath and prepared for the most special women in my life to arrive for my Blessingway. They all squeezed into the living room and filled the apartment with so much love, support and safety. This was our intention for having it in the apartment and I feel it is a very important part of creating the supportive energy in the birthing space. I would encourage women to have their Blessingway in the space they plan to birth in if possible. It was one of the most incredible days of my life. I was on such a high after everyone left as I had been permeated with love.

With that energy I created my birthing altar. I smudged the space, calling on Great Spirit to guide me and hold me through this journey into motherhood. I arranged the cards and sacred objects I had been given with the intention of what they represented to me. I put up pictures of my mother and father and David's ancestors. I cried as I felt deep gratitude and understanding in the realization that they too had stood where I was standing now just before giving birth to me. I felt the history of humanity flowing through me and all that had come before me. I looked in the mirror at my reflection and saw the necklace from my bead ceremony earlier that day still hanging around my neck. I looked deep into my own eyes and realized I had arrived. My belly full with child, I stood at the birthing altar, the place where I was to be altered and transformed from maiden into mother, where all women with child have stood before me. I was preparing to birth my first child. I picked up my medicine drum which I made in my Shamanic Midwifery Training and I drummed, calling all of my guides and angels to be with me and all of my baby's guides and angels to be with her. It felt almost like a veil of love and protection came down around the space that night and I slept with the angels.

David arrived the following day and decided it was important to check over the birthing pool and all equipment needed for the birth. With the spiritual aspect covered we entered into the physical, practical preparation of the birthing space! Luckily he was onto it as we soon realized there were holes in the pool. Very important to take care of the practical aspects of what will be needed for a comfy birth! Lighting was very important to me so I made sure I had some pink lamps and candles to make it soft and warm.

A few nights later David and I had dinner with my 2 support friends. It was important to talk all together about what David and I needed in the support of our birth and how we envisioned the space to be. We named our fears and stated how necessary it was for any fears that came up during the birth to be recognized and we acknowledged that these fears would be felt in the sacred birthing space and potentially hold up the process. I feel that this was a huge part of the emotional preparation for our birthing space as the energies that the people in the room are holding will deeply influence and affect the labour process.

Then came the final magic touches that were accumulated in the space in those final 2 weeks. There were the hand made flags that each of the women had brought to my Blessingway which were left for me to sew together. It felt so right to be spending those last few days before birth sewing - sewing in the dreams and blessings for my daughter Delphi to have forever.

Every day that passed I added more and more love to our birthing space until it finally began to feel like my nest! It is important at that stage in pregnancy to remember to do things slowly, so each day I would achieve one more small thing, like make the playlist of sacred music for the birth or do some food shopping to stock up on supplies. I opened presents and hung the beautiful hand flags... I relished these final days. I was enjoying Betty's visits more and more often. Oh I love her! I felt like the luckiest woman on earth relishing in being pregnant, spending time with my beautiful family and friends, and my beloved David. Every moment felt like the last in some way as I knew once my baby girl arrived everything would be different.

So with the pool blown up, patches on, pumps working, crystals in place, lamps on, pictures up and the flags hung above the birthing pool, I felt alive and ready! Sacred birthing spaces can be created by anyone anywhere, in any way that is good for them. It can even be sacred in a Sydney apartment way up in the sky! All of us are unique and amazing individuals that can tune in to what we need to feel safe and supported and all I have to say is, it can be done anywhere, just create it the way you dream.

"Creating Sacred Birthing creates Sacred Living, creates Sacred Deathing, creates Sacred Birthing, creates..." (quote from 'Sacred Birthing, Birthing a New Humanity' by Sunni Karl)

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CREATING SPACE FOR INDIA

by Amanda Vella

THE FRONT ROOM IN OUR HOME IS MY YOGA ROOM. IT'S WHERE I KEEP ALL MY YOGA BOOKS, MY MAT AND YOGA PROPS. IT GETS THE BEST LIGHT AND BREEZE IN THE HOUSE AND IT'S WHERE I PREPARE MY YOGA LESSONS AND MEDITATE. WHEN I DECIDED TO HAVE MY BABY AT HOME I KNEW I WANTED IT IN THIS ROOM. WE WERE TOLD WE WERE HAVING A GIRL AND SHE WAS DUE TO BE BORN ON APRIL 19TH.

My husband took some convincing about a homebirth but my midwife Sonja Macgregor and I managed to get him comfortable enough with the idea. My eight year old daughter Jordan, on the other hand, couldn't wait. We kept our decision private till the very end so our families wouldn't be too concerned.

I felt incredibly heavy from thirtyseven weeks onward so I was surprised to still be pregnant at my baby blessingway a week before the due date. It was an intimate event in the front room and everyone bought a candle or flowers and a dish to share. The birth altar was adorned with cards, an ultrasound picture and a welcome sign that Jordan had made. My dearest girlfriends and relatives sat in a circle and wished me a safe, quick delivery. We beaded bracelets, made a birthing necklace, ate and laughed. It was a celebration of womanhood and the rituals made me feel supported and my baby honoured. The room was filled with strong female energy; I was ready.

But the 19th came and went. At 4am on the 20th I woke with a strong pain in the lower abdomen. I waited and there were a couple more. I had random contractions throughout the day and went for a brisk walk. I thought it would be nice to give birth on the 21st since Jordan had also been born on the 21st day (of October). But it was the same on the 21st; just random contractions all day. At 2.00pm my naturopath (and dear friend) Roxanne popped over with some caulophyllum, which I took every 2 hours.

I woke up during the night with contractions that were 8 minutes apart for several hours. I was certain that all the walking, chilli, yoga and homeopathy had combined to get things rolling. I couldn't sleep so I sat up and timed the surges. At 5am I decided to have a bath. I ended up falling asleep in it and when I woke up at 6am the surges had come to a halt.

Ian had stayed home from work and Jordan from school, but our baby just wasn't ready to leave the womb just yet. I was becoming frustrated by the stopping and starting. I was tired and felt pressured by the phone calls and text messages asking how it was going. And



on top of all that I was angry at myself for not being patient and not trusting my body. I had planned to surrender completely and let things unfold naturally. But patience has never been my best trait and because of the previous miscarriage and healing time, I felt as if I'd been pregnant for a year!

I stopped taking any homeopathic remedies and went for a quiet walk with Jordan. I realised that it would probably be one of the last moments she would have with me as an only child. We reflected on our life together, walking closely and talking quietly. That night we had dinner at my parents' house. At 8.30pm we were watching TV when a powerful surge made me get up off the lounge. I texted Sonja to let her know that it was probably going to be another night of pre-labour. I put Jordan to bed and retreated to the front room.

I checked that everything was in its place and felt the need to light all the candles and start photographing things. I felt surrounded by love and warmth and I wanted to capture it all before the flowers started dying. I felt like being alone so I lay on the lounge, watched our goldfish glide about and planned to sleep.

The surges became regular and strong. By the time I thought to monitor them they were already five minutes apart. Each time I felt one coming on I would get on my hands and knees. On an exhalation I chanted 'aum' and rode the entire contraction out. I rested between each one and found myself in a zone where my breath, body and mind were all focused on one thing. I felt confident and strong. At some point I went and had a shower. The next few hours became a blur of sleep and chanting through contractions.

At about 2.30am I needed another shower. Ian had fallen asleep so I woke him up and asked him to call Sonja. Contractions were now two to three minutes apart and I felt like I needed her. I was brought to my knees by contractions in the bathroom before I could get into the shower.

Sonja arrived just after 3am. She sat back and observed and I felt reassured by her quiet presence. Ian filled up the pool. I got in at

about 3.30am and continued chanting but started to feel my baby bear down. Jordan woke up at about 5am, walked in and asked where the baby was. She knew everything about conception, where babies come from and had watched birth DVDs with me. But seeing her mummy actually doing it was too much for her. She curled up beside the pool and stayed quiet. I found myself reassuring her that everything was okay and she began popping her head up over the rim of the pool to stare at me sympathetically. Sonja soon had her offering me water and wiping my face.

By this time I was fatigued and doubt began to creep in. My knees were stiff from being on them for so long and the water was getting cool. I started thinking that maybe she was stuck and I would need some intervention. I started repeating that I couldn't do it and that I was tired. I just wanted everything to stop so I could curl up in bed. I wished she could be born while I slept. "What if she is too big for me?" I asked Sonja. "Your baby is the perfect size for you" she said calmly. She offered me some Rescue Remedy, which I took enthusiastically. Jordan and Ian had a dose too and Sonja went to her car to get a tripod for the video camera.

While Sonja was out I had the urge to feel what was going on inside me. I slowly inserted my fingers and not far up I felt the squishy amniotic sac. I pressed it gently and felt my little girl's head. My waters hadn't broken yet and she was almost home! I burst out laughing. I was overjoyed to feel her and in awe of the whole miraculous event. Touching her and visualising her here gave me the encouragement I needed. By this time it was 4.50am.

When Sonja came back in I said I wanted out of the pool and into the shower. She discouraged me from showering and suggested sitting on the toilet for a bit instead. I was helped out of the pool and as soon as my feet touched the dry floor I knew I wouldn't birth in the water. "Blow the candles out," I told Ian. The room became dark, I turned around and headed towards my bedroom. As I passed the computer room I noticed the window was wide open and I hoped my neighbours hadn't heard me too much.

It was 5.45am and it felt great to be on the toilet, but I couldn't stay there long. I made the short journey to my bedroom and Sonja set up the drop sheets on the bed. I tried to get on all fours on the bed but this wasn't going to do. I needed to be down low, close to Earth. I needed grounding. I squatted against the bed, Jordan was drawing in the bed, Sonja was behind me and Ian was holding my arms.

I could feel the intense crowning sensations but I was holding back. Each new contraction became almost frightening, taking my breath away completely. I asked Sonja to please guide me as I didn't want to tear. I felt exactly as I did when I was birthing Jordan; that I had reached some great height or I was at the very precipice of the world and to go any further would cause me to fall, combust or maybe even die. And again, just like during Jordan's birth, I looked deep within me and summoned every ounce of courage and strength I had and I went to the place I needed to go to birth my baby. It was both exhilarating and terrifying.

My waters broke with a pop and gush at 6.20am. Jordan bounced off the bed and took charge of the camera as our baby's head emerged. Sonja swapped positions with Ian so he was now behind me and she was supporting me from the front. At 6.33am our little girl, India Jade, shot out into her daddy's arms weighing 3.86kg. He passed her to me and I sat on the bed cradling her. She was purple, warm, slippery and throbbing with life force. She didn't cry right away but when she did it was full-bodied and deep. She was beautiful and I was stunned to have birthed another precious little girl. Ian too was overwhelmed by the moment.

We wrapped her up and waited till the cord stopped pulsing before disconnecting her from me. Ian called his parents and I rang my mum. "I have my baby girl!" I told her. She was ecstatic. I birthed the placenta in the shower with Sonja's help while Ian and Jordan fell in love with India in our bed.

I emerged from the shower to find my emotional mum, sisters, niece and nephew in the hallway in their pyjamas. Soon after they left, my cousin popped in on her way to work and then my dad (he had the honour of watching Sonja inspect the placenta).



