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# BIRTHINGS

A HOMEBIRTH ACCESS SYDNEY QUARTERLY PUBLICATION



## 'Where Are They Now?'

### ANNIVERSARY EDITION

30 years of HAS & 20 years of Birthings magazine

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

[www.homebirthsydney.org.au](http://www.homebirthsydney.org.au)

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HONORARY LIFE MEMBERS  
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Jo Hunter  
Akal Khalsa

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.

**DEADLINES FOR SUBMISSIONS**

Spring 2012 No. 115 | August 2012  
Summer 2012 No. 116 | November 2012  
Autumn 2013 No. 117 | February 2013  
Winter 2013 No. 118 | May 2013

**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

With thanks to our postage sponsor



**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.

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'Magglets Picnic': Maggie Lecky-Thompson celebrates 1000 homebirths as a midwife with some of the babies whose births she attended. [1994].

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Photo of Jen and Sienna McAnany, Courtesy of Nurtured By Jen Photography.

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# Editorial



Welcome to Birthings Issue 114. Little did I know when I first agreed to do the theme of 'Where Are They Now?' (kindly suggested by former HAS Treasurer and Assistant Coordinator Natalie Forbes-Dash), that this year would mark 30 years since Homebirth Access Sydney was known by this name. It was formerly Parent Centres Australia which split into Homebirth Information Service and Homebirth Association Sydney, then re-amalgamated into Homebirth Access Sydney in 1982. Furthermore, it is also 20 years since the naming of what was the HAS newsletter to the current name of 'Birthings', won in a naming competition by David Crossley in 1992. So really, this is a special anniversary edition in more ways than one.

It has been a fascinating journey, doing some research for this edition. I must admit that being a busy Mum (and a Facebook addict - there I admitted it!), I do not devote much time these days to sit down and read tangible material. But when founding life member Elaine Odgers Norling sent me 'Homebirth Herstory', (a rudimentary manuscript-style booklet consisting of stapled together A4 sheets of paper) which documented the homebirth movement in Australia, written by her and Maggie Lecky-Thompson in 1992, I did my best to read what I could when sitting down to breastfeed Keanu while Jetsun was otherwise engaged with kids TV. I have never been too much of a history buff - I remember the subject at school always seemed so dry and boring to me with the required memorisation of dates which didn't interest me. But reading 'Homebirth Herstory' really engaged me and I realised how important it is to know the roots of the organisation and the history, sorry, 'herstory' of homebirth in general.

I was pretty nervous that I wouldn't get enough content for this edition, which was well founded upon deadline day when I only had two theme articles. So I hurriedly made up some questions and emailed them out to five long term members - one of whom sent it on to three more 'old timers' who I weren't too familiar with but who were equally as important in furthering the cause. And so now you have a snapshot of where we have come from and who has helped us to be where we are today. I would like to acknowledge our founding members Elaine and Maggie, (whose 1994 photo is featured on our front cover - see contents for details) and all the other women who have supported and contributed to HAS along the way.

To the right is a photo of the first Homebirth Access Sydney newsletter meeting after the two groups, Homebirth Access (formerly Homebirth Information Service) and Homebirth Association Sydney merged in 1982 - The newsletter was put together with paper, scissors and glue! How far we have come as an organisation and a magazine! Yet how far we still need to go in terms of achieving true birthing rights in the current hostile political/obstetrical climate!

I hope you enjoy reading the issue as much as I have enjoyed putting it together. There are also seven lovely birth stories to remind us all of why we are here, and they are as always, a pleasure and an inspiration to read (though all this birthing inspiration is a little hard to deal with when you have decided to have no more babies!)

The next issue will be on the theme of 'Bellies and Boobies' which hopefully opens up quite the possibility of content. We would love to have your submissions on how you interpret this, whether it is about your pregnancy or breastfeeding journey, or body image before and after baby. I already have some ideas in mind and some possible arrangements for some interesting topics to be written, so I am sure it will be a great issue. So get your thinking caps on and your typing fingers busy and contribute! Email your theme articles, birth notices, birth stories, letters, art and poetry to [editor@homebirthsydney.org.au](mailto:editor@homebirthsydney.org.au) by August 1st.

Finally I would like to say a big welcome to our brand new designer Jacqui Fae (our 5th designer since I became editor). I am also looking forward to getting to know her style and seeing how the issue will look when it is all complete. It feels a little like being pregnant and wondering how my baby is going to look when it's 'cooked'! I am sure it will be amazing. :)



^Back row L to R. Wendy with baby Celeste, Christine Rees without baby Amy, Jan with baby Jackie, Jillian Lynch-Woodlock with baby Zackary. Front row L to R. Belinda Mericourt with Jessamin, Leah Bloomfield with Daniel, Sue with Terry.

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 Sian Campkin. Sian has won a \$50 voucher to spend at Frangipani Baby, kindly donated by business owner Meredith Crawford-McKay. We will pass on Meredith's details for you to claim your prize ASAP.

Send your letters to: [editor@homebirthsydney.org.au](mailto:editor@homebirthsydney.org.au)

7/5/12

Dear Virginia,

**My name is Sian I'm ten years old and I would like to share my thoughts on my little sister Scarlett's home birth. It was a suspense building couple of hours at 3:00 am and I was waiting to see if the baby was a girl or boy. I helped out being a doula by, heating up the wheat pack, getting mum cold drinks and comforting her. In the water I patted mum on her back to make her relax. But the real doula was my mum's friend Kylie. Then at 5:27 Scarlett entered the world. She was surrounded by all those who loved her and covered top to bottom with vernix. All I wanted to do was hold her and hug her, it was a great experience to see how I was born as well.**

**I have been reading the magazine Birthings and it has given me an understanding of this moment. It has also inspired me to have a home birth when I'm older. Our midwife Betty became a friend like a mother to all of us. She loved and cared for us and we enjoy when she still visits us occasionally.**

**Betty let Ruby and me help her do the placenta print when Scarlett was having breast milk (or in Ruby's case 'ba' or 'boobie milk').**

**I hope you enjoyed my letter.**

**Yours sincerely,**

**Sian [Campkin] <3**

14/3/12

Dear Virginia,

Firstly let me tell you how much I love Birthings, I've read 8 past issues over the last few weeks and I'm just addicted! Last week I gave birth to a beautiful baby girl at home, and attached is my birth story. I apologise for the length, this is actually the short version!! I cut out as much as I could but felt that the rest was important to tell the whole story. I hope you can use it.

Thank you.

Kelly Lanfranca

27/3/12

Great issue of Birthings yet again :)

Jo Hunter

27/3/12

Thanks Team HAS for my copy of Birthings. Inspiring work!  
Darren Mattock

27/3/12

Hey Virginia, got my copy of Birthings in the post today. Thank you! Awesome work. Love seeing passion come to life in form and really admire those who have the talent and commitment to make that happen.  
Darren Mattock

27/3/12

Virginia, I just got my copy of Birthings and it is BEAUTIFUL! Hats off to you and your team. You should be so proud. I am going to encourage the participants in my courses to order a subscription and I am going to give away a subscription as a gift as it is so inspiring to read such positive stories...

Regina Studzinski Power

29/4/12

Dear Birthings,

I have been a member of HAS since 1998 when expecting my third child. My planned homebirth became a third caesarean instead, much to my disappointment. But I remained a member and keen supporter of providing real choices to women in how they birth their babies. In 2001 I gave birth in hospital, without drugs or intervention but not without a struggle against the system. I was blessed to have Maggie by my side both times. When I became pregnant in 2011 with my fifth child, the first thing I did was find a midwife to journey with me, and to help me deal with the politics of birthing without intervention when labelled "high risk" due to age (42), 3 previous caesareans and fifth pregnancy.

I gave birth standing in the shower, in the darkness, with my husband and

2 midwives present. No drugs, no episiotomies, no doctors... but in a major Sydney hospital. It was such an achievement on so many levels. I even managed to meet the deadline to submit my birth story a few weeks later. Imagine my sadness then, when I was told my birth story would not be published because it was not a planned homebirth.

Do births only count if they meet a certain criteria? Supporting women to have empowering births should not be about location. I would not have been in hospital in the first place if the system supported midwives looking after women like me. Homebirth was not an option available to me because of my circumstances, but I am a passionate supporter of homebirth for anyone who wants it. Every dealing I have with health professionals in the system allows me to promote births that leave women whole, not damaged. I would have thought HAS felt the same. So I am sending in my birth story again, in the hope that it inspires women who have already been through the system to know there is always hope for a healing birth next time.

With love to all the mums, dads and babies in HAS.

Clare [Colman]

*Ed: Thanks for your letter and your continuing support of HAS. I am sorry you were upset that your story was not published last time. As I had said in my reply to you at that time, we did not publish it "due to space restrictions and because we are primarily a homebirth magazine, so we need to prioritise stories of planned homebirths..." While Homebirth Access Sydney does support birth choice in all its forms, we are a homebirth organisation. I hope you can understand that the majority of our readers are women who do plan homebirth, so it is these stories that they are interested in reading. There are other avenues for planned hospital birth stories such as Maternity Coalition's magazine 'Birth Matters' or Australian College of Midwives 'Midwifery Matters'. However given that we have the space for it to fit in this issue and you're a long term member and supporter of HAS with previous birth stories published, the committee has voted to have your story published. Thanks for your submission and congratulations on achieving such a wonderful birth against the odds in the hospital system.*

1/5/12

Hello Virginia,

I received an email from Sonja MacGregor this morning inviting her clients to write birthing stories. So between feeds and nappy changes today I have written my daughter's birth story which I hope to be shared amongst your readers. I have found your magazine to be extremely uplifting and comforted me during my last weeks of pregnancy. I hope that my story can do the same for other women...

Regards

Emily Ratcliffe

1/5/12

Hi Virginia,

I have a last minute birth story for Birthings.

Thanks for an awesome magazine. Really looking forward to the next issue.

Imogen [McKay]

5/5/12

Thank you HAS for the beautiful flowers, they really put a smile on my face! Xx

Robyn Dempsey

5/5/12

I have just arrived home to my beautiful flowers from HOME BIRTH Access Sydney, thank you, what a lovely surprise.

Emma Beddall [Fitzpatrick]

5/5/12

Thank you for the beautiful flowers. They've just arrived on my doorstep. Thanks to the HAS committee for the endless work you do for homebirthing women and their midwives. It's often a thankless job, I think you guys rock.

Love Jo [Hunter] xxx

6/5/12

Thanks HAS for the flowers on my doorstep when I got home yesterday, what a wonderful surprise.

Jacqui Wood

# Contributors

**CAROLYN NOBLE PHD** is Emerita Professor of Social Work at Victoria University Melbourne and immediate past Head of College and Academic Leader at Jansen Newman College of Counselling and Psychology. She is soon to take up another Professorial position in Social Work at ACAP in Sydney. She was founding member of HAS, co-ordinator and editor of HAS between 1978-1984. She taught homebirth classes before entering academe. Her PhD thesis on Australian Homebirth was published in 1997. She has three adult children and three grandchildren all born with a birthing consciousness.

**CLARE COLMAN** is a mother of 5 children, ranging from university to babyhood. She and Rod have just celebrated their 20th wedding anniversary. Clare has a law degree from UTS and has been a breastfeeding counsellor with ABA since 1998.

**ELAINE ODGERS NORLING** with Robin has three children and four grandchildren. These are her greatest joys in life along with many friends and much film going. Trained as an Art Teacher she has travelled widely since the 60s, including much of Australia as an official photographer in the 1980-90s. As a natural archivist she has photographed many significant events covering the women's movement and peace and justice issues. Her art training led to a varied teaching career focussing on the disabled and disadvantaged. As a black and white illustrator, she spent 10 years with 'Earth Garden Magazine' plus many other varied publications from 'Science in Nursing' to 'The Hard Times Handbook'.

**EMILY RATCLIFFE** is Mum to 3 month old Matilda Charlotte Ratcliffe. Currently on maternity leave from her nursing job in Melbourne and moved to Sydney just before Christmas. Married to her best friend, Tyler, who is a doting father. Emily loves cooking, gardening, reading and camping. A huge supporter of homebirths as it has been an empowering experience. Imogen Mckay lives in the Blue Mountains and is partner to Dave and mum to six month old Indigo who was born at home. She loves bushwalking, knitting, hanging out with her beautiful family and reading the 'No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency'.

**JANE HARDWICKE COLLINGS** is an independent midwife from the Southern Highlands, NSW. She is a homebirth mother, a grandmother, author and a teacher of the Women's Mysteries. Jane is founder and Midwife of The School of Shamanic Midwifery. [www.moonsong.com.au](http://www.moonsong.com.au); [www.schoolofshamanicmidwifery.com](http://www.schoolofshamanicmidwifery.com); [www.placentalremedy.com](http://www.placentalremedy.com).

**JEANIE CRAWFORD** has lived in the Blue Mountains for 25 years and with her husband Gordon McKay has delighted in raising three beautiful daughters. They have three adorable grandchildren, all born at home in the family tradition.

**DR. JILLIAN LYNCH** is a psychotherapist in private practice in the Sydney CBD, and Upper Blue Mountains. She is a mother of two adult sons, Cy and Zachary, and grandmother to Vincent and Tabitha. Jillian became one of the original members of Homebirth Information Service (HIS), later renamed as Homebirth Access, when she joined that group in 1979. She gave birth at home in Sydney in June 1980, and continued her active involvement as a member for many years after the group merged with Homebirth Association Sydney (HAS) in 1982.

**JO HUNTER** is partner to Phil, mum to Jai, Bronte, Riley and Maya. A Homebirth Midwife living in the Blue Mountains, who loves walking in the bush with her dog, camping with the family, rollerskating and hanging with family and friends.

**KELLY LANFRANCA** is first and foremost a mum to 2 gorgeous boys, 4yr old Jordan and 2yr old Hunter, and 2 month old Ava, her home-birthered angel. Kelly and her husband Mark hope to have a fourth child (and second home birth) in 2014 to complete their family. When not making babies and trying to be a domestic goddess, Kelly works in administration and project coordination at UWS.

**KIM RYDER** lives with her partner Karl and gorgeous, spirited 17 month old daughter Treya on the Central Coast of NSW. Having spent much of the first year of motherhood struggling, she now delights in the daily fun and games that comes with having a toddler in residence, and nourishes her creative side by contributing to Birthings and painting. <http://www.pickledtink.com.au/>

**LEAH BLOOMFIELD** is one of the early homebirthers (1980-86). Work-wise she has evolved from laboratory scientist to dictionary editor to academic and isn't in a hurry to retire, although having more free time is appealing. She finds life very agreeable, with a compatible husband and non-resident adult children. She looks back with great satisfaction on her involvement with HAS and the enduring friendships made during that time.

**LOUISE WALTON** is a primary teacher and new mum, living with her husband Jack and 3 month old Flynn in the good old South Western Suburbs. She is enjoying being off work to raise Flynn, and is planning various kids' programs at church with the extra time.

**MAGGIE LECKY-THOMPSON** is a social worker in the mental health field, having trained as a midwife in 1969, she was a founder of Homebirth Access and Homebirth Australia. She attended over 1200 home births between 1978 and 1998, and established the Australian Society of Independent Midwives. Maggie commenced the Midwives Academy and trained 19 apprentices in her practice.

**MANDY DOUGLAS** lives in the Inner West with her husband David and 2 children Max 3 and Zara 10 months. She's a devotee of natural parenting practices including breastfeeding, co-sleeping and babywearing (and can now add home birther); and when she's not doing computer work from home for her mother's business, she's out and about at local parks with her kids.

**NIRRIMI FIREBRACE** is a 19 year old photographer & mama living at the top of the Blue Mountains with the loves of her life (her lover Matt, a filmmaker, and their daughter Alba). They spend most of their lives travelling country to country. This is her blog: [www.theroadishome.com](http://www.theroadishome.com)

**ROBYN DEMPSEY** is a mother and midwife. Robyn believes birthing her first son at home gave her the confidence to venture into private practice midwifery. Birthing at home was one (or 3) of the most wonderful experiences of her life. Whilst pregnant with her firstborn, Robyn was dragged to her first HAS meeting, and the rest is history - a history of long service to HAS, of lifetime membership to HAS and a deep respect for the women who volunteer for the organization.

**SHEA CAPLICE** has been a practising midwife for over twenty seven years, most of which has been as an Independent Midwife attending births at home. Shea has extensive experience in developing and implementing a variety of midwifery models of care including Birth Centres, Team Midwifery, Group Practice and publicly funded homebirth. Shea has a Masters degree in midwifery and qualifications in Family Planning. In addition she has excellent skills as an educator and film maker. Shea is a passionate midwife and a down to earth presenter.

**SHERYL SIDERY** has been a practicing midwife for 27 years - 23 of those years have been at the Royal Hospital for Women, primarily in the Birth Centre. She is passionate about natural birth and its importance in the transition to parenthood. She has combined her hospital role with independent midwifery practice - supporting women who choose homebirth, whilst mothering her 4 inspirational children. There is also a book of birth stories waiting to be written when time permits.

**VIRGINIA MADDOCK** is Mum to her home born boys: 8 month old Keanu and 3 year old Jetsun; and her feline child, 14 year old Yin Yin. She has just celebrated 9 years with Dan, her best friend who she will finally marry next year. She loves her other roles as Birthings editor, HAS coordinator, Beer and Bubs presenter and Sutherland Shire homebirth group hostess. She is also a doula, herbalist and nutritionist, and is passionate about natural health, fertility, birth and parenting. [www.naturalbeginnings.com.au](http://www.naturalbeginnings.com.au)

# Coordinator's Report

In keeping with the theme of this edition, I thought I would do a Star Wars style 'prequel' to HAS's 'Where Are We Now'. Having been with HAS for over 3 years, I am ashamed at not knowing these details before now and I think in honour of our founders, it is important that all our members know too. Here is a brief summary of how we got to where we are today, with help from the info I gleaned from 'Homebirth Herstory' by Elaine Odgers Norling & Maggie Lecky-Thompson...

1961 - Childbirth Education Association [CEA] is formed

1968 - Childbirth and Family Education Association [CAFE Ass.] forms in Sydney as a breakaway group from CEA

1970 - CAFE Ass. changes name to Parent Centres Australia [PCA]

May 1976 - PCA establishes a homebirth referral service in Sydney

April 1978 - PCA launch 'Home Birth Support & Referral Service'

Dec 1978 - There is a faction split with the Sydney PCA group so a new group is formed: Homebirth Information Service [HIS]. (Not the best of acronyms!)

April 1979 - 1st PCA Homebirth Group Newsletter

April 1981 - PCA's Homebirth Support Group becomes an independent body: Homebirth Association Sydney [HAS]

Nov 1981 - HAS becomes a consumer only group with midwives Maggie and Akal being asked to leave

1982 - HIS changes its name to Homebirth Access [HA] then later joins with Homebirth Association Sydney, combining elements of each to become Homebirth Access Sydney, retaining the initials of HAS.

