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BIRTHINGS

A HOMEBIRTH ACCESS SYDNEY QUARTERLY PUBLICATION



Siblings

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

www.homebirthsydney.org.au

Summer 2011/12 – Issue 112

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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 2012	No. 113	1 February 2012
Winter 2012	No. 114	1 May 2012
Spring 2012	No. 115	1 August 2012
Summer 2012	No. 116	1 November 2012

BACK ISSUES Back issues of Birthings are like hen's teeth! But we will try to accommodate requests. Back issues cost \$4.00 – \$7.00 per issue. Postage is \$3.00 per single copy.

A price for multiple copies can be arranged. The magazine is very valuable in that it contains many birth stories and information, plus give an insight into the homebirth movement and HAS activities.

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

CONTRIBUTING TO BIRTHINGS

The strength of Birthings is all the thought provoking, inspiring and challenging writing from members of our community. To ensure that the magazine is balanced, responsive to our audience's interests and needs, and reflects the priorities of HAS, we have developed a set of contribution guidelines. We also work with an editorial board, selected by the HAS executive, to reflect the range of people in our community. The 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 its members and the community,
- Supporting the editors to make editorial decisions,
- Providing a guide for the future direction of the magazine.

PROCEDURES Please provide your story as a Microsoft Word or equivalent document attached to an email and sent to 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.

With thanks to our postage sponsor

nature's child

BIRTHINGS

Siblings

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Photo by Toni Hutchison Photography featuring (left to right): Keira, Jevin, Keanna, Michelle and Kelsey (Mum and baby), Kaitlynn, Kyla.

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Photo by Sandy Bucknell featuring Dan Brent and baby Keanu

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Editorial

Welcome to the Summer 2011/12 edition of Birthings on the theme of 'Siblings'. It seems that each issue of Birthings just keeps getting bigger and bigger and I have our awesome members to thank for continuing to make such great contributions. We have 8 'Siblings' features and 9 birth stories – when I started as editor, we would average about 3 or 4. I apologise to those who submitted their siblings photos only – I had planned to do a pictorial spread but with so much content, I ran out of room.

This issue in particular is a very special one for me as I have the privilege of contributing my own recent birth story. My second son Keanu was born at home on the 28th September. To those of you who read the last issue on gender - yes, the Shettles Method of natural gender selection did not work for us! Just goes to show that any method that is not 100% will have its exceptions, but I have learned a wonderful lesson that our karma or fate is stronger than our own will and at times we are given what we need rather than what we want, for whatever reason that may be... and I wouldn't change a thing!

I hope you enjoy reading the siblings stories. I thought I prepared my 2 3/4 year old son Jetsun well for the birth of his younger sibling. Each night during his bath time, I would sit by the tub on his step stool and massage my growing belly with jojoba oil. It was an opportunity to talk to Jetsun daily about the birth of his little brother or sister, as well as being a way for me to connect with a baby who I felt guilty for neglecting due to being so distracted with Jetsun, (as well as to help prevent stretch marks). I would start by saying to my belly "Hi Baby. Time for your massage!" and Jetsun would usually repeat it. Then we would chat about our body parts, the birth and life with a new baby. He understood that Mummy has a 'yoni' and Jetsun and Daddy have a penis, and the baby was going to come out of Mummy's yoni. I told him that Mummy would make very loud noises to get the baby out and demonstrated what they might sound like. I told him that the baby would need to drink lots of Mummy's milk because it would be too young to eat food, so it was important that the baby got milk before he did.

But things often don't turn out as planned or how one envisions the future. As I birthed during the night, Jetsun slept through the whole thing until we woke him afterwards. I spent a lot of money on a hand-made doll which "Keanu" gave to him as a gift soon after the birth and to help him adjust, but it has remained sadly unused on the toy shelf, along with its new doll wearing carrier – I guess my little boy just isn't metrosexual enough!

In reality, the adjustment for Jetsun has been harder than I could have imagined, which of course has made it difficult for me also. I used to admire an old friend who tandem fed her baby and toddler and made it look so joyful and effortless, however in earlier newborn days I did find myself having more than a few moments of regret for not weaning Jetsun when I had the chance when my milk dried up during mid pregnancy. I found that whenever I fed Keanu, Jetsun would also want a feed, which was far more than the 3 times a day he had been getting for months and that I was comfortable with giving him. And whenever I held Keanu, Jetsun would climb all over me demanding "duddles", which I have found one of my biggest challenges - of having no personal space whatsoever. Jetsun has also had moments of venting his frustrations by occasionally hitting Keanu which has been hard for me to control my natural mother's instinct to protect my baby, revealing its ugly head in a temper of my own.

But as the weeks have passed, Jetsun has definitely become more



accepting of this new little "intruder" and less demanding of being breastfed every time Keanu is; and I know that by continuing to breastfeed him (albeit much less than his little brother), the benefit to our bonding and his health are worth every difficulty. I am also finding more gentle and controlled ways to deal with his physical outbursts by removing myself to a different room and shutting the door for a moment. This diffuses the situation immediately, lets me cool down and is actually very effective in getting him to stop his actions quickly so that we can deal with it in a non-violent way. Fortunately it usually ends with Jetsun saying sorry to Keanu and giving him and me a kiss and cuddle.

It is much harder dealing with a toddler and a new baby, but there are some beautiful moments of having two kids that I definitely treasure. Jetsun has nicknamed Keanu "Yanu" and often shows his growing love for him in the cutest of ways. He says "Yanu is cute Mum!" "I want to duddle/kiss Yanu!" (unfortunately this often coincides with when I have finally got Keanu to fall asleep and I do not want him to be woken at any cost!), and when I am changing Keanu's nappy Jetsun observes loudly "Yanu has a little penis!" - that will be a quote for the memory book! He insists that Keanu has a bath at the same time as him, and when Keanu is crying, Jetsun says "Yanu is hungry Mum. He wants milk!"

As I move from the challenges of newborn territory into one of more day to day predictability (if I could be so lucky!), I am much more conscious than last time that this time is so precious and goes so quickly, especially as I don't plan on having any more children – one child per adult is quite enough for my coping skills! So I take each challenge as it comes and relish every special moment that my two interact. One day too soon they will no doubt be fighting over toys, food and perhaps eventually girls!

I would like to make a special mention to my 3 sub editors for this issue – Amanda Vella, Yvette Barton and Naomi Homel (who has stepped in for this issue to help out while Jaia Shanti-Baer has been finishing her midwifery final exams). I usually edit every submission as they come in but have had to rely heavily on their help this issue with having the demands of a newborn and toddler to deal with. So thanks very much for your assistance Amanda, Yvette and Naomi! I am looking forward to reading everything completely fresh for the first time, as I have not yet had a chance to do so (apart from my own submissions)!

To help keep making Birthings the engaging read that it is to new and more seasoned mothers (and fathers) alike, please contribute to the next issue of Birthings which is on the theme of "Fathers and Partners". Subjects can be anything like dads or partners support during the fertility journey, pregnancy, birth or parenting. It can be written by Mum, Dad, step-Dad, second Mum or Dad (in a gay or lesbian partnership), or older child. And don't forget to write me a letter (for your chance to win the best letter prize), submit your birth stories, photos, art and poetry. Email to: editor@homebirthsydney.org.au by 1st February 2012 – don't forget to check word limit and include a contributor's bio.

VIRGINIA MADDOCK





Letters to the Editor

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

This issue, our best letter prize goes to Vanessa Stasinowsky. Vanessa has won a Nature's Child Essentials Gift Box valued at \$49.95, kindly donated by Jannine at Nature's Child. Your gift box is on its way Vanessa.

Send your letters to editor@homebirthsydney.org.au



6/11/11

Thank you for another wonderful issue of Birthings!

I never thought that gender would be a topic that would ever be so relevant to me, but after the birth of my son (who I was adamant was a daughter!), it was!

I wouldn't say that I wanted a daughter more; I didn't mind either way, but I spent a large part of my pregnancy having dreams about this beautiful baby girl with a head full of dark hair and I was sure I was onto something! I started telling anyone that would listen that I was sure I was having a daughter. Although I felt so strongly that I had a daughter on board, I was a little concerned that feeling this way might have a negative impact on how I felt after the birth if it turned out to be a boy, so I tried to start thinking of my baby as a boy (but it didn't work!)

After my wonderful (albeit long!) labour, I gave birth to a son and I have to admit, I was in shock. I wouldn't say I was disappointed, but it was not what I had expected. Compounding the shock, his cord was cut straight away and he was taken away for resuscitation and off to the Special Care Nursery for monitoring (I had transferred to hospital from home). I was left sitting in the bathroom of the delivery suite in shock, wondering if that had all really happened and if I had in fact had a boy.

It was unfortunately a while before I was able to go the nursery and see him and it felt strange that I didn't have an instant connection with him. I initially thought this was because he had been taken away so suddenly, and I still think this did contribute, but as I was reading Katharina's story in the last issue of Birthings, I knew exactly what she was talking about when she described that she felt her son "was a stranger". Katharina voiced the feelings that I hadn't been able to find words for. Like Katharina, I had to take the time to get to know my son and although it was not exactly love at first sight, our bond and my love for him grew and grew each day.

Thank you for including stories such as Katharina's in your wonderful magazine. Being able to share these stories means that mothers like myself do not feel alone. They remind us that there are a whole range of feelings surrounding pregnancy and birth and that these feelings are all normal and perfectly okay.

Looking forward to the next issue!

Vanessa Stasinowsky

20/9/11

Thanks to the Birthings team for another fabulous edition of the latest mag. Looking forward to including our birth announcement in the next edition and if I'm organised our birth story too.

Rachel Prest

25/10/11

Hi there!

Thanks so much for all the wonderful work Birthings does to promote the joy and honest beauty of homebirthing. We have been greatly encouraged by the many articles we have read in there....

Thanks again for all you do,

Lusi Austin x

28/10/11

Hi Virginia,

...Thank you for the opportunity to share our story and experiences.

I love the magazine and am very thankful for your work.

Best regards,

Doctor Verena Raschke-Cheema

9/11/11

Dear Ed and readers,

This will be my last edition as part of the Birthings team and I would just like to thank all of the team, volunteers, sponsors and readers for being part of this fantastic and valuable magazine. Keep your submissions coming as they are really making an impact on those who read them. Thank you to HAS for the opportunity to be part of such an important and valuable organisation and all the best for a long future.

Sandy Bucknell :)

Contributors

ALICIA LANGLANDS is a mother to three young children, Jedd, Sage and Rivi. Married to Grant, an Environmental officer for the Royal Australian Navy, she has moved around a bit but now calls Sydney home. Alicia is studying with the ABA and hopes to eventually qualify as an IBLCE registered Lactation Consultant. For now Alicia is enjoying being a stay at home mother.

ALINA CAGANOFF is the big sister of Edan and they live in the Blue Mountains with their mum and dad. Alina loves dancing and tumbling and eating cake.

JACQUIE HARSH is a stay at home mummy to 3 beautiful home birth boys, and wife to Micah living in the Blue Mountains. She is a Doula, Childbirth / Early parenting educator, Calmbirth practitioner, ABA Breastfeeding counsellor, Self confessed birth junkie, and loves all things birth & family orientated!

JO HUNTER lives in the Blue Mountains. She is married to Phil and they have 4 children, 3 of whom were born at home. All of Jo's children were present at their sibling's births and she has created a DVD 'Siblings at Birth' which follows the births of her children and their sibling's involvement. She's a midwife in private practice and loves all things homebirth. In her spare time she enjoys long bushwalks with her dog, training for roller derby and reading a good book.

KATHY JOHNSON is married to Jay and is a stay at home mum to 4 gorgeous boys and 3 beautiful girls. The last two birthed at home. She lives at the foot of the Blue Mountains.

LAURI MALE is a stay-at-home mum who grew up and still resides on the Northern Beaches of Sydney with her Cornish husband Tom, 3 year old son Jude, newborn son Jem and four legged friend Josh. Lauri worked as a flight attendant before choosing to stay at home to raise her children. Her first son was born in Manly Hospital. Her second son was born at home.

LOUIS RENAUD, aged 8, is a wonderful helper, always ready to please, loves to draw, read, is class captain, an amazing eater (loved his boobie), has never had antibiotics and is THE most patient & perfect big brother to bubba Pascal.

LOULOU ANDERSSON is a loving mum to a daughter, Jessikah (06/09/1991), & two sons, St★rsan (19/09/2005) & Crue Bobby (27/03/2009). She was proudly born & bred in the beautiful Blue Mountains where she lives with her husband, Darrell & the boys. She enjoys being a stay at home Mum to her two lively boys & is an active member of The Blue Mountains Home Birth Support Group. She is also absolutely addicted to scrapbooking & the telling of stories. Believes Home Birth to be the most empowering experience of her life.

LUSI AUSTIN is a lover of Truth. She is married to her best friend Brett and together they are raising their 5 children in the Blue Mountains. She enjoys writing music, cooking with her family and was once heavily involved in the scrapbooking industry. Now days, her time is happily taken up by the ebb and flow of life that comes with naturally homeschooling, breastfeeding, baby wearing and loving her little clan. Lusi enjoys blogging about her family's life adventures at <http://homeschoolingmamalusi.blogspot.com/>

MEREDITH MCKAY lives in the Blue Mountains with her husband Simon and two sons Finn and Quillan, both of whom were born at home. Meredith has a passion for conscious parenting and works from home running her baby carrier retailing business, Frangipani Baby. She also enjoys gardening, music, sewing and spending time with her gorgeous sisters.

MONICA RENAUD is mother to Louis 8, Pascal, nearly 2, and married to Grant. She is a breastfeeding activist, artist & photographer, that has been shooting family life, and all the beauty that surrounds her for over 20 years. She & Grant love their lazy weekends with their boys by the sea as much as their adventures into town to the museums or cosy city eateries. You can see & read

more at her BLOG via the website, www.studiofiftyseven.net

RACHEL PREST is mum to Xavier (3 3/4) and recently home birthed Ivy (3 months). She is currently on maternity leave from her home-based business, Raid My Wardrobe - preloved fashion event - www.raidmywardrobe.com.au but working on launching in Sydney next year. In her spare time, when she has some, she loves raw vegan cooking, op shopping, sewing and assisting with the local homebirth support group.

VERENA RASCHKE-CHEEMA and BOBBY SINGH CHEEMA are living in Austinmer on the beautiful Illawarra coast. Verena has a PhD in Nutritional Sciences (www.drverena.com) and is very passionate about natural health and wellbeing. She knew from the beginning of her pregnancy that a homebirth would be the ideal way to birth her first child.

VIRGINIA MADDOCK is Mum to 7 week old Keanu, almost 3 year old Jetsun and almost 14 year old cat Yin Yin; and will one day marry her best friend Dan. In what little spare time she gets these days, she also loves her roles as Birthings editor, HAS coordinator and hosting the Sutherland Shire homebirth group at her place in Caringbah every Thursday. She is also a doula, herbalist and nutritionist, and is passionate about natural health, fertility, birth and parenting. www.naturalbeginnings.com.au

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: \$20 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



Coordinator's Report

VIRGINIA MADDOCK

The ACM Protest Rally, which I was the chief organiser for, was on October 19. In case you missed what that was all about – it was to protest against the Australian College of Midwives 'Interim Homebirth Position Statement' and 'Interim Guidelines for Privately Practising Midwives' which ruled out women being able to access a midwife to attend them in any pregnancy or birth which was not low risk. ie. midwives would be contraindicated to attend any woman who falls under the following "high risk" factors - multiple pregnancy, abnormal presentation (including breech presentation), preterm labour prior to 37 completed weeks of pregnancy, post term pregnancy of more than 42 completed weeks and scarred uterus (ie.VBAC).

The day before the rally, I had a journalist from The Daily Telegraph interview me by phone and a photographer come over to take photos for a story to be published the next day about why I chose homebirth and the reasons for the rally. The article quoted a spokesperson from ACM saying that "the protest was unnecessary as the college supported homebirth for uncomplicated pregnancies" which is exactly the point they seemed to miss. The Telegraph were supposed to do a follow up story about what happened at the rally the following day, but didn't.

I also had Channel 9 news come around and interview me the morning of the rally to show on the 6pm news, but it only showed on the 4.30pm news which I missed. (The 6pm story got bumped off due to extended coverage of the Queen's arrival into Sydney!) Fortunately they sent me the DVD of it a few weeks later of which the story only showed a snippet of me saying that homebirth shouldn't be regulated or mandated, and missed the many other valid points I raised. But it did show the rally and interviews with a few attendees there. For more details on the rally itself and photos of the day, please see 'HAS In The Community' on page 46.

One consequence of the rally was that it brought homebirth out into the media again, both in print and on TV. Unfortunately half of the stories missed the point entirely and focused on freebirth, which is exactly what the rally was trying to prevent for those who do not want to choose this option. But I guess that is the sensationalist headline-grabbing "controversy" that the media prefer to focus on!

The day after the rally was the College's AGM. I had joined up as a consumer member on behalf of HAS the previous week, so that I could vote (absently) on motions put forward by some privately practising midwives – most of whom are on our list from Sydney. These motions included:

7.1 Members request improvements in accountability and transparency by the ACM Board of Directors

7.2 That the Australian College of Midwives formulate a guideline, whether part of the ACM Homebirth Position Statement and associated Guidelines or separate, that clearly and unequivocally endorses and documents the process for a woman's right to informed refusal and the midwife's right to provide care for her in pregnancy, labour, birth and post-partum irrespective of the woman's risk status and without regulatory or legal consequence for the midwife.

7.3 That the Australian College of Midwives withdraw the current position statement on homebirth and formally consult widely with midwives, consumers, their representative groups and others affected by this regulation before reformulating this statement.

7.4 Members reject the Supervisor of Midwives model from the United Kingdom, and call on the College to support the development of a mentoring process that is appropriate and acceptable to Australian midwifery. In developing and adopting a mentoring process, we call on the College to in a united and egalitarian process with stakeholders including the Australian Private Midwives Association, and other organisations representing midwives who work in publicly funded continuity of carer and homebirth models.

7.5 That the Australian College of Midwives establish a Private Midwives Sub Committee that would be able to support and advise the College on issues related to privately practicing midwives.

7.6 That the Interim Position Statement on Homebirth be withdrawn, and that a new position statement consistent with that of the International Confederation of Midwives (ICM) be prepared in consultation with members.

I could not attend the AGM myself but my sources say that it was pretty chaotic, with some midwives berating the College for not sending a representative to address the crowd at the rally, and some pretty heated arguments with Tracy Martin the college president!

I have heard that all motions were carried (ie had many more votes for than against or abstained) and the College said in their newsletter that "The National Board of Directors will consider these motions at the next Board meeting." I am not sure what considering means but in a democratically elected organisation, one would hope that all the changes voted for would be acted upon.