India's name honours my love for yoga and Ian's love for cricket (he tells everyone she's his best catch to date!). As a yoga teacher I have developed a deep appreciation for and trust in my body. I have spent hours on the mat making discoveries about the power of my breath. But birthing my baby at home superseded any yogic experience to date and empowered me more than I ever thought possible.

India is almost 7 months old now and I am thankful for many things but especially:

- The support and faith of my wonderful midwife Sonja. Her everyday approach to childbirth, her calm professionalism and warmth to my family and friends made the experience truly amazing.
- My husband Ian for opening his mind, releasing his fears and trusting me not only to birth at home but to raise our baby according to attachment parenting philosophies.
- My two beautiful little girls, Jordan and India who are the inspiration for everything I do.

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HAS In The Community



BIRTH CHOICES EXPO BY ANNE HARRIS (BIRTH CHOICES EVENT COORDINATOR)

The biannual Birth Choices Expo was held on Friday 15th October 2010 at the Leichhardt Town Hall. There was a huge variety of exhibitors, including doulas, midwives, Royal Prince Alfred Hospital childbirth educators, pre and post natal health practitioners, baby products and the ever important organisations like Homebirth Access Sydney, Australian Breastfeeding Association and the Nappy Network. Leichhardt Town Hall was just the right size, there was enough room for exhibitors, patrons plus a few rows of seats in front of the stage for people to sit down and listen to the speakers and entertainment.

Katie Brown was the first speaker. She is the author of Mother Me and spoke about valuing yourself and your time with your child and managing the new stresses that motherhood throws at you, with a barrage of great techniques that help you sail through the rough times and float like a heavenly being in the good times.

Lucy Perry was next. She is the founder of Beer and Bubs and author of the newly released book Cheers to Childbirth. It reminded us all about the benefits of active parenting by Dads and the value they lend as birth support and during the postnatal adjustment, to ease the family's transition with a new babe in the house.

Other highlights of this fantastic community event included the organic Indian food which had been lovingly prepared and presented by Veena, and the fantastic chai and Persian lovecake Yia had on offer. To finish off a lovely evening of information gathering, networking and friendship, the Avalon Drummers brought the night to a close.

The next Birth Choices Expo is in April 2011 and you can keep in touch by visiting the website www.birthchoicesexpo.com.au or becoming a friend on Facebook. It's a great opportunity to come along and hear great speakers, find natural birth and parenting information, and meet like-minded preventative health professionals and other lovely people.

Jenny Carleton (HAS committee member)

Birth Choices was a fantastic night – we spoke to many couples planning their first child or wanting a different birth experience for their second or third pregnancy. Our Guide to Choosing a Midwife was very popular resource.



AUTHOR OF 'MOTHER ME' KATIE BROWN, SPEAKING ABOUT MANAGING MOTHERHOOD STRESS



SARAH, ANNE & AMELIA AT THE HAS STAND AT ECO BABY EXPO

HAS COMMITTEE MEMBERS GRETA, JENNY AND JO (WITH PIPPI) AT THE HAS TABLE!

ECO BABY EXPO BY JENNY CARLETON

The Eco Baby Expo was a great opportunity to promote homebirth to a receptive and engaging audience. In the past we have exhibited at the Sydney Pregnancy Babies & Children's Expo where we often felt a bit out of place amongst generally mainstream products and services. However, while the Eco Baby Expo was a suitable audience, the number of attendees was very disappointing. We suspect this was because it was a new event and its location was perhaps not ideal.

Mama is... 'What We Learn #1'



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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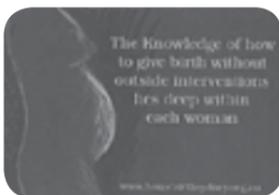


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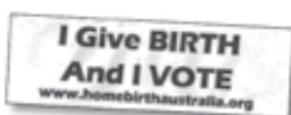
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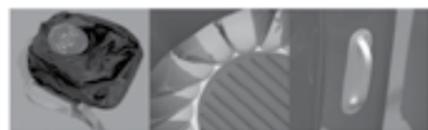


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BOOKS AND DVDs



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HAVING A GREAT BIRTH IN AUSTRALIA
David Vernon
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012BK \$24.95

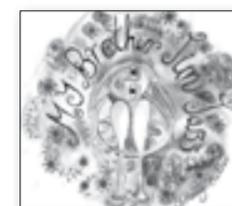


WE'RE HAVING A HOMEBIRTH
Kelly Mochel
Children will love this colorful, contemporary book about their family's special upcoming homebirth event. A great tool for discussion about what to expect when the baby arrives, this affordable book covers important issues such as the role of a midwife, being good labour support, noises to expect mom to make, cord cutting, placenta delivery and breastfeeding. Combined with healthy conversation about pregnancy and homebirth, this book will help teach children that birth is a natural occurrence, not a medical emergency.
SKU: KMBK \$12.00



NEW

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Chrissy Butler
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Aust 2006.
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3 HOMEBIRTH ICONS DVD
Maggie Lecky Thompson
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THE WONDERFUL PLACE BOOK
Chrissy Butler
This unique picture book is printed onto 100% post consumer recycled paper which affirms the sustainability of breastfeeding. 'The Wonderful Place' is a delighted look at full term breastfeeding through joyful artwork and the whimsical musings of a breastfed toddler.
\$20.00



Review: Virginia Maddock

'DOULA! THE ULTIMATE BIRTH COMPANION' BY TONI HARMA

'Doula! The Ultimate Birth Companion' is a lovely 50 minute documentary based in the UK and directed, filmed and edited by Toni Harman. It follows the work of three doulas: Sally, Caroline and Samsara, and documents their role in supporting three women and their partners before, during and after the birth of their babies – all of them planned homebirths; two of which are born at home and one who transfers to hospital and ends up having a caesarean (not shown).

Interspersed between prenatal, birth and postnatal scenes, both the doulas and the couples are interviewed which really shows the intimate bond which is formed between them all. When talking about them, the women speak of their doulas with such admiration that it would convince anyone to hire one, and of course, the men are just as appreciative. But I found that this DVD shows almost as much about the benefits of homebirth as it does about doulas, which is fantastic as it may lure more women to choose to birth at home after watching how serenely homely their births are. You can tell from the visiting midwives that these women are booked through hospital homebirth programmes which are much more common in the UK.

The only shortcoming is that it does not show doulas doing their work where it is required most – in the hospital, where they're absolutely needed to advocate for birthing women against the hospital system and all its faults. (And of course it would be nice if it was filmed here in Australia, but maybe someone will make one here one day!)

There is an extra 10 minute section on postnatal doulas, who are vastly underutilised in this country. The two women interviewed hire their doulas for different reasons, but both find them a valuable support in helping to cope with their newborn babies. Emma hires her doula 'Sally' because she experienced a real lack in postnatal care, and really struggled with breastfeeding and bonding with her baby. She also found that after her husband returned to work the attention and fuss from all her friends and family in the two weeks following the birth dried up and she felt quite alone. Her partner said that having Sally there prevented him from returning to a teary girlfriend.

Margaux, the second woman hired her doula 'Samsara' to give her a rest, to help with some housework and to take the baby and older sibling for a walk while she caught up on emails. Samsara describes her role aptly as a mixture of mother's help, nanny and nursery nurse. (I would add in housekeeper as well.) She grows to really love her doula, extending Samsara's work period from two weeks to over a month, and talks about wanting a third baby, just to have her back!

I would recommend anyone to watch this DVD if they are unsure about what doulas do, or are considering hiring one and want to know what to expect. I would also recommend that some hospital midwives watch it, so they do not feel threatened by doulas (as I have experienced recently!)



Review: Virginia Maddock

'WHY DIDN'T ANYONE TELL ME?' BY REBECCA GRIFFIN

This book is no ordinary parenting book. It is not filled with advice from some 'parenting expert' telling you the right and wrong way to bring up a child. Instead it is a book of stories; heartfelt stories, written by parents from as many different situations as you could think of.

It is divided into chapters that cover every aspect of parenthood: fertility, pregnancy, birth, babies, motherhood, fatherhood and families. It really opens the doors on topics that are rarely talked about openly, as the writers share their intimate moments of both the struggles and joys of having a baby.

The many topics covered include: infertility, assisted reproduction, fostering, adoption, surrogacy, becoming pregnant, hospital birth, homebirth, emergency and planned caesareans, breastfeeding, formula feeding, sleep deprivation, co-sleeping, sleep training, attachment parenting, baby health problems, becoming a mother and father, postnatal depression, working and stay at home parents, shared parenting, single mothers and fathers, only child and large families, same sex parents, and the list goes on.... Throughout the book the author provides information and evidence-based research

on the given topic, as well as a very comprehensive international resource section in the back of the book.

Some of the stories in this book really brought a tear to my eye and I found that reading such personal accounts helped me to understand some of the reasoning behind choices that other parents make that are different to my own. I think as parents, most of us can be quick to judge others for their choices but 'Why Didn't Anyone Tell Me' allowed me to feel empathy for those who shared part of themselves and their stories. If everyone could read this book and find such empathy for others, then wouldn't we all experience parenthood in a much more supported way!

'Why Didn't Anyone Tell Me' is a great book that would be a valuable addition to anyone's library, as there is something in it for everyone. It would make a great gift for any expecting or new parent so that they can get a glimpse of the journey ahead or be able to identify with others who have been through similar journeys. It is also a great resource for anyone who works in the birth or childcare fields, to better understand the issues that come with the territory.



Review: Virginia Maddock

DANCE OF THE WOMB. BELLY DANCE FOR PREGNANCY & BIRTH DVD BY MAHA AL MUSA

Dance of the Womb is the follow up to the book of the same title (which will be reviewed next issue) and is a step by step visual and audio guide on using belly dance during pregnancy and birth. It can be used from 14 weeks onwards and with no prior dance experience needed.

Maha, at 32 weeks pregnant and dressed in a gorgeous red costume, shows us how the ancient art of belly dance can help release tensions, strengthen muscles and loosen the pelvis to help facilitate the birth experience, as well as to massage the baby from within. According to Maha, "By tilting your pelvis in pregnancy, your abdominal muscles will strengthen; you will increase flexibility in your lower back, and relieve the weight from your uterus onto your abdomen and buttocks. A movable pelvis enables you to find comfortable positions during labour."

With a background of beautiful and exotic Middle Eastern music, it is narrated by Maha's calm and relaxing voice. The DVD starts with a 45 minute warm-up of slower and smaller movements of each body part, followed by over an hour of dance movements that progressively build on each other and eventually involve the whole body. It is very comprehensive albeit quite slow moving, making it suit the absolute beginner and those who are uptight and in need of loosening up the mind as well as the body.

The 'Bonus Feature' is a film and photo montage of Maha's birth of her daughter Aminah at her home in Byron Bay, which shows her putting the dance of the womb into action in all her birthing glory. Her midwife 'Jayne Alder' and another midwife friend who attended her classes 'Ann Marie Bernauer' are interviewed throughout and affirm why belly dancing both prenatally and during labour is beneficial.

Seeing Maha dance while pregnant and in labour, and about to embark on attempting pregnancy soon myself, I can't wait till I can put these belly dance for birth moves into action, and I can only wish that I look as graceful as she does.