July 1982 - 1st Homebirth Access Sydney newsletter

1992 - The HAS newsletter was renamed Birthings after David Crossley won a naming competition.

...And the rest, as they say is 'Herstory'!

The **HAS Annual General Meeting** was held in March and the current office bearers and volunteers are listed in the front inside cover of the magazine. HAS would like to warmly welcome our newest recruits: Veronica Cerbelli as Merchandise Coordinator, Aleks Kucharski and Nadine Fragosa as the newly titled Fundraising & Events Coordinators, and let's not forget our new Birthings designer Jacqui Fae.

On the 26th April, **Lateline** on ABC TV covered the current issues facing homebirth in Australia with interviews from Associate Professor Hannah Dahlen from the Australian College of Midwives, Michelle Meares from Homebirth Australia, Obstetrician Dr Andrew Pesce and HAS member Kelly Le Franca who recently had a successful VBAC at home. I thought it was a very balanced report, which in this climate of very hostile anti-homebirth media, was quite surprising and refreshing. (Unsurprisingly Dr Pesce still made my skin crawl with his argument against women regarded as high risk having the right to an insured midwife attending their birth at home!)

On April 27 at the **Standing Council on Health**, State and Territory Health Ministers considered a West Australian proposed

model of care for privately practicing midwives to provide Medicare-eligible services as part of planned homebirth for 'low risk' women, but decided to hold off and discuss further at the next meeting in August. Following this the advisor for Federal Minister for Health, Tanya Plibersek said that a roundtable of all stakeholders will now be held to discuss the issues facing homebirth. I am hoping that HAS may be able to join Homebirth Australia as one of the stakeholders represented at the roundtable - will let you know if we get a seat! Thanks so much to everyone for your letters and emails to your MPs calling for more consultation, as they definitely made a positive impact.

**International Midwives Day** was on May 5th. Last year we started a tradition to buy all the midwives on our list a thank you gift of flowers for supporting HAS by buying all their clients a membership which keeps us going as an organisation, enables us to continue publishing Birthings, and supports the homebirthing community. I was supposed to order all 13 of our midwives' flowers on the 4th which was a Friday, but despite having it in my mind all week leading up to it, I completely forgot.

Fortunately something on Facebook reminded me it was the special day on Saturday morning, so in a panic and mad rush I managed to get them all ordered before the deadline of 10am to get them delivered that day. As with last year, it gave me such a high to imagine the joy it potentially brought. On our letters page I have printed the written responses we got. I hope some of you also kept your midwives in mind on that day and at least wrote them a little message!

Speaking of midwives, I would like to personally relay my confidence for all the midwives who currently advertise with us, as to date (and to my knowledge) we have had no major consumer complaints with any of them. Unfortunately we have been hearing numerous complaints about a privately practicing midwife in Sydney, not on our current list, who does not follow acceptable standard protocol and pressures women into signing contracts with unreasonable charges, terms and conditions and exorbitant cancellation fees with gag orders. So I would implore everyone to please be on their guard when presented with contracts, take your time to read them well, follow your intuition and if unsure, interview more than one midwife from different practices to see what is normal and acceptable practice - it is far better to be safe than sorry. Fortunately I am certain there is no need to worry about the integrity of the midwives who are on our list of 13!

Finally I would like to remind everyone of the upcoming **Homebirth Australia conference 'Birth Rights Human Rights'** which will be held in Hobart Tasmania on July 19-21. I have gone to every conference since 2006 (with the exception of Echuka in 2010) and I have always left feeling so enthusiastic, refreshed and renewed, hearing great speakers and mingling with the essence of the like-minded homebirthing community of Australia. I am sure this one will be no exception with keynote speaker Jan Tritten: the founder and editor-in-chief of Midwifery Today magazine and a midwife who was in active practice from 1977-1989. I will be there representing HAS with a merchandise table, so if you are there, please come and say hi! Our next issue of Birthings will have a conference review and photos on the 'HAS In The Community' page!

VIRGINIA MADDOCK

# Secretary's



# Report

YVETTE BARTON

Led by a group of committed homebirth activists, HAS provides a voice for homebirth consumers, and women at large. Through lobbying and networking activities, as well as publications of Birthings, we aim to shed light on both the value and power of choice in birth, and the struggles of those whose right to choice is being circumvented.

HAS raises most of its revenue through merchandise sales, advertising, sponsorship, memberships, donations and events. Given the current politically motivated push to drive birth out of the home and into the hospital, (or perhaps the operating theatre), there has never been a more important time to stand up and be counted in the fight for birth rights.

This considered, it has been heartening to see HAS membership rates for 2011/12 steadily rising. In the last quarter alone we have seen an extra 30 new members above our average join us. We can thank our advertising private midwives (of whom we were down to 9 last year and have since increased to 13), who kindly pay for their client's memberships.

As we look back on thirty years of HAS and twenty years of Birthings (yes it has been that long), HAS continues to look to the future, and to fight to make it one in which legal homebirth is still alive and well. HAS, along with other like-minded organisations including Homebirth Australia and the Maternity Coalition, has been focused this year on petitioning government and other relevant organisations in a bid to maintain this freedom for all.

In 2012/2013 we will continue this fight in the hopes that sanity prevails and our government sees reason. Our Editor, Virginia Maddock, will be representing HAS at the 2012 Homebirth Australia Conference, aptly entitled Birth Rights Human Rights. This will be an opportunity to further build our network, raise revenue for our initiatives, and to regroup and review strategy for the fight ahead.

This has been my first year as HAS secretary, having taken over from long standing member Greta Werner. As the mother of two daughters, while I do not relish the need to fight for homebirth, I embrace the reality and am proud to be part of the voice of homebirth. If ever there was a time to join us it is now! Our next meetings will be held on June 12 and July 10 (pending no changes) at the Australian Doula College, 422 Marrickville Rd, Marrickville. Please come join us!

**Ed: Since writing this, Yvette has needed to resign due to other commitments so if you would like to volunteer as new HAS Secretary and can make it to our monthly meetings, then please contact us: [info@homebirthsydney.org.au](mailto:info@homebirthsydney.org.au).**

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# Committee Member Profile

# New and Renewed Members

Veronica Cerbelli -  
Merchandise Coordinator



**JOINED:**

September 2011 signed up by my midwife Jo Hunter.

**FAMILY:**

Fiancé: Peter  
Daughter: Leyla Mia (5 yrs)  
Son: Ryan Matias (9 weeks)  
Cat: Butters (2 yrs)

**LIFE BEFORE BIRTHING:**

Life before birthing my first child....Was a very highly demanding lifestyle of work, work and work. I was a Security K9 Handler and Trainer. Training and working with 15 dogs and plus a very physically demanding work timetable.

I became pregnant with my daughter in 2005 and had to let my career go. I gave birth to her in 2006 and became a mum to a very smart little girl that kept me on my toes and still does today. I then had a big gap between my two children and finally gave birth to my wonderful little boy Ryan this year. He has opened my eyes to a totally new life. And I have grown more as a person and as a mother thanks to the experience and journey I took while carrying him in my womb and giving birth to him.

**WHY HOMEBIRTH?:**

My pregnancy with my daughter was very stressful, I didn't feel pregnant. My birth with her went even more sour than it should have and I wished every day that I could have changed it. When I fell pregnant with my son, I was nervous and very anxious because I didn't want the same experience. When finally a very outspoken and confident pregnancy yoga instructor just gave me the nudge I needed.

Meeting Jo (my midwife) was the biggest relief I got in a long time. I felt the weight lift off my shoulders and I finally began to enjoy my pregnancy. I don't regret any second.

The journey carrying my son, taught me a lot of patience and appreciation for what was happening within me. And over some time I learnt that perhaps if the experience that I had with my daughter hadn't happened, I may not have been able to completely appreciate the beauty of my experience now.

Now I don't wish to change what happened in the past with my daughter. I look forward and appreciate my present and my future. I hope to educate those later in the importance of bonding with their babies during pregnancy and birth, which I think is the biggest contributor to Post Natal Depression.

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

- |                       |                  |                  |
|-----------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Jo Lin                | Naomi Homel      | Kylie Roughsedge |
| Sarah Bromwich        | Alyssea Kemp     | Georgina Jhet    |
| Melissa Duck          | Sarah McLean     | Nadine Fragosa   |
| Miriam Hart           | Bronwyn Lin      | Aleks Kucharski  |
| Yvette Gent           | Abby Taylor      | Santina Sannen   |
| Hayley Rixon          | Mary Kelly       | Jacinda Jaensch  |
| Joanne Day            | Davinia Jones    | Laurel Cook      |
| Helena Martinez Tahar | Vanessa Finder   | Nicola Judd      |
| Jane Collings         | Kristine Maunder | Carolin Skipka   |
| Wendy Mackay          | Nerissa Walsh    | Kate Drew        |
| Alicia Langlands      | Anna Logouna     | Laurel Cook      |
| Trisha Gough          | Briana Vella     | Mandy Douglas    |

## 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

# Birth



Belinda and Ben would like to announce the arrival of our beautiful little girl '**Mieke Lotus**', born into water at home at 7.35am on 15th July, 2010, weighing a lovely 3.9kgs. A beautiful way to greet the sunrise! In the presence of our much-loved midwife Sonja MacGregor, and our equally as loved support Emily, Nanna Carol, and adoring big brother Ziggy. Mieke you continually make our hearts sing with your beauty and your funny nature, and we are blessed every day to be your parents. Thank you so much Sonja, you made our experience so calm and your support will never be forgotten. We love you!



**Daniel Thomas Colman**, born 5th April 2011 at the Royal Women's Hospital, welcomed into our home that day by his siblings Andrew, Stephanie, David & Genevieve. Thanks to our wonderful midwife Betty Vella, to Dr Bisits for his support and to Rod for being such a great husband and father.



Our beautiful daughter, **Arielle McDonald**, was born on 4th July 2011 at 4.34pm. She weighed in at 3.1kg, and was 47cm long. Our planned home birth turned into a hospital birth, but we still had one of our wonderful midwives, Jane Palmer, with us. Robyn Dempsey was helping other babies arrive safely, but did check in via phone :-). Thankyou to both our midwives for the love, care and support throughout our pregnancy and birth. Our miracle daughter arrived safely, (apparently there were some touch and go moments) and is wonderfully healthy ... Thank you to our families who waited patiently in the hospital for her arrival, and to Nonna and Auntie Chloe who were with us all day and there when she made her appearance!



Frederick and Sheri are delighted to welcome **Charlotte Lily**, born with a fighting spirit at home on 16th December 2011 at 14:40 and weighing 3480g! We cannot express just how grateful we are to our amazing midwife, Lisa Richards, who allowed us to take charge of our pregnancy and birth. Along with the many amazing people in our lives, you gave us the strength to fight for our little girl when she needed us the most. She smiles every day knowing we all love her so much. xox



Announcing the arrival of '**Esther Samarah**', our beautiful little girl, born into water at home at 3.20pm on 19th January, 2012, weighing a healthy 4.3kgs. In the presence of our awesome midwife Sonja MacGregor, Emily, and big brother Ziggy and big sister Mieke, you are constantly adored and loved in every way. You are a sweet child, with a placid, gentle energy, and we are blessed you have chosen us for your earth parents. Thank you again Sonja, you have seen me at my very worst and absolute best. Also thank you to midwife Lisa Richards, who was also there with her loving warmth and tender care. I love you both so much.



**Alba Joy Firebrace**, our moonflower, born 24th January 2012. She was born into water, delivered by my passionate midwives Melanie Jackson and Emma Beddall. She is the light of our life.

# Announcements

Send your birth announcements with a photograph to [editor@homebirthsydney.org.au](mailto:editor@homebirthsydney.org.au)



Emily and Tyler are delighted to welcome their beautiful baby girl **Matilda Charlotte Ratcliffe**, born on Wednesday 1st of February at 3:44am, into her daddy's open arms, weighing 3960g and measuring 52cm. A calm and comfortable water birth at home with the support of our wonderful midwife Sonja MacGregor, who we cannot thank enough for empowering us to take this journey. Matilda you have brought so much love and joy into our lives.



Introducing **Scarlett Atarangi Nicholson**. Born at home in the water on 12th February 2012 at 5:27am after a 2 ½ hr labour, weighing in at 9pd 7oz. Special thanks to our amazing Midwife Betty Vella for her support encouragement and care. You truly epitomise the role of Midwife and it was an absolute honour to birth in your presence. Also our Doula Kylie Roughsedge who did an outstanding job of supporting us all. A beautiful peaceful birth surrounded by love and care in the comfort of our own home.



Veronica and Peter welcomed their beautiful son **Ryan Matias**, little brother to Leyla Mia, on the 15th February 2012. Ryan was caught by Daddy at 4:30pm weighing 4.07kg and measuring 58cm. Ryan was born in Blacktown Hospital after a transfer from home. I would like to thank the midwives from Blacktown hospital for respecting my birth plan & helping me birth my baby on my terms. Thank you to my wonderful midwife Jo Hunter, who gave me strength and support when it was needed. Thank you for walking this journey with me. This pregnancy has been the biggest learning curve in my life and I am a better person and a more empowered woman and mother because of it.



Jack and Louise give a big thanks to God for **Flynn Ralph Walton**, born at home in water on 20th February 2012. This fatty weighed in at 4.72kg and was 53cm long. He's a strong, healthy boy who is an excellent sleeper. We also thank Melanie Jackson and Jane Palmer for their terrific support. And a big apology to our anxious neighbours – next time we'll warn you that a birth is taking place, not a murder!



Mark and Kelly and big brothers Jordan and Hunter are overjoyed to announce the beautiful, natural homebirth of **Ava Catherine Lanfranca**. Born in the water at 12:16am on March 7th, Ava was a healthy 4.54kg and 54cm! Huge thanks must go to our amazing Doula Jacinda Jaensch, and our incredible midwives Emma Fitzpatrick and Melanie Jackson. Without your support and encouragement this life changing experience would not have been possible. to Nonna and Auntie Chloe who were with us all day and there when she made her appearance!



Hitoshi, Karishma and Tara (3 years) are delighted to announce the arrival of their little blessing – **Maya Elizabeth Sataka** born at home in water on 15th March 2012, weighing 3810g and measuring 54cm. A truly magical experience guided by our wondrous midwife Jo and doula Nat, to whom we are forever grateful!

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# Heart To Heart

## Full Circle

Jennifer's mother was born in the farmhouse  
Where Jennifer's grandfather too had been born  
And when Jennifer's grandmother went into labour  
They called for the midwife to come to the town  
Now Jennifer's grandfather wanted no part of it  
Birthing was woman's work, he ploughed the fields  
So the midwife and Jennifer's granny together  
Brought Jennifer's mother safe into the world

And the baby was healthy and hearty  
Held fast in her midwife's strong arms  
With her father's red hair and her mother's blue eyes  
The first of their kids to be born on the farm

Jennifer's birthplace, the big city hospital  
Doctors and nurses all sterile and masked  
Jennifer's father exiled to the waiting room  
Smoking and pacing until he was asked  
Will you come to the nursery please Mr Robins  
A beautiful daughter all healthy and bright  
And Jennifer's mother exhausted and tearful  
Could never explain how she felt on that night

And the baby was healthy and hearty  
With a shock of her mother's red hair  
She was welcomed with love to a home full of warmth  
And they thought there was never a babe to compare

Now Jennifer's pregnant and so is her sister  
And Jennifer's chosen to give birth at home  
Michael will be there and so will the midwife  
Together they'll all help the baby to come  
And Jennifer's sister will be at the birth centre  
Midwife and partner and right there at her side  
They'll breathe and they'll push and they'll weep and  
they'll laugh  
As together they'll all help the baby arrive

And the babes will be healthy and hearty  
And they might even have the red hair  
But the certain thing is they'll be wanted and loved  
And their parents will think they're the best anywhere

And Jennifer's mother thinks Jennifer's crazy  
But Jennifer laughs and she says with a wink  
It's the freedom to make your own choice that's important  
Now where were you born Mother? Just stop and think

The strong arms that held you were those of a midwife  
You needed no doctor and neither did Gran  
It's not where we give birth but the care that surrounds us  
And we're getting the best care that anyone can.

Judy Small 1989

[Sourced from 'Homebirth Herstory' – Elaine Odgers Norling & Maggie Lecky-Thompson, and submitted by Virginia Maddock]



^ Can't Wait to Meet You [Louise Walton]

Inside myself, into my womb, my energies flow  
With you my child, our birthing - gentle and pure  
Moving, shifting, getting agitated - transition had arrived  
Into the water I sank, relief was instant and focus sharp.  
I felt you descend, 'it burns it burns',  
'don't rush, soon soon soon I breathed.  
You crowned - your hair swishing against my thighs  
'it's you, it's you'  
onto my chest, I saw your face - my pink and squishy child.  
Your face alert, eyes wide open, you knew me as I knew you.  
This is the moment I treasure,  
This moment when we became two."

By Catherine Bell

Evening sounds of NYC  
No sky for an illuminated checkerboard  
So tall before me  
Each square a new life  
A new story...

It's dark but bright  
Quiet yet loud  
Here with baby  
Breastfeed in the breeze  
.....all around me  
So soothing  
Like massage  
On this Hawaiian Isle

By MJR [October 2010]



^ Karl and Treya [photo taken by Kim Ryder]

# Where Are They Now?

## Maggie



^ Maggie with son Jeremy [1979]



^ Maggie in 2012

### Family:

Partner: Pete Gailey  
Children: Melanie (38), Tamara (36), Jeremy (33)  
Grandchildren: Luke (14), Malia (11), Xavier (3yrs) and an unborn, unnamed baby, due date tomorrow!

### Why did you choose homebirth and who was your midwife/midwives?

I didn't want to have to leave my little girls to go to hospital. I knew as a registered midwife I was too conditioned to be a 'good patient' to fight for what I wanted when I was vulnerable and in pain. It always felt counter-intuitive to leave home to birth. I wanted my partner to be with me. He couldn't stand hospitals so we hadn't shared the other births and I felt I had been to the moon and back and could never explain what had happened. I felt incomplete as a woman; I knew I could only fulfil this need if I avoided hospitals.

I had two midwives, beautiful and compassionate women: Margot Smith (a Parent Centres Australia educator and British midwife) and a Finnish midwife, Marietta Topila.

### Tell us a little bit about your own birthing experiences.

Two awful intervention driven experiences. The first with an epidural, forceps and a third degree tear on top of an episiotomy followed by PND. The second with an induction, no epidural, but forceps rapidly applied and used.

It took me many years to realise the heartbreaking sounds of a woman's moans and sobs that went on for what seemed hours afterwards, was me. I returned to the RHW to have them. My pride and dignity as a trained midwife returning to birth among colleagues had not permitted me to seek instruction from mothers. I thought as a midwife I was supposed to know how to do it well.

My third baby was born at home in a large rented house in Ryde. I learned that I have long hard labours and only need a lot of love and faith in my abilities to give birth well. When I took my son into my arms for the first time I had an overwhelming sense of belief in myself that I could do anything that mothering demanded of me with this child.