The good news is that at the time of writing the College just released their revised 'Guidance for midwives regarding Homebirth Services' and 'Guidance for midwives regarding Homebirth Services' today. Fortunately it is exactly what we have been fighting for - no references to any contraindications, it is consistent with the International Confederation of Midwives (ICM), and it supports a woman's right to informed refusal and the midwife's right to provide care for her in pregnancy, labour, birth and post-partum irrespective of the woman's risk status.

So thanks to everyone who sent in their submissions, attended the ACM protest rally, signed up as consumer members especially to vote at their AGM, and the midwives who put forth the new motions. The united voice of women and private midwives has been heard!

The other updates I can give you are from the regular teleconference meetings of the newly formed Australian Homebirth Consortium. This group aims to be a unified voice for homebirth from different consumer and midwifery groups around Australia which HAS has been participating in. The last 2 meetings were on 6th and 25th September. In the first meeting, the discussion mostly centred around the ACM guidelines and what the group would do about it – this included putting forth motions (as above) for the ACM AGM by some midwives, and encouraging consumer members to join ACM to vote on these motions.

The second meeting was soon after the rally and AGM. Ann Kinnear from ACM joined in and informed us that over 250 submissions were received in response to the statement and guidelines. She explained the review process and informed us that there had been a meeting in Adelaide where the new version was drafted and there would be another meeting to look at the revised draft. It was asked whether the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) and the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA) will definitely endorse the new homebirth position statement (as they had with the interim documents which were released to them prematurely), but she said it is entirely up to the discretion of AHPRA and NMBA. Regardless, the old versions of the statement will be withdrawn from ACM and no longer exist.

The next meeting is Thursday 9th December. and as always we will keep you updated!

Finally, I need to say a sad farewell to a couple of our volunteers who are moving on. Sandy Bucknell our Birthings Distribution Coordinator is having a baby early next year so this will be the last issue that she will be posting out as she simplifies her life in readiness. Fortunately we have found a replacement in Amantha McGuinness and are very grateful for her volunteering to take over. The second person is our Merchandise Coordinator Sarah McLean who will be leaving us due to becoming too busy with family and her midwifery career. So we are in desperate need of someone to replace her. Merchandise Coordinator duties include: Checking online orders and posting out HAS stock as needed (average 2 orders per week). You would need some storage space to store stock and library of Birthings magazines. Please contact Sarah on 042 334 6690 or sarahmclean2092@hotmail.com if interested.

We thank you both for all that you have done for Homebirth Access Sydney – Sarah for your 5 years of volunteering for us, comprising Secretary, Birthings editor then Distribution and Merchandise positions; and Sandy for keeping our postage sponsor Nature's Child happy in getting us a bulk postage discount, and stuffing/posting out the magazine for the last three issues.

To our readers, please give back to the organisation that gives so much. Get involved!

Birth Announcements

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



Liam, Jolene and Jonah are so grateful to welcome Baby **Ari Nicholas Johnson** to our family. Ari arrived safely at home with a big splash in our birth pool 9.14 am Monday 2nd May 2011 after some beautiful relaxing meditation, humming, laughing, happy tears and a few moments of madness! Ari was great stock weighing in at 4.5kg and 58cm long. We feel so blessed to have him in our lives and wish to say a super special thanks to our private midwife Sonja MacGregor who restored our faith in what we always new to be true and correct - the power of birth.



Joel and Vanessa are proud to announce the arrival of **Lachlan Joel Stasinowsky**. Our beautiful baby boy was born at 5:10pm on Monday 27th June 2011 at Blacktown Hospital after transferring from home. Lachlan was 2.3 kg and 50cm long and born into Daddy's arms. A huge thank you to our amazing midwives Hannah Dahlen and Melanie Jackson for all of the support through the 40 hour labour and for helping us to have a good transfer experience and a wonderfully empowering, drug free birth. We couldn't have done it without you!



Verena and Bobby are excited to welcome their first son **Jayden Singh Cheema** into this wonderful world. He was born on Thursday the 30th of June 2011 at 3:58 am through a natural home-lotus birth at 41 weeks (49 cm and 3 kg). We are very thankful for the guidance, calmness, support and wisdom we received from our midwife Rachele Meredith. Jayden is an amazing, grounded, alert and healthy child and we are so thankful, overjoyed and blessed to have him in our lives.



Daddy: Rajesh Sharma and Mummy: Rupinder Sharma would like to announce the birth of our son, **Rajan Sharma**, our first baby. He was born on July 31st, 2011, weighing 3.2 kg. Thanks to our homebirth midwife Lisa Richards and Rajan's grandmother who was also present at the birth.



Jeremiah "Jem" Thomas Male was born into our family on a sunny day at 6:40am on the 18th of August, 2011 at our little home. 3.049kgs. Born in water in the lounge room with his wonderful Dad, fantastic midwife Sheryl, Janine who assisted, and our faithful four legged companion Joshy present to witness his arrival. Big brother Jude slept soundly and woke when Jem arrived. Welcome little man, we've all been waiting for you. Love always, Mimi, Days, Jude and Joshy Dog.



Rachel, Grant and big brother Xavier welcomed **Ivy Louise Prest** earthside on Tuesday 30th August 2011. Born into water, at home into her mother's arms at 11.42pm, weighing 4020g and measuring 53cm. She was lovingly supported by her father and good friend Lindsay Hinchey. Lotus born Friday 2nd September 2011. Thank you to our wonderful midwife Sonja MacGregor for journeying with us and empowering me with trust and confidence to experience birth in such an amazing way. Many thanks also to midwife Lisa Richards for providing the backup support we needed.



Michelle, Brett, Jevin, Kyla, Keira, Kaitlynn & Keanna welcomed their newest family member **Kelsey Cerridwen King** on 3rd September 2011. She came swimming into the safety of her mum's arms and was surrounded by her siblings. Many thanks go to our fantastic midwife Jo Hunter, lovely doula Natalie Forbes-Dash and to our great photographer and friend Toni Hutchison.



We are so pleased to announce the births to our two beautiful boys, **Finn** born 17th September 2008, weighing 3.45kg and **Quillan** born 30th August 2011, weighing 4.02kg. Both were born at home into water in the presence of their daddy, Ma and fabulous midwife Sonja. Finn was also present to see his baby brother's birth. We are so grateful that we could bring them into the world so gently. They bring us so much joy and love!

Ezekiel Qelevuki Austin was born at home in the water on the 5th September 2011, surrounded by our loving family, my parents (Karen and John), Dannii (my gorgeous sister in law), our beautiful midwife Hazel Keedle and our friend and amazing photographer Mell Mallin. He weighed 8 pounds 9 ounces. It was a joyful time for us all and we praise Yehovah for His faithfulness and blessing!



Hayden Emmanuel Harsh was 'born in the caul' on Tuesday the 13th September 2011 at 4:22am weighing 8.13 pounds. Sending out A HUGE thank you & so much love to the lovely Sonja & Nat our fantastic birth team- you will both forever and always inspire me!! To my amazing husband for his unconditional love & support, To my beautiful mum for everything 'mummy' she does for me & my family! and of course thank you to my gorgeous little men Logan, Brock & Hayden for choosing us as their family! Another very beautiful birth, and another very beautiful home birth baby boy! We feel very blessed - The memories will be cherish forever!

Jay and Kathy would like to welcome **Ezaria Faith Johnson** - a little sister to Ethan, Ezekeil, Elijah, Ewan, Elizabella and Essence. She was born at home in the water on her Grandfathers birthday 23rd September 2011 at 2:43pm. After a long pregnancy we are really happy she finally arrived in God's perfect timing! Lots of thanks to our fantastic midwife Sonja and also all of my wonderful support people - my Mum Karen, best friend Donna, cousin Leanne and of course all of my beautiful children.

Grant, Alicia, Jedd and Sage welcome **Rivi Cecilia**, born 23rd September 2011, our second HBAC baby at home in water. Rivi arrived in a hurry, caught by Daddy only minutes before our fabulous midwife walked through the door. Rivi's arrival has completed our family and we feel so blessed to have her in our lives. Many thanks to our midwife Jo Hunter for her support, comfort and encouragement throughout the pregnancy and birth. We will cherish you forever.



Dan and Virginia are stoked to announce the birth of their son **Keanu Jarrah Brent**, born under water into Mummy's hands on the new moon at 3.10am on Wednesday 28th September. He was 57cm long and weighed 4.49kg (9 pound 14). Keanu is our surprise boy, (though big brother Jetsun knew it all along), and we wouldn't swap him for anything! We would like to thank our good friend and amateur doula/photographer Kylie Roughsedge for capturing it all on camera; and our awesome midwife Jo Hunter for her friendship, wisdom and calm support! We will miss your regular visits. And a big thanks to Keanu for choosing us as your family - we are honoured to share your journey!

Alan, Shirley and big sister Hannah are delighted to welcome **Ruth Susanna Goldrei Fekete**, who was born at 6:43 pm on Monday October 3, which is Labour Day! She arrived weighing 3.35kg, in a comfortable water-birth at home, with support from our magnificent midwives Robyn Dempsey and Hannah Dahlen, and from her grandmother Naomi.

Evie and Kat would like to announce the birth of **Patrick Xavier Dwyer**, born at home into water at 11:50am on 29th October 2011 after 1.5 hours of active labour. A little brother for Joey who was fantastic during the birth, telling Evie "Mum! You do want baby, you push baby out now!" when she said she didn't want a baby anymore :) Thank you so much to midwife Jo Hunter for all your support during the pregnancy and your calm presence at the birth helping me to breathe baby Paddy out into Kat's hands.



Sponsor Profile: Jannine Baron from Nature's Child



Tell us a bit about your background and why you started Nature's Child:

Until I had children, I worked and travelled as a teacher, human rights advocate and writer. My life changed with the birth of my two sons. I discovered the joy in staying in one town and used my skills to create resources and support groups for parents in Byron Bay.

My life took a 180 degree turn thanks to my children. While initially using my skills to create resources and support groups for parents in Byron Bay where I raise my children, my personal desire for environmentally friendly products to use on my sons and an unexpected passion for cloth nappies eventually led to my creation of my now successful on-line organic baby store www.natureschild.com.au I have been writing on the subject of cloth nappies and reusable, chemical free baby product for the past eleven years, I address conferences and I write freelance for parenting magazines as well as running my business. My boys Nelson (16) and Harper (14) are my daily inspiration. They have grown into the most amazing teenagers and I tell them its because they were born at home and breastfed for years.

Why did you join HAS as a sponsor?

I gave birth to both my sons at home in Byron Bay in the late nineties so I understand all the challenges and beauty that this birth choice involves. I passionately believe that birth at home is a safer, less expensive, more empowering way to give birth and my hope is that in our lifetime, our government will wake up to this fact and allow home birth on Medicare. This will allow homebirth to be a viable choice for all women. I believe midwives and doulas are angels on this earth.

I don't think home birth is the only way, I just believe it is an important choice for a woman to be able to make if this makes them feel safe. It is certainly a special and beautiful way for a human being to enter the world

Organisations like HAS ensure that this goal will one day be possible. I have also been a volunteer for most of my life before I started Nature's Child. So I know first-hand the passion, time and money that volunteers use to ensure community based projects like HAS survive. I know that magazines like Birthings impact directly on women's lives and birthing experiences and I am honoured to support an organisation that does this. I know that home birth was the only way for me to feel safe. Despite being very broke, we found creative ways to afford our midwife as hospital just was not an option for me.

I thank all the women and men that contribute their birth stories, handy tips and empowering images that allow women to believe in themselves and trust the process of birth. Volunteer run homebirth support groups and magazines are a vital link to ensuring birthing issues remain on government health agendas.

My advice to all of you: Never underestimate the power of what you do. Every time you think you have no time or energy left, or there is not enough help, do it anyway as you are impacting the world in ways you cannot even imagine.

"The most important work you and I will ever do will be within the walls of our own homes." Harold B. Lee

Nature's Child is proud to support the important work of HAS and that's why we sponsor your mail out quarterly. Nature's Child is 11 years old now and proudly for me, a well known brand name across Australia. Our beginnings are not dissimilar to what HAS does. I spent years writing and speaking and educating parents about the importance of product choices we made for our children. I coined the phrase "Change the World, One Purchase at a time" which became the cornerstone of our philosophy and business plan.

Nature's Child is for our children and for our children's children. It is for the oceans, the earth and the waterways they will inherit from us. Nature's Child products are often less expensive, healthier and kinder to our environment – we encourage you to buy less but buy quality and chemical free. It is a natural extension of a home birth to me that we would continue parenting and using products that are the most natural possible.

Nature's Child exists to empower women, inspire women and provide products that are kind to our earth. Thank you for the opportunity to speak directly to HAS members.



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New and Renewed Members

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

Penny Bayl	Anh Do	Louise Walton
Monika Habicht	Nicole Drozd	Ange Milthorpe
Vikki Willmott	Helena Court	Jenny Schellhorn
Natalie Trusler	Milene Mahe Bau	Meggan Brummer
Aileen Holt	Michelle Finch	Kirrilee Heartman
Rachel Holt	Amity Lynch	Caroline Smith
Courtney Kenny	Kerrie Thomas	Madilein Butt
Kylie McWhirter	Jacqui Afioni	Brit Sooby
Dior Brooks	Amarna Moore	Alisia Foster
Leanne Simcic	Selena Maloney	Helene Drimer
Sarah Dinse	Nicola Gifford	Megan Zavieh
Karishma Stretton	Cassie Thompson	Dana Mrkich
Ryachelle Cestern	Sheri Aviu	Sonja Macgregor
Larissa Burns	Katerina Shmelkova	Lisa Richards
Kylee Brooke	Cathlin Duggan	Sharmayne Frost
Emily Ratcliffe	Louise Young	Sheryl Sidery
Clare Harrison	Belinda Madin	Natalia Baechtold
Amie Carrington	Loulou Anderssen	Kathleen Brewster
Belinda Ferguson	Eleanor Phelan	Michelle Carruthers
Kim Ryder	Simonne Salathe	Melinda Emeleus
Janett Peter	Monica Renaud	Chrissy Grainger
Kristie Tatton	UTS Library	Veronica Cerbelli
Sara Heritage	Jacqui Wood	Jacqueline Blanc
Renee Fallshaw	Katrina Flynn	Brydie Pereda



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Pregnancy, Birth and the New Sibling.

CATHERINE BELL

When we are pregnant with Number 2 (plus), it is normal to feel worried: Will I have enough love? How will my older children cope? Do I want them present at the birth? How can I prepare them for the changes that will inevitably happen?

Ten Tips for parenting beyond the only child:

1. From early on in your pregnancy, change your sleeping arrangements to mirror the post-birth arrangement. This might mean having your partner do the bedtime routine, or moving your toddler to a big bed, or 'sidecar' bed. Perhaps your family plays musical beds; with you sleeping alone (and afterwards with the baby) whilst your partner sleeps with your older child – whatever works! It is best to make changes well before the baby is born.

2. Spend time reading together, on the lounge or in bed. This special time, can be carried over into breastfeeding time when the baby arrives. Perhaps you wish to hold a doll, and explain that when the baby is born you will be holding it and even breastfeeding it while you read the stories.

3. If you are breastfeeding your toddler, you might like to use the doll to practise tandem feeding positions. This can help your toddler to accept this change and look forward to it, as well as helping you to work out some strategies.

4. You can use the doll to practise looking after the baby and talk about the day-to-day life with a baby. Will you be baby wearing? Do you have your sling/wrap/carrier ready? Will you be using a pram? Do you need to get your toddler out of the pram? Or used to a new one? Where will baby be sleeping? Get this space ready and familiar well before the birth. How do you intend to toilet the baby? EC? Cloth? Disposables? Have your toddler help get the baby clothes ready, washing them, putting them away and looking at them. Your toddler may want to try them on, and will see that they are too small... Talk about how small your toddler was, and what wonderful things they can do now that they are bigger; that at first the baby won't be able to play, but will love being talked to and holding your toddler's hand.

5. Establish the post-baby routine well before the birth. Will your toddler be starting day care or preschool? Toilet training? Establishing these changes and being able to deal with any difficulties before the birth can help avoid associations of these changes with the sibling.

6. Some mothers find a baby doll is a useful gift, others find their toddler shows little interest in playing with it. Using a doll can be a useful tool in practicing, especially when you do not know anyone with a real baby, even if your toddler does not play with it.

7. As part of your birth plan, you will need to decide how you will manage your child at the birth. Who is your backup babysitter? Make sure they spend lots of fun time together. Who will attend to your child as you labour? This will be your child's 'special adult' during labour and birth. If it is to be your partner, do you want a doula/ friend with you? Or are you happy to be left alone? You will need to discuss your intentions with your midwife/doula. Choose some toys and books (or if you really want to, buy something special) and put them away, so that they first see it at the birth. It may serve as a good distraction. If you have more than one child, you will need to consider their individual needs and ages. Older children may be able to say if they want to be there or not, and you may be able to arrange for them to be picked up and arrive back soon after the birth.

8. If it seems appropriate, find some positive, gentle birth videos that resemble your own ideal birth and watch them together. Talk about how you might feel. Respond positively to the video. This step is not really necessary though, as your child will take his cues from you on the big day – if you are calm and happy, and your child has his 'special adult' with him, your child is likely to be just fine.

9. After the birth, it is important that you have the time and space to establish breastfeeding. If you are offered help – accept it! If you need help – Ask! Suggestions of real help – meals, folding washing, vacuuming, cleaning the bathroom, taking the older children to the park or simply playing with the kids.

10. After a few weeks, it will seem like the new arrival was always there, especially if you ask your toddler to help. Maybe your toddler can pass you the baby clothes, or the washer, or can hold the book and turn the pages as you read while breastfeeding. Going with the flow, one day at a time, with no grand plan – but more a rough guide – will help you all ease into life with a new baby. If your toddler happens to sleep at the same time as the baby – sleep! If your toddler likes TV or movies, you may be able to get some rest time using this – that is OK! Balance it out with a walk every day – this will be good for all of you. Eat well and drink water to suit your thirst. You matter! Taking care of yourself means you are better able to take care of others. Again: if you need help – ASK! Is there a mothers group, a play group or a group of like-minded parents you can visit with? Company can make a big difference when it is like-minded and supportive.

Enjoy this special time...some days may be long, but the years are short.

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Preparing our Munchkins to

Meet Bubba Zeeki



"I wonder what he'll look like?" said our curious six year old son Ethan. "I think he'll have no hair" replied Elijah, almost eight, emphatically. "Boys, we won't know 'till he gets here" came the voice of reason from older sister Stassi who was nine. Conversations like this were aplenty in our house, in the lead up to their baby brother's homebirth. Two year old Zipporah wasn't exactly sure what was happening, although she did love reading through the 'Hello Baby' book that we had bought online to help prepare the kids.