Dance of the Womb book and DVD are available to buy online at her website: www.bellydanceforbirth.com

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IMARLI'S BIRTH STORY

by Martina Kreznovic



IT WAS A GOOD DAY TO HIT THE SHOPS, SO MUM AND I WENT INTO TOWN AND I FOUND A COUPLE OF NICE THINGS TO SHOW OFF MY BABY BUMP, AND OFF WE HEADED BACK HOME. THAT NIGHT I HAD A STRONG URGE TO GO THROUGH ALL OF THE THINGS IN THE NURSERY, ESPECIALLY ALL THE BABY CLOTHES, AND ORGANISE EVERYTHING AND TIDY IT ALL UP SO IT WAS READY TO GO.

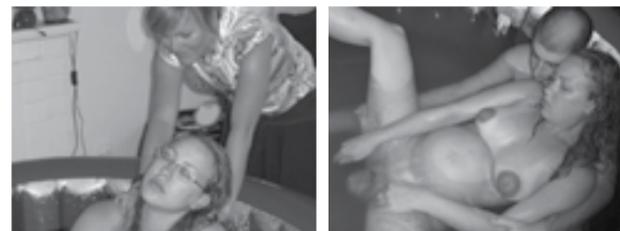
I managed to finally get to bed by about midnight but woke up at 2:30am with period-like pain through my back. I tapped my partner to wake up and massage my back... I felt really bad in doing this since he leaves for work at 3.30am! At first I didn't think anything of it but they were getting more and more intense and I found that Dejan pushing into my spine relieved the pain a lot. He asked me if he should just stay home. "No, go to work. I will see if Mum can help the pain". So I asked her to jab into my back, but she was nowhere near as well as Dejan so home he stayed!

5:30am came and I found myself needing to go to the toilet quite often, so I knew my body was clearing itself for my baby's birth and I thought to myself "The universe knows I just don't want to poop in the pool!" I had another contraction whilst on the toilet and then the bloody show appeared, so I called my midwife Sonja and she happily and calmly told me... "Guess what... you're going to have your baby today!" She told me she would get herself ready and make her way down. I hopped into the bath again and Dejan started pumping up the birth pool while Mum walked around filming us both excitedly. I've always found water to be a peaceful relief. I always jump into water to wash my pains and stresses away and always somehow knew I would have wanted to birth in the water.

I rang my friend Haley who was coming to the birth and she answered whilst still half asleep and then told me she would be on her way soon. I rang another friend Rachel who is notorious for never answering her phone and was worried she wouldn't pick up. Of course I was right, so I left a message telling her that I didn't think she was going to work today because this baby is going to be born.

I was feeling so many things throughout my labour in between contractions. I had back labour so each contraction brought on a sense of knives being stabbed into my back. I never once felt any bit of pain anywhere else. Once the contraction was over, all the thoughts of "Am I going to be a good mum?", "How long till I see my baby?", "Will it be a boy or a girl?", "Do I have everything I need?", "Will my baby love me?"... just everything you could think of raced through my mind as my baby and I were hours away from meeting each other. I often got emotional, focusing on these thoughts and would start to cry as I asked myself all these questions. I had a turbulent last couple of years so I kept saying over and over again to everyone and to my baby "I just want to be a good mum!" Now when I reflect back on those moments I think I needed to say these things to myself for my baby to hear and make her way down.

I always pictured myself being surrounded by women while I birthed, and for that reason I had asked Mum to be there, and Rachel and Haley were very close girlfriends of mine back from school days. First Sonja arrived and then Haley at around 7am. As Haley sat beside me throughout my contractions, she started pulling the same facial expressions I was putting out, and I'm thinking I must really be turning her off pregnancy right about now. I think for Mum it was hard for her to see me in so much pain, so she tried to hurry around the house making food, cakes and coffees for everyone, making sure everyone had what they needed to keep going for as long as they had to. It made me start worrying about her and I kept asking... "Is Mum ok? Someone go see Mum." Hahaha.



Sonja could see that I still had a while to go. So she popped out for a little while but stayed close by in case I wanted her to come back, and she told Haley she could do the same and so she went to go and see her family. Dejan and I were left to relax during my early stages of labour and he helped me get some rest as I had been up since 2am in the morning. Rachel then made her way to my place. She said "I never look at my phone before I go into work but something this morning told me I had to check it!" Lucky!

She was fantastic, swinging her arms with mine and dancing in the backyard during contractions. She really was in tune with what I needed and just said all the right things to keep me going, even though she had never been at a birth before and didn't know what to expect herself. A little while later everyone else made their way back to my house. Haley and Rachel were tag teaming it with water and wash cloths, and Sonja was close by providing emotional support and guiding me through all my different thoughts and feelings.

I felt like days had passed, even though it was a few hours, and I looked at Sonja and said "Do you see anything down there?" She chuckled and said to me "I don't know, why don't you check?" So I had a go and said "I don't know what I'm feeling for!" She told me I was eight centimetres dilated and still had a little while to go. I hopped back into the pool again. It seemed as though every ten minutes I was switching from pool to toilet to bed to toilet then back into the pool. If I stayed in the water too long it seemed to stop helping as much as it did when I first got in.

A couple more hours had passed and I asked Dejan to come into the pool. At first he was against being in the pool with me or catching the baby. When I asked why he said he nearly fainted when his first daughter was born because she had passed her first bowl movement inside the womb and it wasn't pretty. But by this stage I sort of didn't give him the option. "Put your shorts on and get into this pool now!" And so he did! He was really great and I think having the girls there as well really let him enjoy everything that was happening. It was really nice to have him right beside me while other people wiped my forehead and brought me water and ice cubes to cool down with. It is so funny though to watch the video now and see me cursing my head off at him while he is just sitting there doing nothing! Ahh the integrity of childbirth!

Throughout my labour, as intense as the pain was in my back, I thought "There is no other way to birth this baby... this is how all babies were born before!" I kept repeating over and over again... "It hurts so much but I don't want to go to hospital."

As her head emerged Haley yelled out "Ya havin' a baby!" and the atmosphere in the room was just of such happiness and excitement to meet Imarli. A few minutes later she was resting on my chest. As Dejan and I sat in the pool watching our daughter make her own way to my breast, we were just in awe of her. What a clever girl! How amazing it is to see all the first instinctual acts that often enough get lost and forgotten. Sometimes people think babies don't know anything but they know everything they HAVE to know.

I was amazed by Dejan who in the beginning didn't want to be in the pool at all and now he was sitting next to us with the pool water turning red as I birthed the placenta. I am so proud of him and I am sure he is proud of himself. He was a guy who never knew any different from hospital births and now boasts to everyone since



having Imarli at home he wouldn't ever do it any other way and loves sharing her birth story with anyone that will listen.

I'm so grateful I got to birth my baby the way I wanted! I really feel I gave her the best start in life. It saddens me to think that people feel they have the right to tell a woman it is not safe to birth at home. A woman knows what is best for her baby, for her body and for her spirit and there are always so many different ways to go about things that may come up. I truly feel that had I have birthed in a hospital, I would have had so many interventions because of the way my labour progressed and that scared me.

It's funny how people told me I was brave, or made comments like "Yeah you'll see when your labour begins... you'll want the drugs!" I think they are brave for going to hospital. Hospitals are there for illnesses and emergencies.

Sonja MacGregor is such an amazing woman, such an amazing midwife, an enormous amount of strength and support. Everyone should have midwives and doulas. The memories I will have of that day... the jokes, the tears, the laughter, the pain, everyone having a good time and anticipating Imarli's arrival with open hearts, being in the pool with my new family with everyone just letting us be together without interrupting... I would do it all over again in a heartbeat!

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AMINAH ANNE'S BIRTH STORY

by Maha AlMusa



Photos by birth photographer Katrina Folkwell

A GOLDEN NEEDLE WAS GENTLY PUSHED INTO MY UPPER WRIST. "WHAT DO YOU THINK – BOY OR GIRL?" I ASKED. "DEFINITELY THE PULSE OF A GIRL!" REPLIED MY WONDERFUL JAPANESE ACUPUNCTURIST, JACQUI. I WAS EXCITED BUT CAUTIOUS. AT 46 YEARS OF AGE I WAS AMAZED THAT I WOULD BE HAVING ANOTHER BABY... LET ALONE PERHAPS, A GIRL AFTER TWO BOYS???

Jacqui did a session two days before I went into labour with lots of cupping and extra moxa. After I left, the strangest feeling came over me. I knew that this was the beginning of labour and I needed to go home, rest and nest!

The next evening, with mild contractions I ventured out to the Aboriginal Tea Tree Lakes with my partner Don and my good friend Liz... the same place that I had gone to 11 years ago in labour with my first son at 34 weeks pregnant. I needed to be in the soothing energy of those red still waters and beneath the whisper of trees, the smell of ocean drifting from afar and the sands of time beneath my feet, connecting me to Earth Mother. I leant against the tea trees for support and nourishment, feeling the softness of bark on my palms and rotated my hips gently with each contraction, feeling my baby, talking to it quietly. Don took pictures of me as Liz watched with that serene smile of knowing, no words, just presence. We played at the lake as the sun set and birds fluttered. Ahhh natural birth, in nature!

Coming home, Liz and I did a thorough clean of the house and the words of Sheila Kitzinger echoed "Women nest at home then go to a hospital and have their baby!" Never made sense to me either!!

That night I lay in bed feeling my uterus contract through my quiet slumber. Here I was at it again, about to have this amazing life-affirming experience, in my own bed, my own home... with an awareness like never before!

I rose at 6.30am and thought "Yes this is it. Today is the day!"

Don and I looked at each other. "It's happening Don." I said. "Are you sure?" "Yes!" We hugged as I called Jayne, my midwife. She arrived around 7.30am. Such a blessing, such an Angel Mother to me, so calm and joyous. I rang my photographer Katerina and friend Liz.

Everyone arrived - my circle of comfort and support, my beautiful sisters. The day was still, no wind, overcast but fine. "The BEST conditions for birthing!" I thought "God has covered me with a fine silk-like protection, but given me enough light to guide my way."

The cows roamed the paddock as I roamed the garden. Contractions came and went. On the birth ball with pelvis wide I rocked and rolled, danced and stretched, relaxing into this sacred birthing. Don went about fixing the pool and organizing the house. I walked around, smiling and laughing as we spoke about how we all felt immersed in this energy of birthing, this blessed moment of Life. It all felt normal, peaceful.

I walked outside into the garden and called Don to be with me. I leant against his strong chest and quietly moaned, opening my legs into a wide stance, circling and opening my pelvis, connecting with my man. We walked down the tree-lined road outside my house, arm in arm, connected as my body began to feel more surrendered, baby and I exchanging our essences through the pulsation of the chord. Baby spoke to me of timeless wisdom, teaching me to let go, be brave and strong. "I am giving birth" I thought. "How lucky I am!" I realized that a great pouring of love was beaming out of me. I took Don's hand as we walked further into our garden, and then came that less flattering but essential need to relieve my bowels, straight into a bucket in the garden for all to see. That moment spoke to me: "Inhibition is not a requirement of birthing. Let it all go Maha, let it all gooooo", I whispered to myself!