### What year did you become involved with HAS, why did you become involved and what did you do within the organisation?

I trained as a midwife in 1969 at St Margaret's in Sydney. I worked as a labour ward midwife at the Royal Hospital for Women then at Paddington when I returned from England and South Africa.

My initiation to homebirth in Australia was a seminar about birth in January 1978. It was organised by the Down to Earth network (the beginnings of our Green movement). It was at Paddington Town Hall and the facilitator was Ina May Gaskin. By lunchtime I realised that I would have another baby and this time get it right and give birth at home. By the time I left I knew my life had turned on its axis that day; my purpose and direction was irrevocably changed.

My friend Louise Sherwood thought I had gone mad. She was on the executive of the Childbirth Education Association, a terrific if conservative group. Nonetheless she ultimately supported me and was at Jeremy's birth in March 1979 and became his godmother.

Back in early '78 Ina May introduced me to Henny Ligtermoet who put me in contact with others having and attending homebirths in Sydney, including Margaret Ireland in the Blue Mountains and many others all over Australia. I arranged a film night for Sydneysiders to view material Henny sent me. I was newly pregnant and looking for a midwife.

Also present was a sister NMAA (now BFA) counsellor Virginia who was also pregnant, due in October 1978 and on the same mission. The morning after the film night she called and asked me to be her midwife. I said that if I didn't find someone in time for her I would start preparing myself to attend her birth at home.

So began a drive to find supportive GPs who attended workshops on subjects like putting up IVs, suturing and resuscitation. I continued for years to facilitate these workshops for midwives and ultimately it evolved into the Midwives Academy. I teamed up with another midwife Chris Schlieb, a novice too, and we attended a client of hers before Virginia's.

# Lecky-Thompson

At about the same time, Andrea Robertson, Elaine Norling and Carol Flanagan set up Homebirth Information Service (HIS). In no time it had a splinter group who called themselves Homebirth Access and later rejoined with us at HIS (Humph not the acronym we really wanted!) and we morphed into Homebirth Access Sydney.

## What have you been doing in your own life since being involved with HAS and 'Where are you now'?

After attending my first homebirth in October 1978 I practised as a private and independent midwife attending approximately 1200 births. I trained 19 apprentices, fortunately, as in 1998 I was deregistered as a nurse and midwife. I had the sense as that time drew nearer that: "I may well go down but I will ensure there will be a 100 more to stand in my place."

I then went to university at 51 and studied to become a social worker. University was incredibly healing. I felt like I was having a childhood experience. It was surreal after the responsibilities of being an independent midwife. At uni the most I had to worry about was not getting an assignment in on time and of course having to super-achieve like all mature aged students! I moved into a lovely nurturing relationship with Pete Gailey. He had been a student of mine when he trained to be a childbirth educator with Marie Burrows at Birth Rites, with whom he still teaches. We have been together since.

I did honours, I did a post graduate certificate, I moved from field work student to the management committee of Bankstown's Womens' Health Centre. For my sins I now work in a call centre for Medibank. I am part of the mental health team and we triage and crises manage mental health patients and situations, especially rural and remote areas, and disaster lines. Whilst I love my work and it is sooo much easier than my previous life's path, I feel the need to atone for this breach in my political alignment so I am back at uni, this time studying ethics.

I was midwife to my eldest daughter Melanie when her babies Luke and Malia were born at home and I supported my younger daughter Tamara when she had her first baby Xavier in London. We are now days away from her birthing her daughter, a planned homebirth in London. These of course are incredibly significant events of my life and midwifery path.

## Are you still active in homebirth advocacy?

Yes. I have mentored some midwifery students with the support of their educators and attended some recent homebirth conferences and always participated as speaker and avid listener. I am now on the editorial panel of Birthings and love to spend time with my former colleagues and catch up with friends who were once "clients".

## What changes have you seen over the years in respect to birth choices?

A thin veneer of improvement.

I see that hospitals and the doctors that dominate their policies have done their public relations re-scripting. The rhetoric of fear is well used to keep women compliant and a widespread belief that interventions are necessary for a safe birth. The popularity and impact of media personalities who have naïve and mistaken ideas about body image and sexuality exacerbates this societal mind-set. Affluence buys higher caesarean rates, higher PND rates, and higher numbers of mothers returning to work in shorter spaces of time. The deficits of this on our society is evidenced by the high rate of mental health disorders I see in my present work.

## What do you hope to see for the future of homebirth in Australia?

Despite the evidence noted above I am enormously heartened by the current Australian homebirth movement participants' intelligence, resilience and creativity. I hope they will turn around the current trend so that homebirth becomes a viable option that is as readily embraced as our current model of institutionalised birth. I sincerely believe in Margaret Mead's encourager: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."



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# Where Are They Now?

## Elaine Odgers Norling



^ Elaine with her children Meg, Owen (born at home 12 days earlier) and Beth. [Christmas Day 1979]



^ Elaine (60yo) with her Auntie Elsie, daughter Beth (30yo) and her granddaughter Juno – all born at home [1992].



^ Elaine [2012]

The question takes a bit of thought: so where 'Am I'? Geographically at Copacabana on the beautiful Central Coast, physically at 72 not doing too badly despite a nasty broken leg a couple of years ago, emotionally very buoyant, politically active and socially content. I have three children. The eldest Beth is a children's book illustrator, Meg is a qualified chef, and Owen is a freelance video editor and motion graphics artist. They and my four grandchildren give such joy and perspective to my being and a reason to continue the activist life.

After 43 years associated with the childbirth movement, I am however sad to see birthing families still not always able to access a birth of their choice, indeed not even understanding their choices.

Perhaps the notion of choice is a relatively recent idea. All my grandparents were born at home as was my father and twin Uncles, my mother and I were born in 'cottage hospitals' [only the wealthy went to a Hospital or a Doctor].

I find the history of the past hundred years, particularly for women, both encouraging and exasperating. I am encouraged to see individuals and groups who have created change but exasperated with community conservatism. As a teacher I believe a broad education is the key to the advancement and development of any society.

Thankfully I benefited from the post WW2 push to educate women which, along with the economics of the times, allowed the women's movement to flourish and with it the determination that equality, fairness and justice are for all. These ideals are still unrealised but the idealists amongst us push on! Childbirth practices have changed due to fashion as much as medicine, how else can a 60% caesarean rate in some institutions be explained. A statistic like that makes me wonder if all the effort of so many over the past 4 decades has made any difference to birth choices?

I reflect on my birth experiences - 2 in hospital and the last at home in 1979. The hospital system had failed my expectations so I opted

for a homebirth, others felt the same and from our activism came an Australia wide homebirth movement, very heady days as we challenged doctors and hospitals. Beliefs and practices were under scrutiny and beneficial changes happened - both my daughters have had homebirths but my last grandchild could not legally be born at home in 2009 in the Northern Territory - a place where homebirths had been 17% of all births in the 1980s!

In 1992 I wrote in the 'Homebirth Herstory' "I believe every woman has a right to birth where and with whom she chooses and that her choices do not financially disadvantage her, or her standard of care, or put her or her birth attendant outside the law. I continue to lobby via governments, medical and health systems and all social structures to maintain and achieve these rights" and now in 2012 the same applies.

I never imagined the fight for such basic requests would take so long and though it has been gratifying over the years to know that so many women and their families have benefited from our activism and the changes it brought about, birth remains in the hands of institutions and the medical profession rather than women.

I continue my advocacy for birthing women - I recently had lunch with my Federal MP Deborah O'Neil as part of keeping homebirth on the agenda and was also pleased to take part in the Q and A session that followed the screening of Face of Birth at my local cinema. I believe that knowing our birth history is an essential part of the process of framing our future birth practices and I have therefore kept the extensive archive of HAS [Homebirth Access Sydney] and PCA [Parents Centres Australia] as they are a valuable resource. Some of that archive is with the Jessie Street National Women's Library and the rest resides at my home in 22 boxes plus 100s of photographs, and has been a reference for various publications including a Masters and PhD.

My son and grandchildren have expressed their hope that their children can legally be born at home.



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With love from Pickled Tink! xox

Workshops with

Jane Hardwicke Collings Midwife, Author of Ten Moons - the Inner Journey of Pregnancy

# Exploring, Honouring, Celebrating & Healing Our Sacred Feminine Path

## Moonsong

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

## Pregnancy – The Inner Journey

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

Contact me [janeollings@bigpond.com](mailto:janeollings@bigpond.com) if you would like to receive my seasonal newsletter.

To book for a workshop or for further information  
email: [bookings@moonsong.com.au](mailto:bookings@moonsong.com.au)

## BirthKeeper Intensive Workshop →New←

BKI is an experiential workshop for BirthKeepers - doulas, midwives, doctors, folk who have made it their work to be a birth activist and a holder of the sacred wisdom of birth. BKI has been designed to help you understand your hidden agenda, the unique gifts you bring to your work and to teach you shamanic tools and processes to add to your own medicine bundle in serving and facilitating the transformation possible around birth. We will do shamanic drum journeys, rituals, ceremonies and craft. We will sit in circle, BirthKeepers united on a mission – “to heal the Earth, one birth at a time.”

## Connecting With The Shamanic Dimensions of Pregnancy →New←

One day workshop.

Pregnancy is a portal into the sacred, spiritual and shamanic dimensions of womanhood. Using shamanic processes and ritual we will access information, insights, life lessons and healing. We will connect with Power Animals, let go of fears, up date our belief systems, access the power of our voice, connect with our baby inside and establish our Birth Temple in preparation for our birth.

## 2012 workshops

### Pregnancy – The Inner Journey Workshop

Wednesday March 28th – Friday March 30th 2012  
Venue: Jane's place, 331 Kirkland Road, East Kangaroo, Southern Highlands, NSW  
9:30am – 5pm daily  
Fully catered, non-residential \$450

### Moonsong Workshop

Saturday March 31st - Sunday April 1st 2012  
Venue: Jane's Place, 331 Kirkland Road, East Kangaroo, Southern Highlands, NSW  
9:30am – 5pm daily  
Fully catered, non-residential \$350 or \$250 per person for two family members

### Pregnancy – The Inner Journey Workshop

Wednesday April 18th – Friday April 20th 2012  
Venue: Lower Plenty, Melbourne, VIC  
9:30am – 5pm daily  
Fully catered, non-residential \$550

### Moonsong Workshop

Saturday April 21st – Sunday April 22nd 2012  
Venue: Lower Plenty, Melbourne, VIC  
9:30am – 5pm daily  
Fully catered, non residential \$400 or \$300 per person for two family members

### BirthKeeper Intensive Workshop

Thursday May 10th - Friday May 11th 2012  
Samford, Brisbane, Queensland  
9pm - 5pm daily  
\$400 Teas catered BYO lunch

### BirthKeeper Intensive Workshop

Thursday August 23rd - Friday August 24th 2012  
Marrickville, Sydney, NSW  
9pm - 5pm daily  
\$400 Teas catered BYO lunch

### Connecting With The Shamanic Dimensions of Pregnancy

Friday November 4th 2012  
Forestville, Sydney, NSW  
930am - 430pm  
\$160 fully catered

### Pregnancy – The Inner Journey Workshop

Wednesday 7th – Friday 9th November 2012  
Venue: Jane's Place, 331 Kirkland Road, East Kangaroo, Southern Highlands, NSW  
9:30am – 5pm daily  
Fully catered, non-residential \$450

### Moonsong Workshop

Saturday 10th November – Sunday 11th November 2012  
Venue: Jane's Place, 331 Kirkland Road, East Kangaroo, Southern Highlands, NSW  
9:30am – 5pm daily  
Fully catered, non-residential \$350 or \$250 per person for two family members



# Where Are They Now?

# Jillian Lynch



^ Jillian Lynch + son Zac [1980]



^Jillian [2012]

In a few weeks time it will be 32 years since I gave birth at home. When I became pregnant with my third child in September 1979 I decided without hesitation to have a homebirth and set about finding a midwife. I contacted the homebirth branch of Parent Centres Australia and was provided with a list of several independent midwives.

I deliberately chose Joan Brandt, primarily because she had worked for many years as a district midwife in England. Joan was somewhat eccentric, highly intuitive and I trusted her. I loved my prenatal visits with her and especially appreciated her encouragement to trust my body's ability to birth naturally. My homebirth was the positive experience I expected to have.

My decision to choose home as the birthplace of my third child was initially a reaction to the trauma I had experienced with the stillbirth of my daughter in hospital two years previously. My daughter died at 38.5 weeks in utero due to damage to her umbilical cord. This was caused by an amniocentesis test to test her lung maturity (in a major hospital in Sydney).

Driven by the need to regain control of my reproductive self I was attracted to the women-centred practice of homebirth. Although the choice to birth at home had initially arisen from my desire to resist medical domination, the experience provided an unexpected and invaluable opportunity to reflect on my identity. The power of reclaiming 'authorship' of my life through the experience of birth gave me the additional benefit of a real sense of belonging to a larger consciousness of womanhood.

Early in 1980 I became an active member of Homebirth Information Service (HIS), later renamed Homebirth Access, which ran as a collective. This group had recently broken away from Homebirth Association Sydney (HAS), which had a more conventional form of hierarchy.

I was involved in Homebirth Access throughout my pregnancy and homebirth and continued to be an active member for many years after the two homebirth groups united to become Homebirth Access Sydney in 1982. I was involved in producing newsletters, fundraising activities, organising conferences, presenting papers, and political lobbying. In the late 1980s I directed and produced a documentary on the politics of homebirth.

Homebirth became an issue to which I developed a strong political commitment. It was the impetus for me to train as a childbirth educator with Parent Centres Australia, qualifying in 1984, and thereafter facilitating groups and attending 30 births as a labour support person.

The homebirth movement introduced me to a group of inspiring women who held strong and diverse political and philosophical beliefs. This led to the creation of special bonds and friendships, several of which continue today.

I believe my homebirth experience served as a catalyst to stimulate my interest in seeking further education, which has resulted in tertiary

degrees in two different disciplines, a post-graduate diploma, Ph.D. and a successful career as a counsellor and psychotherapist.

Although I am no longer an active homebirth advocate I maintain an interest in the politics of childbirth. My hope is that women are able to make whichever birth choice is right for them. However, I am often dismayed at the percentages of birth interventions currently reported and I feel concerned that birth is no longer considered the important women's rights issue it was 32 years ago.



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- Worries about the kind of parent you will be
- Memories from your own childhood that may resurface during this time
- Feeling numb and wanting to escape



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**Kathy Solanki**

BN (CMHN), Grad Dip Mid, Grad Dip PIMH, CIMI

m 0488 334 445

e [kathy@bambinimama.com.au](mailto:kathy@bambinimama.com.au)

# Where Are They Now?

## Carolyn Noble



^ [L>R] David, Lucy (2 1/2), Carolyn, Hamish (just born) and Matthew (5) after Hamish's birth at home [ 1982]



< Carolyn [2012]

### Family:

I have three adult children and three lovely grandchildren. My daughter (born at home) has had 2 homebirths and one birth centre birth.

### Why did you choose homebirth and who was your midwife/midwives?

When I was interested in having a homebirth for my second child I began exploring options here in Sydney and found them wanting. I met Maggie Lecky-Thompson at a Childbirth conference in 1979 and she was having her baby at home and was a midwife herself. My daughter Lucy was her 3rd homebirth in 1979! I went on and had another successful homebirth with my third child. At that time I was also becoming more politically aware of the medicalisation of birth and was happy to become involved in the beginning of the homebirth revival to help women have the birth of their choice without undue intervention. This act of defiance at the time resulted in the introduction of birth centres and launched many midwives and birth activists' careers who all went on to change birthing practices for many, many women (including my daughter who has had 3 natural births and 2 homebirths). Wonderful times!!

### Tell us a little bit about your own birthing experiences.

Interestingly enough each of my children's births were a wonderful experience. My first son was born with the help of the midwives in a London maternity hospital and after 9 hours he was born a healthy 8.5 lbs. I remember the midwives saying at the time "I think she is going to do this naturally!" I also remember thinking that doing this naturally was an important thing for him and I to be doing. For my next and subsequent births I chose home because I already had the confidence I could birth naturally and I wanted above all to have an intimate family focussed birth.

### What year did you become involved with HAS, why did you become involved and what did you do within the organisation?

I was a founding member of HAS set up in 1979 as a breakaway group from Parents Centre Australia (PCA). I was for a time its Coordinator and the editor of the HAS newsletter as well as a childbirth educator. The early HAS meetings were held in my home with many families being linked to midwives to help them have the births of their choice. I acted as a doula for many years, again making sure women who wanted to birth at home were able to do so. I also organised several conferences, seminars and meetings over the years I was involved in the group. I later went on to do my PhD on Homebirths in Australia in 1996. This was the first major Australian study of Homebirths. I have written several articles on homebirth and was editor of the successful HAS book "Birth Stories".

### What have you been doing in your own life since being involved with HAS and 'Where are you now'?

I am working in the area of social work education professionally, and personally I supported my daughter's children's births which I was privileged to be present at.

Are you still active in homebirth advocacy?

Not as much, but I did go and see Nicole Roxon as Health Minister and advocated for homebirths and for her to stop the deregulation of private homebirth practitioners. I think what we found out at this meeting was helpful in informing the organisers of the big rally in Canberra.

### What changes have you seen over the years in respect to birth choices?

When I was having my babies, caesarean rates were between 20% and 25% and we thought this was outrageous! Now I believe they can be as high as 60%. My worry is still the same as it was when I was having my children - that is women are being socialised into a fearful culture where creativity, spontaneity and self confidence in themselves and their bodies as well as their babies, is being eroded. I think the same lack of confidence and agency is happening to the babies born within the current medical culture and helping in a small way to foster the culture of fear that is endemic in Australia at the moment.

### What do you hope to see for the future of homebirth in Australia?

Free, safe access to the birthing options of your choice and to end the politics within and without the maternity and gynaecology professions, including the various consumer focused groups. And importantly keep up the good work HAS is doing - well done everyone!!



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# Where Are They Now?

## Jo Hunter



^ Jo having just birthed Maya with husband Phil and big sister Jai [2001]



^ Jo as IM with baby Zenon Barkley [2011]

### Family:

Husband: Phil Johns  
Children: Jai (15), Bronte (13), Riley (12), Maya (10).  
Pets: Gus (cat), Bodhi (dog) and 11 chooks

### Why did you choose homebirth and who was your midwife/midwives?

I first started thinking about homebirth in 1996 after a beautiful water birth at an inner city Birth Centre and a poorly managed physiological third stage (cord traction which resulted in the cord being pulled off and the placenta remaining inside my body and no doubt a partial separation of the placenta). I went to theatre for a manual removal of the placenta had a 1500ml PPH and a blood transfusion. I decided there must be a better way.

At the time I was risked out of the Birth Centre for my next babe due to being considered 'high risk'. There was absolutely no way I was going to a labour ward!

My sister in law had birthed my nephew at home five years earlier and I had two good friends who had had homebirths. So I picked their brains and a year or so later when I found myself pregnant with bub number two, I knew I was going to have a homebirth.