We were all in new territory really, since this was my first homebirth. None of us really knew what to expect although we really did try and prep them (and ourselves!) the best we could. We talked about all the things that might happen. Mummy might not be able to talk to you during the birth because she has to concentrate a lot. Mummy might use her voice to help her get through the contractions so she might sound a bit loud but that's ok! You might see some blood, but that's normal and doesn't mean that Mummy is hurt. The labour might be quick or it might take a long time.

Our almost eight year old son is autistic, although he is high functioning and can cope well with different situations as long as he is prepared for them. So we decided that it would be good to watch my previous labour videos as a family. One rainy Sunday afternoon, we piled onto our bed, hooked up the old video tapes and discussed them as we watched. The kids cried with joy and I knew they would be so excited to be at this baby's, our fifth child's, birth.

One day during the pregnancy, I invited the kids to a 'tree party.' We took some hot chips to our favourite park, set down the picnic rug under a huge tree and talked about the impending arrival of our little one. I asked each child what they would like to do during the birth and as we brainstormed, I wrote down their ideas. That was a very special day for me. I wanted to bottle their excitement and enthusiasm. It was so precious! Later on in the pregnancy, I took the ideas I'd jotted down and photographed each activity. Some of the activities were getting Mum her water bottle, doing a special scarf

dance around the birth pool, watching a Little House on the Prairie DVD, making cards for Mum and colouring in stuff!

Once I had photographed each activity, I printed these off and put them into a little mini photo album for each child. Each album, while different, said something along the lines of 'During labour, I can...' and then had the photo and the label in the album sleeve. I then sewed up a special felt pouch for the albums to go in, each in our kids' favourite colours so they would know whose was whose. They were so stoked when I showed the albums and pouches to them! These sat in the activity basket with the activities themselves for the remainder of the pregnancy.

Preparing our children meant not just allowing them to chat about the birth but also involving them in the pre and post birth things we did too. All of them helped to cook with me and get the house ready for my pre-birth celebration. Stassi, our eldest, attended the day and enjoyed hearing the other women encourage me with words and scriptures. It was so special to have her there too. We sang a song together that I'd composed for the birth and she had learnt it too. She sang it beautifully that day and was the proudest big sister ever! The kids attended most of my day-appointments with Hazel. They loved to hear Bubby's heartbeat through the Doppler and Hazel would let them hear their own heartbeats which they loved so much! They all helped to clean the cot and move it next to our bed. The kids helped to pick out music too that would play during the birth, and would enjoy listening to the songs in the lead up to it as well.

I bought and assembled a small rocking chair for our two year old to sit in, in preparation for the arrival of bubby and breastfeeding. I collected some books and put them in a basket near my big rocking chair and before Zeeki was born, we would sit in our chairs, rocking back and forth, and read stories together. The children would talk to Ezekiel in utero all the time; kissing my belly, rubbing it, giving him 'hi-fives'! Often the kids would come and lay hands on my tummy and pray for Ezekiel. They would talk to him like he was already here and

"The birth was such an incredibly rich bonding experience for our whole family.."



LUSI AUSTIN

Photos by Mell Mallin'



that made my heart sing so much! They had formed a very special relationship with him before he had even arrived into our arms!

No doubt, the preparation we did helped them to have such open hearts to meet him and prepared them for what would happen during the birth. It was incredible to have them in the room while I birthed Ezekiel. We were all there to welcome him with so much love. I'll never forget their sweet voices saying excitedly, "Hi Zeeki!!!" "Praise Yah!!!" or "He's here!!!" The birth was such an incredibly rich

bonding experience for our whole family, especially Ezekiel's siblings. The next day, Zippi our two year old proudly told me, "Zeeki not in your tummy anymore. Zeeki came out your wo-wo (vagina) and into the birth pool! He's not in your tummy now!"

Every little conversation, question and activity we did to help them prepare for the birth of their baby brother was totally worth it and we hope we get to do it all over again sometime soon!



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Meeting Ezekiel



I started going to sleep and then I heard the sound of Daddy pumping up the birth pool. I said to myself, "Tonight is the night! My little brother is going to be here!" I got out of bed and I looked at Mum and she nodded her head so I knew it was time.

As soon as Mum was really contracting I woke up the boys and said, "Ezekiel's going to be here tonight!" Ethan was under the covers and when I said that he threw off the covers and said, "I want to meet my new baby brother!!!" When Ethan jumped out of bed, Elijah asked, "What's going on?" and I said, "Ezekiel is going to be here!" and he said, "Awesome!"

I sat in the rocking chair and I watched Daddy fill up the birth pool. I took off my pyjama top and put on another top that I'd picked out especially so that my PJ top wouldn't get wet. Daddy set up the camera for me to video underwater with. I got a pink wrap around me that I was going to dance with to music. The song was 'Amazing' by Janelle.

When I started dancing I started twirling around the birth pool. I felt happy and excited while I was dancing because I knew he would be here soon and thought it would be a short labour. After I finished dancing, I stayed near the birth pool almost the whole time.

Naii (my Grandma) rang Hazel the midwife and after a couple of minutes I heard a knock at the door and it was Hazel. I said, "You're here Hazel, you're here!" I heard Mum breathing very deeply and I said to myself, "He's going to be here soon!"

"I felt really loved to be there at the birth. I will treasure that moment forever."

We got all the stuff out of the activity box and when I got the Little House on the Prairie DVD out, Elijah said, "You know what this means? We're going to be able to watch Little House tonight!" I got the detective activity book out of the box and then thought, "Nah I'm going to do that later and watch Mum having the baby instead!"

Pupu (my Grandpa) lit the candles and turned out the lights. It gave the room a warm feeling. I went into the learning room and made a card for Ezekiel and Mum. Elijah and Ethan made one too. Mine said, 'Dear Mum, Thank you for letting me be at the birth. That was awesome. Love Stassi'.

Mum looked very tired but very happy. Daddy was holding Mummy's hand because Ezekiel was crowning. I said to the boys, "Quick, quick I can see his head!!!" and the boys ran towards the birth pool. Elijah asked, "Where? Where?" and I pointed and said, "There!" Mum caught the baby and she said, "Hi Zeeki" and we were all like, "Hi!!!" That was very special.

I was really, really, really glad that I got to be at Mum's labour because I'd never seen anyone go into labour before and it felt really special to be there, because Mum is really special. Mum said, "Have a look at your new baby brother" and when I was looking at him there were tears in my eyes. I tried to blink them away so Mum wouldn't see them, I don't know why I did that but I was really happy! When Sulley (Dad's sister) came, she was standing in the hallway and I ran to her and said, "He's here! He's here!" and she gave me a big kiss and a hug.

I felt really loved to be there at the birth. I will treasure that moment forever.

STASSI AUSTIN

(Aged 9 years old)

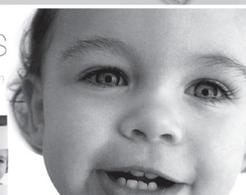


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Interview with a Big Brother

Monica Renaud talks to her 8 year old Louis about becoming a brother.



M: So Louis, what's it like to be a brother?
 L: Ummm, good. Well, bad too. Annoying and crazy, because I have to look after Pascal all the time...but when people aren't around and I can play with my baby I feel better.
 M: Do you love him?
 L: Yeeessss, A LOT!
 M: What are the best bits about becoming a brother?
 L: When he sits and plays nicely, hugging me and when he's so cute and joins in to play Lego or Spiderman with me. And when he says new words and calls me Ooooy.
 M: Were you happy you were here when he was born?
 L: Yes but I wasn't; I was in the kitchen getting another cracker!
 M: How did you feel when I was pregnant?
 L: Well you left me out a bit, like when you were talking to your belly. But it felt really good too because we lost Maceo and now I was getting another baby.
 M: You talk about Maceo a lot...
 L: Yeah I know, I'll always have two brothers.
 M: Anything else to add?
 L: Well, when I am older I'll always have Pascal to rely on and play with, like when I don't have anyone else around.
 M: So that's all then?
 L: Yeah, well...and he's just sooo cute (with a big smile).

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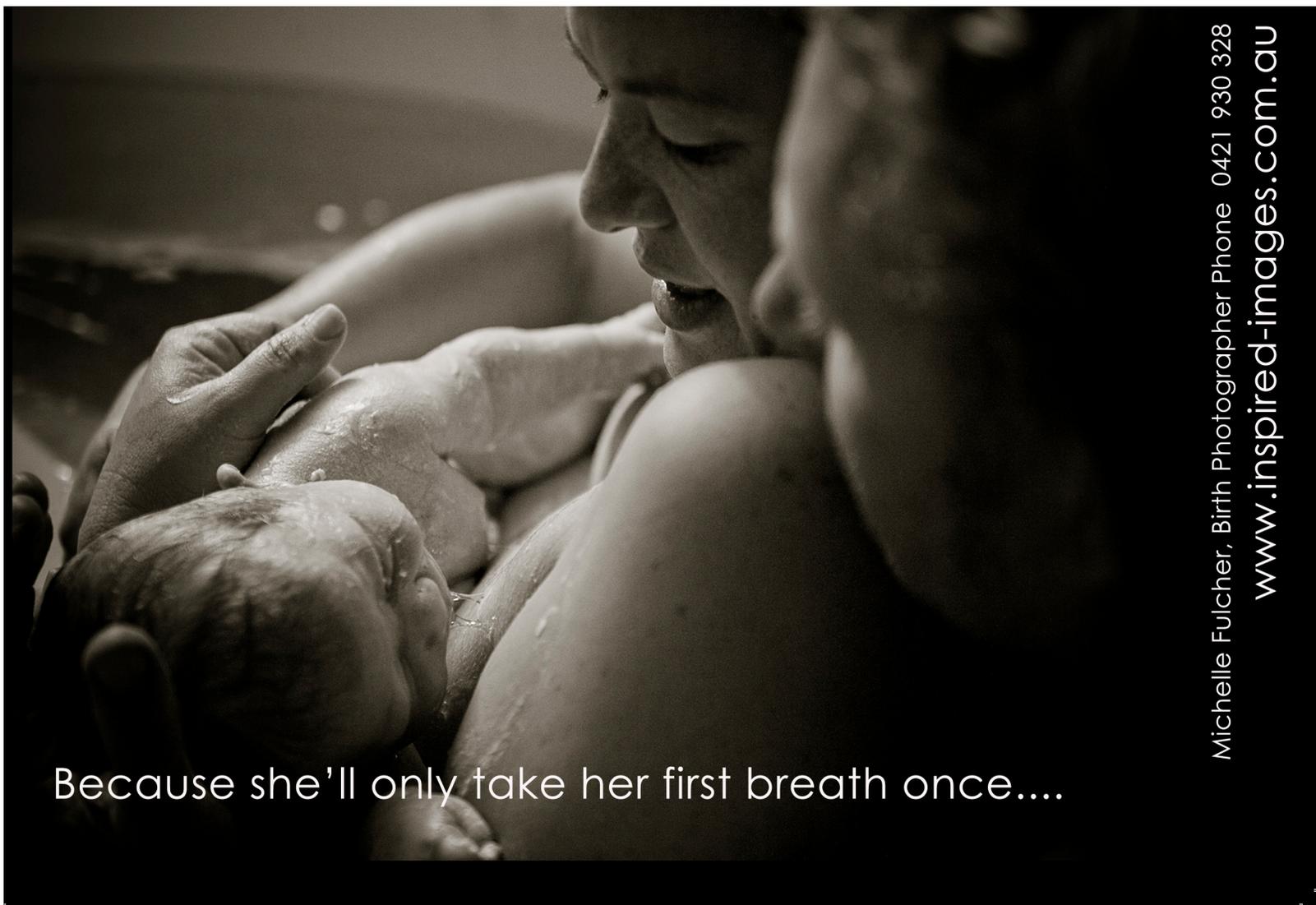
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Siblings At Birth

Should Children Be Present At Childbirth?

Before I became a mother I worked in early childhood development and much of my time was spent observing and recording children's developmental capabilities and needs and using those recordings to write programs for individual children in early childhood settings. I worked with many highly university trained early childhood experts, all of whom could rattle off the theories of Erickson and Piaget, but when it came to actually connecting physically and emotionally with children many of them didn't have a clue.

I personally birthed 4 children in 5 & 1/2 years (all naturally into water with the last 3 births taking place in my home) and subsequently had my own pre-school at home! This is when I became passionate about issues around childbirth, a self confessed 'birth junkie' studied, attended courses and workshops and became a childbirth educator and doula.

All of my children were involved in the births of their siblings and their involvement was one of the many reasons I chose to birth at home with the last 3 babies.

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

1ST SCENARIO

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

For the moment I want you to imagine being a small child – let's say a 4 year old. Your mummy has told you that there is a baby growing in her tummy, as time goes by you witness mummy's tummy move and jump and mummy tells you it's the baby kicking.

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

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

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

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

2ND SCENARIO

Now just imagine you're the same 4 year old, you know that there is a baby growing in mummy's tummy. You know that when it is time for the baby to be born that mummy will have pains in her tummy and that she might make a lot of noise, but mum said that's ok because it helps the baby to be born. You have been to visit the midwife lots of times with mum, your favourite part is helping her listen to the baby's heart beat – she lets you press the buttons on her machine, the baby's heart beat sounds like a horse galloping. She listens to your heartbeat and she lets you help with the blood pressure machine, sometimes you even get to wee on a stick – just like mummy.

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

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

The next thing you know daddy is waking you up to tell you that the baby is coming. You go into the lounge room and mummy is in the big pool that you helped daddy blow up a few days earlier. The midwife is there too and she smiles and says hello. Mummy is making some big loud noises and she has her eyes closed. At first you feel a bit worried, and then she stops making the noise, opens her eyes, looks up at you and smiles. "The baby's going to be here soon", and she squeezes your hand. You help dad with cold washers for mums face and offer her water to drink. After a while the midwife says she can see the babies head and she shines a torch through the water so that you and dad can see too. Then mum makes some really really loud noises and a baby's head comes out of her vagina, soon after the baby's body arrives and the midwife passes him up to mum. Mum and dad cry happy tears as you look on in amazement. Mummy turns





around and kisses you, you reach out to touch the baby, you stroke his head and his hands and he squeezes his hand around your little finger.

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

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

Why Does It Matter?

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

Children are incredibly robust and have the ability to deal with the majority of situations as long as they are told the truth and the facts of the situation. We can help them through by giving them words to

express how they feel, however when they are excluded from life's experiences and left to imagine situations we are unable to help and protect them from their imagination and nightmares.

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

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

JO HUNTER

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Whilst the time we live in now is different, the women's hearts and bodies we bring to this life are still the same perfect, precious instruments finely tuned to hear and receive the wisdom of our Ancestry as it calls.

*The opportunity to find our way back to the Motherline is always there.
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Siblings – A Gift From God

KATHRINE JOHNSON

My doctor once told me the best present any parent can give their child is a sibling. It's so true. I was ten when I saw my brother being born. It was amazing and created a strong bond between us.

It wasn't until my fourth pregnancy though that I considered having my other children present at birth. I think because I didn't know anyone else who did it. My eldest son Ethan was five and my husband and I decided he could come with us and take photos.

Ewan's birth was in hospital and quite long but Ethan was fine. He took great photos and wrote a beautiful letter to baby Ewan describing his birth. This opened my eyes and I realised what a blessing birth was to siblings. They could see their gift arrive! With baby number five I had my two eldest children present. I thought the other two were a little young and had them brought in straight after. Once again, they were great. Birth was becoming normal for them so when I fell pregnant with our sixth child and finally planned the homebirth I always wanted, I knew I'd have all my children there to witness the miracle.

Essence was born at home in the birth pool with all of her siblings there to welcome her. They loved it. I remember opening my eyes just before Essence was born and seeing all my other children standing at the edge of the pool waiting. This is a beautiful memory that I'm sure I'll have forever. We had a few tears from Elizabella who was 22 months. She had missed her day sleep and was a little overwhelmed by all the people there. She was fine though and still talks about this birth two years later.

23 months later we did it all again and all the children were there to experience it. My Mum held Essence as Ezaria was born and kept telling her I was singing a song when I started making noise. Elizabella stood at the edge with her brother Ewan and took it all in. As soon as Ezaria was born, Ewan (5 years) said he couldn't wait two more years until we could do it all again!

Elizabella (now 3) found some spare plastic sheets that I had left over from the birth and was excited, saying it means we could have two more births because she loves birth!

Ethan is 11 and has seen four babies being born. He watched a childbirth video in class at school and told everyone that it wasn't really what birth was like. He said it wasn't like anything he had seen as this mother was laying on the bed screaming with blood everywhere! He knows the truth about birth not just what they show in the movies.

I'm glad my sons will be able to support their wives when the time comes and glad my daughters will hopefully be able to experience how beautiful and amazing natural child birth is.





Mixed Blessings

MEREDITH MCKAY

'Siblings' is a topic close to my heart at the moment. In August we welcomed our second child into our family, a little brother for 3-year-old Finn. The months since the birth have turned out to be a challenging time for Finn and have set me thinking about siblings. Both Finn and I are first children and I have spent a lot of time exploring how I reacted as a two-year-old to having a new sister. Now that my own child is in the same position I am thinking about those feelings again and finding a whole new set of mother-emotions expressing themselves.

As a 2-year-old with a new sister arriving I think I felt quite displaced and angry towards both my mother and my sister. I carried these feelings with me into early adulthood when I worked through a lot of them in psychotherapy. Alongside the anger was also a lot of fear and anxiety that became reasonably debilitating through parts of my life but has recently settled down a lot.

Now as I watch Finn coming to terms with his new brother I feel this anxiety rising again. I can see in him the feelings of anger and displacement that I myself felt at his age and I empathise so strongly with him. I know those feelings deep down in my being and now I am watching them unfold in my own babe! I have moments of feeling such guilt at having forced this on him and that I now have less time and attention for him. I so easily have enough love to go around, but managing to express this love to everyone is often exhausting and sometimes feels impossible.

However siblings are such an enormous gift. I know that for all the emotional challenges it places on my little boy who is finding his place in the world and our family, it is one of the best gifts we can give him. I would never, ever want to be without my two beautiful sisters. They are the best friends I will ever have. Somehow, I think all the hard times in childhood have helped this be so. As much as I worry I can know deep down that this is good. A little brother holds a lot of promise!



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JACQUIE HARSH

Our boys were always involved in the prenatal appointments leading up to Hayden's birth, our third child. They loved our midwife's 'bag of tools' and thoroughly enjoyed her coming over 'to play'. She included them in the entire process so having them present at their sibling's birth wasn't traumatic; it was a beautiful and gentle introduction to the very natural process of creation, birth and life.