I came inside the house and instinctively I needed to be in a cosy darker space, so I went into my bedroom and played some lovely Donna Delroy chants. As some bigger contractions melted through me, I danced, softening into my pelvis. Liz came into the room and danced by my side. Together we were in harmony, no judgment, no words, an unspoken symphony.....

And so the labour progressed. Don filled the pool, Jayne sat quietly by, Katerina danced around the scene taking pictures, and beautiful Liz flowed with gentle ease - everyone calm, relaxed. Inside and outside the house, I just went wherever my body took me.

Early afternoon came and I was ready to get in and out of the pool for pain relief. I had a moment where a strong pain gripped my right side. I crouched in the water and moved rocking from side to side, breathing through the cramp-like pain. It passed, I got out of the water and wanted to lay on the couch. I had hardly lain on my side when I had to get up again and dance through another strong contraction. I remember this moment, that desire for everything to stop, for mother to have rest but body saying no!



I returned to the water and an overwhelming emotional anxiety arose, taking me by surprise, sweeping through my body. A childhood trauma connected to my father and men in my life... and the women, my mother, Don's mother, the women that we had both been taken from as babies. It was overwhelming. The sadness and grief welled up in me, and I knew it was an important bridge that I needed to cross. My contractions stopped as I burst into tears, deep heart-wrenching sobs, and Don came and sat beside me and just placed his hand on my shoulder, his head very close to mine. Katerina brought some candles and pictures of our mothers and my sons, and placed them beside me. I looked deeply into each photo and cried and cried, feeling the depth of the loss of our mothers, and the gratefulness of my own chance to have my beautiful boys and now another gift, another baby, to embrace my sorrows and give me joy. Ahhhh birth! The magnificent clearing, the space for emotional allowance, the learnings, the spiritual awakenings...

And as the feeling had consumed me and beckoned me to face my fears and my sadness, the moment changed, as energy shifted and I felt strong again to keep on going. The waves parted and the passage was clear. No turning back, this baby was coming!

I felt a huge pressure deep down in my pelvis. I let out guttural sighs. The sensation was intense and I kept changing positions in the water to work into the pain. "My body knows what to do" I thought, "You can do this Maha" I repeated. "Surrender" I whispered through my out breath. The water bag was bulging and Jayne broke my waters at my request - the pressure was too much, logic was nowhere to be found in this raw state of birth.

I could feel baby was well and truly right down, and I moaned, breathed, spiraled and rocked in the water. Before long Don was in the pool with me. Immediately I was drawn to lean against him, and there I stayed through second stage. The baby was coming fast and it

was sooo intense. I screamed through the contractions, trying to bring my voice down onto my perineum as baby's head began to push and stretch me, and I remembered my first son being the same, my primal sounds as though excavated from the bowels of Mother Earth. I focused on my breath through the lull and into the bite - bearing down was my hardest moment.

I yelled at Jayne "Get it out!" She calmly told me "You are doing it, baby is coming!" I wanted it out now!!! I felt that knowing again - there is no turning back, both comforting and difficult a moment all rolled into one... nowhere to hide, this IS the power of now!!

Last big, strong push through the stretching, in unison with a magnificent contraction. Out baby's head came into the water... such relief! I waited for the next contraction, all the while breathing and focusing on my breath, now my lifeline to God. I turned onto my left side to help baby through the birth canal... and then final relief as the whole body slid into the water. I leant back into Don and before I knew it my baby was on my chest, wet and warm and slippery. "We love, we love you" I kept repeating, staring at a crunched up face and ears, little nose and solid, strong looking hands with chubby fingers.

"Oh Don. Oh Don" I cried, in a total oxytocic moment. I stroked our baby saying "There there, it's OK, it's OK", my voice laced with such love... Ahhhh that primal nurturing; the staring, smelling, stroking, total unison in heart, body and soul. No words, just joy, shock, surprise, happiness. I kept kissing baby and then did the peek - I lifted baby's leg gently and saw... a girl!! I did a double take and placed my hand to my mouth in shock. "A girl, a girl!" Oh my God, I had wanted a girl for sooo long and here she was... I couldn't believe it. I looked at Don, we both smiled and were so genuinely happy. The birds tweeted sweetly, just outside our window... It was perfect!

We enjoyed the next hour in the warm pool with our beautiful Aminah who cried and connected and cried. And we laughed and smiled and shone as we held her, stroked her, breastfed her, loved her. I was so deeply immersed in the moment that nothing could touch me... that nectar of birth I wished every woman could taste, breathe and be enraptured by. No interference, just Mummy and Daddy swooning in the love... and as my next contraction came, I stood up in the pool and delivered the lotus placenta.

At 46, I felt so blessed to have once again been given this opportunity of a lifetime. I could do anything, anywhere, at any time! I love you Aminah Anne.....

Aminah born 10.10.2008 at 3.07pm weighing 8lbs 6oz.

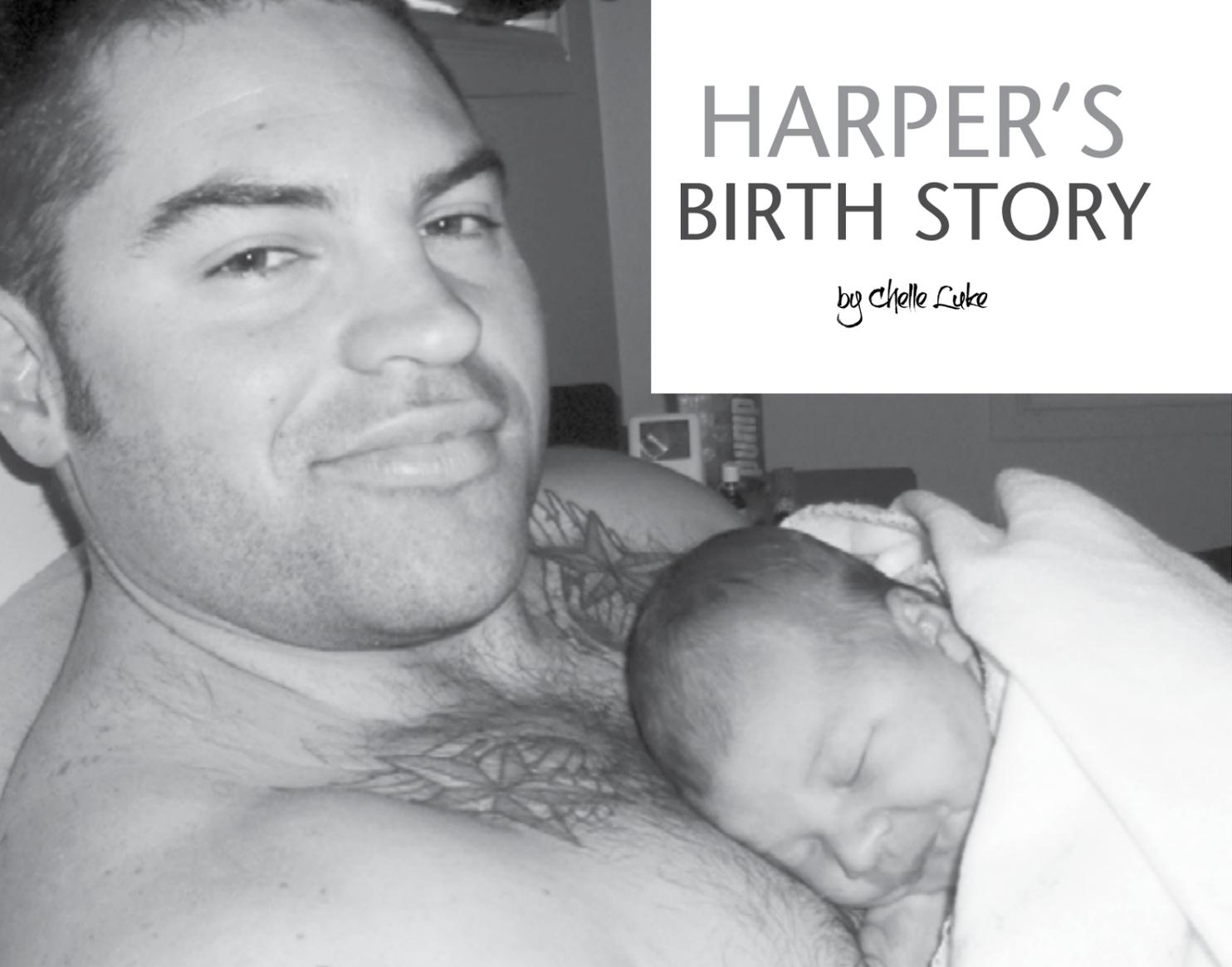
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HARPER'S BIRTH STORY

by Chelle Luke



the rush of boiling water so my body could absorb the delicious heat. In our bed I remember opening my eyes as if from a deep sleep with every rush, to see my husband's face looking back at me wide awake, as if he had been watching over me the whole time. As I have later found out, we were both snoring our heads off between contractions and would wake up together, and both fall back asleep as the rush went away. As one contraction came I opened my eyes and it was Amanda's face looking back at me. "Hey little one" was all she said. She has since told me the energy she felt walking into our bedroom that day was so intense and overwhelming it brought her to tears.

Soon after Amanda arrived, I started to have the sensation that I needed to push. Robyn suggested I follow the urges and see what happened. I pushed for a little while but felt nothing was really happening, so I asked her to check how dilated I was. I had been in labour now for over 12 hours and in my own mind I was sure I'd be at least 8cm. Thank goodness Robyn didn't tell me I was only 4cm and only on one side!! My baby was trying to come down on an angle causing one side of my cervix to dilate and the other side to swell. She explained to me we had to get my baby's head off my cervix so he can realign and I can dilate evenly. For the next few hours I had to be head down, bum up and fight my body's every urge to push, and instead, try to pull my baby back up into my uterus!

As the sun came up and light began to fill our bedroom, I remembered that a woman's labour can slow down during the day. With the possibility I may not birth my baby until the sun went down again, I nearly broke. I sobbed to Robyn at the end of one difficult contraction "I can't do this". Thankfully she had come to know me so well over our months of prenatal visits that she knew just what to say... "If you still can't do this in another hour, do you want me to take you to hospital?" That quickly snapped me out of my self pity! After another painful one I begged her for some Nurofen, and again she threatened me with hospital and an epidural "No! I can do this!" I was determined to have my drug free home birth. Robyn became my torch to follow through the darkness. She made sounds I could copy at the peaks of my contractions to ease the all-consuming urges to push. I trusted her so completely, and would follow her voice wherever it took me.

Between some of my contractions I was laughing and making jokes, as if nothing was happening, then between others I remained in a trance preparing for the next one, hissing "Don't be funny" at my husband attempting to continue jokes from the last break. Ben and Amanda stayed close to me the whole time. Their hands never left my skin, putting pressure on my lower back during a contraction, massaging me in between, pinning my hair back, rubbing ice on my face and holding my hands. As the urges to push through a contraction became too much to bear, my husband copped punches, scratches, even a headlock, just so I could release some of the tension. Luckily he is a big, strong man and could take it... although he is still teasing me that I bashed him up!

After many hours, I began involuntarily pushing at the end of my contractions. I just couldn't fight my body anymore. Robyn suggested we check my cervix again.