My husband Phil was a little concerned due to my last experience and how unwell I had been after Jai's birth. We met Maggie Lecky-Thompson and so began a lifelong love of homebirth.

We went on to have three beautiful, quick home water births with Mags over the next four years. And guess what? Never again did I have a PPH! My midwife fully understood how to facilitate a physiological third stage. 16 years later and I am still amazed at the lack of understanding of many hospital-based midwives when it comes to physiological third stage management. It seems that many consider it exactly the same as active management just without the synto. NO!

### Tell us a little bit about your own birthing experiences.

First baby Jai (1996): I spent the majority of my labour at home with Phil. Labour started at 6am with mild contractions. Phil eventually prized me off the toilet and into the car at about 4pm. I remember

roaring through contractions in the car driving along King St, Newtown, with the driver's window wound down and Saturday shoppers turning to look at what the commotion was when we were stopped at the lights. "Shut the fucking window," I shouted at poor Phil who thought the baby was about to fall out in the car. Three hours after arriving at The Birth Centre our beautiful Jai arrived in the big birth pool with Phil in the pool behind me. This is when it all went to shit!

Second baby Bronte (1998): Five hour posterior labour, three hour pushing stage. Hard but amazing! Supported beautifully by Phil. Born in water at our home in Concord. Maggie was our midwife and Lucretia our doula. Witnessed by my daughter Jai, my mum and Phil's mum.

Third baby Riley (1999): Two and a half hour labour. We had moved to the Blue Mountains. I was one of those women (who I've since come to know) who didn't want to bother the midwife in case it wasn't really labour yet! I called her too late and Riley arrived five minutes before Maggie and was caught by Lucretia. Phil was my rock and eyeballed me throughout. Witnessed by my daughters Jai and Bronte, my mother-in-law and my dear friend Rell. Another fabulous experience.

Fourth baby Maya (2001): 75minute labour. Rang Mags after first contraction! She was born at nearly 43 weeks gestation after drinking castor oil (which I now regret). Mags made it! Lucretia and Nat were my doulas. Phil was in the pool with me and caught our darling little girl. Witnessed by Jai and Bronte (Riley fast asleep, it was 4am). The feeling in my home that morning was simply beautiful. All the kids hopped in to the sofa bed with me in the lounge room. Surrounded by a fabulous support team. My mum arrived soon after and my dad arrived a few hours later with champagne (it was his birthday too). Magical memories!

### **What year did you become involved with HAS, why did you become involved and what did you do within the organisation?**

I went to my first HAS meeting when Bronte was six weeks old. The committee was in dire need of assistance and I came home as treasurer. Soon after that I dropped the treasurer role and became coordinator and Birthings editor. I got involved because I wanted to give something back and I wanted to be involved in something that was 'just for me' with likeminded passionate women. I was officially a birth junkie and felt I was part of this secret little club that 'knew' and had experienced something truly incredible. I wanted to support and educate other women to have the experience that I was fortunate enough to have.

### **What have you been doing in your own life since being involved with HAS and 'Where are you now'?**

I worked as a doula and childbirth educator in the Blue Mountains for many years, primarily in homebirth. Continued in my role with HAS for about eight years. Became National Convenor of Homebirth Australia and remained in this role for five years. Assisted with organising the 2002 Homebirth Conference in Katoomba, the 2006 Homebirth Conference in Geelong, the 2007 midwives retreat in Katoomba, the 2008 Homebirth Conference in Sydney and the 2011 Homebirth conference in Newcastle.

Heavily involved in lobbying and advocacy for homebirth for many years. Co-organised the 'Mother of all Rallies' in Canberra in 2009. Studied Bachelor of Midwifery (BMid) at UTS and have been in private practice for 3 years.

I have to say the three years studying BMid were the most challenging of my life. Juggling a family of four young children, a partner who worked shift work, continuing to support past clients as a doula and studying full time was really, really hard. The hospital placements were soul destroying and I often wondered what on earth I was doing. I had 2 mantras: "Cooperate and graduate" and "If I can make the smallest bit of difference to a woman's experience, then I can keep going." I'm so pleased I did!

### **Are you still active in homebirth advocacy?**

Yes, however I have resigned from my role with Homebirth Australia. They now have a fabulous, passionate, educated, hardworking, amazing committee. I remain as an advisor to the committee and am 'brought in' when complex issues arise that they feel they need assistance with. I continue to lobby the government, speak with my local member, write my letters and submissions and try to keep up with the ever changing rules and regulations.

### **What changes have you seen over the years in respect to birth choices?**

WOW! That's a huge question and there is way too much writing needed to answer it in its entirety. The biggest changes that stand out to me over the past 16 years include.

1. Successfully lobbying the government and lots of hard work by many birth related organisations to change the Nurses Act to The Nurses and Midwives Act. Therefore allowing midwifery to stand as a profession in its own right. This led to the commencement of the BMi, where students could enrol in a three year degree which was specifically about midwifery and no longer had to do a three year nursing degree with one year tacked on the end, which focused on midwifery.

2. 2001 brought the loss of insurance for private practice midwives. This was due to global factors; the collapse of the insurance market after September 11 and a landmark obstetric birth injury case proving a payout of \$14.2 million in 2001. This figure was double that of the previously highest awarded payment for birth injury. Guild Insurance was the company providing indemnity at the time and they made a straightforward economic decision. With just under 200 privately practicing midwives paying approximately \$800 per annum, there was simply not a large enough pool to fund a payout of the magnitude mentioned above.

3. In 2009 The Federal Government established a National Registration and Accreditation Scheme for all Health Professionals. This required all health professionals to provide evidence of medical or professional indemnity insurance to secure their registration. After The Mother of all Rallies, privately practicing midwives were granted an exemption until July 2013 from needing to have insurance for the 'birth part' of a woman's care. To date, a full insurance policy is still not available to midwives in private practice, therefore it is currently feared that private midwives will not be able to register once the exemption runs out in July 2013.

4. The establishment of several publicly funded homebirth programs. Offering more choice to women who meet the inclusion criteria.

5. The establishment of 'the eligible midwife', where midwives can apply for Medicare accreditation in order to receive a Medicare Provider Number. This enables their clients to claim back some of their out-of-pocket expenses for the nine months of care their midwife provides them. Whilst in many ways this is a step forward, I am not planning to apply for eligible notation while the current Determination remains in place. I strongly believe all women have the right to decide their maternity care and carer without the enforcement of collaboration with an obstetrician or Doctor. I also believe that midwives are specialists in normal labour and birth and as such are able to make decisions in collaboration with the woman, about her care. I must add here that I am not criticising midwives who have chosen to be eligible; it's just not for me as it currently stands. Each to her own.

### **What do you hope to see for the future of homebirth in Australia?**

I really don't know what the future holds. I hope that the government gives private practice midwives an exemption forever for needing to have insurance for 'the birth part' of a woman's care, though this is highly unlikely. I hope that private practice midwifery without the need for collaboration remains an option for women. I hope women considered 'high risk' by the powers that be will still be able to legally employ a midwife to care for them throughout their pregnancies and births, without risks to their midwives registration.

I hope that midwifery organisations will include consumer voices when creating and endorsing new policy and frameworks and work closely on a political level with the very people who are seeking their services and are keeping them employed. I think medical dominance over women and birth has created a social movement that endeavours to protect birthing alternatives. The women's voices are strong and the women lobbying for change are often highly skilled in political action. Just as in birth, the midwives and the women must stand strong, side by side, in partnership, when lobbying for change.

"Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change that we seek." (Obama, 2009)

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# Where Are They Now?

## Robyn Dempsey



^ Robyn, Pat Davda, Elaine Norling, Ina May Gaskin, Maggie Lecky Thompson and Heni Ligamot [1997]



^ Robyn [2011]

### Family:

Yes, I have one... Oh, you want me to talk about my family? My darling husband Bryan, and three beautiful homebirthed children, Jamie (21), Luke (19) and Tayla (12).

### Why did you choose homebirth and who was your midwife/midwives?

I birth at home because it's the safest option for me. I was pregnant during my midwifery training, and if one more obstetrician said "Well, you'll be a C-section, won't you!" one more time, I was going to scream.

The lovely Maggie Lecky Thompson was my midwife for Jamie and Luke. Jenny Fenwick was my midwife for Tayla.

### Tell us a little bit about your own birthing experiences.

Jamie – After hosting a dinner party with my sister and her boyfriend, I felt my first sensations. That was at 10pm. By 1am I was screaming in the bath with Bryan telling me to shut up!! So I told HIM to call the midwife, since HE wasn't coping. (I guess that's like in hospital when they offer an epidural because the woman's noises are upsetting the staff!).

So around 1.30am Maggie arrived. Somewhere in there I had a vaginal exam, and was a whopping 1cm dilated! Maggie went for a nap on our lounge, I carried on...

Really, to cut a long story short, labour continued, by around 6am I requested another vaginal exam... 4cm. Funny enough, I wasn't bothered by this, as I knew my sensations were good and strong. Within an hour and a half I was fully dilated and pushed him out by 7.45am! I can still remember the astonishment; that it was a baby! Laying back, a squirming bundle of arms and legs was placed on my tummy. It's odd how you can't really get a good look at your baby this way.

The midwife was keen for the placenta to be born and asked me to tug on the cord, which I did, a little too hard. I think the placenta came, but so did 1000mls of blood...

I remember Maggie giving me a drug to stop haemorrhage and then throwing up as it hit my system. It was very effective though.

I refused to transfer to hospital for a transfusion and promised to take iron tablets and rest. It took me a week to get out of bed without feeling dizzy and the best part of a year to recover! But I DID recover – I wish I'd known about placenta medicine back then! Jamie weighed 2600g.

Luke – I remember waking in the early morning, staring out the window to a moonlit sky and seeing a cat run across the back yard. I was soooooo hungry, so I made myself eggs on toast for breakfast. Some vague sensations were playing around my back, but nothing serious.

By the time the rest of the family was up, around 7am I guess, I was having REALLY STRONG 10 second contractions. It was so weird, I'd feel them building, and then they'd be gone!

Hubby called Maggie and she arrived around 8.30am. I honestly was surprised to see her, apparently I had been 'groaning' a bit! Well, I was embarrassed, as I didn't feel labour was progressing that fast. A vaginal exam showed me to be 7 cm! I was so surprised, but it focused me into getting on with the job.

Looking back, I would say the strong labour started at 10am, we had a birth pool, which I got in, but it really wasn't working for me; I'm not one for the water anyway. So I got out. Time passed, and the midwife said she was going to get some lunch.

I couldn't voice it at the time, but I didn't want her to leave, so I stuck my finger in my vagina and broke my waters, as I knew this would make the midwife stay put! I soaked a favourite pillow that I was sitting on, but, hey, pillows can be replaced!

Man that next contraction was a 'hum dinger!' (I can STILL remember it 19 years later!!). I felt Luke move down in the pelvis and make his way out – he was born at 12.30pm (I would say a two and a half hour labour). I asked that Maggie have the Syntocinon ready this time in case I haemorrhaged, but of course I didn't.

Jamie had seen Luke being born, and I reckon he wonders to this day how Luke got the farm animal set through my vagina that he (Luke) gave as a 'big brother' present! Luke was my biggest baby at 3kg.

Tayla – Bit of a short story really. I woke at 2am, went to the loo as all pregnant women do, and noticed I'd had a 'show'. "Cool!" I thought, "Hadn't had one of those with the others!" So I scrambled back into bed. About an hour later my waters broke! I popped on a pad, and forced myself back to sleep...

By 3.45 I had to get up, the dull back ache was getting annoying. As I got up a really strong sensation rippled through me. I called the midwife. Whilst on the phone, she said "I'll be right there", and hung up! Odd I thought... I waddled into the bathroom and checked my own cervix... there wasn't one!

I told my husband that the midwife wasn't going to make it and was it okay with him. (Too bad if it wasn't hey!).

I made myself comfy on the loo. Staring at the bathmat and the wet towels from the night before, I figured, oh well, who cares. (I HAD washed all the 'birthing towels' and collected the bits and pieces we all get together for a homebirth, but that was in the other room – WAAAY too far away and waaay too difficult a concept to communicate to my husband).

So, I knelt down on the old, slightly damp, bathmat. I thought vaguely about the bright lights in the bathroom (bright), but also didn't care. Within 45 minutes I'd given birth to one beautiful baby girl, (which was 20 minutes after I'd called the midwife). We wrapped her in the damp towels and someone covered me in a rug that had dog hair all

over it!!!! Guess Tayla got her immunity early! I was back in bed within about 2 hours of starting labour. My kind of labour! Tayla was a whopping 2500g! (Basically I coughed and she fell out!)

**What year did you become involved with HAS, why did you become involved and what did you do within the organisation?**

I became involved with HAS when I was pregnant with Jamie. I got asked to a meeting by Cathy Isackson who I was working with at the time. After that meeting I was elected Vice Coordinator!!!

From that time on I held just about every position there was! I've done the newsletter, dragged two kids and run stalls at the various festivals, and even, back in the day, organised bush dances!

**What have you been doing in your own life since being involved with HAS and 'Where are you now'?**

I'm currently working in a group midwifery practice with five others. Right now I'm sitting at my computer typing this, wondering if I'll have time to change out of my PJs in time for my first client .

**Are you still active in homebirth advocacy?**

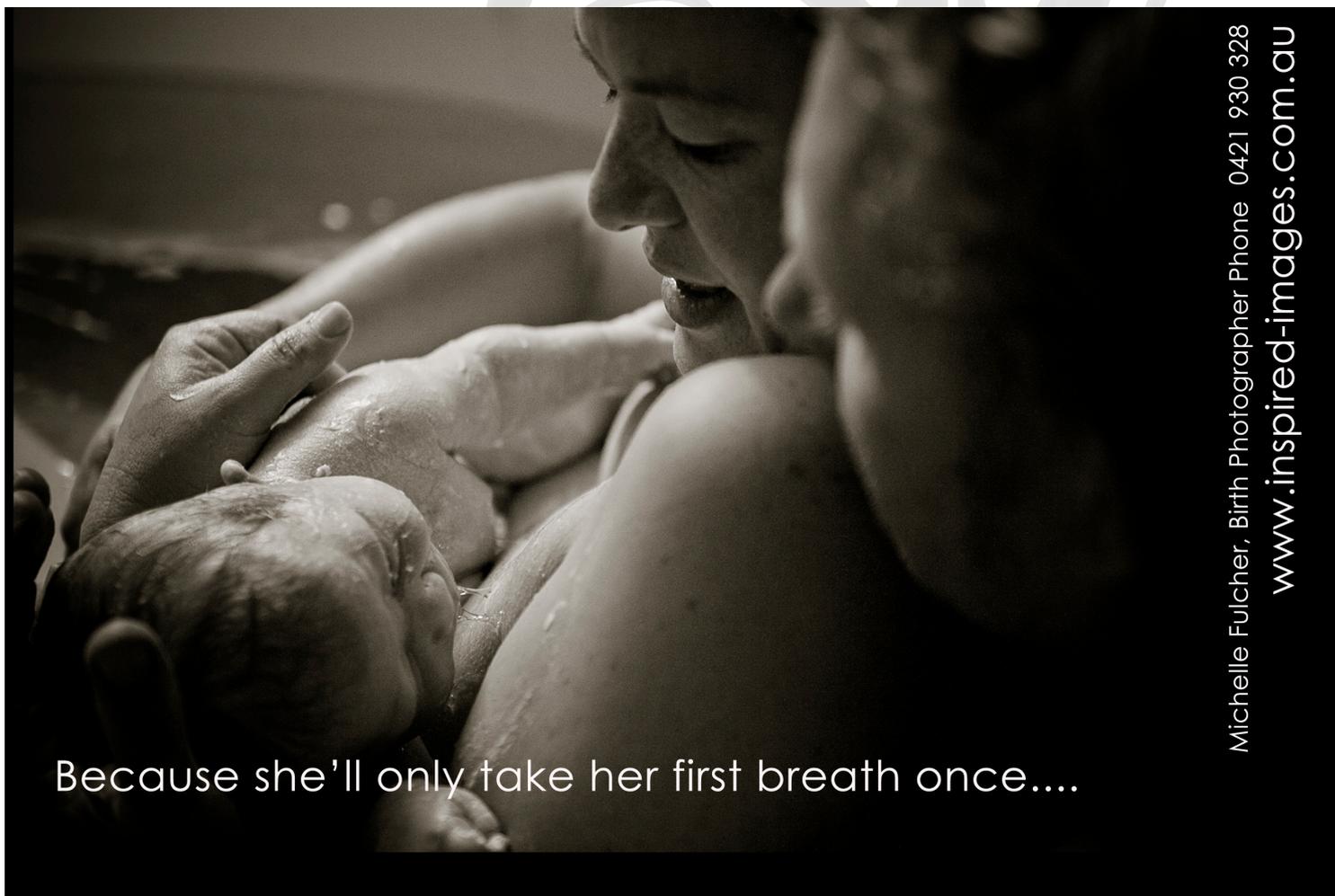
Always was and imagine I always will be.

**What changes have you seen over the years in respect to birth choices?**

How much time have you got? Nothing for about 20 years, then it all came in a rush in 12 months with Medicare and Insurance. What's really sad is it's split the homebirth community in two; 'Medicare' midwives and those without (but that's a story for another time...).

**What do you hope to see for the future of homebirth in Australia?**

We are going through a difficult labour, but if we stay strong and work together as a team, the beautiful baby will be born. This baby will offer choice to women no matter where and with whom they want to give birth.



Because she'll only take her first breath once....

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# Where Are They Now?

## Shea, Jane & Sheryl



^ Shea, Jane and Sheryl in 1987



^ Shea, Sheryl and Jane in 2007



### Shea Caplice:

What I am doing now? Sitting writing this at the airport in Bundaberg after speaking at an International Midwives Day dinner held last night here. A wonderful group of midwives and doctors attended and I spoke on one of my pet subjects 'Fear'. So these days I am passionate about handing on what I have learnt through workshops and talks around the country.

I feel I have run the gauntlet of midwifery since my student midwife days, from a short stint as a labour ward midwife, many years as a midwife and manager in a Birth Centre, setting up team midwifery and setting up the first publicly funded homebirth service in NSW. Throughout my career I have been attending homebirths as well and it is these that have been my midwifery soul food and my cradle of learning. It is that for which I am most grateful. All the wonderful homebirths I have attended and the clients I have had, I remember them all. I'm so thankful for the connections I have had with so many families. Blessings to you all.

I now coordinate a group midwifery practice that targets Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families in Sydney. This is both rewarding and challenging work. As the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies die at double the rate of other babies, it is a priority area for good midwifery and I feel a worthwhile use of my skills.

My filmmaking career began in the year 2000 and I have made many films since the first and best selling 'The Art of Birth'. My most recent film is about men and grief. The visual image to me says so much more than words and I love the process of filmmaking from 'conception to birth'. The films are an integral part of my handing on of what I have learnt too.