My eldest son has seen both of his little brothers being born into water at home. He still remembers seeing his brother "be born into the bath" when he was 19 months and this time around he was so excited to help cut his newest baby brother's "bilical cord". Whenever somebody asks him how he likes his little brother, he excitedly tells them he got to see him come out of Mummy's tummy! I love watching the look on their faces as they think, crazy kid. I love even more the look on their faces when I back up his statement with, "Yes, he was in the room when Hayden was born."

My middle son (then the baby of the family) was 22 months old at the time and really benefited from witnessing his little brother's birth. It lessened the shock of another baby coming into the family. He was so interested in the birth and not traumatised at all. He loved being given a pair of doctor's gloves to play with the placenta as well!

My mum came over to support the boys for each of our homebirths (the boys love nanna very much). She's a fantastic 'children's doula'. She played with them and brought them into the bathroom to see the very end of labour if they weren't already there. The boys got spoilt with all kind of sugary treats; it was like a big, fun, happy party for them with a new playmate at the end as the biggest present ever!

People are always shocked when they hear my sons were present when their baby brothers were born. I don't know about you but I think it's more natural to watch a beautiful birth at home than to watch some of the television shows available for them.

We couldn't think of any other option than having our boys present for their siblings' births. All we can hope is that they can take away their learning experiences to positively influence their wives and the wider community in the future.

Having siblings at birth is really the best gift ever; a gift for them, for the baby, for the parents and everyone involved. If everyone got to witness the normality of birth at home from such a tender age, maybe this world would be a very different place!



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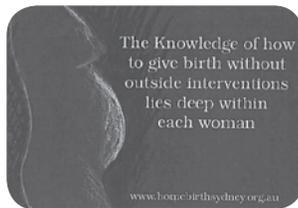
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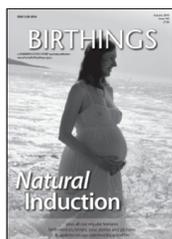
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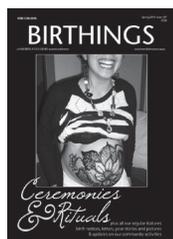
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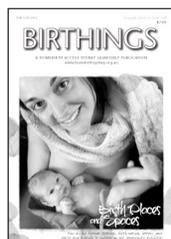
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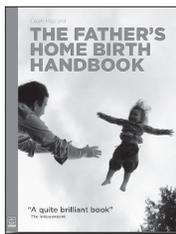
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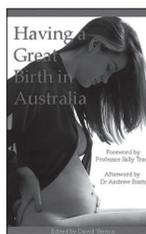
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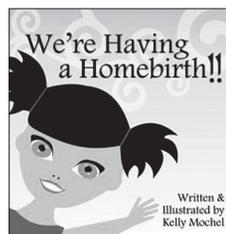
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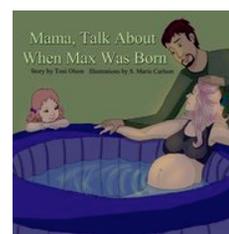
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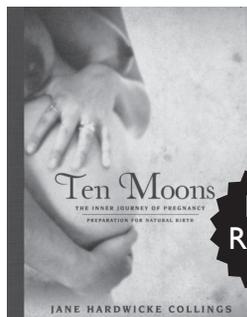
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012BK \$24.95



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My son Jetsun had been 13 days “overdue”, so all along I was mentally prepared for going overdue again. I had not told my family my due date of 26th September, telling them only the ambiguous date of ‘early October’ to avoid the pressure. But for 5 days before I was due, I had the intense feeling of the baby’s head being low in my pelvis and heavy on my cervix and bladder, so I started to consider that I may not go so overdue after all.

Then at about 11pm on Tuesday 27th September, I was just about to go to bed when I felt a ‘Pop’ in the upper left side of my belly. I went to the toilet to investigate and some cloudy fluid leaked out and I knew it was probably a hind water leak. I then started to feel some mild cramps.

I texted my midwife Jo and explained what happened and that I was going to bed and would see what might eventuate. She replied that it did sound like a hind water leak and that it may or may not start labour, and that she’d also go to bed too.

I climbed into bed but could only stay there for about 15 minutes as the contractions started getting stronger. I looked at the bedside clock and I timed them to be 2 to 3 minutes apart.

So I got out of bed again and went into the sunroom where the uninflated pool was waiting to be filled, underneath my blessingway bunting and beside my birth altar. I called Jo and told her to come over. I then texted my good friend Sandy who was to be Jetsun’s support person if he woke up, as well as take professional photos. She did not reply.

It was a cold, dark and windy night with a new moon, and the uninsulated metal clad sunroom was freezing cold. I had 3 heaters ready to heat the room but they were not plugged in and I could not find any extension cords to reach the electric sockets.

I went into the bedroom and woke up Dan who had been asleep for about an hour, being mindful not to wake Jetsun. Dan got up and sorted out the heaters while I put on my TENS and swayed on the birth ball. Then he tried to call Sandy. She didn’t answer and I was to learn later that this was the one night she had her phone on

charge in a different room. But all things happen for a reason, and we concluded later that it was probably for the best that she didn’t come as she was pregnant and probably not in the right head space for the intensity of what was to come.

So Dan called my backup - my good friend Kylie who is also a naturopath and had been present at 7 births before. By this time, I was kneeling across the couch in the full swing of strong contractions while I moaned loudly into a pillow. Dan then inflated the birth pool and filled it with water and I couldn’t wait to get in.

I was in the pool when Kylie arrived about 15 minutes later. She asked me whether I could feel a head. I said abruptly “No, I’m not ready to push yet!” She told me later I sounded so intense that she was trying to gauge how far along I was ‘coz she thought I might have the baby before Jo arrived. There was no gentle build up of prelabour like Jetsun’s had been, and I can only imagine it was what being induced must feel like!

I had previously envisioned Jetsun being present at the birth, but realised in the midst of ‘labourland’ that it was a good thing he was sound asleep, as despite what I told him to prepare him, my birth sounds would likely have scared him - especially if he had been sleeping, as he often wakes up very grumpy and needy! So instead of having to babysit, Kylie took lots of photos. Meanwhile Dan was by my side, cooling my head down with cold wet cloth nappies, giving me drinks of water between contractions and keeping the pool filled with warm water.

Jo arrived at about 1am and asked me if I felt the urge to push and I said a little bit. She asked if I could feel inside myself for the head but all I could feel was my cervix. Jo concluded that I must have a cervical lip and she encouraged me to pant through the contractions so I wouldn’t make it swell further. In hindsight I think that it was a blessing in disguise, as I am certain it gave me the extra time I needed for Jo to be there to assist, otherwise she may have missed the birth.

At some point, I started having the most intense nerve pain which would shoot from my groin down the inside of my left leg with each contraction – it was absolutely excruciating. With each contraction,



VIRGINIA MADDOCK



my left leg would shoot out straight in agony and I could not get it comfortable. Eventually I stood up in the pool which offered minor relief but as my body was exposed, it made me quite cold and the side of the pool did not provide much stability to brace against. So Jo covered my shoulders with a towel and Kylie got me a stool to lean on.

Apparently I was in transition for 2 hours, doing my best to pant through the intense contractions and nerve pain, but I distinctly remember the moment when the cervix must have finally expanded over my baby's head and I suddenly moved into 2nd stage and really started roaring as my body's power overtook me and pushed down – fortunately the nerve pain ceased. (My next door neighbours said they had heard me, as did my neighbours diagonally across the street inside their closed house!)

I remember thinking that I would soon be birthing my baby and I wanted Kylie to get some good photos, so I moved to the other side of the pool because I did not want the writing on the bottom of the pool to be in shot. I then squatted against the side of the pool as I pushed so that I would be as open as I could possibly be, and I wanted to avoid another long 2nd stage which had been 3 hours with Jetsun. As baby's head crowned I started bobbing up and down in the water to encourage stretching but Jo warned me to stop it as the head was starting to hit the bottom of the pool which I didn't realise – good thing the pool bottom was soft and air filled instead of hard porcelain!

When the head was half way out, Jo told me it was at the biggest diameter it was going to be and would not get any more painful. This reassured me so much that I came out of my trance and became fully coherent. I said to Kylie that I was going to pull the baby out, turn it over and I wanted her to take a photo of the baby underwater.

The head stayed stationary for a few contractions so Jo put some downward pressure on it to help it come out. It stayed put for a further few contractions so Jo had to free the shoulders and then she said to me "OK, on the next contraction you have to make the decision to get this baby out NOW!" I could hear the seriousness in her voice so when the time came, I pushed with all my might.



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“...what a gorgeous looking little guy we had made.”

Jo guided my hands down and I pulled the baby out of me by the shoulders, then turned him over and looked at him through the water while Kylie took a photo. I was keen to leave him under for a while longer but Jo seemed a bit nervous and said “Ok, lift him up now.”, so I did. It was 3.10am on Wednesday 28th September. I brought him up to my chest and thought I saw a penis but then reasoned to myself that it must have been the cord, as I was sure all through pregnancy that we had created a girl. Then when I looked properly I realised that it was a penis and I was so shocked! “It’s a boy. I can’t believe we’ve got another boy!” I said. I must admit that I was slightly disappointed that he wasn’t a girl, but the magic of the moment soon overtook that and I was so impressed with what a gorgeous looking little guy we had made.

The next thing I remembered was to check his thumbnails to ensure they were complete as I carry a genetic disorder called Nail Patella Syndrome which, among other traits, makes the outer half of my thumbnails absent and has a 50% chance of inheritance. Fortunately the preconception and natural fertility program Dan and I undertook to try and prevent it was a success, as it had been with Jetsun. I was so overjoyed we had prevented it again and I still find myself looking at his thumbnails and smiling at their utter perfection! He cried for a few minutes then I put him to the breast and he latched on immediately. Jo asked if we had a name. I said I had one in mind but Dan hadn’t agreed on it yet - I kept it to myself at that moment so Dan wouldn’t feel pressured in front of Jo and Kylie. As soon as I saw my baby, there was no doubt as to what I wanted to call him.

I was scared of going through more pain with birthing the placenta but Kylie reassured me it would feel really nice and soothing coming out, which I was surprised that it did. Jo put the placenta in our mixing bowl which floated in the pool as the cord stayed attached to the baby.

I told Dan I really wanted Jetsun to be here and he was initially reluctant to wake him, saying he would wake up really grumpy and not be in the right frame of mind, but I’m so glad I insisted ‘coz that experience would’ve been lost forever otherwise. Dan brought him out and he was all dazed and sleepy. Dan cut the cord with Jetsun in his arms and eventually Jetsun came over to see his new baby brother but remained rather quiet – it was 4am after all!

The pool was getting cold so we got out. Jo put him on the scales and looked at me with disbelief, and showed me that he was 4.49kg (9 pound 14) - no wonder he took some effort to get out. He measured 57cm long – 7cm longer than Jetsun had been. Our new family of 4 then cuddled up together on the couch with a doona, before I hobbled to the shower with help from Jo and Kylie. Once clean and warm, I went to bed with Keanu where the rest of the family soon joined us.

Later on in the day I asked Dan again if he was happy with the name Keanu and he ended up saying “Well I’m not really going to get a choice am I!” (Which wasn’t a no, so as always I took that as a positive sign to go ahead. After all, he had no good alternative suggestions!). Keanu is Hawaiian for ‘cool breeze’ which fitted the night he was born, and his second name is Jarrah which is aboriginal for ‘gum tree’.

I am still getting used to the idea of having another boy, but he is so damn cute, I fall in love with him every time I look at him and wouldn’t swap him for anything; and I can really see the value in Jetsun having a brother.

Big thanks to Jo Hunter, for being an awesome midwife and a great friend; to Kylie Roughsedge for being a natural doula and for taking so many great pictures; to my man Dan for being a great birth support, partner and best friend; to Jetsun for having to (reluctantly) give up pole position; and to Keanu for choosing us as your new family.



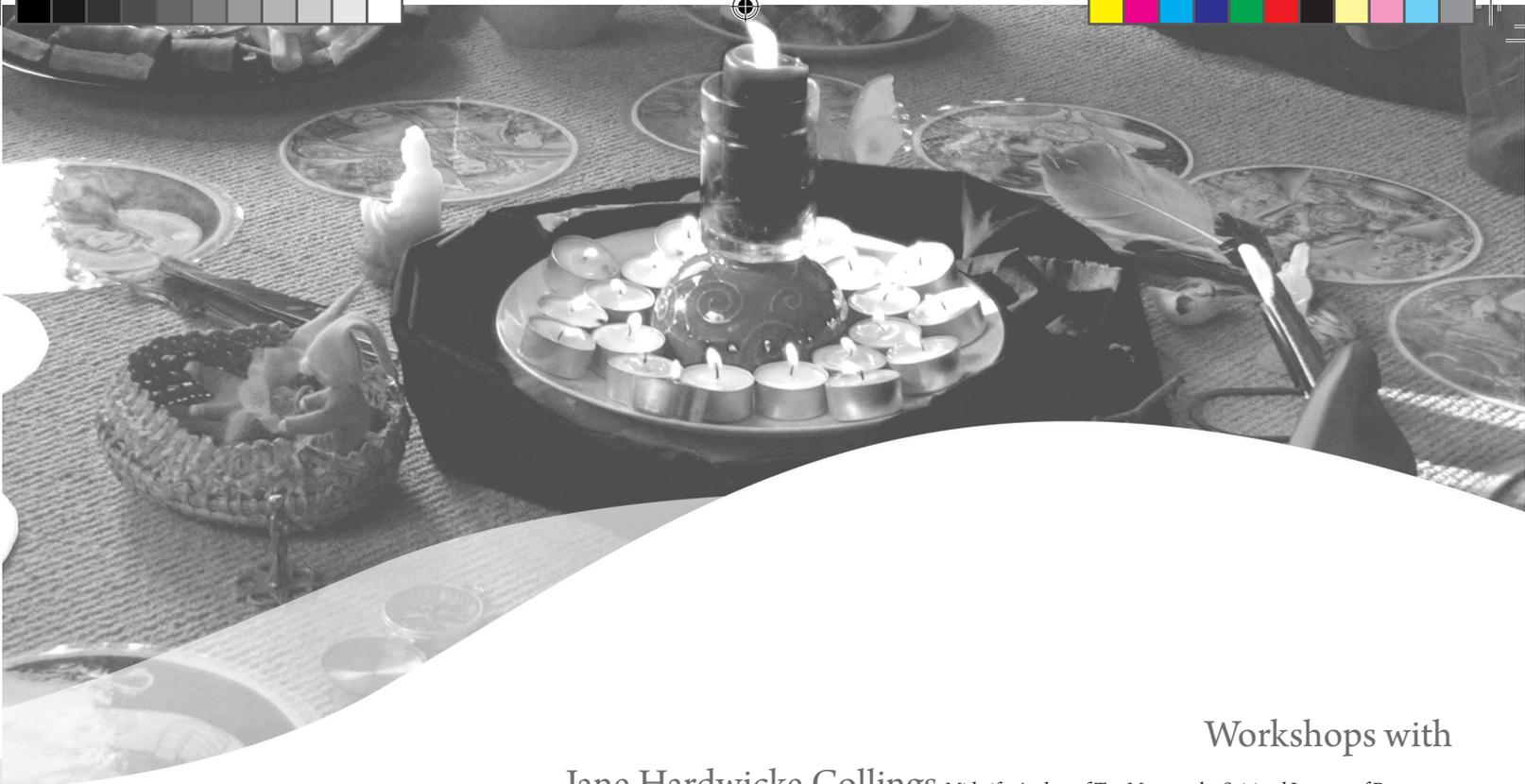
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Workshops with

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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
Bellingin, NSW
Fully catered, non-residential \$550

Moonsong

April 30, May 1 2011
Bellingin, 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





My Unassisted VBAC HomeBirth of

Rivi Cecilia



I have no idea how to begin writing this birth story. The birth itself was so incredibly fast that there isn't really much to recount, but the pregnancy was a different story!

Throughout the pregnancy I had felt uncomfortable. I truly believed that something was going to go wrong. After having two previously uneventful pregnancies, I really had no reason to feel this way – but I couldn't shake it. At 34 weeks pregnant I began itching. Blood tests indicated that I may have obstetric cholestasis, a disease which I was not prepared to battle with in order to gain my second Home Birth After Caesarean (HBAC). I began preparing to meet my belly babe by 37 weeks.

Even so, in the hopes that I may somehow beat the disease, I changed my diet, and began acupuncture and chiropractic care. Within three weeks my blood tests had returned to perfectly normal levels. I continued having blood tests every week and still, they remained normal. My plans for HBAC were back on the table!

In those three short weeks of preparation to meet my baby before my expected due date, I had completely lost focus on allowing my belly babe to arrive in her own time. I had begun using natural induction techniques in a vain attempt to bring on labour. Needless to say, they hadn't worked! Hundreds of dollars spent on acupuncture, naturopathy, herbs, tinctures and tonics... but my baby came when it suited her best, and I'm so thankful that she did!

By the time 41 weeks rolled around, I gave in. I gave it to the Gods, completely surrendered, and stopped all induction techniques. Those final five days of pregnancy were bliss! My head didn't feel so foggy, I didn't feel any pressure to meet an expiry date, and I spent quality time with my husband, Grant, and kids, Jedd and Sage. I can honestly say that by forgetting about WHEN I was going to meet my baby, I allowed myself to relax enough for her to make her perfect debut.

When labour did finally kick in at 41 weeks + 5 days, I was completely ready for it. Grant had begun his leave from work and I felt supported and assured. Jedd and Sage had, unfortunately, had

gastro two nights previously and Grant woke up in the early hours of the morning with vomiting and diarrhoea. I woke a few hours later with a little vomiting, but mostly diarrhoea. Thankfully Jedd and Sage had recovered well and were booked into daycare that day. After dropping them off early, we hopped into bed for a couple of hours of catch-up sleep.

As soon as I lay down my surges began! They came every 10-15 minutes. I would wake and rock my body through it, then lay back down for some more sleep. After two hours of rest, I had a hot shower and the surges became a bit more intense, so I did what anyone does when they're expecting to have a baby – I went straight back to bed for another two hours! I kept this pattern up all day and finally got out of bed at 4pm.

I called my friend Erin to come around and hang out with me while Grant went to collect Jedd and Sage from daycare, and grab some take away for them all for dinner. Erin arrived at around 5:30pm and we chatted in the kitchen for an hour. I had to stop chatting when the surges hit, lean on the kitchen bench and rock my body through them. Whenever we stopped talking, Erin's five month old son would gabble away. It was so sweet, almost like he was talking to my unborn babe. It reminded me what this was all about – meeting my baby!