"I think we're ready to push" were the sweetest words I had ever heard! Ben and I looked at each other and nearly burst into tears! I leapt off the bed as fast and as gracefully as a naked 42wk pregnant woman

possibly could and locked myself in my bathroom. I needed to be on my own. Robyn had suggested I try sitting on the toilet to push. Once I could feel my baby's head in my vagina, I stood up, flung open the door and declared I was getting into the pool! I embraced my inner warrior woman and thoroughly enjoyed this stage of labour. I would roar and push with every fibre of my being when a rush would come, and breathe for my baby in between them.

Surrounded with love by his Daddy, his Nanna Honey, his fairy god mumma Amanda, and his midwife Robyn, my little lion man was born in the water at 3:44pm, Monday the 2nd of August 2010. He was caught by the super fast hands of our midwife, and placed on his Mumma's chest. At that moment my whole world stopped and fell silent. All I could see and hear and feel was him... my perfect little baby.

My husband put his hand on my shoulder. I looked up to see his face beaming from ear to ear. He had tears in his eyes. We had done it! Harper was finally here, at home with us.



My mum dropped by that afternoon, and has since told me she knew I wasn't far off. I was glowing with a quiet calm she had never seen around me before, as she had always said I was such a 'spirited' child...

At 7pm that night I felt the rumblings of pre-labour. We messaged Robyn to let her know things had started. Robyn told us to go to bed because we may be in for a long night, but we were far too full of anticipation to sleep! We curled up together in bed, cuddled, and chatted quietly until I couldn't stay still anymore. Ben set up the birth pool and began to fill it. I sat close by bouncing on my exercise ball, feeling so calm, happy and giggly with excitement. I was enjoying my mild pre-labour contractions with no clue of what was to come.

As my contractions became stronger and more regular, I climbed into our birth pool and discovered the water coming from the hose was cold! We had run out of hot water!!! It was now 1am, active labour had begun and I did NOT want to be without my beloved birth pool! Ben called my mum to come and help him carry buckets of boiled water up the stairs. She hadn't been able to sleep anyway and was there in less than 5 minutes... bless her...

As my labour trance took over, the rest of my story becomes a bit of a blur. I have little recollection of time or the order of events, so this is what I have pieced together through my own vague memories and those of my awesome birth team.

Robyn arrived shortly after Mum. I was so happy to see her. Everything was coming together now... just waiting for my cousin Amanda. She had booked the earliest flight she could from Brisbane and was due to arrive at 8am.

My baby and I laboured steadily through the early morning. In the birth pool I remember Mum pouring hot water in, trying to avoid scalding me with it as I would stretch out a leg, or arch my back towards

I WOKE UP EARLY SUNDAY MORNING, 5 DAYS "OVERDUE", DETERMINED TO GO INTO LABOUR THAT DAY. MY HUSBAND BENJAMIN TOOK ME OUT FOR A MORNING OF POWER WALKING LAPS AROUND THE LOCAL PARK, THEN TO IKEA FOR MORE POWER LAPS, MENTIONING ON THE WAY HOME HE NEEDED TO MOW THE LAWN. "I'LL DO IT!" I YELLED, CERTAIN THAT WOULD GET THINGS GOING... AND IT CERTAINLY DID!

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DELPHI'S BIRTH STORY

by Elizabeth Criner

DECIDING TO HAVE A HOMEBIRTH FOR OUR FIRST CHILD FELT LIKE THE ULTIMATE LEAP OF FAITH. WE REALLY HAD TO PUT THIS INTO PRACTICE WHEN MY DUE DATE CAME AND WENT, WITH OUR FAMILY CALLING EVERYDAY TO CHECK IF WE HAD A BABY YET.



Finally the morning came, waking at 4am with period pains, I got the hot water bottle and went back to bed. By 7am I had my show and was very excited. David jumped out of bed and decided we should have a celebratory breakfast at the cafe downstairs. I was hesitant to leave my nest but the contractions were very mild and irregular so it was best to carry on with our day. After pancakes and eggs and a few deep breathing moments, we went to Wendy Whitely's beautiful garden in Lavender Bay, next to the apartment we were staying to have our baby. Again I was hesitant to be going further away from where the baby was to be born, but my Darling David persisted it would be a lovely thing to do.

So off I waddled down the street and into the magical garden. We walked and stopped and breathed together, we looked out over the city of Sydney and the beautiful harbour and relished in our final moments of togetherness, just the two of us. The flowers were blooming and the smell of Spring was in the air, a beautiful sunny day. We sat under a big fig tree for a while and made our intentions for the day and the birth, and realized we were inside of our own vision. We had spoken about spending the day in the garden for the beginning part of my labour and there we were!!

So began the journey... I was rocking gently as the expansions were getting slowly more and more intense. After a few hours, we began our journey home along the harbour and up a giant hill. By the time we reached the top I was feeling very sensitive and I could feel everything around me more than usual. I decided it was definitely time for us to head back to our little "birthing den"! We made our way back and I felt very happy to be safe in my nest again.

By the time the sun began to set, labour was well and truly established, so David called our midwife, Betty and support friend Nadine. As the contractions were still not regular she said she would come after dinner if nothing changed in the meantime. David ran a bath and I relaxed into it while he read me affirmations. He was very sweet and enthusiastic, but after a while I asked him to give me some space. Just after he walked out I proceeded to vomit and I felt the energy intensifying, so I had to go back to leaning over the bed swaying my hips.



It must have been another few hours before the girls arrived and I felt great relief to have them by my side. I felt myself relax deep down into my body as they breathed with me and massaged me gently. They gave David some jobs like filling up the pool and preparing things, which made him feel much better as he had something to do!!

It wasn't long before I was told it was ok to enter the pool so I sunk into the beautiful, relaxing water. What a relief! Then after only a few minutes I felt sick and began vomiting and realized the water was way too hot for me, so I had to get out. I was stumbling around the room trying to find where I wanted to be, everyone was advising me to do different things: "Go to the balcony door and get some fresh air", "Why don't you lean over the bed here?", "Do you want the ball to sit on?" They were all staring at me when I said "Can everyone please leave the room? I need some space!" I don't know where it came from that voice!! It was like my higher self was speaking through me!! And so there I was, left with me, myself and I... and of course my baby!! This was a very significant moment in my labour.

I closed the balcony door and in my own time made my way back to the pool and got in. Relaxing into the warmth of the water I received the message that it was time to take my energy inward, and that yelling and moving away from the pain was exhausting me, it was time to conserve my energy, to quiet myself and journey downward, deep down to meet my baby...

I hummed with each contraction, sending the sensations down through my legs into the earth. I allowed the pain to surge through my body as if I was entering into the pain instead of pulling away from it. The vomiting stopped and I realize now it was happening because each time the pain got more intense, I would resist the energy, pushing everything upwards, instead of down towards birthing my baby... And so labour progressed...

David came in and sat with me, he guided my breathing and we breathed together. I felt such a beautiful, deep connection of love. Nadine was there for me to lean on, covering me with hot towels, singing and dancing for me as the music I'd chosen played in the background and created an incredible sacred energy. They played my medicine drum and the beat reminded me of my strength, supporting me in crossing through the gateway into motherhood. At one point

the Baby's Soul song that I'd previously recorded with Ganga came on with my heartbeat, the baby's heartbeat and me singing her soul song which I'd channeled. It was as if I were singing the baby into this reality...everyone in the room was crying. It was a divine moment.

Betty checked me around 2am and I was 7cms dilated. They all encouraged me and told me what an incredible job I was doing. I remember David's beautiful manly voice telling me how wonderful I was doing and it gave me strength to carry on. I reached a point of extreme pain in my cervix that made me pull away from the sensations and I was reminded of the 3 abortions I have previously had... I cried for those babies, but I mostly cried for the pain I had experienced in the first one. I was in America and they did not use anaesthetic so I felt the pain when they opened my cervix. It was indescribably painful and I realized I was feeling the same sensation of an upward pushing pain on my cervix and I cried and cried until the pain released. I let go, I forgave myself and I called out for this baby to come... for I longed to hold her in my arms.

A few more hours passed and I began to feel like pushing. Betty checked me again. "Lizzy," she said, "Let's have this baby!!!" My heart exploded!! I had obviously reached transition as I couldn't get comfortable. Then David said "Do you want me to get in and be your chair?" It was so sweet. I grunted and he understood that was a yes so he joined me in the pool and sat behind me supporting my back and we breathed together. It was so divine to be held at that moment.

The contractions were FULL ON by this stage and soon after little Delphi crowned. The girls said she had hair and she went slightly in and out a few times. Each time I thought "Oh no, she's gone back in!!" But she took her time. As I began to feel the 'ring of fire', I was yelling "Oh no" and Nadine was saying "Oh yes!!" I decided to surrender to the burning sensation around my clitoris instead of resisting. Betty said to me that I had been avoiding the burning and I had to push past it... so I made a conscious decision to allow the sensations to be ok, and they almost became pleasure in a really strange sort of way. I was yelling "Oh yes", "Oh yes", "Oh yes!!!" And it was only when I watched the video that I saw how it actually became quite sexual, touching on the orgasmic energy of birth. Delphi's head was half way out and stayed there between contractions for what felt like forever!!! Then her head was out and

she turned her body around and came out and Betty lifted her into my arms. No words could ever describe that moment....

David's arms wrapped around us and she looked up into our eyes. She didn't cry, she just looked, staring into our eyes. I felt like I was falling into the deepest love there is. Then she looked around at Betty and Nadine and up above to the flags hanging above us that had been made especially for her... like she was taking the room in that she had known but never seen. She looked so wise and oh so beautiful.

I got quite cold in the pool so the girls added some warm water and I stayed in the bath and delivered the placenta. I felt in a strange in-between place when Delphi was born, but it wasn't until the placenta had been birthed that I felt myself coming back into my body. David got out and showered and then held baby Delphi on his chest. Nadine gave me tea while I was still in the bath, like golden warmth in my belly.

I slowly made my way out of the pool to the warm shower and then onto the bed so Betty could give me 2 stitches. I got Delphi's head out without tearing but it was her shoulders that gave me a little tear. Then the girls tucked us into bed and cleaned up a little before saying goodbye. We basked in the warm, glowing light of the candles with the curtains closed as we rested together in bed and couldn't stop staring at her!!

We were nourished and delivered food by my dearest friends and family, Nici and her children. And so the days and nights became one... Betty came each day, always at the perfect time. I learned more about Delphi everyday and felt that deep, sensitive place one rests in after birth. I was floating...

I give thanks to Great Spirit for guiding us, to all of the incredible support from our friends and family, to Jane Collings and my Shamanic Mermaid Sisters... the incredible women I've been studying Shamanic Midwifery with this year. Thanks Nadine for coming all the way from Rotuma to be here for my birth!! Dearest Betty, thank you for being the incredible angel in disguise, for your courage and trust in the natural process of birth, and my Darling David for being the man that you are... But I especially give thanks for my happy, healthy baby, Delphi Willow Walsman and everything her soul brings to us... I give thanks to all aspects of myself that brought me here and carried me through my first birth experience. A baby, a mother and a family were born.... at 5:38am on the 10th September 2010.