I still attend the occasional homebirth and, of course, it remains a passion... cannot think of myself in the future as never attending any births so hopefully even when I am very old I will still have that opportunity albeit with a lot more knitting in the corner I suspect.

What a privilege being a midwife has been and my beautiful sistas Jane and Sheryl I do not know what I would do without them? Although our times together now are not as numerous, they both remain diamonds in my life.



### Jane Hardwicke Collings:

My journey from the time of the Group Midwifery Practice (24 years ago), which was 'a first' at that time, to now, has taken many twists and turns. Not long after that photo I started learning about shamanic practices and incorporating them into my midwifery practice. I have had some wonderful teachers over the years - Maggie Lecky Thompson, James Blackbear Harvey, Jeannine Parvati Baker, Cedar Barstow, and all the women I had the privilege and honour to serve, as well of course my Beloveds and our children. Incorporating a shamanic framework into birth really cracked the whole thing open for me and I was initiated into the women's mysteries.

We left Manly in 1993 and lived on the land in the bush in Kangaroo Valley - a life changing experience for me. I became connected to the Earth, the Source, and the cycles in a way that city life really didn't enable for me. I was a country midwife during that time and 'raised' our children on our little 'farm'. It was challenging and hard at times and I loved it. We also had the experience of coming and going to the city, so had plenty of that 'excitement' as well. After eight years in the bush, we lived overseas for a while, and then

settled again in the Southern Highlands 10 years ago. I began giving 'Pregnancy the Inner Journey Workshops' and 'Moonsong Workshops' (about the women's mysteries) on our property. I wrote 'Thirteen Moons', the how to chart your menstrual cycle handbook and journal and 'Spinning Wheels', a woman's ready reckoner of the cycles; 'Ten Moons', the 'Inner Journey of Pregnancy', and 'Becoming a Woman', a guide for girls approaching menstruation, during the first half of the 2000s. I was one of the local homebirth midwives in the country town and I loved the like-minded community this created. This community grew into what was called EarthDance and gathered, and still does, to celebrate the seasonal Sabbats, puberty and menarche rites of passage, women's circles and maiden's circles.

At the request of a young midwife, which to me felt like a 'call to action', in 2007, I created The School of Shamanic Midwifery in 2009. The School is a women's mysteries school, which offers programs that teach the mysteries and how to facilitate transformation, learning this firstly on oneself. I'm not 'catching' babies now; I'm teaching and writing full time. My teaching includes the School of Shamanic Midwifery programs, other workshops, presenting at conferences and gatherings, and writing for publications and through my websites. My direction has gone deeper into the shamanic and ceremonial aspects and my current focus is on making an 'app' for the spiritual practice of menstruation, writing a book called *Birthing With The Goddess*, creating and giving online courses, co-creating Red Tents and gatherings and festivals, co-creating an Australian Women's Mysteries Teacher Circle, raising consciousness and, as I always say, "Working for the Goddess".

My connection with Shea and Sheryl remains a total rock for me. We love to imagine ourselves as the three witches and get together as often as we can, and our grown up children are all very dear friends. We are blessed, and I give great thanks.



^ Sheryl with baby Erin Day

## Sheryl Sidery:

The three of us came together 25 years ago, all newish midwives who had all been midwife to each other (or had yet to be) and all had done their extraordinary 'apprenticeship' with the wonderful Jane. We each had a child born within eight months of each other (Jane's second, Shea's first and my third) at the time that photo was taken although the babies in the photo are not ours. We had a lot in common; our mothering, our philosophy of birth and the importance of midwifery.

In the years that followed we worked together in a group practice, then Jane moved to the country and Shea and I worked together for many of the past 20 years. Jane had another child, with Shea and me as her midwives, and then I had my fourth with Shea by my side. For the most part of 22 years I have worked at the Royal Hospital for Women in Sydney whilst combining this with my homebirth practice and mothering my four children. For 15 years I worked in a team of seven in the infamous Birth Centre. Eight years ago my personal circumstances changed which led to my needing to work Monday to Friday. I created the role of midwifery consultant for perinatal mental

health and, whilst this may seem a long way from being a homebirth midwife, the position provided me with the opportunity to learn a lot about the emotional development of the newborn, attachment theory and how our experience of being parented affects how we birth and how we mother.

My youngest turned 16 last year which enabled me to move into one of the group practices. I am fortunate to work with a small team of wonderful midwives. I have also continued working as an independent midwife (not sure how really!) having cared for over 300 women. I am as passionate about midwifery today as I was 27 years ago when I first completed my training. I feel privileged every day, with every woman I am with. I've been midwife to most of my friends; an incredible honour. I learn something new every day and never tire of the miracle of birth and the newborn.

My practice has changed a lot over the years. I feel the essence of midwifery is so much about the woman's (and her partner's) transition to parenthood, focusing on their relationship and how to care for their baby. So much of the information women are provided with in 'mainstream care' does not prepare women for birth or motherhood.

In recent years I have been fortunate to be midwife to a few of my children's friends which means I guess that I am getting older but it also speaks volumes about how my kids represent 'the cause'. I love how passionate they are about birth and midwifery. My youngest daughter is training to be a nurse to then do midwifery. Even my grumpy teenager asks me how the birth went after I've come home in the wee hours. So life is good. I sometimes wonder how long I can climb out of bed at 3am and how much longer can I be 'on call'? But whenever I think about that I come home from a birth, riding that massive high...

Independent midwifery is by far the best care that a family can have. We must preserve homebirth. Most practitioners, who have only ever worked within the confines of the 'institution', have never really seen the true beauty of childbirth. Amazingly beautiful women, giving birth powerfully and intuitively to extraordinary newborns with loving supportive partners, who then go on to instinctively mother. Having said that I do believe that with the right relationship between a woman and her midwife, a woman can have a great birth anywhere (providing she goes home as soon as possible after the birth).

Midwifery has given me so much. I am humbled, thankful and grateful to all the women I have cared for, for sharing that incredible time in their life with me. The three of us will be connected as sisters for the rest of our lives. If ever I need some 'sense' in my life it's one or both of them whom I call. I love that our children are close too. We are family.



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# Where Are They Now?

## Leah Bloomfield

### Family:

Daughter Tessa, son Daniel, husband Robin (not their father).

### Why did you choose homebirth and who was your midwife/midwives?

I disliked having stay in hospital after first baby, Tessa, was born but didn't have the confidence or partner support to go home. As her birth had been easy and as Daniel's father was born at home in Ireland and was supportive, homebirth was a natural choice. Midwife was Maggie Lecky-Thompson.

### Tell us a little bit about your own birthing experiences.

Tessa was born at King George V (Sydney) in 1976. I arrived in early labour and was given oxytocin to speed it up. She was born about 8 hours later with minimal pain relief (gas). Daniel was also born after an easy 5 hour labour with no pain relief in 1980. Both babies were around 3kg, 52cm, healthy, alert and took to the breast with great enthusiasm.

### What year did you become involved with HAS, why did you become involved and what did you do within the organisation?

I contacted Homebirth Association Sydney, the precursor to the current HAS, for a midwife referral in late 1979. I was invited to meetings and found it very easy to make good friends in the group. Becoming involved with HAS gave me support and like-minded companionship after Daniel was born, enabled me to give something back to HAS and gave me opportunities to extend support to other home birth families. I had previous advocacy experience in the women's movement and I enjoyed using those skills to help produce the monthly newsletter, lobbying (oh the endless parliamentary submissions!), organising conferences and fund raising.

### What have you been doing in your own life since being involved with HAS and 'Where are you now'?

In terms of family, both children have been independent for a very long time and I have re-partnered. Incidentally, Tessa has a 9 year old son, also born at home. I had part-time paid work from the time Daniel was 1 year old. I returned to study when he was 6, which led to full-time academic work when he was 12. This continues. In my spare time I focus on music, dance, reading and gardening.

### Are you still active in homebirth advocacy?

Not active in HAS since 1985 but I always present a pro-homebirth view in discussions about birth options. Advocacy work has become limited to signing email petitions – but I do a lot of those.

### What changes have you seen over the years in respect to birth choices?

It's a long time since I made an effort to track developments in the area, so my views are based solely on what I see and hear from young friends. On the positive side, large metropolitan hospitals appear to have expanded and improved their birth services, early discharge with community support seems common and hospital-based midwives appear to have a higher status and more responsibility than in my time. It is tempting to believe that HAS and the other homebirth advocacy groups contributed to these positive developments. On the downside, the elective caesarean rate is higher than it was, higher than it should be.

### What do you hope to see for the future of homebirth in Australia?

I can't comment. I've been out of the loop for far too long.



^ Leah in 1982



^ Leah in 2012

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# Jeanie's Homebirth Family Tree



^ Top Row L-R: Jo Hunter (midwife), Maggie Lecky-Thompson (midwife), Jeanie Crawford, Sonja MacGregor (midwife). Bottom Row L-R: Imogen with Indigo, Rosie, Meredith with Finn and Quillan. [2012]



^ Jeanie's extended family – all of whom have been born at home or birthed their children at home.

I have my older sister Anne Lawrence to thank for my introduction to home birth. She was the first amongst family and friends to have her baby at home in 1980 and her passion and determination inspired us all to take the same path. Anne, my younger sister Kate, five of my closest friends and I had 23 homebirths between us in the 80's and early 90's. We were helped on our journey by Maggie Lecky Thompson, Akal, Geneth Frame, Sue Stewart, Joan Brandt and Namira Williams. I was also incredibly fortunate to have been at the births of some of those beautiful babies and they have all grown up to be beautiful and remarkable young men and women.

My sisters and I are the only generation on my mother's side to have been born in hospital. We are so grateful that our mother's involvement with the League of Health and interest in anthroposophy as well as her Christianity motivated her and my father to pursue gentle births and responsive parenting.

My firstborn Meredith was born with the help of the beautiful Maggie in 1984. When Meredith and her partner Simon announced their first pregnancy in 2009 I was overjoyed with the thought of being a grandmother and also by the fact that Meredith had decided to birth at home with the help of midwife Sonja MacGregor. Being at the birth of Finn and later his little brother Quillan were precious events and sharing that experience with Sonja was lovely.

My second daughter Imogen, was born in 1986 and the story of her birth appeared in the spring of 1987 edition of the HAS newsletter. Once again Maggie's wonderful presence and intuitiveness helped me to enjoy my pregnancy and to go on and have a wonderful birth in a bath, specially installed in our bedroom by my husband Gordon. There were no birthing pools in those days! Imogen and Dave's daughter Indigo was born in November 2011 with the help of Jo Hunter. Imogen and I were touched by the special connection between Maggie and Jo – some of the books Jo lent Imogen had Maggie's name inside the cover and the fetoscope Jo used to listen to Indigo's heartbeat was the same one Maggie used to listen to Imogen's heartbeat.

Rosie, my third daughter was born in 1990 after we had moved to the Blue Mountains. I developed gestational diabetes and the midwife I had chosen had some concerns and encouraged me to transfer to Katoomba Hospital. I had an easy labour, mostly at home, and the hospital staff were happy for me to have Meredith and Imogen there to see their little sister born. I was home within hours of her birth and all was well.

I have so much gratitude and love for the courageous, intelligent, compassionate, wise, skilful and beautiful midwives who continue against all the odds to serve families so well. Thank you in particular to Maggie, Namira, Sonja and Jo.

And I have so much love and admiration for my passionate, intelligent, loving, creative and gorgeous daughters –Meredith, Imogen and Rosie - who fully embrace life and its joys and challenges.

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# Homebirthing In The Mid 1900s:

As most of us homebirthers will know, homebirthing doesn't always elicit positive emotions in others, and my own homebirth was no different. When I told my sister of our intentions, her reply was a horrified "Oh Kim!"

So it was an absolute delight to have a good old natter with Treya's great granny Hilda, who herself homebirthed both her sons in Germany in the early 1950s. There wasn't a hint of fear... in fact it all sounded so normal!

Hilda's biological mother was unmarried at the time of falling pregnant in the 1920s, and for this reason, she chose to put Hilda up for adoption. As a result, Hilda herself was born in hospital. However, all three of her siblings were born at home in the 1930s. Hilda went on to birth both sons, Harry and Edgar at home. Here is her story.

Kim (K): So both Harry and Edgar were born at home. Was that a normal thing to do back in those times?

Hilda (H): Yes. See you got from the hospital a medical fund...

K: If you gave birth at home?

H: Yeah, and if you went to the hospital you didn't get this money. If you had to go... like if you had complications. Most of the women had children at home.

K: Was the money a substantial amount?

H: No, it was like Medicare.

K: Was it enough to make you want to birth at home for that reason?

H: Oh, not really. But still the money was a little bit of help. But see I was working at the hospital, and that's why I didn't want to go to the hospital.

K: Why?

H: I just didn't like the idea. I saw the way the women were laying there and waiting and waiting and the nurse came in occasionally and towards the end, the midwife, and if they needed a doctor, he came too.... I just wanted to be at home because it is more private.

K: Did you have to visit the hospital to get checked up or did the doctor come to your home?

H: With Harry, I saw a doctor to confirm the pregnancy. I was 3 months pregnant. After this I never saw a doctor again until after the birth - I had a midwife. We saw her once when we booked in, and then I saw her again at the birth.

K: Tell me about Harry's birth.

H: I had the flu. I was in bed. And then I started (early) on the Thursday morning. Every 10 minutes and then every five minutes and then my brother went to get the midwife at lunchtime, but she didn't turn up until 4pm. She said it was my first birth so it needed longer time. So Harry was born on Friday morning at 5.15am. (I laboured) more than 24 hours.

K: So where in your house did you give birth?

H: Oh, in my bed in my bedroom! [Laughing, as though that was a silly question]. No, really it was the lounge room, because it was very cold. And there they put my bed in the lounge room because I had the flu. That's where Harry was born. Anyway he was born... he came out and the midwife put him somewhere straight away and covered him up and fixed me up first and I ask her "Can I see the baby?" and she say "No, you wait, you have to be cleaned up first" and I got told it was a boy. And after she finished with me she gave



^ Hilda and her great granddaughter Treya.

Harry a bath and dressed him up and that's when I saw him for the first time. He was six and a half metric pounds. (Approximately 3.250 kilos, I think).

K: Were there any complications in the birth?

H: No, the only thing was he had the cord wrapped around his neck and they had to cut (it) straight away to get him free. So he was already red like a lobster [laughs].

K: And so that was your first birth. How did you find it? Did you think it was easy? Hard? Scary?

H: No I just took it the way it was. ... Couldn't do much about it [laughs].

K: So was it Edgar who was big?

H: With Edgar, I was living in the Black Forest and there I saw the doctor more often because I had troubles with my legs. I had really big veins and once the doctor put 12 leeches on to suck the blood out. I had more problems with Edgar's pregnancy. I had a special girdle, because I couldn't carry him alone. I needed the girdle to, you know, hold it up. But I was going to work six weeks before he was born. And ah... one morning my mother came over and asked me if I come to church, and I said "No, I am not going, I am not feeling well". I said 'If you see the doctor, then tell him if he doesn't come today and do something, then I go to the hospital'.

K: Because you were overdue?

H: Yes, by 3 weeks, and I told the doctor... the doctor always told me...

K: You must have got your dates wrong?

H: Yes.... and I said "Listen I know exactly when it was happen" (laughs) because a few days later I said to Herbert already "I am pregnant" and he said "You're joking." I just (had) a feeling... yeah.

K: So you said "If you see the doctor, send him 'round"?

H: Yes, my mother told the doctor and anyway he came around at about 11 o'clock. The funny thing was, for about three weeks, at least four times we called the midwife. I had contractions but every time, the moment she came, they stopped, automatically. They just stopped. And the midwife said (laughing) "I think you never get your baby" (laughing). Anyway, the doctor came and he gave me an injection at about 11 o'clock and then I started straight away

# A Great Granny's Perspective

and then half past 11 he gave me the second one. He says "I think it works" and then Edgar was born at 4.45 in the afternoon. .A five hour labour, it was very strong because I got the injection, you know. But the doctor was there, he stayed because the first time I split and I had to be stitched. The doctor said that he would like to avoid this. When Edgar was born he was 12 half (metric) pound.... six and quarter kilos.

K: He was six plus kilos? That's massive. Are you sure that's how big?

H: Yes, he was three centimetres longer than what a baby should be. ...I don't know the exact measurements. I just remember he was three centimetres more than a normal baby.

K: And do you have a little birth certificate with all his measurements on it?

H: No, we didn't do that then.

K: So tell me about how you actually birthed him. Were you lying down?

H: Yes, I was in bed.

K: Lying on your back?

H: Yes.

K: So it wasn't the done thing to birth, say, on your knees?

H: No, just in your bed.

K: But you had a lot of pain with Edgar didn't you? It was a hard birth wasn't it?

H: Oh yes the pain was stronger from the injections but it went fairly quick then.

K: So which was harder? Edgar or Harry?

H: Edgar

K: But you didn't tear?

H: No, thanks to the doctor's help. When the time came he always told me exactly what to do. When to push and when to stop and he was pushing against this...

K: On your perineum?

H: Yes, and then suddenly he just... 'psssst'... he came out. He flopped out.

K: And was he taken away like Harry was?

H: Yes, I saw him and I had ironed in the cot a pink set and a blue set (of clothes) and I said to the midwife take the one what you need and she took the blue one and I said "Oh no!" because I wanted a girl, definitely. With Harry, the first time I could feed him was the day after. At 9am the midwife came, fixed me up first, gave Harry a bath, and then she put (him) on and I couldn't move because I had this much milk. It was really painful. With Edgar the same. He got fed the day after, now you put the babies on straight away.

K: Or we let them climb there themselves if they want.

H: No, not in my time.

K: So did the midwife help you to breastfeed or did your mum teach you?

H: No, the midwife. I didn't have any ideas.

K: No neither did I! (laughs)

H: With Harry, I didn't see a doctor and I only listened to what people had to tell me. It's all what I knew. With Harry I had (lots of) milk. I was feeding the dog and the cat! I didn't have this much (with Edgar) but I still had enough.

K: Until what age did you feed them both?

H: Only six weeks. No, Harry I fed a little longer, maybe 8 weeks. With Edgar I had to go back to work. I had only six weeks off. But Edgar couldn't take the change from mother's milk to normal milk. He was sick and throwing up all the time and I had to put him in hospital. When he was in hospital he got whooping cough because in the hospital they brought a baby in and they didn't realise straight away that he had it and the whole room got whooping cough. Six babies... they were all young.

K: And when he got home did you put him back on the boob?

H: No, we gave them oats. I cooked oats. We didn't have these fine oats, we had the big ones. I'd cook them with water, and put them through a strainer, and mix it with half milk and half of this stuff. Once, when Harry was four or five weeks old, I didn't have the oats cooked and a neighbour gave me formula and I gave it to Harry. And the moment I gave it to him it, everything came out, he vomited. He couldn't take it.

K: So formula did exist?

H: Yes, but I got told by the midwife to give them the oats, and so that's what I did.