In that hour my surges picked up quite a bit. When Erin arrived they were still 9-12 minutes apart, but by the time she left at 6:20pm they were coming every two to four minutes and lasting for about a minute each. Because I had laboured for 24hrs before Sage's birth, I still felt like I had a long way to go. I messaged my midwife, Jo, to let her know where I was up to and she asked if I wanted her to come over yet. I ummed and ahed and finally said that she should have some dinner first and take her time, but to head over when she was ready. I messaged my photographer, Britt, at the same time and she arrived first. Just as well really – I'm glad she got some photos of me in labour!

Britt arrived just after 7pm and I was well and truly in labour-land. My candles were lit, my birth affirmation posters were on the wall





Langlands

ALICIA LANGLANDS

photos 2- 6 by Britt Janay Photography



“This uterus was so strong and powerful that it hugged and squeezed my belly babe Earthside.”

and the birth pool was being filled. None of it meant anything at the time though. My body had a job to do and my focus was on bringing my baby Earthside. I swayed my body through each surge and after a few more rushes went to sit down on the toilet.

Squatting down was the most amazing feeling – I rocked my body forwards and backwards through the surges, feeling every motion and movement within. Then the most incredible thing happened – I felt my body pushing! I had never felt this before, the intense urge to bear down. There was no fighting it. My scarred uterus was pushing my baby Earthside; the very same uterus that had been sliced open for a caesarean; the uterus that had ruptured from a conornal pregnancy. This uterus was so strong and powerful that it hugged and squeezed my belly babe Earthside.

I went back to the floor beside the birth pool and got down on all fours – this pushing felt so good! I could hear my voice rising and my face tensing, so focused on relaxing my jaw and lowering my voice. I reached down and could feel my baby’s head. The pool was too hot to get in, so whilst Grant bailed hot water out and put cold water in, I kept on all fours, rocking and feeling my body gently embracing my belly babe. Finally I couldn’t stand it any longer – I NEEDED to be in that birth pool! It felt close enough to being the right temperature so I just hopped straight in and discovered that it was perfect. Time to meet my baby!

Grant took his shirt off and hopped in the pool with me. Three or four more pushes and Rivi made her way Earthside into Daddy’s waiting hands. He lifted her straight up to my chest and I closed my arms around her little body. Love.

Five minutes later Jo came running in, and ten minutes after that I birthed the placenta. Everything was perfect and exactly as it should be. I felt empowered, amazed that I had achieved my second VBAC, and in awe of it happening so quickly! I had never expected to have such a short labour and birth – it really took me by surprise. Rivi weighed 9lb 11oz, measured 57cm long and had a head circumference of 34cm. She was far too long for the 0000 outfits that I had bought her and went straight into 000.

Rivi is now 5 days old. She is such a dream and so easy to love. Rivi has completed our family and taught me so much in the last ten months – patience more than anything else. But also her birth has taught me how important it is for women to be able to continue birthing at home assisted by a midwife. Even though Rivi arrived before my midwife did, homebirth needs to remain an option for women to choose when deciding where they wish to give birth. My daughters deserve the right to choose to birth at home with a midwife and I will continue to write my letters, rally and protest for their maternal rights to be protected. If I don’t, who will?

Ezekiel's 34 Minute



We were overjoyed to find out we were pregnant with our fifth blessing. After much prayer, research and discussion, we decided to have our first homebirth. We met with midwife and friend, Hazel Keeble.

The pregnancy went along beautifully and, except for sciatica, was uneventful. I read aloud 'Hello Baby' to the kids, prepared their special activity baskets for during labour and watched our previous birth videos with them. I had a special pre-birth celebration where friends brought encouraging verses of scripture and prayed for me. We enjoyed a lovely afternoon tea together.

From around 35 weeks I began having strong but irregular contractions. Being my fifth pregnancy I knew this was completely normal and my body's way of getting ready for labour. I also knew that my labours had almost halved in duration (four hours, just over two hours, 90 minutes, 45 minutes) so I wondered what this one would be like. We got our homebirth supplies ready.

I cherished every visit with Hazel. She took time to nurture the children and answer their questions. We couldn't have asked for a more caring and supportive midwife. She attended my haematology check-up appointments and helped me research nipple vasospasms to help prepare me for a better breastfeeding experience. We knew my body may not give me a lot of notice before going into transition so a couple of times Hazel stayed late or overnight just in case.

My 'due date', however, came and went. The contractions had been so strong for weeks so I asked Hazel to do an internal to check how I was coming along. Nine days over and I was 5cm dilated. That was encouraging! I lost my mucous plug but didn't have any regular contractions. Brett needed to go back to work so I asked my parents (who live seven hours away) to come and help in case I went into labour. They arrived on Sunday. On Monday, after an appointment with Hazel, mum prayed for me. She was so fervent in her prayer and asked boldly for it to happen today!

We hit the sack around 9.30pm and I went to the toilet at 11.10pm. I got back into bed when all of a sudden I had a massive surge through my body and I knew this was it. I quickly woke Brett and asked him to pump up the pool. He flew out of bed (knowing how quickly I labour when it's actually time!) and began pumping up the pool. He and dad were fabulous working together. Mum rang Hazel, Mell Mallin (our photographer and dear friend) and then my sister-in-law. I went to the toilet again and knew that I needed to get off and into the water. I took about ten steps and, bang, another powerful surge hit. Our seven year old son came to my aid and walked me through the kitchen to the pool. There was enough water so I hopped in.

As soon as I got into the pool I thought, Oh okay, now THIS is why everyone raves about water birth! The relief was immediate and fabulous. I sat upright and breathed low and quietly through each surge. I felt in control and wonderful even through the pain. I welcomed each contraction because I knew it was bringing us closer to meeting our little bubba. I said, "Thank you Yah!" out loud a couple of times when the contractions came and sang softly through some of them to the words of the songs we had playing quietly. Our nine year old daughter had been practicing a special dance with a shawl for months. She began moving around the pool to the music and I felt so joyful. I was in the moment and completely aware of being part of a real-life miracle right then and there.

I asked my Mum to read out the verses of scripture which had been of incredible encouragement to me during my pregnancy. Her voice was beautiful in the background as I continued to quietly breathe through each strong surge. My dad read me a text message my sister sent saying she had woken up praying for me. The room was filled with love, scripture, sweet worship music, the encouragement of

Homebirth

LUSI AUSTIN

Brett, Hazel and my parents along with the excited voices of our children and soft candlelight. After sitting on my legs I asked Hazel if I could change position and hang over the edge of the pool. "You do what you want sweetie," she reassured me.

Within two minutes of me changing position, I said excitedly, "He's crowning, he's crowning!" I heard our eldest daughter calling her brothers, "I can see his head! Look!" About 20 seconds later I said, "I think he's here, I think he's here!" As he slid out I very calmly uttered, "Praise Yah." Hazel then said, "Reach down and get your baby." I gently pulled him up onto my chest. I couldn't believe I caught my own baby! It was one of the most incredibly powerful and emotional moments of my life. There were woohos and hallelujahs and "He's here!" from everyone present.

Mine and mum's prayers had been answered; Ezekiel was born that day. He entered the world only 34 minutes after that first strong contraction when I'd gotten back into the bed. 26 minutes later the placenta was birthed naturally. I waited in the pool for it since Zeeki had a very short cord. We had a beautiful time of sitting in the water skin to skin. I sipped birthing tea, took some of the Shepherd's Purse tincture I'd made and the kids finished off their activities. Mell was incredible and took the most gorgeous photos. I was also glad that we had the video camera running the whole time. I felt on top of the world!

Brett cut the cord once it had stopped pulsating. My mum held Zeeki during this and dad tied off the cord with some thread Hazel and our daughter had already plaited. It was such a family experience. Brett's sister arrived not long after he was born and was amazing with the kids. I took a shower in my own bathroom, changed into my new pjs and snuggled up in bed with Ezekiel while everyone helped pack up or put the kids to bed. Finally, the pool was emptied and the house was quiet once again. Brett came to bed with us, we gazed at each other and marvelled at what had just taken place. And there, lying between us, was our little fifth-born, first homebirthed blessing.

Photos and slideshow by Mell Mallin available for viewing on my blog: <http://homeschoolingmamalusi.blogspot.com/> or on Mell's blog: <http://mellmallinportfolio.blogspot.com/>



BEAUTIFUL BIRTH BEGINS AT HOME



Homebirth mum, Doula, Calmbirth Practitioner & Childbirth Educator, Jacque Harsh, is in the process of collating & editing home birth memories from all over Australia in the hope to publish a book to promote the beauty, safety & positive variations of home birth to inspire, empower and normalise birth how nature intended it to be!

All women, dads, siblings, doulas, family, friends, midwives, birth workers and doctors are invited to tell their stories, opinions and experiences through their eyes. Submissions may include home birth stories, memories, favourite quotes, drawings/paintings, poems and photos that capture your journey through pregnancy, birth, or those special moments/days following. Homebirth transfer stories are welcome also!

If you would like to share your joy of home birth please send in your submissions to Jacque - jacque@holisticfamilysupport.com.au



Jayden's Lotus



My husband Bobby and I decided at the beginning of my pregnancy that we would have a homebirth for our first child. With the support and guidance of our midwife Rachele Meredith, I prepared myself for a natural and safe delivery at home. I ate live, organic, nutrient dense whole foods, did prenatal yoga, listened to guided relaxation CDs, educated myself about the birth process and familiarized myself with pain management techniques.

During the nine months of pregnancy I learned to listen to the needs of my body and child. This resulted in slowing down my life. To provide our child with a strong and healthy foundation for life we also decided to aim for a lotus birth where the umbilical cord stays attached to the placenta until it falls off by itself a few days after birth.

When I was five days overdue (41 weeks) my husband came home from work and said our child wouldn't come into this world until we decided on a name and put it on paper. I thought this was an interesting point because we'd decided on a girl's name but not a boy's. So we sat down and I wrote up the shortlist of boys names we had gathered. We decided on the name Jayden Singh Cheema for a boy within five minutes. I wrote our final names for a girl or boy on a nice card and put it on my birthing altar. This ritual sent our child the message that we were fully ready for its entry into this world and were welcoming it with love and excitement.

At 4.00am the next day, Wednesday June 29th 2011, I woke up with tension and tightening in my lower abdomen. Those sensations came every hour and continued consistently throughout the day. I felt very excited that something was moving. I observed these mild and hourly contractions all morning and decided at around 10.00am to call Rachele. She told me to keep her updated.

I checked my emails and found one from my aunt in Austria. She is a highly qualified astrologer and kinesiologist and has always guided me through passages of life. She mentioned that Cancerian children sometimes feel so comfortable in the womb they often don't want to come out. To assist our child with his journey into the physical world she attached an affirmation and recommended I read it to the little one in the womb: I detach from you mentally. You are ready for your life and we are excited about you entering this world. Life welcomes you with love and joy, so that you can transform all your wonderful experiences that will emerge in front of you. I felt I had received this affirmation at the right time. I read it to our child all day as I was convinced it would speed up my birthing process.

The day went by quickly. I spent it preparing for the birth, rested and called my mum and my good friend Anja in New Zealand. Anja's son was born on the June 29th 2009 and we thought it would be funny if our children shared the same birthday.

Bobby and I had dinner around 7.00pm. By that time my contractions came every 20 minutes and I informed Rachele. I was sure I would give birth to our child during the night or the next day. I felt it was the right time to put my birthing necklace on. I had created it using beads received from all the powerful women around me. The necklace felt wonderful and I enjoyed feeling its female energy, which would assist me with my transition to motherhood.

Bobby went to bed at 9.00pm to get some rest for the big event. My contractions were too intense to lie down so I spent some time sitting on the floor in front of the couch. I counted and timed my contractions. They were seven minutes apart and I could really feel the pain wave increasing and peaking. I was able to breathe through them and continued with reading my affirmations to our child. I texted Rachele about the progress and went into the bedroom to tell Bobby that my contractions were becoming consistently and more intense. He joined me in the living room and started timing the contractions, which were every four minutes. I concentrated on breathing through them and squeezed my stress balls together at the peak. Bobby started setting up the birthing pool. I was very excited that our child had started its journey into this world.

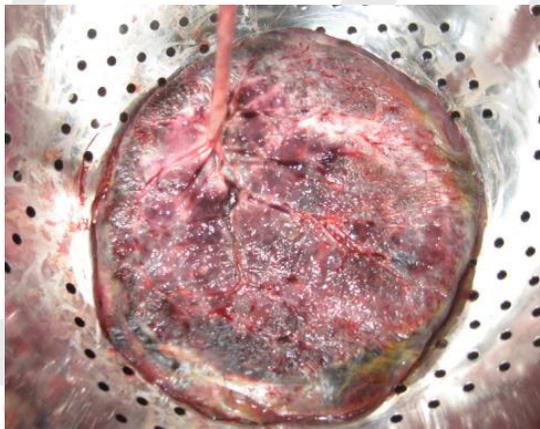
At 11.00pm the contractions were so intense that I could barely talk through them. I called Rachele and told her to come and join us for the delivery of our child. I was sitting on a firm cushion on the floor leaning on Bobby's shoulders and breathing intensely through my contractions. They came so close together that I had to really concentrate on managing the pain at the peaks. Bobby was amazing; he coached me through each contraction with his breath and voice and gave me a sip of his homemade labor aid drink to fuel me with energy.

Rachele arrived at 11.45pm. She set herself up very quietly and honored my birthing space. I continued on the floor for another hour with Bobby's help and then felt the need to try out the pool. Rachele and Bobby helped undress me and step into it. The water was too cold for me and I asked for a top up but Bobby told me our hot water tank had ran out of hot water. They started to warm up hot water on the stove and topped up the pool.



Birth Story

DR VERENA
RASCHKE-CHEEMA



In the meantime I tried to get comfortable. I thought the water would decrease the pain but the peak of my contractions were almost overwhelming. The fluctuation of the water temperature irritated me and made it difficult to relax. Inside me I knew I could do this and made this slogan my new mantra. I turned inwards more and more and started to communicate with our child on a very deep level about its descending journey.

Bobby continued to assist me with managing my contractions through deep breathing and kept telling me to relax deeply. Rachele told me that everything was slowing down and she recommended stepping out of the water. They helped me get out of the pool. At this point I thought I couldn't continue because the intensity of my contractions was so incredibly strong. It felt so good to hold Rachele's hands when stepping out of the pool. Her strong female energy flowed through my body. I asked Rachel how I was doing and she said, "Verena you are doing so well." But I wanted a more precise answer about exactly what stage of labor I was in.

Rachele thought it would be a good idea to go for a walk outside and have a chat with Bobby. I told her this was the last thing I could do right now. After two more contractions outside the pool she suggested I go to the toilet to empty my bladder. Bobby helped me put on a shirt and walked me to the toilet after another contraction had passed.

I emptied my bladder and felt the urge to push. It was the most intense feeling I had ever experienced. I made very loud ah sounds while pushing, which helped to relax my cervix. I was sure all the neighbors would wake up from my screaming. Rachele told me continuously to breathe through the contractions slowly as the urge to push the baby out at once was so intense. I was tied to the toilet seat with my arms pushing the walls and after four pushes the top of our child's head emerged.

The excitement in me was so high because I knew we would meet our angel very soon. After 3 more pushes Rachele suggested I change position. It was impossible for me to stand up and get on all fours so I squatted down with Bobby sitting behind me and supporting me under my arms. Rachele said I should concentrate on the next push now and push the baby out. I pushed really hard this time and when the head wanted to go inside again I let go fully.

In the next minute our child was born into Rachele's arms. My heart was filled with so much joy, pride, love and respect for my body and

our baby. We did it! I was a mother! Rachele passed the little one into my arms and I put him towards my heart. After a nine hour labor our son Jayden arrived healthy and safely into this world. I looked up to Bobby and could see tears rolling down his cheeks. We were both overwhelmed by the amazing miracle that had just unfolded.

Bobby and Rachele helped Jayden and me to the couch where I bonded with our son. In the next hour I delivered the placenta, which we put in a colander to drain well. Jayden stayed attached to the placenta for four days until the umbilical cord detached itself during an afternoon nap. We are truly thankful for the empowering, enriching and guided rite of passage we experienced.





Big Brother,



I have birthed two babes, two little boys. I'm a mummy. This fact never ceases to amaze and astonish me. These two births, into water at home, have been the most awesome experiences of my life. These brothers both came into the world in a similar way, but under very different circumstances.

I'll start with Finn because he came first, on September 17, 2008. When we found out I was pregnant there was no question that we would be having a homebirth. My mother, aunts and many of their friends birthed at home so it seemed like the normal, obvious way to go. We found ourselves a gorgeous midwife and away we went... About 10 weeks before Finn was due I decided we needed to buy a house. If we hurried we could move in before the baby came and I could birth in the new house, our very own house. Nice plan. Finn wasn't so keen on playing along and decided to stick to plan A. On some level I agree this was best as I was still most at home in our old house.

At 37 weeks we were halfway through moving into our new house that we still hadn't finished painting. I went to the loo and realised that I had lost my mucous plug. In a bit of a state I rang our midwife Sonja, my mum, and my husband Simon. Mum and Sonja both assured me that I wasn't necessarily going to go into labour straight away and that I'd probably wait until we had moved. An hour later Sonja said to me, "Meredith, I think you're going to have a baby today." "No!" I thought, "I'm in the wrong house! And we haven't finished painting! All the towels are at the new house, and I haven't washed any clothes or nappies!" The pool was with someone else who was due to birth before me and to top it all off someone ran up the back of our car as Simon was driving home from work, writing off the car and sending him into shock. There seemed to be people running all around me like mad things and the phone kept ringing. This was not how I had imagined the birth would be.

At about 5.00pm everyone finally left me in peace. I'd spent the past while sitting on the bedroom floor feeling anxious and unprepared. As Sonja left she suggested I lie down and rest in case we were in for a long night. As soon as I was alone the contractions started to ramp up I could no longer lie down. I spent time kneeling on the floor, leaning over the bed and sitting on an exercise ball. I had imagined myself moving through labour, dancing and walking but I couldn't. Once I got into a position it seemed too hard to move. I was trying to chant Om and focus more on this sound than the pain but it was getting increasingly difficult. Eventually I got into the shower – relative bliss! At this point Simon rang Sonja and asked her to come back.

When Sonja arrived, around 9.00pm, I must have been in transition. I was screaming and bellowing and carrying on, kneeling in the bath with the shower running on my back. Sonja walked in the front door and called out, "You're sounding good!" I could have decked her! She came in and helped me to make more helpful, deep sounds. At some point the hot water ran out. The pool was being set up in the lounge room, but I wasn't really aware of that.

Sonja rang my mum a little later and she came with the camera. Then the pool was ready and even though it was difficult, I managed to make it to the lounge room and get in. What relief! That soft squishy floor of the pool was bliss for my knees and the water was so hot and soothing, plus I was just about ready to start pushing. I was nearly there!