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THE BIRTH OF IMOGEN SUNSHINE COATES

WE HAD PLANNED AND DREAMED OF A HOME BIRTH FOR OUR FIRST CHILD. THE PREGNANCY HAD PROCEEDED PERFECTLY ALONG THE WAY. WE DID CALMBIRTH CLASSES, RELAXATION EXERCISES, PRE-NATAL YOGA AND SHIELDED OUR EYES FROM ANY STORIES, INFORMATION OR REALITY TV SHOWS ABOUT PREGNANCY AND CHILDBIRTH THAT COULD LEAD US TOWARDS FEAR.



by Esther Bailey



I'd visualised my baby's birth as a six hour labour, commencing in the early hours of the morning of the 7th October, four days after my due date and aligned with my tenth new moon. It would begin in the middle of the night, followed by a dawn walk along the cliff, followed by a speedy labour at home in the birthing pool. I'd be supported in this blissful state by my husband and midwife, and all done and dusted by lunchtime!

In the 2 weeks before my due date almost 40 charms for my Blessingway necklace flowed in from all over the world, sent by the women who have shaped my life, each with special significance from the sender. It felt amazing to be at the centre of so much positive energy. I had my baby shower on my due date and again close friends poured out love and affection, creating handmade singlets and t-shirts whilst drinking champagne and eating cake.

So the 7th arrived, and I was not awoken to the onset of labour! Ahh well, a little walk perhaps? No. A relaxation CD? Nothing. A nice bath? Nada. Vindaloo? Bit of gas. Hmmph! Well babies will come when they're ready so it's important to be Zen and remember that this is not a process that you control, but one that flows through you. The 10th day of the 10th month of the 10th year is coming. Perhaps she is holding out for that? No. More acupuncture! Nope. But my doting friend is not leaving the country until the 13th so as long as she comes before that we should be okay. Tragically no... and so on all the way up to 2 weeks over due!

When we hit the two week marker I felt despondent. With a miserable cough and cold for the previous week, I was not feeling at my peak and living in limbo-land was starting to take its toll. Betty arrived on the Sunday night and did a sweep. There had been some thinning of the cervix and there was a couple of centimetres dilation, so at least something was starting to move. She recommended more sex and internal use of evening primrose oil to encourage softening. Whilst the sweep brought on some light period type pains that I desperately tried to coax, they had ebbed away by bed time and so the next day we decided to book into the hospital to get some tests done to make sure that the baby and placenta were still happy.

On Monday I rested. On Tuesday I cried. On Wednesday I ran to Coogee. Literally! I jogged down steps and danced along the cliff walk with my favourite tunes. Rest and relaxation wasn't working so let's bounce her out instead! At least being active rather than passively waiting put me in a much more positive state of mind and being out in the beauty of nature did feel amazing - those who saw me pass probably thought I was crazy!

That afternoon Betty and I went into the Royal Women's Hospital for my ultrasound and CTG, and the results all seemed awesome. The doctor then said to us "So all of your test results are great, bubby seems very happy and so the good news is that we don't need to induce you today. How about first thing tomorrow!". It was vital at this stage that, as a couple, we were clear on our wishes and prepared to assert them. Having discussed it in advance, I let her know that I was not comfortable with this, we felt baby was on the way already and we would agree to be induced the following Monday, at the start of week 43, if nature had not taken its course by then. The hospital agreed to wait if I underwent daily monitoring.

The next day I arrived at the hospital for my CTG which went very much as per the previous day. I encouraged them to give me my third sweep which they reluctantly did. This confirmed the dilation was still 2cms. As usual this stimulated some light period-like pains as I drove home, but unlike on previous occasions they seemed to catch and hold this time.

Soon after 12pm we had definitely established and I knelt on the floor leaning over our bed. The waves came regularly and I dropped instinctively into the long outward breaths that they teach you in Calmbirth. Four long outward breaths would get me through a surge and then I had some time to rest before going round again. I hummed or 'Ohmed' or moaned through each breath and the vibrations helped to focus and soothe. Brad timed the contractions and they were so regular he could count down when each would end - which really helped. At some point I got tired of kneeling and lay on the bed with one leg outstretched on the birthing ball. I was already deep into labourland. I didn't really have any conscious awareness and just focused on enjoying the rest between surges. Immediately after each surge I felt very nauseous, but never had the energy to puke!

Betty arrived around 3pm. I barely acknowledged her, looking up only briefly to say hi before disappearing back into my little world. At some point the contractions lengthened and I think my vocalisations increased. Thank God I'm not a Scientologist - silent birthing was definitely NOT an option! Betty and Brad filled the pool and at 4pm Betty did an exam, told me that I was 5cms and I could get into the pool. I wobbled across the hallway from my bedroom to the baby's room. Ah the relief of the water was instant! I knelt in the pool and continued to labour, gripping Brad's hands. I rested my head on his lap in-between surges and his presence was an essential comfort through that first stage.

I didn't really discern the transition then the next round of surges came and my lower body arched with a powerful retching sensation. Conscious of not pushing too soon but unable to do anything about it, I asked Betty if it was okay to push and she let me know that it was. I had gone from 5-10cms dilation in minutes in the soothing pool. The surges came hard then and the mantras that I had written up on the wall came into their own: 'Breathe her out'; 'Have faith'; 'Surrender'... My body took over and all I could do was let go and remember my breathing. There were a number of points where I heard my sounds get higher in pitch and tinge with panic, and I pushed them down low again and it felt more controlled.

For me there were 2-3 sub-stages of the releasing stage: the giant poo stage where the baby was moving down; the hot sting phase where I felt the stretch; the bobbing stage, where she progressed and receded before breaking through. This was frustrating so I concentrated on remaining relaxed in the pelvic floor between surges, and during



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surges I tried to hold the forward push so that each surge built on the previous - which began to be more effective after a couple of attempts. Having held her forward I was desperate for her not to recede and gave a couple of fairly strained big pushes. I remember asking Betty if she could just grab her and pull her out - she said no!

I remember doing a bit of swearing at this point! On the next round I gave an almighty push and the head popped out. Blessed relief! I then had the luxury of a little relaxation before the next surge and felt more alert and conscious than I had previously. Soon I gave a big full-body shudder and the rest of our baby came out easily into her father's waiting hands.

Imogen was born in caul, floating in her own little bag of fluid in the pool, so she was remarkably calm and unfazed. Brad and Betty broke the bag and cleared her face and airways as I turned around to have her placed onto my chest at 5.40pm. Turning around to see her floating in the water was very strange. I looked up at Brad and said "How mad is that!" During labour it is all about you and your pain, and then all at once there's a tiny person that you've both made and she's right there. I am still blown away by it. Brad placed her onto my chest and she made little squeaky noises. The placenta was perfectly pearlescent and spiralled and she was covered in vernix; we took both as good signs of her health and wellbeing.

Being born in caul is incredibly auspicious, signifying that she may be destined for greatness, be psychic and/or have a fairy companion - so much nicer a way to arrive than having your waters artificially ruptured in a hospital. It just proved how right we were to hold on and have her naturally at home. She sat on my chest for a little while before spontaneously locating the breast and latching on. We all sat and marvelled at the work we had done and Betty got us all a nice cup of tea and a biscuit. I felt very alert and weirdly normal, having been in such a tripped out place for so long.

Eventually it was time for Brad to cut the cord and to have his own first skin to skin time with his daughter. The two of them cuddled for an hour or so whilst I completed the third stage and washed up. By 8pm on Thursday 21st October, the three of us were relaxing in our giant beanbag in front of the telly, ordering a takeaway pizza under a rising 10th full moon.

Betty Vella was amazing, calm and insightful. Her real skill is in making herself as invisible as possible. She gives you all the confidence you need to go forward and trust yourself. She anticipates your needs and supports your partner to be as present as they can be. Her daily post-natal visits are a god-send and ensure again that you have the confidence in your own abilities to intuit a path forward.

Named on day 6, Imogen Sunshine Coates has been a perfect little baby. She sleeps a lot, never cries and is incredibly alert. Being a mum feels totally normal and fabulous and like it's Christmas every day!

31 JULY 2010

Midwives attack new 'veto' – *The Age*

Julia Medew reports on how midwives are aggrieved about new rules that might curb their access to Medicare rebates and prescribing rights, accusing Health Minister Nicola Roxon of trying to hide the change in the lead-up to the election. Last year Ms Roxon announced that from November this year midwives would for the first time be able to use the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme and Medicare rebates for their clients. At the time, Ms Roxon said the historic move would boost a midwife's ability to work independently and increase options for pregnant women, especially those in rural areas who struggle to get access to care. But in a long-awaited change to the legislation, which the government has not yet announced, midwives will now have to work collaboratively with a doctor, who must endorse their practice before their clients can access financial benefits.

<http://www.theage.com.au/national/midwives-attack-new-veto-20100730-10zxd.html>

7 AUGUST 2010

Women's birthright: private midwifery – *The Australian*

Barbara Cook, a QLD midwife discussed how it's now set in law how women will be able to access private midwifery and Medicare rebates. It describes how midwives are to work in collaboration. It's apparent the medical system has won the right to veto women's choice and access to private midwifery. Women wanting care by a private midwife need to be approved. A collaborative care plan must be prepared with a signed agreement between doctor, midwife and client. In her case, working in a rural community, she was previously able to book a private client into the public hospital by providing a care plan to demonstrate collaboration. There's no incentive or process for doctors to provide a collaboration agreement enabling a woman to give birth under my care. All choice for a woman who may have wanted to give birth within the confines of a hospital with her as private midwife has been removed.

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/health-science/womens-birthright-private-midwifery/story-e6frg8y6-1225901863844>

16 AUGUST 2010

Midwives attack hysteria over home births – *The Guardian* (UK)

Cathy Warwick, the general secretary of the Royal College of Midwives claimed there as a "concerted and calculated" backlash by some doctors in downplaying the benefits of home births and has involved

the use of "flawed" evidence to support claims that babies were more likely to die if not born in hospital. She represents 38,000 midwives in Britain and has been incensed by a recent paper presented by US academics last month that claimed a home birth carried three times the risk that a baby would die. It prompted the respected medical journal the Lancet to write, in an editorial, that "women have the right to choose how and where to give birth, but they do not have the right to put their baby at risk". In an interview with the Guardian, Warwick described the Lancet editorial as "sweeping and misogynistic". She said midwives now "feel there is a concerted and calculated global attack and backlash against home birth which is being unfairly pilloried by some sectors of the global medical maternity establishment."

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2010/aug/16/homebirths-midwives-hospital-baby>

13 OCTOBER 2010

Health Department under attack for home birthing information – *ABC News*

The WA branch of the AMA says the WA Health Department is wrong to promote home birthing on its website without a warning. They claim it has been shown that babies born at home have a higher risk of dying or being harmed. They say the website information about home births is misleading and does not warn about the dangers involved.

However, the Health Department says it recognises that some women want a home birth and directs them to a publicly funded service for mothers deemed to be at low risk. Its chief medical officer Simon Towler is standing by the decision to post a link on the department's website to a home birthing page on the Community Midwifery Association's website. Dr Towler says, "the outcomes for that program which are regularly reviewed are of very high quality and consistent with decisions made generally around the world around home birthing for women who are at low risk of complications being safe," he said. "In fact, our evidence is that that is in fact the outcome is in deference to what the AMA has said."