I started (solids) fairly early. Maybe 4 or 5 months. Mind you, I had to put them through the strainer.

K: Do you remember at what point in time homebirthing lost popularity in Germany?

H: No. We left Germany in 1960 and there was still more homebirths than hospital births.

Hilda shared other parts of the story off camera, which were intriguing but not to be shared with all you wonderful Mamas. I left amazed at her strength and persistence, her acceptance of what was and feeling almost envious in some ways that homebirthing was so embraced by the wider community in Germany at that time. So... to Treya's amazing Great Granny Hilda Griesberg, I thank you for sharing your life story with us and for reinforcing in me the belief that women are born to birth... wherever they feel most empowered!

KIM RYDER



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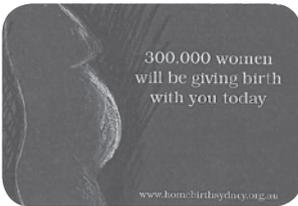


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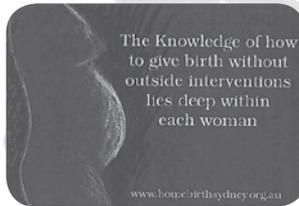


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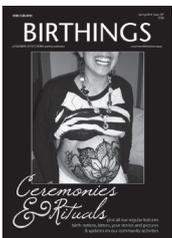


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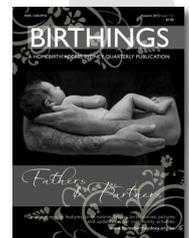
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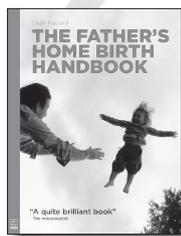


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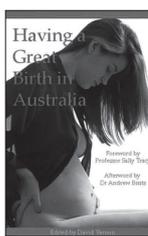
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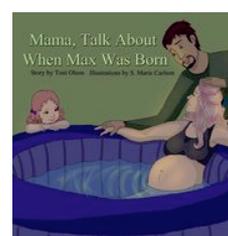
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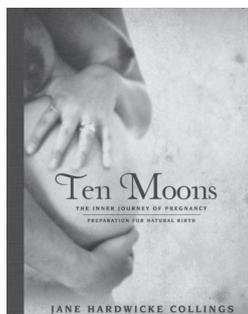
**HAVING A GREAT BIRTH IN AUSTRALIA**  
David Vernon  
This is a collection of candid stories from 20 Australian women who have recently given birth. These stories tell, with honesty and insight, about the challenges and joys of childbirth. Each of these women discovered the value of being able to make informed decisions about their maternity care and with the right care, had positive and empowering birth experiences.  
Aust 2005  
012BK \$24.95



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



**MAMA, TALK ABOUT WHEN MAX WAS BORN**  
Toni Olson  
This tells the story of Max's birth, which takes place at home in water. Max's older sister likes to hear about when Mama first learned that she was pregnant; about seeing the midwives; about preparing for Max's arrival and finally his water birth in their living room.  
\$25.00



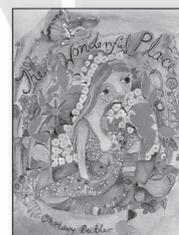
**TEN MOONS BOOK**  
Jane Hardwicke Collings  
A unique guide to pregnancy and birth. This book offers practical tools and suggestions to help women reconnect with the spiritual side of birth. The spiritual journey of pregnancy and natural childbirth are acknowledged in relationship to the earth's natural rhythms. Subjects covered include, letting go of fear, connection with the baby inside you, yoga and meditation.  
\$25.00



**MY BROTHER JIMI JAZZ**  
Chrissy Butler  
A beautifully illustrated children's book, written from the perspective of a young girl about the homebirth of her brother Jimi Jazz. This book embraces natural active homebirth, breastfeeding, co-sleeping, cloth nappies and siblings at birth.  
Aust 2006.  
013BK \$20.00



**3 HOME BIRTH ICONS**  
DVD  
Maggie Lecky Thompson  
Honours the lives and work of Henry Ligermoet, Joan Donley and Jeannine Parvati Baker, who were passionate and fearless about maintaining a stand against ignorance and oppression regarding childbirth and early parenting.  
Aust  
017DV \$20.00



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

# Along Came Ava:

In 2007, pregnant for the first time, I knew I wanted one thing: continuity of care. Based on the experiences of those around me, I had formed the opinion that birth was a medical event. Therefore, I had determined the only option for us was to find a private obstetrician to ensure continuity of care and that ever-so-important medical expertise. I wish that back then someone would have told me that the decisions you make for your first birth will affect you for the rest of your life. I wish someone would have told me that although birth is one day is still requires a lot of preparation.

My first pregnancy ended in an elective c-section because we were told baby was too big and too high and a natural birth was just not going to happen. My second pregnancy ended in an emergency c-section because after spontaneously going into labour I was told our baby was distressed and I was not progressing. It felt wrong and I felt robbed.

Then came 2011 and we were fortunate enough to be having a third child. I was annoyed that I had let the system dictate my first two births and adamant it was not happening again. I had read statistically your chances of a vaginal birth after c-section were higher in a public hospital so I started there. I called the local public hospital's antenatal clinic and set out my story: I'd had 2 possibly unnecessary c-sections, was planning a vaginal birth and didn't want any trouble. They put me in touch with a caseload midwife who was eager to take me on and I was told this was my best bet. I was excited; this time would be different.

I had also read that statistics show having a Doula decreases intervention rates and increases positive outcomes so I was certain we needed Jacinda, an acupuncturist and doula who I met during my second pregnancy.

At 18 weeks I received a phone call from my caseload midwife advising me the team had agreed I would be fighting an uphill battle against hospital policy and procedure to have the birth I wanted. She arranged an appointment with a public obstetrician to "seek permission" for a trial of labour. I called Jacinda flabbergasted and afraid that I'd never find someone who would believe I was capable of giving birth. She suggested we look into homebirth. This was an idea way out of my comfort zone. I agreed to speak to a couple of independent midwives but we also decided to meet with the public obstetrician to hear what he had to say.

I spoke to four independent midwives about homebirth, my c-sections, the risks of repeat c-section versus the risks of vaginal birth and I could not believe how supported I felt. They all gave me the impression that I was perfectly capable of giving birth and that I was not insane for wanting to try.

When I saw the public obstetrician, however, he could not understand why I wished to deliver my baby vaginally. He agreed there were a number of risks of repeat c-section. He stated my first two c-sections were down to, "Dr having a holiday booked and just bad luck." He even informed me I had a "favourable pelvis for childbirth." In conclusion, he said he would allow a trial of scar but with conditions and that if he was not on duty on the day I went into labour, no other obstetrician there would agree to this.

Mark and I knew that if we stuck with the hospital we would end up with another c-section. But we still weren't entirely comfortable about the idea of giving birth at home so we asked an independent midwife to meet with us. Hazel was passionate about VBAC in particular. We chatted for a couple of hours and she answered every fathomable question with a well-researched and evidence-based answer so we were buzzing with excitement. We were going to do this; we were going to bring a child into the world in our home! We went to see our beloved, trusted GP to tell him the plan and his response was, "Oh no, you can't do that, your uterus doesn't work, you need to have another c-section." I laughed it off.



A few weeks later Hazel called to say her family had to relocate to Orange and she could no longer be our midwife. I was now about 22 weeks and panicking. What if we couldn't find another midwife? I met Emma and instantly loved everything she stood for; her passion, her energy, her intelligence and her faith in the human body. PLEASE BE MY MIDWIFE! It turned out that Emma worked as part of a Private Practice of Midwives and when you book with them you have a second midwife attend the birth. I loved this idea; there is safety in numbers after all. Melanie would be my second midwife.

The rest of my pregnancy was a dream. Prenatal visits with Emma were relaxed. We talked about any concerns and made plans for the birth. Finally, here was the continuity of care I had longed for since 2007. It was bliss. Jacinda and I talked through my fears, came up with coping strategies and prepared for birth. My confidence was now at 100%. I had found a birth team who believed in and supported me. We went to a local GP to get a script for some medication (syntocinon just in case) and he lectured us about homebirth being far too risky and that babies were not consumable goods that you could just throw away and try again. We laughed that off too.

At 41 weeks I developed terrible back pain and Melanie told me that the baby had turned around and was now posterior. Excellent. On Saturday night I had a show and the following day I woke in the morning feeling like something was starting. I had mild contractions throughout the day and night and then it stopped. And then nothing. Emma came to visit on Monday and she said that the baby now appeared to be anterior. She suggested that the early labour I had experienced was just to help turn the baby around.

A contraction woke me at 3am on Tuesday morning (Hunter's second birthday). By 6.30am they were so strong that I could no longer lie in bed. They were coming about every seven minutes and I just had to move through them. We had made plans to take the boys out for Hunter's birthday but I stayed home and laboured alone. I was quite tired so I tried to get some rest. Lying down slowed the contractions so I knew that it was still early. Each time one came I just had to get up, it was involuntary. I would either hop up onto my hands and knees and swing my hips in a circle or stand at the ensuite sink and sway. I had decided that 'soften', 'open', and 'release' were to be my key words so with each contraction I would take a deep breath through my nose and on the exhale I would say those three words.

After a couple of hours in the bedroom I needed a change of scenery because it just wasn't working for me anymore. I decided some fresh air would be nice so I went out into the backyard. When a contraction came I would pace Mark's beautiful garden and I would look at the plants, the water fountain and the Buddha while breathing and saying soften, open, release. This was so calming and refreshing, just what I needed. But then the silence of the house became deafening. I went in and turned some music on and danced with each

# Our Journey to A Homebirth After Two C-Sections



contraction. Finally my boys came home. As much as I enjoyed the time alone I was so happy to see them. We had lunch together and then put them down for a nap.

Now it was time to try a bath. Again the contractions slowed right down and it was lovely just to get some rest after spending so long pacing and dancing! After 45 minutes my three year old burst into the bathroom declaring that he needed to do a poo. The moment was lost and I got out. I found that pacing around the dining table furiously shaking my hands was a good way to distract myself from the pain.

On some occasions Mark would hold an ice pack to the small of my back while I swayed through contractions and this felt good but I needed more of a distraction. I decided to cook some bolognese sauce. Hunter loves pasta and it was his birthday after all. So at around 4pm I started grating carrot, capsicum, onion and mushroom to make a healthy dinner. By now I'd stopped timing contractions as it was too consuming.

Jacinda had told me that sometimes it's not the regularity of contractions that indicates a woman has reached established labour but her demeanour between contractions. So when I burst into tears at 5.30pm we knew something was happening. Mark asked me to call Jacinda and Emma. Emma said I sounded like I was doing very well and that I was now establishing. She said she would come whenever I needed her to. During the ten minute conversation with Emma I had three powerful contractions and I realised how close together they now were. Meanwhile, Mark was trying to get the boys fed, bathed and in bed an hour ahead of schedule and he was successful!

Jacinda arrived shortly after 6pm and it felt so good to see a fresh face. We stayed in the bedroom where I would rest on the floor between contractions and rock on the fit ball breathing through them. From the moment Jacinda arrived I didn't once check the time. Mark joined us once the boys were in bed. We realised we hadn't filled the pool yet nor did we know how long it would take so off he went again!

It was just before dark when Jacinda suggested I get in the pool. We headed to the lounge room. Ah, the serenity. The heat of the water and the sensation against my skin was just what I needed. I was so incredibly relaxed. I decided it was time to call Emma. I needed to know our baby was ok. When she arrived she was so discreet I hardly

noticed and I was so focused that I could barely acknowledge her. She observed me and checked the baby's heart rate and assured me we were both doing really well.

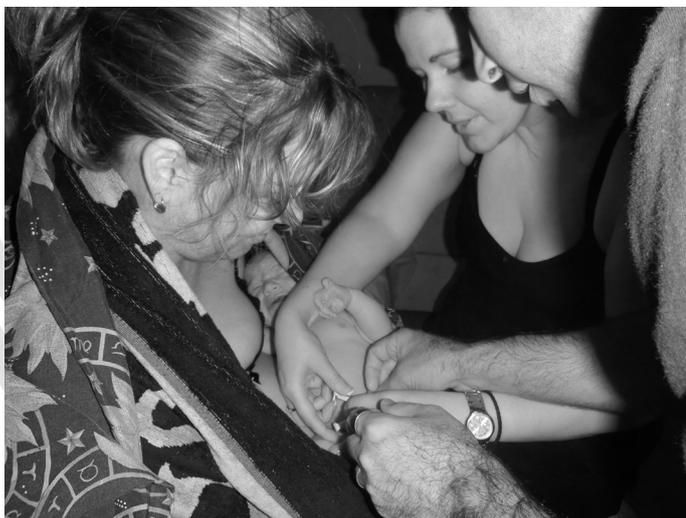
I must say, I felt like a goddess. Here I was, laying in a pool, surrounded by gentle, caring people catering to my needs. I was constantly offered drinks, I was fanned, water was poured over me, cold compresses held to my face and neck, music played and hot water added to the pool on request. There was no place in the world I would rather be.

But then it started to get really hard. The breaks were shorter, the contractions were longer, the pain was more painful. At some point I started really chanting OPEN and OUT on the out breath and found that I could not handle the contraction without yelling these words. I also started banging the side of the pool with my hands as the motion seemed a good distraction from the pain.

The pain in my back became quite unbearable so Emma tried applying pressure, which really helped. Mark then got in the pool. I knelt on all fours while he pressed hard on my back and Jacinda held my hands. A few times I complained that it was getting too hard and taking too long and Emma would reassure me I was doing a fantastic job and making great progress.

Finally something started to change. It wasn't anything I had control over but what my body did with contractions turned from coping through them to working with them. It was at this point that I asked Emma if we should check to see how dilated I was because I was afraid of pushing if I wasn't yet there. Emma was amazing. She told me to listen to my body, it knew what to do. She suggested we get through a few more contractions and if I wasn't sure she would check dilation.

Only a few contractions later I felt my water break and Emma again reassured me this was a sign of great progress and to just go with it. My body took over. My yelling OPEN and OUT during contractions suddenly turned to silent pushing. I could feel my pelvis opening up, feel my baby coming down. I felt the head emerging and I pushed and panted and pushed and panted, feeling myself stretch and stretch. Her head popped out and I had to breathe deep and wait for the next contraction and her body was then born. My oh my what a strange feeling that was. I felt her kicking and twisting inside me as she wriggled out and I exclaimed, "What the f\*\*\* is that?!"



It was 12:16am. "Sit back and pick up your baby," Emma instructed. This two seconds lasted an eternity. As I reached my hands into the water and lifted out my beautiful baby girl I was in absolute awe of what had just happened. She took her first breath in my arms with Mark right there with us. We confirmed that she was a girl and just sat there holding her, amazed by her, absorbing the moment. Mark went and got the boys out of bed.

Emma suggested I get out of the pool. I climbed out onto the lounge holding my baby in my arms. The cord stopped pulsing so Mark clamped and cut it. Jordan was too tired to participate and wanted to go back to bed but Hunter was mesmerised and refused to leave his sister's side.

I sat feeding Ava, trying to work with the contractions push the placenta out but I just couldn't. I could feel myself fading and Emma and Melanie were starting to worry. An hour after Ava was born Emma removed my placenta using controlled cord traction and then discovered that I had a third degree tear. It was recommended we go to hospital to have it stitched so Ava and I were dressed and packed into the car. Before dressing Ava, Emma weighed her. My five foot two, 55kg body had just given birth to a 4.54kg baby!

We got to hospital at about 3am. The obstetrician wanted to repair the tear under a general anaesthetic and I agreed. Emma stayed, taking care of Ava while I was under and bringing her to me in recovery. After several hours of declaring my intention to leave I was finally given scripts and instructions and signed a form to say I was leaving against medical advice. I was at home in my own bed with my three beautiful children by lunch time. Bliss.

Would I do it again? In a heartbeat. What an amazing experience. It felt so right. Yes I ended up in hospital but I gave birth to a 4.54kg baby! How could I push that out and not need some stitches? I am so proud. I want to take my baby to every doctor who said I couldn't give birth and say, "I did it!" I've recovered beautifully, my baby is now one week old and I am on top of the world. I am so incredibly thankful to have found Jacinda, Emma and Melanie and to have such an amazing supportive husband. All it took was for them to believe in me. I can't wait to do it all over again.

KELLY LANFRANCA

### **HAS Volunteer Position Vacant.**

## **Secretary Wanted**

Our only requirements are that you are free on Tuesdays to attend our monthly meetings, have a laptop to take the minutes (or are happy to transcribe the old fashioned way) and can upload them to the group, and write a yearly report in Birthings on our activities.

Please contact us on:

[info@homebirthsydney.org.au](mailto:info@homebirthsydney.org.au)

**Free membership for successful applicant!**

### **New Homebirth Group**

#### **Western Sydney Homebirth Support Group**

Every Second Wednesday of the month

Location: 20 Millard Cres Plumpton

Time: 10:30am – 12:30pm

Contact: Veronica ph. 0415-107-601

email: [Veronica1530@yahoo.com](mailto:Veronica1530@yahoo.com)

All mamas or mamas to be are welcome.

Your little ones are welcome

to come join in and play.

If you can, bring a healthy

snack to share together,

if you can't, don't worry come anyway.



# SYDNEY PREGNANCY CENTRE

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For more information on the products, services, workshops and courses offered by and through the Sydney Pregnancy Centre please email [info@sydneypregannacyentre.com](mailto:info@sydneypregannacyentre.com) or visit [www.sydneypregnancycentre.com](http://www.sydneypregnancycentre.com)

# The Birth of Fat Flynn



I decided to have a homebirth basically because I DON'T like hospitals but I DO like my home. Why go to a place of sickness, suffering and death to carry out what God has designed to be a natural, empowering and awe-inspiring experience?

My sister-in-law, Naomi, had her second and third births at home and highly recommended it, having beautifully peaceful, easy births compared to her first hospital birth. I booked in with Naomi's midwife, Melanie, who suited us perfectly as she was so calm and laid back. My husband Jack wasn't too keen on homebirth at first, but with Melanie's answers and explanations, and some Calmbirth classes, he came to like the idea too and was amazingly supportive during both the pregnancy and birth. I'd always wanted a water birth so I borrowed Naomi's birth pool and we were set.

Then came the countdown.

35 weeks. Getting so close, not to mention a little uncomfortable.

36 weeks. Melanie said I could probably have the baby safely at home if it came soon.

37 weeks. Officially in the full term range. Started painting inspirational birth pictures.

38 weeks. Ribs hurting and stretch marks made an appearance. Bummer, thought I'd escaped them.

39 weeks. Surely it would be soon or my ribs would break! Oh well. Do some more painting.

40 weeks. Uh-oh. Starting to worry about possible induction down the track.

41 weeks. I know it's all in God's good timing, but that didn't stop me from trying acupuncture, reflexology, a long walk, sex, pineapple, raspberry leaf tea and any other medical or mythical suggestion out there... and it seems that at least one of those worked, because the next day, labour started!