As I pushed Sonja helped me to breathe and make noises that would help, and I held my finger in my vagina so I could feel the top of his head and feel him coming down. She kept telling me not to push ("I can't help it!") but to breathe my baby out. The burning sensation as his head was birthed was almost more than I could bear (the one time I swore!). What a moment that was when his head came out and we could all feel it. The rest of him came with the next contraction.

I lifted a just-born Finn up out of the water at 11.07pm that night. What a magical, magical moment. I cannot find words to describe that moment. And a boy! Coming from a large, girl family I felt quite astonished and proud! The placenta took a couple of hours (they're shy, apparently) and I sat on the lounge feeling pretty out of it but also drinking in this new little one with total amazement. I did that! Almost exactly three years later Quillan arrived into quite different circumstances on August 30, 2011. We were in our own home, we had the pool, I had washed baby clothes and nappies and we had oodles of towels. No-one had a car accident. I felt as prepared as was possible. I started waiting, something I didn't get the chance to do with Finn.

It felt extremely important to me that Finn be present for the birth of his sibling. We read picture books and watched birth films and talked about it all. We made the observation that I would have to have my pants off for the baby to come out.

Pre-labour began a couple of days before I hit 37 weeks. After a few days of it I started thinking "Right, so where's this baby, then?" Five days later the pre-labour became different – there was a bit of pain. Sonja was on her way to Newcastle for a visit, so I kept going as per





Little Brother:

A Story of Two Beautiful Births



usual and hoped nothing would happen until she got back. I rang her a few times through the day and her answer was always the same, she thought it sounded like it was still pre-labour. Drat! She was still saying this at 6.30pm when I was breathing through contractions as I spoke to her. "The contractions still sound too short" she said. We decided to wait a little longer and see what happened.

My mum had taken Finn for a little play at her place until things moved along and we felt ready for him to come back. I didn't feel like I could cope with his energy and enthusiasm at the time, I just needed to curl up in my cocoon for a bit. A little later Sonja rang back and said she was going to come over soon to see how I was getting on. Just as well because by then I was finding it hard to remain quiet through contractions.

Simon was getting the pool ready (the hot water ran out again!) while I laboured in the bedroom on my own. When Sonja arrived I started to sob that I just wanted it to stop so I could have a little rest, I was so tired and I just wanted to sleep. I'd had enough. Sonja held a hot water bottle firmly on my back through contractions and reminded me to relax my shoulders. I was ready for some attention from someone and it was so reassuring to have her there. Mum and Finn came back and I saw Finn eyeing me and looking at my pants. I could tell he was thinking, "No, the baby can't be coming now. She still has her pants on!"

Climbing into the pool was such a huge relief. Plus I was starting to feel those first little urges to push. Sonja swished water over my back as things got more intense and Simon sat in front of me through some of the contractions, I didn't want him in the pool this time. Finn and Mum sat beside the pool playing with fuzzy-felt. As I pushed, the baby seemed to be taking forever to move down and when he did, he went straight back up again after each contraction. After a while I started to get really sick of the whole thing – it was getting boring and tiresome. I just wanted my baby now! I began to push a little with contractions if I felt the urge, and it felt good to do that. Finally his waters broke and he stopped moving back so far after each contraction. The second stage was a funny time, as I didn't go into 'the zone' between contractions. Instead we talked and even joked and laughed.

Finally, the head! That fabulous moment again when it was almost all over and I could feel my babe for the first time. That soft, squishy little head, two ears and...a roll of fat at the back of his neck! I reached down and almost pulled him out with the next contraction. I was so keen to get him into my arms. I lifted him up to my chest.

He was so chubby! He had such fat cheeks and delicious roly thighs. We had a look together and – another boy! I could hardly believe it! Fancy me, with all these women in my family, having two sons! He was born at 10.50 pm. Almost the same time as his brother, Finn. I feel so pleased that Finn was there to see our baby being born. It felt so right to have us all there together in those moments after Quillan's birth, to hold both my boys to me and feed them both together. I feel so grateful that they have each other as brothers, as my very best friends are my two beautiful sisters.

I am so grateful to my beautiful Simon for sharing all this with me and for being so supportive of homebirth. I am also grateful to my precious Mum for being with me and with Finn through these births and for birthing me so gently at home. I am grateful to our fabulous Sonja who has been such a fantastic midwife and friend, and of course to my gorgeous boys, Finn and Quillan, for being here and bringing me so much joy!

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How Crue Bobby



Thurs 26th March 2009.

I'd had two or three cramping pains between 6.30-8pm but didn't think much of it. I felt really tired so decided to go to bed very early at 8.30pm.

I was awoken at 11.30pm by a contraction and I knew it was time. I was 40+2 weeks. I quietly got out of bed, so as to not wake my husband, Darrell. I know from past experience to allow your support people as much rest as possible during early labour. I went into the kitchen & started cleaning up, doing dishes etc. When I went to the toilet for a wee, I looked into the bowl and saw a fair bit of blood. That was curious, I'd never experienced that much blood during early labour before. There was no mucous plug yet and the time was 12.30am. So I called my birth attendant Natalie Forbes Dash to find out what was going on. She told me it was great news my body had done a lot of work already! She said not to worry. Wow! That was so cool. I'd only been in labour since 11.30pm. I said I would call her if I was finding it hard to manage but for her to go back to sleep. I said I would also call my midwife, Sonja MacGregor later. I went to the toilet a couple more times to find the blood still coming and also some mucous. Super Good-O!

At around 2am, the contractions were getting more intense. I rang my sister, Babe, in Brisbane (I am for them) to let her know I was in labour and before I knew it, my brother in law Nath, was booking flights for Babe and my then 17 1/2 yr old daughter, Jess. All going to plan they would be here at about 10am. Plenty of time, we all thought going by my track record of marathon labours. I wanted them both at this birth. Jess had been at St★rsan's. I definitely wanted my sister to support me and for Jess to support St★r. That was the plan anyway...

For the rest of the night I managed my contractions using a lavender wheat pack my friend Chris Davidson had made and given me for the labour. I wanted to have all my candles around me from my Mother Blessing and beautiful birth music playing but that didn't happen. At least I had my beads and blessings with me. In between contractions I only had enough time to heat that pack up in the microwave and get it on my back until it was over. I started timing contractions at 2.14am. I jotted down the time and the duration of each. I was completely in control. I felt very empowered, wonderful AND I didn't have to go anywhere!! That was the BEST part! The contractions were all over the place though. There didn't seem to be any pattern to them. Always ranging between 2-6 mins and lasting anywhere from 10-75 seconds, all over the place. Some were very intense others quite manageable.

At 5am my wonderful, caring man Darrell came out into the lounge room ready for work, saw me sitting on my recliner and asked with concern "Are you having some more cramping sweetie?" "Well, honey" I said, "I've actually been in labour since 11.30pm last night". He was very pleased and enthusiastic to say the least! He instantly asked me what he could do for me. I suggested he start getting the birthing pool ready. It made me happy and comforted to know he was ready and awake. I mean really awake to be by my side in every way. At 6.30am, he checked with me to see if I'd called Nat, Sonja, Babe and Jess, he suggested calling Sonja then so she'd be ready with enough time to be here for the birth.

He drew me a bath at 6.55am. "As hot as possible please, my love" I asked. I knew it wouldn't be long till St★rsan was waking up. I wasn't worried, but was still hoping Jess would arrive in time to play with him and keep him busy with face washers and water for me. I'd done a lot of preparation for my homebirth. Not only on myself but also with 3 1/2 yr old St★rsan. Everyday we talked about the birth, the sounds I could make, faces I might pull, and things he could do to help me. I read homebirth books to him every night and we often watched birth DVDs together. He was present and participated in every visit Sonja made during my pregnancy and present at every ultrasound. I was preparing my little man for the birth of his younger sibling. After all, this was his baby too.

He was great at the birth. I think he was more interested in making Sonja and Nat laugh than in me moaning and groaning in the pool. Its great to have the birth video to look back on, to see things you are unaware of while you're 'in the zone'. He was helpful with face washers and water, then he'd be bouncing around on the lounge, trying to stand on his head and basically playing around and getting everyone's attention. When he watched his baby brother being born, he was astounded, really interested. Then all he wanted to do was get into the pool with me!

Furry (my husband) called Nat at 9.20am. She arrived at 10am. I was still labouring on the lounge and she suggested I move to the pool, as I was getting close. What a woman! She knows just what to say and when to say it. I took my pyjama pants off and climbed into the pool - AAAHHHH! There's nothing like the feeling of hot water caressing the body of a labouring woman, it's heaven. My lower back seemed to be taking a brutal beating with each new contraction. The word 'surrender' kept repeating in my head. It was the word my friend Amanda gave me during my Mother Blessing. It really helped me focus so I surrendered. I've always trusted my body and the knowledge it already possesses, the knowledge to birth my baby without interference.

Came To Be



One thing I needed was a large hand with strength behind it to massage me through those waves. My good ole pal, Furry was right there doing his bit. A couple of times he was busy doing something for our son, St★rsan so either Nat or Sonja took over the hard, rubbing massage, but it just didn't cut it, no matter how hard they tried. Thanks anyway... Back to it Furry! He was doing a super job of balancing St★r's needs with his labouring wife's. I look back on the video footage and can clearly see how relaxed he was during this time. After all he had already done it once, so he knew what to expect and how to support to his full potential. Nat has also been a fantastic guide for him. I remember at one stage feeling like there was no end. Nat asked if I'd like my emergency essence but she sprayed it in my mouth not around me! It tasted sooo bad, I scooped up pool water and rinsed my mouth out - YUK! She then gave me the drops when I'd finished laughing. This moment took the edge off. I felt more sorry for Nat! The last thing she wanted to do was spray something in my mouth that tasted that bad!

Furry called Sonja again at 9.30am to attend. Sonja arrived at 10.30am. I remember looking at the clock at 11am and saying, "Where are Babe and Jess? They should have been here an hour ago!!" I was getting worried. I found out later they'd missed the train from Central because Jess needed the toilet! The train's only run hourly to the Blue Mountains.

Babe and Jess arrived at 11.20am. St★rsan was so excited to see Jess; he was pre-occupied playing with her so my labour noises went unnoticed! I remember hearing Babe calling out as she was coming up the stairs. Nat went to the door and calmly explained I was in advanced labour. I KNOW Babe was thinking there would be plenty of time left (going by my track record). I had Babe on one side, Nat on the other, Furry was behind me massaging my lower back when I suddenly felt the urge to get up on my knees and bear down. I felt baby's little crowning head and said "HEAD! HEAD!" It was amazing I had only been in that position for around 2mins. Furry had a nice feel of baby's head and hair. After one more push and my beautiful baby was scooped up by my sister Babe who then placed him on my bare chest. He was lucky those big boobies didn't suffocate him!! Very discreetly, Sonja gave baby some oxygen, as he was quite pale and working hard to breath. I wanted to soak in my baby. I didn't want to discover the sex until I'd had time to just love my baby, for my baby. To me, a long time went by before I heard Furry ask "Can we see what sex it is now?" (It was actually about 20mins). That's when we discovered we had a beautiful new baby boy.

The decision for my sister to receive the baby was all Furry. I've seen the video of the birth where he asks her if she would like to. She

was hesitant at first not knowing what to do but he just explained the baby would slide out into her arms and Nat would guide her the rest of the way. This moment bonded Babe to Crue Bobby forever.

My final baby, Crue Bobby Anderssen was born in the Caul at 11.41am Friday 27th March 2009 after a wonderfully short 12-hour labour.

It was easy caring for Crue Bobby's placenta. St★rsan and I salted and sprinkled lavender oil on it twice a day, wrapped it in a cloth nappy and placed in the beautiful bag Sonja's husband made especially for it. Because of this, it emitted only a mild odour. Crue's placenta lotus birthed on his third day, March 30th, at around 2pm.

St★rsan was very enthusiastic about every aspect of looking after his baby brother. He especially enjoyed salting the placenta as well as the many 'jobs' entrusted to him. I highly recommend including siblings at birth. I believe in my case, it very much helped with St★rsan's acceptance of his brother and the adjustment to his new role as 'big brother'. Just prepare them.

Crue's birth was the greatest, most empowering, wonderful experience of my life!
HOMEBIRTH ROCKS!!

**All full names have been used with written permission.*

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Jem's Birth

LAURI MALE



JEREMIAH "Jem" THOMAS MALE 18/08/11

I am the fifth child in a family of six and feel richer for the companionship and love that I share with my siblings. My brothers and sisters are a gift to me from my parents, and in them I have friends for life. They are my family and I wanted my precious son Jude to know that same life long connection that occurs between siblings.

When I first became a mother the innate urge to nurture, protect, love and guide my child was unmistakable. My husband and I enjoyed every second with our boy as we walked through those first years of our new lives together. And then, just before Jude turned two, I got a feeling that there was something else I had to do for him. I knew in my heart that the time had come to welcome someone new into our family and that we were all ready for that change to happen. I wanted to give Jude a sibling. I felt so strongly about it. It was almost as if there was a spirit walking with me and that he was just waiting for the right moment to make himself known. I knew that the spirit was a boy.

Months passed and then finally, there were two lines on the home pregnancy test. A positive! I fell pregnant at exactly the same time of year as with Jude and was due to give birth on Jude's 3rd birthday. The 18-week scan showed we were having a baby boy and that he was healthy. We were so thrilled. We would have a baby brother for Jude. Just as I had felt, my intuition was proven right.

Sheryl Sidery became my midwife and in joining us on our journey she instantly became one of the family. Jude assisted with the pre-natal checks and would listen intently to his baby brother's heartbeat. We read books about family, about brothers, sisters and homebirth. We also talked to him about his special job of being a big brother. And although he could not possibly grasp it all, he understood that his brother was coming, and he was looking forward to that time.

I had felt the call of birth for a few days before I had any sign of my baby's imminent arrival. At 39 weeks into the pregnancy, my sister decided to come and help out for a few days. The afternoon that she arrived I noticed what I thought were the first signs of my body preparing itself to give birth. I was sure true labour would start in the next day or so. The initial phone calls between my sisters', my mother and I reassured me that I was on the way to labour. My sister stayed the night and the following morning when my husband had left for work, I hopped out of bed and headed to the bathroom. Right then, at just before 8 in the morning, I felt my first twinges. It

was beginning in the same way as my labour did with Jude. My body had relaxed so much in knowing my sister was there to help out for the day that it knew it could begin it's big job.

I could hardly rest from excitement. I had called my husband Tom to let him know that it had all begun. When he arrived that night, I instantly felt comforted and able to let go now that my most important support was by my side. Tom has always been a calming source of strength during uncertain and vulnerable times in my life and from the moment he stepped in the door I felt the labour progress evenly. Once Jude was in bed I could relax. I was at home in my sanctuary with just my important people and no unnecessary distractions. Contractions were becoming stronger and more breathtaking by this point. By 11pm, once the house was asleep, labour had established itself well and I could no longer lie in bed, I had to get up and move about. By 1am, I had called Sheryl to come. The light was dim and the house was warm, quiet and so very still, just as I had wanted. Our gorgeous dog, Josh was sitting by my side on the couch. Calm and cool as a cucumber, he would not leave my side for the duration.





I remember quite clearly saying to Sheryl in between contractions, "I don't know why, but I need to cry". Sheryl said "If you want to cry, you just cry". I cried and I cried. And as I did, my dog rested his paw on my arm in a calming and knowing way. As quickly as they had arrived, the tears were gone, and the contractions moved closer and closer together. I could no longer talk between contractions. It was decided that now would be the right time to fill the pool. Tom got the equipment together to fill it and as he was setting up discovered that the hoses weren't working as they had just days before. Instead Tom had to ferry water a bucket at a time to fill the pool. At this point, Jude woke up and came out to us. He was thrilled that there was a pool in his house. Not only that, but his dad was playing with buckets of water at 3am and Sheryl had come to visit! Jude decided that perhaps craft was an appropriate option amongst all this, but Tom wisely decided to take him back to bed and this also gave him the opportunity to have a much needed nap.

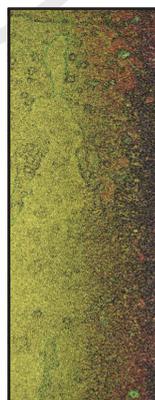
I was once again left on my own to quietly labour. I sat in the pool and was completely focused. I found myself in a meditative state that I had never experienced. I never knew I was capable of reaching such a place. Never before had I been able to completely zone into my being and rely solely on my body's ability and strength. Waves of pain would take hold of me. I found that the best way for me to deal with the pain was to just allow it to flow through me and take its own course. I focused on keeping every muscle relaxed and my breathing as normal as possible. I also found that instead of vocalising my pain during contractions, if I stayed completely quiet it helped me deal more effectively with the pain and stay more relaxed.

Sheryl sat quietly and waited. I was in the thick of it now and had complete trust in my body, all I needed to do was to allow the process to unfold of its own accord. It was all happening as I had envisaged. The feeling of water suspending my heavy, tired body was soothing. The sound of it when I moved in the pool was calming. My baby also felt calm, he knew what to do. Sheryl pressed the Doppler into my belly and there, reassuringly, was the smooth thudding of my child's heart.

Just when I needed him in the room, Tom woke up. Suddenly I felt my muscles bearing down. I had not experienced this so much with my first birth in hospital, but I knew in an instant what the feeling meant - my baby's birth was imminent. I looked at the clock it was just after 6am. I wanted my baby to be born before the world woke up.

I was lying with my right ear in the water listening to the amplified sound of my heart beat, it was so comforting. The pushing feeling grew stronger with the next contraction, and with this one I had the urge to assist with the push, the pain was too great not to. With that strong push, I felt a snapping feeling. The pain was searing and a gush of water rushed around my legs. The first words that I had uttered in hours were, "OK, my waters have broken. Tom can you get in the pool." Tom hopped in, sat behind me and held me up. Another contraction and with this push I could feel my baby descending. At this point Sheryl told me that within the next few pushes his head would be out. I told my baby that it was time for him to be born and sure enough, within the next few pushes, I could feel his head and his soft hair floating in the water. The surge of love that I felt was instantaneous and so great. I told him "Oh, I love you already little man". With my very last ounce of energy he was born, just four days before Jude's birthday. Tom caught him, drew him out of the water and placed him on my chest. I held him and said, "we did it little man, we did it!" It was a beautiful morning. The air felt still and he was here.

With Jem's very first cry, Jude awoke, came into the room and held his baby brother for the first time. This moment was all that I had hoped for - my two boys finally had each other. And now my husband and I are blessed with a lifetime of opportunity to observe this sacred relationship.

birth rhythms 

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The Unassisted Waterbirth of *Ivy Louise*



I'd always wanted to have more than one child. My first son's birth was a traumatic experience. Our planned homebirth through a hospital program ended in transfer and it was many years till I felt safe and 'healed' enough to consider conceiving another child.