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/10/13/3036940.htm>

26 OCTOBER 2010

Fight for home birth continues – *Irish Times* (Ireland)

Supporters of a woman's right to have a home birth say the practice could be driven underground if new legislation is passed. Tomorrow, the Association for Improvements in the Maternity Services (Aims) Ireland will deliver a petition to the Dáil while picketing the building to

highlight their concern that the Nurses and Midwives Bill 2010 will effectively prevent the practice of professional midwifery in the home. "This is taking away a mother's human and constitutional right to choose where to have her baby, having informed herself any risks," said Krysia Lynch, co-chairwoman of Aims Ireland. The bill goes before the Select Committee on Thursday.

<http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/health/2010/1026/1224282000178.html>

12 NOVEMBER 2010

"Women are the losers in maternity care reform" – *The Daily Telegraph*

Editorial from Justine Caines, Homebirth Australia about how women can now for the first time access a Medicare rebate if they seek care from a certain (eligible) self employed midwife. She explains how the woman appears to feature little in the implementation of these government maternity reforms. Over the last 18 months the turf war has raged violently, particularly between private obstetricians – squealing about the global financial crisis combined with the capping of the Medicare safety net – and midwives providing homebirth care who only appear to come to political life when they have the threat of illegality hanging over them. Women have been put to the side in a debate that has seen the Government struggle to get the first area of health reform sorted – not a minor area but that which has the greatest number of bed days attributed to it.

<http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/opinion/women-are-the-losers-in-maternity-care-reform/story-e6frezz0-1225952246450>



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
- Midwifery Matters
- Birthing Beautifully WA
- Kindred



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www.birthright.com.au

BIRTH RIGHT HAS MOVED AND WE ARE OFFERING MANY NEW SERVICES FOR PREGNANT WOMEN:

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- Massage
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BIRTH RIGHT has moved to new premises – you can find us at:

1/1 National Lane, Rozelle
All enquiries to Susan Ross
– 0419 606 171

e: susan@birthright.com.au
www.birthright.com.au


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COME AND BE EDUCATED, INSPIRED AND LEAVE FEELING EMPOWERED AND WELL SUPPORTED.

City & Eastern Suburbs

MISCARRIAGE & STILLBIRTH SUPPORT GROUPS

Though one in four women suffer miscarriage, most are left feeling alone with their loss. The natural grieving process is seriously hindered by lack of appropriate support. We are attempting to remedy this by providing an opportunity for women who have suffered a loss of pregnancy to engage in an intimate support group.

This group is facilitated by psychotherapist and social worker, Genevieve David, and supported by obstetric acupuncturist and doula, Naomi Abeshouse, who hold a safe and nurturing space for women to come to understand and share their loss. This not-for-profit program will be run in two-hour sessions over 8 weeks. We will be holding a free introductory evening very soon, so please contact us for details. Medicare rebates available with GP referral.

Genevieve David 0408 213 030
genevivedavid@redtent.com.au

Naomi Abeshouse 0413 690 861
naomi@redtent.com.au

www.redtent.com.au

RED TENT HEALTH CENTRE

Naomi Abeshouse – Acupuncture, Chinese herbs & Doula Rebecca Mar Young – Acupuncture & Chinese herbs

We specialize in gynaecology & obstetrics and have supported many women through conception, pregnancy, birth and post-natally. We gently and effectively treat many symptoms such as morning sickness, back and pelvic pain as well as preparing your body for birth and turning breech babies. We run workshops to teach you and your partner how to effectively use acupressure during labour. See our website for details.

61 Queen St, Woollahra, www.RedTent.com.au

Naomi 0413 690 861, naomi@redtent.com.au

Rebecca 0404 457 911, rebecca@redtent.com.au

REBECCA GOULDHURST

Doula, Naturopath, Counsellor, Pregnancy Masseur & Hypnobirthing

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

Rebecca Gouldhurst, 93864243, 0415304369
counsellor@doula.net.au

www.rebeccagouldhurst.net.au

Inner West

AUSTRALIAN DOULA COLLEGE & THE CENTRE FOR SPIRITUAL BIRTH & DEVELOPMENT

Please see our listing on the next page under 'Birth Support Services: Doulas'. 422 Marrickville RD, Marrickville 2204 / 1300 139 507
moreinfo@australiandoulacollege.com.au
www.australiandoulacollege.com.au

BIRTHSENSE Hypnosis for birth

Personal and creative birth education, counselling and body centred hypnosis for a positive pregnancy, birth and bonding. Weekend workshops, women's groups also.

Jackie McFarlane / 9566 1035 / jackchip@optusnet.com.au

ERIKA ELLIOTT calmbirth® classes

Prepare for your amazing labour and birth experience the calmbirth® way. Learn, from a seasoned doula and childbirth educator, ways to release fear and tension so you can sit in your feminine power and birth your baby with confidence & grace and remain connected to the experience. Once completed, you will trust your body, trust your baby & trust birth. Private classes held in your home or in small groups in Lilyfield/Rozelle. Erika Elliott – MotherBirth – Birth the way nature intended.

erikaswa@hotmail.com / 0425 217 788

North Shore / Northern Beaches

ALL ABOUT BIRTH calmbirth®

calmbirth® is an enriching prenatal course for women planning a homebirth, water birth, active and natural birth. calmbirth® affirms that birth is a normal process, and you will learn relaxation skills to use during pregnancy, birth and beyond. Learn how to work with your body, partner and discover a wonderful way to have a positive birth experience. Louise is an experienced midwife and childbirth educator and courses are held in Dee Why and Neutral Bay. Contact Louise for more details and dates.

Louise Luscri / 0408 231 759
info@allaboutbirth.com.au
www.allaboutbirth.com.au

BIRTHING SPIRIT – HEATHER CRAWFORD

Acupuncturist, Doula, calmbirth®
Please see our listing on the next page under 'Birth Support Services: Doulas'.

Heather 9011 6447, 0423 171 191
heather@birthingspirit.com.au
www.birthingspirit.com.au
www.theambaatree.com.au

Sutherland / St George

CALMBIRTH® PREPARATION COURSE

The calmbirth® course is an amazing course, it imparts the knowledge of birth preparation techniques such as deep relaxation, visualisation, breathing, positive imagery, attitudes/expectancy to achieve a rewarding, easier, more comfortable stress-free birthing experience. Many women who have done the calmbirth® course during their pregnancy are far more likely to have positive feelings about their birthing experience. Their partners and midwives are quite often very impressed with how beautifully they've worked with their body during the labour. For enquiries of dates and available times and bookings phone 9544 6441 available weekends, weekdays, evenings.

Visit: www.julieclarke.com.au see website for dates and discount. Special note: Julie's calmbirth® course is very reasonably priced.

Julie Clarke / julie@julieclarke.com.au
0401265530 / 9544 6441. 9 Witherby Brook Pl. Sylvania (20mins south of airport).

NATURAL BEGINNINGS

Herbal Medicine, Nutrition & Birth Support

I have a very personal interest in treating preconception, pregnancy and children's health, naturally. With some help from herbs and nutrition, my partner and I prepared our bodies' health naturally for a conscious conception, and I enjoyed a trouble free pregnancy, and gave birth at home to a healthy, full term baby who continues to have perfect health. You too can benefit from my experience in natural health care. I can assist you with:

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

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

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

TRANSITION INTO PARENTHOOD

Childbirth and Parenting Preparation

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

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

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

Reasonably priced and discount available.

Julie Clarke / julie@julieclarke.com.au / 0401265530 9544 6441 / 9 Witherby Brook Pl. Sylvania (20 mins south of airport).

Southern Highlands

PREGNANCY WORKSHOPS

Midwife Jane Hardwicke Collings gives regular workshops – "Pregnancy The Inner Journey" – in the Southern Highlands and in other places by arrangement. As well as "The School of Shamanic Midwifery" – a women's mysteries school for doulas and midwives

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

SYDNEY & SURROUNDS

Inner West Homebirth Support Group

Day: Wednesdays
Time: from 10am

Contact: Greta
gwerner@circleinteriors.com
0402035069.

Sutherland Shire and St George Homebirth Group
10.30am weekly on Thursdays.
Contact Virginia 0415683074
or maddvirg@yahoo.com.au

Illawarra Homebirth Support

Karen Sanders (02) 4225 3727

Mothers & Midwives of the South (Southern Highlands)

We meet every month in the Illawarra area. For more details contact Jane Collings on 4888 2002, 0408035808 or Jaia on 0431709978, jaia_shanti@yahoo.com.au
Everyone welcome!

Blue Mountains Homebirth Support

Gatherings fortnightly on a Thursday at 10am.
Alicia 47592336 or Sara dave-sara@bigpond.com

NEW SOUTH WALES

Birth Central (Far south coast)

Cindy (02) 6494 0131
www.birthcentral.org.au

Armidale and District Homebirth Support Network
Contact: Melodie
Mobile: 0402 910 211
Email: hbsarmidale@gmail.com

Clarence Valley Birth Support
Laena Jongen-Morter
(02) 6649 4271

Far North Coast NSW
Jillain Delailie (02) 6689 1641

Mid North Coast Homebirth Support Resource & Referral
Berry Engel-Jones
(W) 6652 8111 (H) 6655 0707

INTERSTATE & NATIONAL

Homebirth Australia
Jo Hunter (02) 4751 9840
homebirth.australia@bigpond.com

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

Darwin Homebirth Group
(09) 8985 5871
darwin.homebirth@octa4.net.au

Homebirth in the Hills – Dandenong Ranges
Melinda Whyman
(03) 9754 1347
mwhyman@bigpond.net.au

Homebirth on the Mornington Peninsula
Kim (03) 5987 0657

Alice Springs Homebirth Group
Anna Yffer 0402 424 780
wildisha@gmail.com



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- Reiki
- Birth Support

Specialising in Natural Fertility,
Pregnancy, Birth and Children's health

Fridays & Saturdays by appointment

Virginia Maddock
ADWHM, DN, ACl, RCl, DC
9501 0863
0415 683 074
5 Balfour Ave Caringbah NSW 2229
virginia@naturalbeginnings.com.au
www.naturalbeginnings.com.au

NORTHERN & NORTH-WESTERN SUBURBS

Jacqui James

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

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

Mob: 0418 445 653
jacquij@people.net.au

Birthing Spirit – Heather Crawford

– Acupuncturist, Doula, calmbirth®
Heather practices from a lovely clinic overlooking Manly Beach and provides specialist acupuncture services for the whole family through pre-conception, pregnancy, birth and the postnatal period. She has post-graduate training in obstetrics, gynecology and paediatrics and has worked alongside an acupuncturist and midwife and is now training to become a midwife herself. Home and hospital visits can be arranged for those who can't travel. For appointments: 9977 7888 or other enquiries: 0423 171 191
15 South Steyne, Manly
heather@birthingspirit.com.au
www.birthingspirit.com.au

EASTERN SUBURBS / CITY / INNER WEST

Australian Doula College & The Centre For Spiritual Birth & Development

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

422 Marrickville Road
Marrickville, NSW 2049
1300 139 507
moreinfo@australiandoulacollege.com.au
www.australiandoulacollege.com.au

Erika Elliot

Please see my listing on the previous page under 'Prenatal Services'. 0425217788
erikaswa@hotmail.com

SOUTHERN SUBURBS

Natural Beginnings Holistic health and Doula service

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

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

As an ex-nanny, I can help look after older siblings so that Mum can focus on birthing, Dad can focus on Mum, and older sister or brother can still feel important and included in the process, without fear.