On Monday morning at 2.30am I thought I had some stomach cramps so I got up and sat on the toilet, reading. I realised about 45 minutes (and about 6 'stomach cramps') later that they weren't in my digestive system at all. I went back to bed at 3.30am when contractions were about five or six minutes apart, but I couldn't sleep, I was grinning too much.

At 5am I was too excited to keep it to myself so I woke Jack up and told him I was in labour. He was so happy, and we just lay in bed and talked and cuddled for a while. I let Melanie know at 6am that I

thought I was in labour. I told my two sisters, Jess and Mel, (who were going to be with me at the birth) to come a bit later in the morning, so they arrived around 9am.

Contractions were lasting 40 seconds to a minute and were about five minutes apart, but not really painful yet, so Mel and Jess went and hired some DVDs and brought some Vietnamese noodle soup back. We watched movies and ate ice blocks all day. After we watched 'Kung-Fu Panda', contractions were regularly four minutes apart. After 'Kung-Fu Panda 2', they were a steady three. After 'Footloose', they were two minutes apart, lasting up to two minutes in length, certainly with more intensity than before. This was around 5pm and I wasn't sure if Melanie should come or not, but everyone else seemed to think that would be a good idea.

Turns out it was. By the time Melanie arrived at 6pm I wasn't sure what else to try for pain relief as it all felt like one continuous contraction so I decided to move to the birth pool. Good decision. The contractions settled into a good pattern and I now felt only the really intense contractions with a pain-free interval to rest in. We turned the lights down, put on relaxing music and stuck my paintings up. Movie time was over.

I was very relaxed, and I loved the way Melanie was so relaxed about everything. I would just tell her how I was feeling if I wanted to, and she would answer questions if I asked them, but there was no prodding and poking, or demanding orders or forceful suggestions. I just did what my body said to do.

At 7.30pm I started to groan a bit and push, and then I felt the urge to give a guttural scream with my next push, and my waters broke. After that I felt the urge to be fairly... vocal... (when mum arrived later she said the neighbours were sitting on the porch looking over at the house a bit anxiously) and soon I could feel the baby move right down my birth canal with each contraction, then slide back up with each interval. I felt like everything was working how it should although I was getting exhausted and Jack had to hold me up. Melanie and Jack were very encouraging, which kept me going.

At 8.36pm, during my second last contraction, I decided that it was time. I knew that if this little guy slid back up during an interval, I wouldn't have the energy to push him back down the canal AND out, so I held him at the entrance (I don't know how...) until the last contraction came. I gave an almighty push and out came the head at 8.39pm, followed pretty soon after by the body at 8.40pm as Melanie pulled him out. (My second midwife, Jane, arrived at 8.39pm in the seconds after the head was birthed, but before the body came out!) Meeting Flynn was indescribable. I'll just say that God has an amazing design for the beginning of life. But holding your baby in your arms for the first time is so beautiful, and we were just smiling in wonder

at this little rolled up, moving, grunting bundle of chubbiness. I don't want to sound emotionless (because I wasn't at all!) but my first thought was "He's so fat!" and as I put out my finger so his hand would close around it, I said, "This is NOT a tiny newborn hand! It's huge!" And then we were just laughing at how floppy and fat and funny he was.

After that my mum arrived and we sat around talking while I waited for the placenta. After an hour there were no signs, so Jack cut the cord, dried off Flynn and held him. After two and a half hours and still no sign of a placenta, Jane gave me an injection and pulled it out. Then I got some stitches while my mum and sisters cleaned everything up, and Jack sat on the bed near me with Flynn. When they finally weighed and measured him, Melanie was struggling to lift him with one arm as he weighed more than 10 pounds!

By 1am, everyone had left and Jack, Flynn and I were all able to cuddle up together for our first night as a family. Flynn was so calm and alert and just looked around everywhere until he fell into a nice deep sleep for the night. He's been a good sleeper ever since.

Do I regret not giving birth at hospital with no obstetricians or painkilling drugs? Of course not! The thought never even entered my mind that I needed them. I loved my homebirth, and hope I can have many more in the future!

LOUISE WALTON



ONCE UPON A TIME, BUT NOT SO VERY LONG AGO,  
WHAT WE CALL SHAMANIC MIDWIFERY  
WAS JUST A WAY OF LIFE.... *A way of life that all women  
knew inherently from their own birth.*

As babies and children we watched our mothers and the women of our tribe facilitate transformation daily within community life – holding space for each other in Moonlodge, birthing their babies with instinct and knowing, honouring their Elders, attending to their rich spiritual practice and walking a way of wisdom, sovereignty and beauty in their expression of being a Woman.

At our time of Menarche we were honoured and initiated as women and welcomed to join the Motherline, ready to receive into our own hearts, the ancient ancestral women's wisdom of all those who had walked before us. As we lived our lives through Mother, Maga and Crone, the voices of our Ancestors called to us often, whispering wisdoms of Knowing, Truth, Intuition, Psychic ability, Healing prowess and the Midwifery that comes from being a Shamaness who walks between the worlds.

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.  
We are the sacred vessels we have always been.**

## FOUR SEASONS JOURNEY Spring 2013 - Spring 2014

A year long earth based spiritual experience creating and maintaining a deep connection with the Earth and the Divine Feminine. 4SJ is for all women and focuses on the shamanic perspective of cycles of the Earth, life, the moon, and menstruation, preparing women to be shamanic midwives for their community and beyond.

## BIRTHKEEPER INTENSIVE AUGUST 2012 - Sydney

For midwives, doulas and childbirth educators interested in learning the practices of the shamanic midwife. These two day gatherings aim to teach the participants various processes and practices to use to help women during their childbearing year.

for more information and registrations go to  
[WWW.SCHOOLOFSHAMANICMIDWIFERY.COM](http://WWW.SCHOOLOFSHAMANICMIDWIFERY.COM)

# Matilda Charlotte's Homebirth Story



that tonight was the night. My contractions were getting closer and stronger. Tyler and I had decided weeks earlier that we would not time the contractions and we didn't want to focus all our energy onto them.

During my labour, Tyler had been on the phone to Sonja telling her how things were progressing. She told Tyler to run me a bath and to call her back whenever we needed to. At around 11:00pm I hopped in the bath. It was warm and soothing. Taking the weight off me and allowing my body to move with each contraction. As the bath cooled, Tyler refilled it in-between contractions so I didn't get burnt. As the water got warmer the contractions got closer and stronger.

At 12:30am my waters broke releasing into the bath providing a very short sense of relief. Tyler needed to fill the pool but whilst in the midst of a contraction I couldn't let him go. Once the contraction subsided he turned the bathroom light off and left me to go fill the pool, calling out to me to let me know he was still nearby. When he returned I was having the urge to push and this scared me as I had had it in my head that this labour was going to go for at least 24hrs.

At five months pregnant my husband Tyler and I were told that we would be moving from Melbourne to Sydney for Tyler's work. A daunting prospect to those around us, however Tyler and I decided to embrace the adventure. We had spoken about the idea of having a homebirth before we got pregnant but the idea fell out of hand with the big move ahead of us. A month later I started calling around and was delighted to hear the words from Sonja MacGregor a Sydney midwife, that she would be available to attend our homebirth. At seven and a half months pregnant, Tyler and I made the move away from all our family and friends.

Tyler called Sonja and she arrived at 1:40am to find me leaning against the bathroom sink. I remember using my yoga moves and rotating my hips in a dance allowing my waters to leak onto the mat below me. At 2:00am I hopped into the warm pool. The water making me float as if I was being held up in a cradle position. I remember asking Sonja if she thought it would take another 10 hours and if she thought I would have the baby today. Both Sonja and Tyler laughed and I knew that it was a silly question but in me I still felt that I could labour for hours more.

There were concerns about having a homebirth in a house that I had never set foot in, however the thought of birthing in a hospital away from the comforts of my own belongings was far more daunting.

In the darkness of our dining room/ birth room, Sonja's and Tyler's encouraging words "You're doing a great job Emily" calmed me during the stretching and opening of my body. At 3:00am Sonja told me to go with the contractions. I needed someone to say this. At this point I finally realised that the baby was coming today. At 3:20am I was comforted when Sonja assured me that the bulge I was feeling beneath me was in fact our baby's head and I could feel the baby's hair moving in the water. It was extremely soft and felt nothing like I had imagined.

In early December I arrived in Sydney with my best friend Jess and took the first steps into the house that I would soon be birthing in. From the outside, the house gave me a wave of excitement and as we walked around inside it I felt like I was a little girl opening her presents on Christmas day. This was it! It felt like home and I could already picture our birth space. We unpacked over the next month with help from Jess and my parents who came to visit. Washing and then folding and unfolding the tiny little clothes a hundred times.

Over the next 24mins I involuntarily pushed with each contraction, feeling our baby's head opening the doorway. As each contraction subsided I allowed the baby to slowly move back up with each deep breath. It felt right to welcome our baby slowly. Allowing my body to slowly stretch and when the time came I whispered to Tyler to jump into the pool to catch our baby. Tyler knelt into the pool with his open arms watching our baby come out. Her arms whaling in the water as her head and shoulders had been released from my body; however she became stuck for a whole minute at her hips due to her father's genes. At this stage we all shared a laugh as our baby was swimming underwater. With the next contraction I pushed and Tyler announced that we had a baby girl! Her daddy passing her into her mother's arms I was filled with an overwhelming sense of love and tears began rolling down. Matilda Charlotte Ratcliffe was born on Wednesday the 1st of February at 3:44am weighing 3960g and measuring 52 cm. The placenta was birthed at 4:20am and the cord was cut by her Dad.

We met Sonja our midwife for the first time on Thursday the 15th of December. From this day we have felt her to be part of our family. She answered every question we threw at her and empowered us on our journey with the most generous and encouraging words.

Matilda is the proud granddaughter of Lynda (Nanna), Craig (Pop), Richard (Granddad), Kate (Nanny), Vikki (Nan) and Laurie (Pa).

I had been excited about the labour throughout my whole pregnancy. I was looking forward to the pain that my mother had always described to me. She had often told me that she would have liked to have laboured many times more but only wanted two children, my brother and I.

At 40 weeks and 3 days on Tuesday January 31st at 5pm my contractions started. Every woman wonders if they will know when their labour starts. For me the shock of the first contraction as I sat on the couch, hit hard. Tyler saw the pain across my face but as the contraction eased off we were filled with excitement. We decided to order takeaway for dinner to celebrate the moment and enjoyed sitting on the floor in the lounge room eating in front of the coffee table. As a contraction started, Tyler moved the coffee table away from my gigantic belly so that I could move my body with it. Within 30 seconds, I was sitting upright again eating my dinner.

We shared my body for nine months and four days and little by little we share you with the world. Reconnecting every time I breastfeed you. Matilda Charlotte may you go through life with our guidance, love and support to become your own person. This story is for you so you always know about the sacred moments we shared.

A couple of hours into the labour, I decided that I would go to bed and wake up the next day after a good night's sleep to have this baby. After having a shower and hopping into bed, the baby decided

EMILY RATCLIFFE



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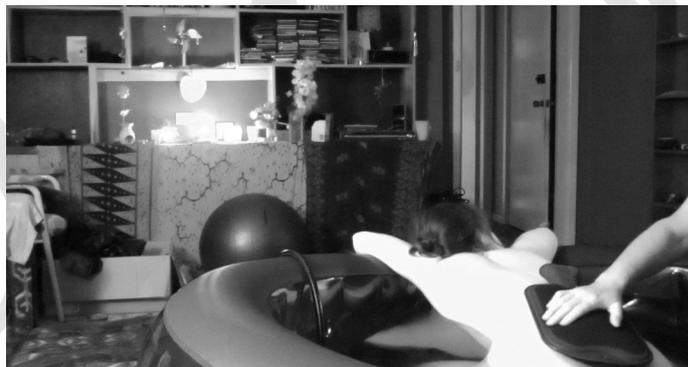
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# Indigo's Birth



I was born at home, as were my sisters, cousins, nephews and many family friends. When I discovered I was pregnant I knew straight away I would birth my baby at home. My partner Dave was a little unsure about the idea at first but after meeting a few homebirth midwives he felt completely reassured.

I had an easy pregnancy and enjoyed the prenatal visits with our midwife Jo. I finished up at work early at around 32 weeks as I was finding the physical work a bit challenging and wanted a big break before the baby came. Most of the babies in my family have been born a bit early so we had everything ready very early and I found it hard not to get impatient during the last few weeks.

At 40 +1 weeks I woke up in the night to go to the toilet and found I was leaking pinkish fluid. Dave woke up and I told him what was happening and then tried to get some sleep, I kind of failed at this and ended up spending a lot of the night sitting up knitting a cardigan for the baby. I also started getting some mild period type pain. I felt so excited that something was happening!

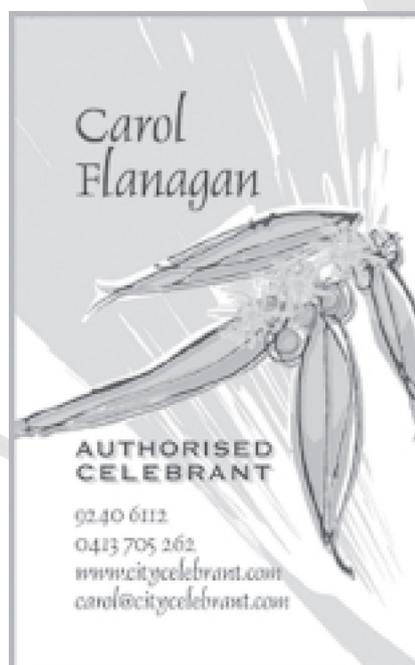
I spent the next day and night trying to rest and doing lots of knitting. I was having mild pre labour contractions on and off especially during the night, and found it really hard to stay lying down so spent a lot of time pacing the house. Jo came the following morning to check the baby's position and heart rate. She said there was a good chance that tonight would be the night!

After Jo left I had a long bath and a sleep. I woke up at about 2.30pm and as I stood up amniotic fluid gushed everywhere so I ran into the laundry and more fluid gushed all over the floor. The contractions got a lot stronger at this point and I had to hold onto something to get through them. Dave phoned Jo to let her know what was happening and then started timing contractions, I remember finding this quite irritating as I had to keep telling him when the contractions started and finished.

Dave got the pool ready straight away. I was a bit worried it was too early to be getting into the pool but I was so glad once I was in.

Jo arrived soon after and I felt like I could completely relax. I leaned over the side of the pool during contractions and focused on relaxing and letting my body do its thing. I liked this part of the labour the most because I felt like my body was doing all the work and I could just let it happen. It felt like time was moving really fast, Jo was checking the babies heart beat every hour and I always felt surprised that another hour had passed already!

Contractions seemed a bit all over the place, sometimes really powerful, sometimes just small, sometimes close together and sometimes with a big rest in between. The sky went an incredible pink and orange at sunset, it was lovely sitting in the pool watching it out the window. Dave had lit the candles I was given at my blessing way





and the atmosphere in the room felt really special. He held my hand through contractions and I felt like the baby's presence was growing stronger as the labour progressed. Jo said she had a really strong feeling the baby was a girl.

At some point I realised that I hadn't done a wee for hours and was starting to feel a bit of pressure on my bladder during contractions. I tried to wee in the pool and then sat on the toilet for a few contractions but I still couldn't wee. It felt like the baby was in the way. I think it was about 8pm by this stage and I was feeling a bit tired and things seemed to be slowing down a bit. Jo suggested I lie down for a while and try to get some rest, so I got into bed and managed to rest a bit between contractions.

About half an hour later, Jo had a look at my belly and said the baby was posterior and we could be in for a long night. Then she noticed that my bladder was so full that she could see it protruding out! It seemed like my bladder was holding the baby up but because the baby was so low I couldn't wee. I was so relieved when Jo said she could give me catheter. I tried to go one more time in the shower while Jo got her stuff ready. I remember having a contraction on the floor of the shower and feeling totally miserable and wishing I hadn't drank so much raspberry leaf tea.

After the catheter I decided to have a VE to see how things were coming along. Jo checked me and announced that she could feel the baby's head and no cervix! The baby moved to an anterior position after one contraction and I got back in the pool. The room felt so full of excitement and anticipation, we were about to meet our baby! I started pushing not long after that and I could feel the baby's head moving down and then up again after each contraction. It felt like it was taking ages and I felt frustrated that the contractions weren't coming closer together. It seemed like a lot of hard work compared to the first stage of labour! The head started crowning and I got more impatient when I found out the baby had lots of hair. I couldn't wait to see it!

At this point I started bleeding a bit so I got out of the pool so Jo could see where the blood was coming from, I got down on my hands and knees and started to panic a bit when I looked down and saw all the blood dripping down between my legs. I could tell Jo was really worried, she told me to tell myself to stop bleeding and it worked! We worked out later that I must have started to tear but it wasn't visible on the outside yet. I had some rescue remedy to help calm me down a bit but I still felt pretty shaky and anxious.

I could feel my body stretching as the first half of the head slowly came out and then I felt my perineum tear and the rest of the head suddenly popped out. Ouch! I remember looking down between my legs and seeing the baby's head and then I reached down and touched the soft silky hair. At this point she got stuck and didn't rotate so Jo help to turn her and then released her shoulders. The rest of her body slithered out into Dave's arms. Dave passed her between my legs and I felt so surprised and amazed that there was suddenly a perfect baby in front of me! I remember putting my hands on her and saying "Oh my God!" and hearing Jo say "Pick up the baby love!" I picked her up and held her against my chest. She was so beautiful and

chubby with lots of dark hair and the cutest double chin. I couldn't believe how gorgeous she was! We didn't check her gender for a while but I think we all just assumed she was a girl because she had such a pretty face.

Our little Indigo was born at 10:22pm on the 20th of November 2011. She weighed 4.360kg and measured 53.5cm. I feel so blessed to be her mother and to have been able birth her at home with the loving support of my wonderful partner. I'm so grateful to our midwife Jo for helping us bring her safely into the world. And of course, thanks to my Mum for giving me such a good start by birthing me at home and to midwife Maggie for attending my birth. I hope Indigo will have the same birth choices if she ever has children.

IMOGEN MCKAY

Are you interested in any of the following?



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# The Homebirth of Alba Joy Firebrace



Alba is now one week old and fast asleep beside me. She makes soft sounds as she dreams, sweetly cooing and grumbling. Her fingers curl up by her cheek and she frowns and smiles in her sleep. She is my heart outside my body. Tonight I feel ready to tell our story.

For nine months I tried not to think too much about Alba's coming birth. Not because I was afraid but because it made me cry from all the excitement, impatience and love that welled up inside. The thought of holding her made warmth travel over my skin. The thought of bringing her into the world made me bliss. The little girl who I'd already fallen for.

On the morning January 23rd I decided I felt ready. My mother and sister were here, the birth pool was set up, candles placed all around, incense ready to be burned, Alba's clothes freshly washed and a box full of everything I would need for labour. I asked Matt to let Alba know she could come today. He held his palms over my heavy belly (marked with mother lines) and softly said, "You can come today Alba."