This birth was about reclaiming my inner wisdom, tuning into my body and to the messages it sent throughout pregnancy, to birth my baby. Engaging the services of a privately practising midwife was the care option I felt the safest with. When I heard a midwife was servicing our area, it was time to begin our preconception care preparation.

Our baby was conceived around the new moon December 2010. I didn't need to take a urine test to tell me a baby was growing in my womb. I could feel the warmth and listened for the signs. After a few days I contacted this midwife and knew I had found the perfect woman who trusted me and my body to grow and birth a baby as nature intended – unobserved and without intervention.

My 3-year-old son was the first to hear the news and so began the most beautiful journey of sharing my growing belly with him. The belly cuddles when he breastfed, reading homebirth stories, feeling the kicks, belly casting, midwife visits and setting up the birth pool. Throughout my pregnancy I requested little monitoring and my midwife was very respectful of this. I trusted that the babe conceived in me was the one meant to be with us and would grow perfectly in my body. I didn't need scans, heartbeat checks or fundal height measurements to tell me this. Osteopathy, kinesiology, yoga and belly dancing, together with Jane Hardwicke Collings book, 'Ten Moons' and Lina Clerke's meditations were the tools I used to journey with this pregnancy. My midwife, Sonja MacGregor, with her most wonderful wisdom, was to be a gentle presence at my birth unless I requested monitoring.

At 40 weeks I spent the most memorable days with my son painting, gardening and swimming at the beach. We made a birthday cake together. The time was soon as it was the new moon.

At 1am on Tuesday 30th August I woke with that familiar feeling that prevented me from sleeping. I got up, listened to my meditation, swayed my hips and breathed through the contractions. I didn't want to time them but when I noticed I'd had three in a space of about 15 minutes I knew things were happening. At 2am I phoned Sonja, I had to give her 3hrs notice, and maybe this birth was going to be a lot quicker than my first. She mentioned I was probably in pre-labour and to try and get some rest. We had a check-up that day, so I was to see her anyway. I went back to bed. By morning the contractions had virtually stopped so my husband went to work. As he walked out the door my contractions came on regular again. I told him Sonja was coming and I'd call.

My contractions continued throughout the morning every 10 minutes, I couldn't speak so swayed and hummed through them. My son was so calm; he just played with his toys all day. I was reassured by Sonja later that morning that everything was unfolding perfectly. She suggested having a bath when my son went for a nap, if I was in labour my contractions would speed up, if they slowed down I was in pre-labour. She left, but re-assured me to phone her and she would return.

I took a bath and my contractions slowed down. So I went for a nap only to find my contractions picked up again. We both awoke and my husband, now home, went for a bike ride with our son. I hopped in the bath again. The warm water was the best place for me it helped me to deal with this pre-labour. The contractions again slowed down, so I hopped out and rested on the lounge with heat packs, breathing through each wave. It was going to be a long night.

My husband took over the bath/bed routine whilst I was quietly laboured in the living room. I tucked my son in for the last time and he and my husband fell asleep. I went to the toilet and emptied my bowels, thinking to myself, this baby is coming tonight.

At 8.30pm, before I hopped in the bath, I phoned Sonja. I told her I feel it was becoming too much for me and I couldn't go on with this pre-labour for another night. I told her I needed her. She listened. Earlier today she told me of her predicament, that another woman, who lived four hours from me, was also in labour. Sonja was on her way to her birth. I had the back-up support of another private midwife, Lisa, whom I had met. She was ready to come, but as she was only one hour away I thought it was too early to call her. I was still pre-labouring and didn't want her sitting around waiting for me to birth.

In the bath I instantly relaxed. The contractions were strong and I vocalised through them. I phoned my good friend Lindsay to come. As I lay in the bath it dawned on me 'these contractions are speeding up, not slowing down' like they had been doing all day'. 'I'm in labour'.

I know it would take 30 minutes to fill the birth pool. As I laboured in the bath and each wave passed, I thought, 'I need to wake my husband'. Eventually I jumped out. My friend arrived and hugged me saying, 'we are all here for you and a midwife will be here when you need her'.

As the pool was filled, I laboured in my dark, private bathroom, grabbing onto the vanity rocking my hips and moaning. When the pool was ready I asked my friend and husband to leave, as I wanted to labour unobserved. I was very vocal, letting everything out – wanting to have a soft mouth and soft bottom. One contraction





RACHEL PREST



passed there was pressure and then a 'pop'. Up until this stage each time I checked myself, it felt too squishy and I couldn't tell what was cervix and what were membranes. My waters must have broken. The waves kept coming and then I had a really strong contraction that took my breath, I screamed 'ring the midwife now'.

From that point on my contractions increased in intensity. I felt overwhelmed by pain. They were so strong and I was restless trying to find a comfortable position in the pool. I realised I couldn't remain alone any longer I needed to be held. I invited my husband and friend into my bedroom – my birthing space. I asked them to hold my hands.

The waves kept coming ever so strongly, the pain became too much. I checked myself and felt tissue around the sides and thought, 'no, don't push, need to open'. I later realised I was afraid to push too early, as I was encouraged to do this in my first birth which resulted in disastrous outcomes. I was moaning lots and felt afraid. I asked, my friend to grab the homeopathic kit, select a remedy and give it to me.

After a few doses and more contractions, something changed within me. I started connecting and talking to my baby. I told myself to relax and let go. It was then that I felt the powerful motions of my baby moving down. I checked myself I could feel a hard head with wrinkly skin, but it was still too high. The strong urges kept riding through me. I pressed my head on the side of the pool.

There was a point when my breathing became short and quick. I relaxed and surrendered to the sensations, changing position to be on all fours. I was very vocal, grunting. I repeated the mantra 'open, down, out'. The sounds were high in my chest but when I directed the sound down I felt movement and progression.

I felt my baby's head move down and my body stretch. There was a point on my opening where it hurt to stretch. I tried to relax and move past that pain. My husband reminded me to go slowly; he was waiting to catch. The head was out. I was so excited I reached down and felt my baby's face. I moved back to all fours. I told my husband to stop touching. He wasn't. It was the baby rotating.

I moved to an upright position kneeling on one knee. The head was out; the hard parts were over. With the next contraction her shoulders and body slipped out, I could see her under the water. I reached down and brought her to the surface. I yelled, 'time?' It was 11.42pm. Then the waves of emotions hit me. I had done it! I had birthed my baby at home, in water, myself, uninterrupted. She slowly opened her eyes, cleared her mouth and began pinking up. I looked between her legs to see a perfect little vagina and announced 'It's a girl!'

After some time the contractions began again. Together my friend and I held her while with one push, I birthed the placenta. 'That felt so good' I said. She became restless and I let her self attach, she fed beautifully. This whole time my son was sound asleep in the bedroom next door and the midwife was still yet to arrive. Lisa arrived and was so respectful of our bonding time ensuring we were both comfortable and warm.

I didn't sleep that night, I was so high. I felt so strong and capable and just wanted to shout from the roof what I had done.

The next morning our son finally met his little sister and she recognised his voice immediately. Later we weighed and measured her: 4020g and 53cm. We took placenta prints and wrapped her placenta in its pouch. On day three, my son honoured her placenta with salts, oils and flowers, that day, she decided to lotus birth.

I feel so empowered, healed and transformed by my amazing birth experience and I thank my midwife, Sonja MacGregor, for journeying with me. After the very clinical experience with my first planned homebirth, I knew I wanted this birth to be very different. I thank my children, Xavier and Ivy, for blessing me with the 'rawness' and 'majesty' that I experienced with this unhindered birth. Birth happened through me. I don't know where one stage ended and the next stage began. I didn't have any measurements or checks or durations recorded. I moved through my all my fears and anxieties. Birth just happened, as nature intended, and I was there, in all my power and glory, forever a changed woman.





The birth of



On Friday 23rd September I woke up at 3.00am with more contractions. I had been having them ten minutes apart since midday on Thursday but they had stopped when I went to bed. I went to the toilet and hopped back into bed to try to get more sleep. By 4.00am I had to get out of bed. I knew this was going to be the day my baby would be born.

I did the dishes and tidied the house. Ezekiel and Elijah woke up around 5:30am and I told them the baby would be coming today. At 5:50am I had a really strong contraction at the kitchen table. It broke my water and I breathed through it and swayed my hips. There wasn't a pop and a gush like last time; it was more just a slow leak. I went to the toilet and had a bloody show and more waters so I knew this was really it. I called my midwife Sonja but told her not to come yet. I called my Mum and Donna who had to travel 2 hours. I also called my cousin Leanne to come to help with the children.



I really had no idea what was going on because this labour was so different to my others. The contractions kept coming strong but still quite spaced apart. I woke Jay up so he could start setting up the birth pool. I had told the boys they could have the day off school but realised I couldn't labour with all the kids in the house so I sent them to my brother's house who had the day off. Donna arrived not long after they left.

This labour felt so slow. I walked lots, hung washing on the line, talked and laughed, ate a little and just enjoyed being in labour. This continued throughout the morning.



I realised that the hardest part of the contractions was breathing in. When you're breathing through a contraction it's easier to breathe out as you're working with your body to push the baby down. But when you breathe in you're going against the natural rhythm. I remember telling everyone what I had discovered and how much better it was that I knew this. I felt so much more in control. (Mind you, I didn't feel like this during the second stage.)

Sonja messaged me about 11.00am to ask how it was all going. I still wasn't in 'labour land' and contractions were strong and long but spread out. Sometime before this Jay took Essence to bed with him for a sleep left only Elizabella up. I remember her being there but not really noticing her at all. My legs were sore so I knelt over the lounge or leaned against the bench or the birth pool.

I think it was around midday that I felt things change. Instantly I felt myself go into the zone and was not really aware anymore what was going on with anyone else. I also became sleepy between contractions. I called Sonja not long after this. I felt like I was in established labour but my contractions weren't getting closer together. I remember looking at the clock at almost 1.00pm and thinking maybe she wouldn't even be born that day. I think Sonja arrived about this time. She checked bubba's heart rate and all was good.



Ezaria Faith

Our 7th blessing, 2nd homebirth

KATHRINE JOHNSON

The pool was filled and had a cover put over it to keep it warm. With every contraction more fluid would come out. At 1:30pm Mum asked me if I wanted to get the boys to come home. I thought I still had ages to go so I said no. I always had huge contractions when I walked down the hallway to the bathroom. I think it was because I was down there alone. But they were still spaced apart. I lay down on Elizabetha's bed and rested or maybe even slept.

Then I got up with a huge, intense contraction. I think this is when transition started. I asked for the boys to come home, put on the singlet top I wanted to birth in and headed back into the kitchen where the birth pool was. I had another couple of contractions where I could feel her coming right down. I could also tell in my voice that things were close.

I looked over at the pool and remembered the pain from last time. I think I started to cry a bit and say, "I can't do this, I really can't do this" (as I do every time I'm in transition), knowing I had no choice. With my last birth I was so excited to get into the water but this time I saw the pool as being the place all the pain would happen. I know some women find relief in pushing but I'm not one of them. For me, second stage is the hardest. I had another contraction and thought, Okay, I'd better just get into the pool or she is going to be born on the kitchen floor!

I hopped into the water and it was hot and soothing. I sat on my knees as last time I was on my bottom and wanted to have both hands free to pull her out of the water. After only a few minutes I felt her crown. I reached down (the first time in seven births that I have actually touched the head as it was coming out) and felt her squishy head with a big gooey blob on top. It was amazing. Sonja encouraged me to pant so I copied her to avoid tearing. I felt like I was going to throw up and wondered how that would work while delivering a baby but I didn't.

I had a short break but kept my hands on her head and then with the next contraction I felt her shoulders pop out one at a time and then her body. I grabbed under her arms and pulled her up to my chest. I couldn't believe she was born! I will never forget that feeling! I opened my eyes and gazed at our third daughter; our seventh blessing!

She was covered in vernix all over her back and her tiny bottom. Her fingers were so long and wrinkly. Her head had a lump on top where she must have been sitting in my cervix. A head full of dark hair. I was instantly in love. Finally, after such a long pregnancy, she was here. Welcomed into the world by her four brothers and two sisters. Nothing can ever compare to the emotions you feel after giving birth. I was so happy.

We sat in the pool like that for a while. I felt her cord pulsating. The contractions started again and I was uncomfortable. I really wanted the placenta out. I usually deliver the placenta within ten minutes but

not this time. I tried pushing with the next contraction and pulling slightly on the cord but it wasn't coming. I waited a bit longer but was so uncomfortable. Sonja tried pulling on the cord while I was pushing but it still didn't want to come out. Jay ended up holding Ezaria and everyone else left the room. I got up on my knees, pulled the cord and it popped out.

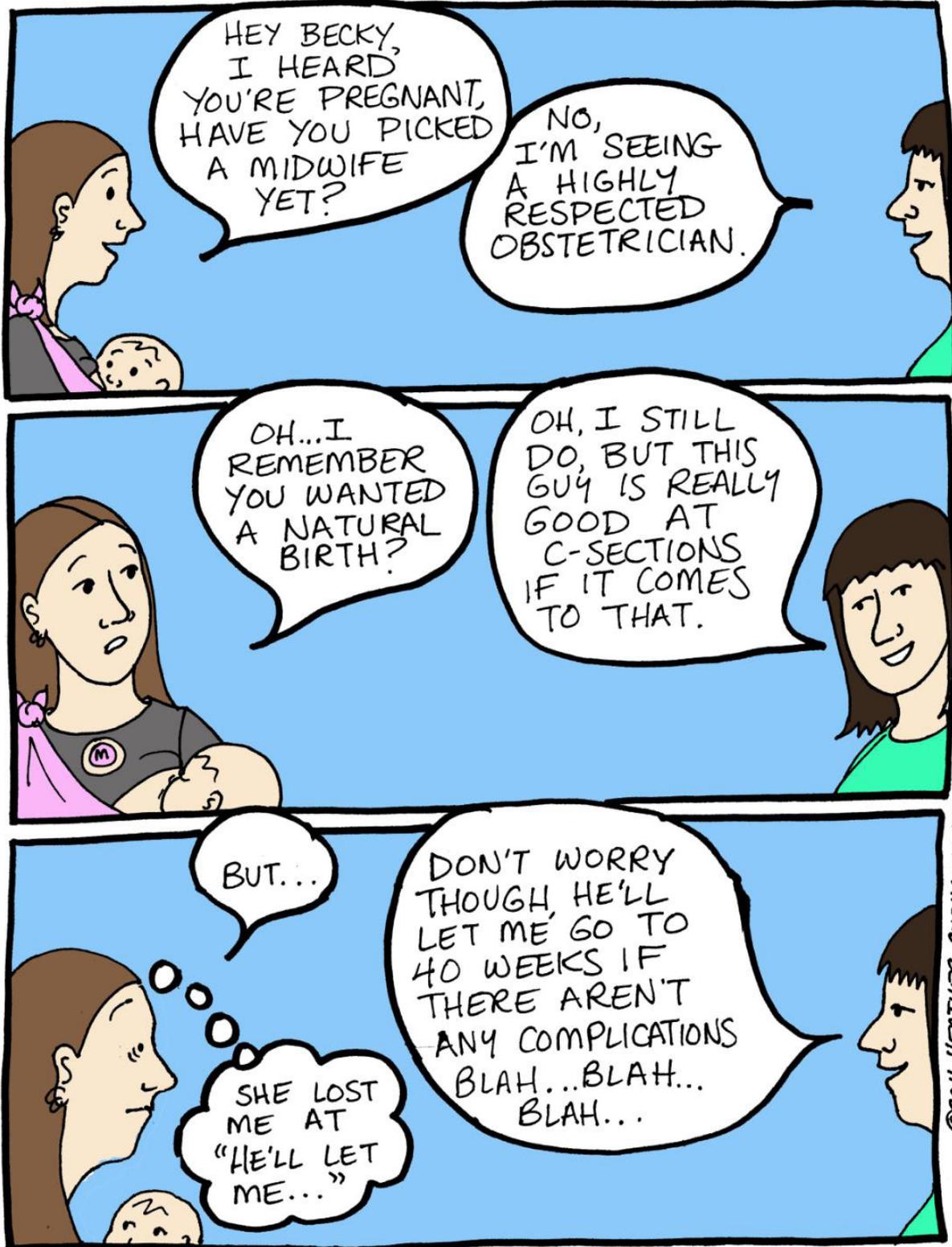
The pregnancy was long, the labour was long (for me) and third stage was also long. I think our little girl is going to be laid back and content to let things happen in her own time. I often joked throughout the pregnancy that she'd be born on my father's birthday even though it was 18 days after my estimated due date. I never really believed it but she was!

Ezaria Faith Johnson was born at 2:43pm. Her placenta came at 3:40pm. Sonja tied her cord and Jay cut it. We got out of the pool for her first breastfeed and cuddles on my favourite lounge. Our family of nine, all together in our own house. An amazing day that I will always treasure - Ezaria's birth day!



Mama Is...

He'll Let Me



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.

19 October 2011

Midwives to feel the pain as mums labour for homebirths

<http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/sydney-nsw/midwives-to-feel-the-pain-as-mums-labour-for-homebirths/story-e6freuzi-1226170137619>

WHEN Virginia Maddock went into labour three weeks ago, she didn't make the mad dash to hospital.

Instead her husband and midwife were by her side as she gave birth to second son Keanu at home.

Today Ms Maddock will join other home birth advocates outside the Australian College of Midwives conference in Sydney to protest for the right of all women to give birth at home if they choose.

The group is angry at the ACM's recently released interim homebirth position statement that women pregnant with twins or breech babies, or those who have had a previous cesarean section, should be referred to a hospital if they request a home birth.

An ACM spokeswoman yesterday said the protest was "unnecessary" as the college supported homebirth for uncomplicated pregnancies.

"For low-risk pregnancies homebirth is a safe option and we support the expansion of homebirths in those circumstances," she said.

"But there are certain situations where the outcomes of homebirth are not as ideal and the college says the midwife should make a woman aware of that before she is accepted for a homebirth."

Homebirth Access Sydney co-ordinator Ms Maddock is worried the guidelines will lead to women giving birth at home without consulting a midwife because they do not want to be referred to a hospital or obstetrician.

"A lot of women wanting to give birth at home fall into those categories because they realise a hospital is unlikely to give them the opportunity of a natural birth," she said.

NSW Health recorded 243 planned homebirths in 2008.

20 October 2011

Home births a labour of love for some

<http://www.adelaidenow.com.au/home-births-a-labour-of-love-for-some/story-e6freau-1226171113682>

WHEN Helen Lane fell pregnant with her fifth child in January last year, she began to dread the prospect of once again giving birth in a hospital. After four "awful" experiences giving birth - all in Scottish hospitals - the now Adelaide-based mother feared another unpleasant experience.