My birth package includes 2 prenatal visits, birth support incl. herbs/flower essences and reiki massage, follow up visit to debrief, and a beautifully presented photo book of your birth for you to keep.

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

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

BLUE MOUNTAINS & WESTERN SUBURBS

Simply Birthing Doula Service

In my three years as a Doula I have been witness to many natural births. I believe strongly in the women's ability to birth her own baby and in her own wisdom and instinct as a mother. I've also been teaching Prenatal Yoga for past 11 years and am a Childbirth and Early Parenting Educator. My focus as a Doula is to ensure that you and your partner are feeling confident, reassured and informed in preparation for your birth. I am also available as a calm support to your family and other children.

Jenny Schellhorn: Doula.
Childbirth & Early Parenting Educator. Pre Natal Yoga Teacher
9625 7317, 0403 957 879
jenny@simplybirthingdoulas.com.au
www.simplybirthingdoulas.com.au

HOME BIRTH ACCESS SYDNEY PROVIDES A LIST OF MIDWIVES CURRENTLY OFFERING HOME BIRTH SERVICES IN THE SYDNEY AREA AND A LIST OF QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN INTERVIEWING THEM ON OUR WEBSITE. MIDWIVES ARE LISTED WHEN THEY AGREE TO SIGN UP THEIR CLIENTS FOR A YEAR'S MEMBERSHIP OF HAS. LISTING DOES NOT IMPLY ENDORSEMENT BY HAS.

AKAL KHALSA

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

Akal Khalsa (Sydney) 9660 2127 | 0411 267 016
akal@ourmidwife.com.au www.ourmidwife.com.au

BIRTH WITH GENTLE CHOICES

Offering continuity of midwifery care during pregnancy, birth and postnatally. Birth is a natural, and empowering experience that is part of a normal life journey rather than a medical event.

Providing support for women and their families and encouragement to believe in herself and her ability to birth instinctively.

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

THE ELLA MAY CENTRE

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

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

HOME BIRTH: A NATURAL CHOICE

I take a holistic 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

INDEPENDENT MIDWIFE: JACQUI WOOD

Pregnancy and birth is a normal, healthy life experience. As natural as it is to conceive your baby in a loving, safe and intimate environment, labouring and birthing at home, in your own relaxed setting, gives you the freedom to follow your body's instinctive knowledge of birthing naturally, without restrictions. As a Midwife, I have immense passion for my career and gain great professional and personal satisfaction from it. I offer a holistic approach to midwifery care, providing care throughout your pregnancy, labour and birth (a birthing pool is available for water birth) and postnatal care up to 4 weeks after the birth of your baby. All care is provided in your home.

Jacqui Wood (Blue Mountains, Western Sydney and South West suburbs)
0430 109 400
www.independentmidwife.com.au jacqui@independentmidwife.com.au

JO HUNTER: HOME BIRTH 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
midwifejo@bigpond.com

NEW BEGINNINGS MIDWIFERY PRACTICE

New Beginnings Midwifery Practice offers a personalised approach to pregnancy, birth and beyond. Receive comprehensive prenatal care with your own midwife. New Beginnings can assist you with homebirth, hospital birth or birth centre birth. Extensive postnatal visits. Access to information, resources and a large lending library. Care and support available 24 hours a day.

Robyn Dempsey (North Ryde) 9888 7829
midwiferobyn@optusnet.com.au www.homebirthmidwives.com.au

ONE TO ONE MIDWIFERY CARE

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

Jan Robinson (Sydney) 0418 117 560
midwife@ozemail.com.au www.midwiferyeducation.com.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

SONJA MACGREGOR

A holistic 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.birthatome.com.au

ST GEORGE HOSPITAL HOME BIRTH 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.

FOR A DOWNLOADABLE LIST OF THESE QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR MIDWIFE, PLEASE GO TO THE 'FIND A MIDWIFE' PAGE ON OUR WEBSITE.

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

- Interview as many midwives as you can
- 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 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

HypnoBirthing®

BIRTH CLASSES

- Annandale
- Glenorie

Imagine your perfect birth...
A calm, fear-free, natural birth.

When a woman is properly prepared, mentally, physically and spiritually, she is empowered to birth her baby feeling calm, confident and fear-free.

Sydney Wellbeing Centre
Katherine Ferris
www.sydneywellbeing.com
Ph: 02 9652 1818

HOME BIRTH ACCESS SYDNEY (INC)

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

HAS POLICY STATEMENT

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

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

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

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.

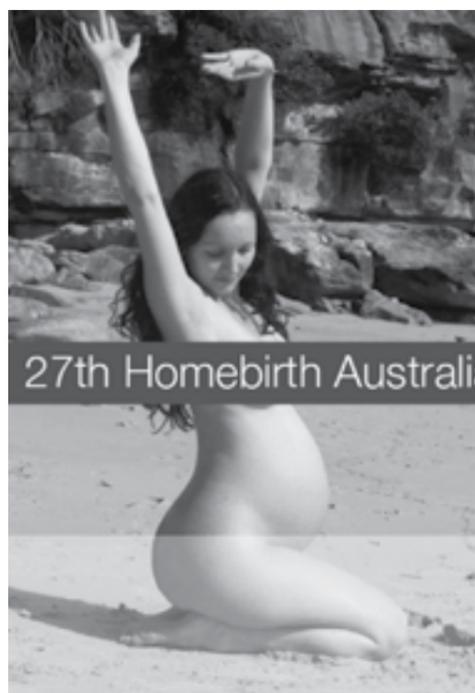
Please call to confirm
Virginia Maddock 0415 683 074

NEXT MEETINGS:
1st February, 1st March &
29th March (AGM)

MAGAZINE ADVERTISING RATES		
	Single (1 Issue)	Annual (4 issues)
Service Pages		
Doula Listing	n/a	\$25
Services Listing	n/a	\$35
Advertisements		
Business Card Display	\$20	\$70
Quarter Page Display	\$30	\$110
Half Page Display	\$40	\$150
Full Page Display	\$65	\$250

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

HAS ABN 75 947 458 113



CHALLENGING THE BOUNDARIES
19-21 AUGUST 2011
NEWCASTLE CITY HALL

27th Homebirth Australia Conference www.homebirthaustralia.org

Speakers include Robbie Davis-Floyd
Put it in your diary now! More details coming soon

HOME BIRTH AUSTRALIA

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

December

WEDNESDAY 1ST, 8TH, 15TH

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.

Our Christmas party is on the 1st December and our final day for 2010 will be on the 15th December, then we will be on a break until the 19th January 2011

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

We will be having our Christmas party on the 16th December. Please dress festively and bring a children's gift (no plastic please!) worth \$10 max for Kris Kringle – 2nd hand or hand-made welcome. Please note that there will be no group from 30th December until 20th January!

THURSDAY 2ND

BLUE MOUNTAINS HOMEBIRTH SUPPORT GROUP

Time: 10am-12pm

Location: We are now meeting in alternating homes & local parks in the Blue Mountains.

Cost: A donation of \$2–5 is appreciated to help with group running costs.

Contacts: Alicia 4759 2336 or Sara dave-sara@bigpond.com

To join our mailing list of upcoming meetings/topics please e-mail Sara.

Bring a healthy snack to share if you get a chance, if not come anyway. No meetings in school holidays.

THURSDAY 9TH

PREGNANCY & PARENTING NETWORK MEETING

Theme: Childhood development, play, preschool & school options. Christmas celebrations!

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 16TH

BLUE MOUNTAINS HOMEBIRTH SUPPORT GROUP

Time: 10am-12pm

Location: Last meeting for the year Wentworth Falls lake (meet near the pirate ship)

Cost: A donation of \$2–5 is appreciated to help with group running costs.

Contact: Alicia 4759 2336 or Sara dave-sara@bigpond.com To join our mailing list of upcoming meetings/topics please e-mail Sara.

Bring a healthy snack to share if you get a chance, if not come anyway. No meetings in school holidays.

WEDNESDAY 22ND

ILLAWARRA BIRTH CHOICES

Family picnic-celebrating the year

Time: 2pm-8pm.

Location: Coledale Twilight Markets

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

January

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.

THURSDAY 20TH & 27TH

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.

TUESDAY 26TH

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.

THURSDAY 27TH

PREGNANCY & PARENTING NETWORK MEETING

Theme: Natural Therapies for Pregnancy and Birth.

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.

February

TUESDAY 1ST

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS: TOPIC – 'SAFETY & RISK'

Email submissions to: editor@homebirthsydney.org.au

+

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.

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.

THURSDAY 10TH

BLUE MOUNTAINS HOMEBIRTH SUPPORT GROUP

Time: 10am–12pm.

Location: We are now meeting in alternating homes & local parks in the Blue Mountains.

Cost: A donation of \$2–5 is appreciated to help with group running costs.

Contacts: Alicia 4759 2336 or Sara dave-sara@bigpond.com

To join our mailing list of upcoming meetings/topics please e-mail Sara.

Bring a healthy snack to share if you get a chance, if not come anyway. No meetings in school holidays.

MONDAY 21ST

ILLAWARRA BIRTH CHOICES GROUP

Time: 10.30am–12.30pm

Topic: Topic and guest speaker to be confirmed.

Location: Russell Vale Community Hall – corner of Keerong Ave and Channon Street Russell Vale.

Contact: Please call Sonia on 0424 051 246 or find out more at www.birthchoices.info/meetings.html

THURSDAY 24TH

BLUE MOUNTAINS HOMEBIRTH SUPPORT GROUP

Time: 10am–12pm.

Location: We are now meeting in alternating homes & local parks in the Blue Mountains.

Cost: A donation of \$2–5 is appreciated to help with group running costs.

Contacts: Alicia 4759 2336 or Sara dave-sara@bigpond.com To join our mailing list of upcoming meetings/topics please e-mail Sara.

Bring a healthy snack to share if you get a chance, if not come anyway. No meetings in school holidays.

THURSDAY 24TH

PREGNANCY & PARENTING NETWORK MEETING

Theme: Gentle parenting, gentle discipline and parenting toddlers.

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.

March

TUESDAY 1ST

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.

Please keep Sunday the 27th March free for the annual HAS Picnic at Jubilee Park in Glebe

The topic for the next issue is:
'safety & Risk'



BIRTHINGS is your magazine. Please contribute!

Submissions are welcome on the issues surrounding safety and risk in birth; and birth stories featuring situations that are deemed too risky for a natural or home birth! As always, we also welcome your birth announcements, birth stories, letters, art and poetry.

Submissions are due by February 1st 2011.

Email the editor at: editor@homebirthsydney.org.au

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. And if you've recently moved, send us your new address so you don't miss out on the next issue of Birthings!

Email: member@homebirthsydney.org.au