Then she came across midwife Wendy Thornton, who introduced her to the home birthing concept.

After initial doubts, Ms Lane had Ms Thornton deliver her baby Jemimah at her Woodside home in September last year.

She couldn't have been happier with the result.

"The home birth was wonderful," Ms Lane said.

"Wendy was a very experienced midwife - she's been doing it for over 20 years and she's worked in hospitals.

"I trusted her implicitly and I knew that if I had any cause to go to hospital, she'd get me there in time and she wouldn't hedge any bets." "We're one of the few countries that has no funding for home births, so women have to pay out of their pockets," she said. "We have no insurance for private midwives attending births at homes." "We've got a system where midwives also have no access to go into a hospital with their mother and continue to provide care. "This is a dangerous system, because it is a disincentive for women to go into hospital when they need to and for midwives to encourage them when they need to do that."

October 23, 2011

Fear as women push for free birth

<http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/fear-as-women-push-for-free-birth/story-fn6b3v4f-1226174042582>

IT'S been dubbed free-birthing -- the growing trend of women choosing to deliver their baby at home without any medical assistance.

But obstetricians warn the practice is too risky and can quickly turn deadly for the mother or baby.

University of Western Sydney research presented at the Australian College of Midwives conference in Sydney last week revealed more women were

choosing to give birth unassisted.

PhD student and midwife Melanie Jackson, who is compiling the data, said many women were disappointed with hospital care and preferred to "stay in control".

"Free-birthing exists and it is quite prolific when you get into the communities. I have found many reasons why a woman would decide to birth unassisted," she said.

"Some women told me they couldn't find a midwife they were happy with.

Others feared they would lose control of the birth in a hospital and didn't want to have any medications, and for others their choice was rooted in their desire to do it alone."

Ms Jackson said it was important the women who choose free birth are informed of risks and have access to a nearby hospital.

Professor Hannah Dahlen of the Australian College of Midwives said she supported women having a choice of where they give birth, but ultimately the best birth was with a trained, competent and caring health professional. She said there was no data yet available on the number of free births taking place in Australia each year, but anecdotal evidence suggested the trend was taking off.

"Free births are booming in Australia," she said.

"It's definitely increasing, there are websites and a real movement behind it.

"We demonise these free-birthing women, but what we are finding in this study is there is a lot of trauma and, sadly, much of it caused by our maternity system."

Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists head Dr Rupert Sherwood said he opposed free births as they were unnecessarily risky.

"If people do choose to home birth or free birth we feel they should be fully informed of the risks," he said.

"We support birth in a setting where there is access to emergency care. This includes birth centres or midwife-led centres within hospitals. We recognise that things go

wrong in childbirth very fast, they go wrong unexpectedly and ... can be disastrous to the point of damage or even death for mother and baby."

Legislation requiring midwives to have indemnity insurance had forced many workers out of business.

"There is a witch-hunt on at the moment to find midwives," Professor Dahlen said.

"Now we have fewer and fewer midwives and women have no options left, so they are turning to free births and doulas for support."

A doula is a supportive carer who is not medically trained.

Professor Dahlen said more women were leaving the maternity system after past traumatic births and would not consider returning to hospital.

"They are turning to free birthing if they can't access a midwife," she said.

"We have had women say essentially 'I would rather die than go back into that place'."

Women had also complained hospital staff don't listen, force intimate examinations or push medications that are unwanted.

"We have to have a very hard look at a maternity system that embraces all the ways and means a woman would like to give birth," she said.

28 October 2011

Home births under threat

<http://www.maitlandmercury.com.au/news/local/news/general/home-births-under-threat/2338603.aspx>

Maitland women choosing to give birth at home will be forced to deliver their babies under a cloud of secrecy if government legislation is not changed. It became illegal in July 2010 for a registered midwife to attend a home birth after a Senate committee recommended that all home birth midwives be insured.

Since then the number of private midwives attending births has dwindled from 200 in 2009 to just 90 in 2011.

Homebirth Australia is now calling on the federal government to ensure Australian women can continue to access the care of a registered midwife at home and not be abandoned by the government for their choice of maternity care.

"Australian women who make the safe legitimate choice to birth at home are asking - will I have to hide to give birth?"

This latest campaign coincides with Homebirth Awareness Week. Figures show home birth has increased by 14.9 per cent in Australia.

HAS in the Community



ACM Protest Rally – Wednesday 19th October

The Australian College of Midwives were holding their annual conference so it was the perfect opportunity to target them when they were all together, to protest against their 'Interim Homebirth Position Statement' and 'Interim Guidelines for Privately Practising Midwives', especially when they were on a lunchbreak before the president Tracy Martin was to give a talk on updates from the College.

We started at the nearby Marian Street Park at midday. The excitement grew as more and more local and interstate women, babies and children gathered (plus one man!) with placards and banners. I would guess that there were about 100 adults there. There were also a few media types with cameras and mics who interviewed a few people. At about 12.20 we started the procession to the Australia Technology Park conference centre, escorted by Redfern Police. One policeman was heard saying that we should be chanting "Our bodies, our babies, our choice."

When we arrived there, we were first ushered to a paved area around the corner and out of sight of the conference centre where the conference attendees were. We were told by the conference centre's events manager through the police that the entrance foyer to the ACM conference was not big enough to have us all there and it was a fire hazard blocking the exit, as well as being too unsafe for children being close to the road (which was just the car park road with speed bumps and was very light on traffic). So only about 25 people with banners and without children were allowed at the entrance. The rest of the crowd were then moved to a grassy area, still out of sight of the conference entrance.

Eventually this crowd moved to the opposite side of the road to the entrance as it became obvious that there was plenty of room at the foyer entrance and it seemed that we were being divided for no good reason, however the police were blocking access for the crowd to cross the road. Finally the policemen negotiated with the centre's events manager and we reached a compromise that everyone could join in at the entrance, but for only half an hour. That was good enough for me and so we became a united voice again!

I did a brief introduction as to why we were there and invited anyone who wanted to come up and tell their personal stories about why they were there and how the ACM's position statement and guidelines for privately practising midwives would affect them. At least 10 women fronted the crowd and spoke about their circumstances. This included stories about twins, breech births and plenty of VBACs (and one brave little girl who was about 5 who said that she wanted to be able to have a homebirth one day). It was also nice to see that a few midwives who had been inside the conference had come out to join us in our protest and voice their support for our concerns (including Jane Hardwicke-Collings with her drum which gave us a good beat to chant to!). I had hoped there would have been a lot more midwives though - shame on those that didn't!

At the end, I said to the crowd that we should be hearing a response from someone from the ACM Board to come and address our concerns, but we were told unequivocally that no one from the College would be coming out to speak to us. I heard later from a midwife who attended the conference that Tracy Martin did not even mention the controversy surrounding the position statement and guidelines, or the protest rally which had happened only moments before. It just goes to show that the Australian College of Midwives who are the representative body for midwives are truly not "with woman" but are somewhat against women and our choice to birth where we choose!

VIRGINIA MADDOCK



Home Birth Awareness Week Picnic – Saturday 5th November

The Blue Mountains Home Birth Group has celebrated Home Birth Awareness Week at Gloria Park in Hazelbrook three years running, unaware that within this area is an Indigenous birthing cave, watering hole & natural food source, with two trees marked for a warning for men not to enter.

This was shown to groups of us who attended the 2011 picnic by Aboriginal Elder Aunty Pat Field. What a wonderful day we all had! The sun shone, the children played & the families enjoyed shared homemade treats.

A special thank you to Virginia Maddock for making the trip from Sydney to spend the afternoon with us and spoil us with her scrumptious vegan chocolate date walnut brownies! Mmmm yummy! Also, thank you to Jacque Harsh's Mum, Adele for embroidering all the 'I ♥ HOME BIRTH' badges she made for the kids - they looked great. And thanks to everyone who organised and attended this special event. It's a must for our social calendar!

LOULOU ANDERSSSEN



PRE-NATAL SERVICES

City & Eastern Suburbs

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Inner West

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www.allaboutbirth.com.au

HEATHER CRAWFORD

Acupuncturist, Doula, calmbirth®
Please see my listing on the next page under 'Birth Support Services: Doulas'
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Northern & North-Western Suburbs

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

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HEATHER CRAWFORD

Acupuncturist,
Doula, calmbirth®

I practice from a lovely clinic overlooking Manly beach and provide acupuncture services for the whole family through pre-conception, pregnancy, birth and the postnatal period. I offer birth support and have been a doula for 4 years, I also hold calmbirth® classes once a month in Frenchs Forest. I love tea and birthy chats or you can see my website for more info.

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MOTHERBIRTH - CONSCIOUSBIRTH

Erika Elliot - Birthing in Awareness

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Southern Suburbs

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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

BIRTHING SERVICES: MIDWIVES

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

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

EMMA FITZPATRICK: MIDWIFE IN PRIVATE PRACTICE

With over 11 years experience in Midwifery, I am passionate about supporting women and their families throughout the journey of pregnancy, birth and the postnatal period. As well as being a passionate Midwife I am mum to 3 children, my littlest recently being birthed at home in the water. I am located in the Hawkesbury, and happy to provide support and service to women in Western Sydney, The Hawkesbury and The Blue Mountains areas. Emma Fitzpatrick (The Hawkesbury) 0432724103 emma_gu77@yahoo.com.au

HAZEL KEEDLE

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

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: HOMEBIRTH MIDWIFE

I believe that women should be placed at the centre of their own experience, supported to empower themselves with knowledge and skills, given time and encouragement from their midwife, as well as being surrounded by those they love and people who believe and trust in their ability to birth. It is the midwives role to have patience and trust in the innate ability of women and babies and to be comfortable and confident to support this process in any setting the woman chooses. Pregnancy, birth and postnatal care up to 6 weeks is provided in your home. I live in The Blue Mountains and service local families, inner west and western Sydney. Blue Mountains, Inner west and Western Sydney (02) 47519840 midwifejo@bigpond.com

BELLA BIRTHING: LISA RICHARDS

Holistic Women Centred Midwifery on the Central Coast, in Newcastle and the lower Hunter Valley. I work with women, their family and their chosen supports for birth at home. I practice with the philosophy that pregnancy,

birth and the postnatal period are normal and when a woman is nurtured individually, sensitively and with no intervention, she is empowered to make choices that suit her and her family's needs and to birth the way she wants. I provide full antenatal, birth and postnatal care in the home. Lisa Richards (Central Coast, Newcastle and the lower Hunter Valley) 0404422617 bellabirthing@live.com.au Wwww.bellabirthing.com.au

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 midwiferyrobyn@optusnet.com.au www.homebirthmidwives.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

ROYAL HOSPITAL FOR WOMEN HOMEBIRTH SERVICE (Randwick)

This public health service is available to women within 7km of the RHW and within the RHW geographical area. Continuity of care is provided by two midwives throughout pregnancy, birth and the postnatal period. For further information contact Anne Lainchbury: 0407498197

SHERYL SIDERY

Sheryl has been in private practice for the past 23 years. Her core belief is that pregnancy and birth are not only about producing a healthy baby but is also a period of profound transformation for the parents. Sheryl lives on the northern beaches and takes only a small caseload of women. She has Medicare eligibility that provides a rebate for antenatal and postnatal care. Sheryl Sidery: Northern beaches through to the Eastern suburbs. 0409760548 secretwomensbiz@bigpond.com

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.birthathome.com.au

ST GEORGE HOSPITAL HOMEBIRTH SERVICE

This public health service is available to women in the St George and Sutherland Shire area. Continuity of care is provided by two midwives throughout pregnancy, birth and the postnatal period. For further information, call the Birth Centre on 9113 3103.

WITH WOMAN MIDWIFERY CARE

I am an independent midwife based in Shellharbour. I provide continuity of midwifery care throughout pregnancy, birth and the postnatal period to women planning to birth at home. All visits take place in the woman's home at a time that suits the family. Areas covered include the Illawarra, Southern Highlands, Southern Sydney, Shoalhaven and Canberra. Rachele Meredith 0421 721 497 rachele@withwoman.com.au www.withwoman.com.au

WOLLONGONG HOSPITAL HOMEBIRTH SERVICE

This public health service is available to women in the Helensburgh to Kiama region. Continuity of care is provided by two midwives throughout pregnancy, birth and the postnatal period. Contact the Antenatal Clinic on 42534256 and ask to book in with the Midwifery Group Practice (MGP). Your details will be taken down and MGP will return your call.

GUIDE TO CHOOSING A MIDWIFE

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

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

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

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

QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

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

ELIGIBILITY

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

PHILOSOPHY AND ATTITUDE

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

COLLABORATION/TEAM

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

a woman to have a doula at birth? Do you have any doulas with whom you regularly work?

- What will happen if I need to see a specialist during my pregnancy or labour?
- What will happen if my baby needs to see a specialist?
- In what circumstances would you recommend my baby see a paediatrician 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 pregnancy? How often will you come up between visits?
- In what circumstances would you transfer me to obstetrical care for during pregnancy? What is your rate of prenatal transfer?
- What is your attitude to 'due dates' and how would you feel about my pregnancy going over 40 weeks? What would your advice be?
- How do you feel about natural induction methods? Can you offer any of these services?
- What would you do in the case that I was having twins? Had a breech baby?
- What prenatal tests do you require? What do you recommend? Do you have an obstetrician to whom you refer?
- Do you provide education as I prepare for the birth? Do you have a lending library of books/DVDs?

...DURING LABOUR AND BIRTH

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

...DURING THE POSTNATAL PERIOD

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

HOME BIRTH 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.

YOU ARE WELCOME TO ATTEND

Homebirth Access Sydney (HAS) Committee Meetings

From 10.30am. Second 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:
13th December, 14th February, 13th March.

HAS POLICY STATEMENT

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

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

MAGAZINE ADVERTISING RATES

	Single (1 Issue)	Annual (4 issues)
Service Pages		
Doula Listing	n/a	\$25
Services Listing	n/a	\$35
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 Karen
advertising@homebirthsydney.org.au

HAS ABN 75 947 458 113

HAS MISSION STATEMENT

Homebirth Access Sydney is a viable and visible organisation working with integrity to support mothers and families' rights to informed and empowered home birth.

HOME BIRTH SUPPORT GROUPS

Sydney & NSW

Inner West Homebirth Support Group

First Wednesday of Every Month
Time: 10am - 12pm
Location: changes every month, so please email your details to Magda or call to find out where we are meeting.
Contact: magda.jansen@gmail.com 0410 139 907
Please feel welcome if you're pregnant, have children or are just curious about home birthing. Partners welcome too!
Dates: 14th December (Xmas Party), 1st February, 7th March.

Northern Beaches Homebirth Group

First Wednesday of Every Month
Time: 10ish am
Location: Dee Why, on the grassy area next to the playground on the southern end.
Contact: Patricia Twaalfhoven 0410 467 854 ptwaalfhoven@manidisroberts.com.au
Dates: 7th December, 1st February, 7th March.

Sutherland Shire Homebirth Group

Every Thursday
Time: 10.30am weekly
Location: 5 Balfour Ave Caringbah.
Contact: Virginia 0415683074 or 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.
Our Christmas Party is on 15th December – dress festive and bring a plate and a Kris Kringle gift for the kids!

Pregnancy & Parenting Network meeting

Once a month on a Thursday
Time: 10am-12pm
Location: Jane Palmer's house, 27 Hart St, Dundas Valley.
Contact: For more details contact Jane. Phone: 1300 MIDWYF (1300 643 993) or email jane@pregnancy.com.au
Info: <http://www.pregnancy.com.au/resources/support-groups/index.shtml>
Please bring a plate of food to share. All welcome.
Dates and Topics - 2011: 15th Dec: Christmas gathering – Celebrating Christmas as a family
2012: 2nd February: Labour including pre-labour, long labour, expectations of labour and labour strategies. 1st March - Baby Wearing

Blue Mountains Homebirth Support Group

Every 2nd Thursday
Time: 10am-12pm.
Location: We meet in alternating homes & local parks in the Blue Mountains.
Cost: A donation of \$2-5 is appreciated to help with group running costs.
Contacts: email Krystal: bmhomebirthgroup@gmail.com or visit our website <http://www.bluemountainshomebirth.com.au/>
To join our mailing list of upcoming meetings / topics please email Krystal. Bring a healthy snack to share if you get a chance, if not come anyway.
*No meetings in school holidays.
Dates 2011: 22nd December. 2012: 26th Jan, 9th Feb, 23rd Feb, 8th March

Illawarra Birth Choices Group

3rd Monday of each month
Time: 10.30am to 12.30pm
Location: Russell Vale Community Hall - corner of Keerong Ave and Channon

Street Russell Vale.
Contact: Please call Sonia on 0424 051 246 or find out more at: <http://www.illawarra.birthchoices.info/index.html>

Mothers & Midwives of the South (Southern Highlands)

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

Central Coast Homebirth Group

First Friday and third Saturday of each month.
Time: from 10.30 till noon.
Contact: Kim 0406 502 715 p4pandora@gmail.com or Jena 0404 712 392 morrisjenar@gmail.com
Come along if you are pregnant, trying to conceive, mums, dads, kids, doulas, midwives, and anyone interested in homebirth (including homebirth > hospital transfers).

Hunter Home and Natural Birth Support (HHNBS)

2nd Wednesday of every month
Time: 10am.
Location: Carrington Community Centre: 1 Hargraves St Carrington
Contact: Chrissy 0418 237 938 hhnbsgroup@gmail.com

Armidale and District Homebirth Support Network

First Sunday of every month
Contact: Melodie Glass 0402 910 211 hbsarmidale@gmail.com

Mid North Coast Homebirth Support Resource and Referral

Contact: Berry Engel-Jones w) 6652 8111 H) 6655 0707

Interstate & National

Homebirth Australia

Contact: Chris Wrightson 0414 812 144 homebirthaustralia@gmail.com
www.homebirthaustralia.org

Queensland Home Midwifery Association

Contact: 07) 3839 5883 info@homebirth.org.au
www.homebirth.org.au

Alice Springs Homebirth Group

Contact: Anne Yffer 0402 424 780 wildisha@gmail.com

Darwin Homebirth Group

Contact: Justine Wickham 0438 888 755 dnbinfo@gmail.com
www.darwinhomebirthgroup.org.au

The topic for the next issue is:

'Fathers and Partners'



Birthings is your magazine. Please contribute!

Submissions are welcome on anything to do with the topic of Fathers and Partners. Subjects can be anything like dads or partners support during the fertility journey, pregnancy, birth or parenting. It can be written by Mum, Dad, step-Dad, second Mum or Dad (in a gay or lesbian partnership), or older child. As always, we also welcome your birth announcements, birth stories, photos, letters, art and poetry.

Submissions are due by February 1st 2012.

Please check word count before sending and don't forget your bio for the contributor's page!

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