I didn't really think she would come then. I thought I would surely go over my due date and time would continue to drag on. But maybe she heard us. We spent the entire day nesting. The house was piles of unsorted things being sorted. My belly would tighten as I moved about but it had for weeks so I didn't think much of it. It was Chinese New Year so we decided we would go out to a Chinese restaurant for dinner. Coincidentally, it was in a small Chinese restaurant on Chapel Street, Melbourne, in 2009 (in the crazy months when we were homeless) that we first decided to have a baby together.

The tightening (which I thought they were Braxton Hicks) was

becoming stronger so I bought a hot water bottle into the car to place against my stomach. This is when I began to wonder. But I said nothing for fear of getting my hopes up only to find out it wasn't real.

The restaurant was small and run-down but I kind of liked that about it. It had a charm to it that reminded me of Asia. Between bites the contractions came and my face tensed up. It would have been a strange sight and at the time I hoped the waitress didn't see this as disgust at my meal. I laughed to myself imagining my waters breaking here. My wonder grew and grew on the drive home. The sun set in thick fog before us, a night coming that would stretch on forever.

I rocked on the birth ball, closing my eyes and breathing as I'd been taught in hypnobirthing. My little sister asked, "Are you in labour?" and I told her I didn't know, maybe. Matt had been fixing an old record player but was still missing a part so he madly began to compose a playlist for the birth. Songs from when we first fell in love. The soundtrack to our life together.

The intensity grew and my mother said, "Try to get some rest." So I lay with Matt upstairs while he timed my contractions. My eyes grew very heavy so I dozed, being woken by the contractions every little while. I went to the bathroom and found I'd bled (what they call a 'show'); something I'd been waiting for to tell me this was all real. Matt and my mother began to fill the birth pool. Our hot water system is weak so they boiled water in kettles and saucepans to keep the birth pool warm.

I texted my midwife at 11pm and told her I thought I was in labour. She told me to sleep as it may still be very early. So we lay upstairs again but I couldn't sleep. I kept focusing on my breathing as the feelings grew more and more intense. I wanted to get into the water



already but I knew I had to wait. I lay in the foetal position in my underwear, with Matt tracing my back. In between contractions I told my mama I couldn't imagine it getting more intense than this; I had no idea.

The whole world began to fall away. I was no longer conscious of the candles flickering around me, the music humming in the background or the smell of the night air mingling with fire mountain incense. I was far inward and all my thoughts were quietened. I was in a place I had never been.

The peaks of pain made me feel very sick. My mother would hold my hair back and I'd vomit between contractions. I rang the midwife. It was 4am and she said she would be here in an hour or so. I wanted her there very much. I needed to hear I was progressing, to know how dilated I was so I had some idea of when the pain would end.

I sank deep down into the warm water. My entire body breathed relief. The contractions slowed for a short while. Everything was calmer. I'd lean over the pool's edge and squeeze my mother's or love's hands during contractions. I did this so hard they felt it for days. I wouldn't let Matt leave me. My little sister fanned me with a book. I was barely aware of anything.

My midwife came in the front door a little after 5am and set up everything she needed. I said I wanted her to see how far along I was. She asked if I was sure because if it turned out I was not far I might become discouraged. I was sure. She told me I was 6-7cm and this was wonderful news. But still I wished I was more.

I spent a long time kneeling on the cold bathroom tiles, vomiting now and then into the bathtub. Matt placed towels beneath my knees and held me tightly, telling me how proud he was and how well I was doing. At times I would lose my focus and say I was scared or that I couldn't do it any longer. Sometimes in the silence I would cry out.

The morning sun began to flood in through the glass doors. The contractions started to feel different. Slowly the pushing urges came and I welcomed them. Pushing felt good. The midwife listened to Alba's strong heartbeat and knowing she was calm helped me carry on. My other midwife came but I didn't notice her arrive.

I told Matt to come into the pool and he sat behind me tracing my spine. It was all close now. I could feel Alba there between my bones. I could feel her moving down with every push. They took all of my strength, more than I could have ever imagined having. I was a warrior, fierce and powerful in those few hours of pushing.

Her head crowned and I felt my skin stretched tight. I was so close to meeting my daughter. I touched her soft head and felt wildly excited. My body ached but I was so close I kept on. Pushing her out was the hardest thing I have ever done.

She was born into the water at 10:05am on the January 24th and Matt and I caught her. I brought her up to my chest and I was overcome with so much love. I was too overwhelmed to cry. I just said, "Oh, baby" and "I love you" over and over in a shaky, awestruck way. Matt cried and kissed her with the same enormous love welling up in his heart. "You were worth all of it," I told her.

Remembering the moment I first met Alba will always make me teary and warm. She gave a few short, beautiful cries and then settled herself, gently watching us with wide eyes. It was as if she knew us, as if she loved us already. She was perfect. My eyes and lips and Matt's nose. The beginnings of blonde curls. Ten tiny fingers and toes. She weighed 4.6kgs. She was more than perfect.

I don't know how long it was that we sat in the water just contently staring at her. I was on a high, bonding and love hormones flooding through me. Even though I'd known for so many months there was a baby growing in my belly, and felt her moving every day, I realised then it'd never truly sunken in. This was a real little person.

Eventually the umbilical cord stopped pulsing. I birthed the placenta, my mother cut the cord and the water became blood red and cold. The midwives carefully helped me move to the daybed and placed Alba skin-to-skin on my chest. She found my nipple and fed, still so wide-eyed and alert. Matt cuddled us both. We were a family.

We thanked the midwives. The wonderful women who made my pregnancy and birth all I'd ever dreamed. They left and I remember being so happy that this precious little thing was ours to keep. From the corner of my eye I'd catch Matt staring at me in awe like I was some kind of incredible superhuman. I felt proud. It'd been the longest night of my life and I birthed my daughter naturally without drugs. It felt like the greatest thing I'd ever do. We were all so sleepy and exhausted so we curled up in bed together and slept. While we were dreaming, bunches of flowers were delivered from our families across the country.

We spend so many hours just staring at Alba. Tracing her features, kissing her soft cheeks. She sleeps mostly. Little dreamer. When she's awake she's so gentle, with wise eyes like she has already lived. Seeing the way Matt is with Alba, the way he talks to her and cuddles her, makes me realise I am not alone in my overwhelming love for her. It hurts to love someone so much. Every little cry makes your heart ache.

Alba, we love you more than we could ever put into words. You are the sun of our lives. You are our muse for all we create from here on. You are our life. We can't wait to show you the world and marvel in the way you see it. We will have so many amazing adventures together; your life will be a beautiful dream. We love you, moonflower.

# Daniel's Birth



^ Clare and Daniel



^ The Coleman Kids: Clockwise from left – David, Andrew, Stephanie, Daniel, Genevieve

When I was 32 I gave birth to my fourth child. Her birth was a turning point in my life, after three previous caesareans. (See Birthings issue #77 for their stories). I felt empowered and whole after she was born, in contrast to the fog of medication, pain and intervention experienced after surgical birth.

Last week, at 42, I gave birth again. Just looking at him, and watching his siblings' interaction with him, fills me with a quiet joy. Physically I feel better than with any of the other births. I went to the gym throughout the pregnancy, until two days before he was born, and gained only 10kg (in contrast to the usual 18-20kg). Already my body is almost back to the weight I was before pregnancy, which amazes me. And yet, from the moment I found out I was pregnant, I knew I would be labelled high risk by the medical establishment: 42, fifth child, three previous caesareans!

The difference for me this time was knowing my body was capable of giving birth! That knowledge was such a gift. So I sought out an independent midwife who would support me. From the very first meeting with Betty Vella, my husband and I knew we had found the right person. The next step was finding an obstetrician willing to support us in hospital (no way my husband would consider a homebirth). We contacted Dr Andrew Bisits, who had just moved from Newcastle to the Royal Women's at Randwick and agreed to take me on. It was a relief to have a team in place, so I could concentrate on bringing a healthy child into the world.

The pregnancy went smoothly. I felt really well, ate good food, exercised, read positive birth stories. I refused all the genetic tests, on the basis that our child would be welcome in our family even if he wasn't perfect. I also declined the glucose tolerance testing because I had no risk factors for diabetes (apart from being over 35) and didn't want to put my body through the fasting and sugar loading unnecessarily.

I drafted a birth plan and discussed it with Betty and with Andrew. I wanted to be treated as a healthy woman giving birth to another baby, not a medical emergency waiting to happen. I knew I needed to be able to take my time, to have privacy and quiet, access to the shower for pain relief and to stay upright and mobile. I didn't want to have a cannula in my arm or have blood taken while I was labouring. I didn't want any sharp implements anywhere near me, at any time. I didn't want to be stuck in a bed, strapped to a monitor. We discussed some negotiable time limits, particularly for second stage, and monitoring requirements in the hospital. I agreed to use the telemetry monitor, so I could remain mobile.

From about 37 weeks I noticed Braxton Hicks contractions on and off. Two days before due date they became more noticeable, and I had some mucus show. On his due date of 4 April I felt things were beginning to happen, but knew it was still early. I didn't want to start

counting labour too soon, as birth could be days away. I had an appointment at the Royal at 1.30pm on his due date. Rod was at work, so I drove myself there, got the baby car seat fitted on the way, met with Betty and Andrew, and drove home again. Being an out-of-area patient meant it was a 45 minute drive each way.

I got home and went to bed with a hot water bottle about 4pm, trying to rest and ignore the contractions. By 6pm I was in the shower, revelling in the hot water. After 20 minutes I got out, not wanting to get dehydrated. I went downstairs and lay on the lounge with a pile of pillows. I was unsure where labour was at, because the contractions would hit with a bang and be full-on for about 20-30 seconds, every 3-5 minutes or so. We rang Betty and she came over about 8pm, and decided to go to hospital. While I didn't want to go too early, I knew we had a long drive to get there, and I really wanted to get in the shower again. It was dark, raining, and the M5 was shut, so we had to take an alternative route. Rod & I were celebrating our 19th wedding anniversary that day, so it was certainly a memorable evening out – Rod driving, me in the back seat with pillows, towels and hot water bottles.

I would have liked to get straight in the shower, but hospital protocol required a 20 minute trace first. So onto the bed I went, strapped to a monitor. We had agreed to a mobile monitoring in the shower, but the equipment didn't work, so it was worse than useless. When I was upright in the shower I was able to cope with contractions, but each time I had to get out for another monitoring session the pain escalated. I wanted to crawl out of my skin. The gaps grew longer, but the contractions were worse. Back in the shower I would stand and sway and move with the contractions, then sit to rest in between each one. Rod kept the hot water on my back and supplied cold water to drink each time I rested.

Close to midnight things seemed to have slowed down. Betty suggested an internal. I had been 3-4cm at home; now I was 5cm dilated. All that work, and I felt like I still had so far to go. My waters had previously broken, but now I had bulging forewaters, which seemed to be holding things up. Once they were broken I got back in the shower and things picked up again. Within the hour I felt the urge to push. It seemed too soon, but Betty said to go ahead if I was ready. So after 6 hours of active labour and 6 minutes of pushing, our son Daniel was born in the shower, in the dark and quiet, and passed into my arms. He weighed 3540g, hc 34.5cm. It was 1.06am on 5.4.11. I couldn't believe I had done it. I felt so relieved and grateful. Twenty minutes later I stood and birthed the placenta.

Throughout the evening Betty kept Andrew informed. He didn't need to be there, as I was progressing well, but I valued his support and his willingness to return out-of-hours if required. By 4am we were settled in a ward. Rod went home to sleep, and returned later with the other children to take us home. By bedtime we were tucked up to sleep in our own bed again.

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Reflections on Post-Partum: Stage 4 this time around has been very different to previous babies. Having older children, I am not chasing toddlers or dealing with the constant demands of other little ones in the house. Daniel is adored by his older brothers and sisters (Andrew, 17, Stephanie, 15, David, 12 and Genevieve, 9). In fact they are volunteering to change nappies and vying to hold him whenever they can. But it is still a physically exhausting time, and I need to keep reminding myself my body needs rest and nourishment. I try to sleep as much as I can during the day, ignoring the housework or delegating specific tasks. (Teenagers are not going to volunteer to vacuum the house or hang out the washing – you have to look them in the eye and tell them what you need).

Evenings can be challenging, juggling the needs of a fussy, hungry baby with getting dinner on the table and preparing uniforms and school lunches. I have been a breastfeeding counsellor since 1998 and have spoken to hundreds of mums over the years. I need to heed my own advice and follow my instincts as a mum. I let him feed as often as he needs to, try to be patient with him and gentle with myself. Daniel is a (mostly) contented little soul. He feeds like a champion and gained 500g in the first two weeks. He is grandchild number 22 for my parents, so he has a multitude of cousins, aunts and uncles to welcome him. When he was two weeks old we drove to Greta in the Hunter Valley to celebrate Easter with all the family. I could not have even contemplated such a trip after the other births.

Special thanks to Betty, an amazing midwife and friend; to Dr Andrew Bisits, for his support and his faith in the ability of women to give birth; to Naomi, the hospital midwife who worked with us and allowed us the space we needed to birth Daniel; to Rod, for being there with me through it all, happy anniversary my love. Thankyou God for blessing us with five beautiful children.

CLARE COLMAN

## HAS Volunteer Position Vacant.

### Website Coordinator Wanted

We are in desperate need of a new Website Coordinator who is experienced with DRUPAL. Our website hosts our membership database, a shop, newsletter and other content.

Regular work involves responding to one or two emails a week, uploading new issues of Birthings magazine each quarter and invoicing new magazine advertisers each quarter. Irregular work involves managing webmail accounts, web advertising and upgrading the site. We have a web programmer (in China!) who has a strong understanding of the site and will conduct the upgrade - your role would be to oversee the process.

Ways in which the role could be expanded, if interested, would be to explore web optimisation and development of content (we have some ideas to get you started).

Familiarity with content management systems would be useful. Attendance at committee meetings is not necessary - but they are a fun way to get together.

If you are interested in the role or would like to find out more please contact Jenny Carleton: 0412 970 183  
admin@homebirthsydney.org.au

**Free membership for successful applicant!**

## HOMEBIRTH ACCESS SYDNEY T SHIRT DESIGN COMPETITION!!!

Homebirth Access Sydney needs a new Tshirt design and we would love for you to be involved in the creation and design which will illustrate homebirth and/or birth choices.



It needs to be original and can be for babies and kids or for adults with words and/or pictures.

The winner will have their design printed for HAS to sell, and will also win a Tshirt in the size of their choice, as well as the Fine Art Print 'Breastfeeding Mama' by Chrissy Butler (valued at \$30). Winners will be notified via email, and will be announced on Facebook and in the Next Birthings Magazine Issue #115.



Please email your designs as pdf or jpg, and your details including your name, contact number and address to:  
info@homebirthsydney.org.au

Good Luck!!

# Zara's Super Fast Birth



The sun was shining that day. Not on my baby's 'birth' day, but on the day I decided I would have a homebirth. You see, my story begins at the Birth Choices Expo where I met my wonderful midwife Jo.

My two year old son Max had woken from his nap early so I rushed to the expo and walked up to the table to meet the independent midwives. I was 32 weeks pregnant! I said to Jo, "My problem with homebirth is that, well... I don't have a problem". She gave me an infectious cheeky grin, so warm and caring that I felt completely at ease. For a midwife like her, she must have heard birth stories a thousand times over, but she never let on that my son's story wasn't the most special thing she had heard that day.

With only eight weeks till my due date, I knew I also wanted a doula. On Jo's recommendation I met the amazing Romany. Much wiser than her years, Romany has a kind of steady and spiritual understanding of the world that is almost otherworldly. She radiates positivity and I instantly liked her practical approach to my birth preparations.

As the weeks went by, Jo's home visits entailed both checking on my pregnancy, but also listening to me download Max's birth story. A long tale of hospital intervention, Jo would sit for hours just listening to me talk. Then Romany would visit and listen some more. Romany declared early on that she was part of my 'dream team'. She would give me tips and little gifts of words that nurtured my spirit with my belly ever expanding.

The winter air was crisp and the sky was so blue on my due date. My husband David and I decided to take Max to the park. I sat alone for some time weeping beneath my sunglasses wishing my father were alive. I wanted to ring him and get some funny piece of birth advice like, "Oh well, nature does what nature does and when the baby wants to come it will". This was the last time my son would be my 'only' and the feelings were almost overwhelming. Upon reflection, I realise now that I was having my 'emotional download' moment and I got it all out of my system that evening.

The next day I went for a long walk along the Cook's river with my mother and Max. I felt so calm and happy as I power-waddled along the path with my baby 'watermelon-ing' between my legs. I thought, "Well, bring it on. I'm ready and excited to meet my baby". My waters broke later that evening and the contractions skipped along faster than an Olympic stopwatch. Within 15 minutes Romany had arrived, with Jo on her way as fast as she could. Romany held my hands and

put her face so close to my eyes in a real Kath and Kim, "Look at me" moment. I'm a very emotional person and I had previously told Romany that I needed her to be right in my face. Whereas others might want space during their birth, I knew I wanted physical support. My eyes fixated on hers and she guided me through deep grunting by saying "Listen to me, like this". If I ever have had a sisterhood moment where I was channeling the strength of a thousand birth mothers, then this was it. I filled my lungs with air and breathed out earthy deep grunts. And as I did, I could feel Zara's head so close to the outside world. After a trip to the loo to poo which they say is a natural thing during birth, I could barely keep Zara from slipping out into the toilet.

Romany walked me to the lounge room and I had just enough time to get into the birth pool. There was only a small amount of water in the pool as we were still filling it up, but it was enough to cover my lower body. Jo calls the birth pool, 'The homebirthers' epidural' and the warm water gave me instant relief, to the point where I felt no pain, only the fuzzy duckling head of my baby entering the world.

Romany took control of all birth duties and had my mum warming towels in the dryer on that cold July night, while David put Max to sleep. It was so important to me to have someone like Romany doing all the manual work around the birth pool because it enabled me to go 'inside myself' and to focus on my body and breathing and to relax into my birth experience. I didn't need to control anything in the outside world. My 'dream team' was working perfectly.

Zara popped out into the birth pool and into Romany's hands. Birthing the placenta followed without any fuss with Romany talking to Jo via the phone. When Jo arrived Zara was quietly breastfeeding. We all laughed and I thought, "Wow, be careful what you wish for" as my last joke with Jo was, "I'd love it to be all over so quickly and easily that you miss the birth". Well, that's what happened and we enjoyed a 60 minute birth. Zara's now nine months old and too young to realise that her simple homebirth has changed the lives of her family. Her brother Max slept through the birth and when he awoke the next morning we showed him his baby sister. Without any expression of surprise at his new sibling, he exclaimed as he ran into the lounge room "Where's my birth pool?"

Mandy Douglas

# 28TH HOMEBIRTH AUSTRALIA CONFERENCE

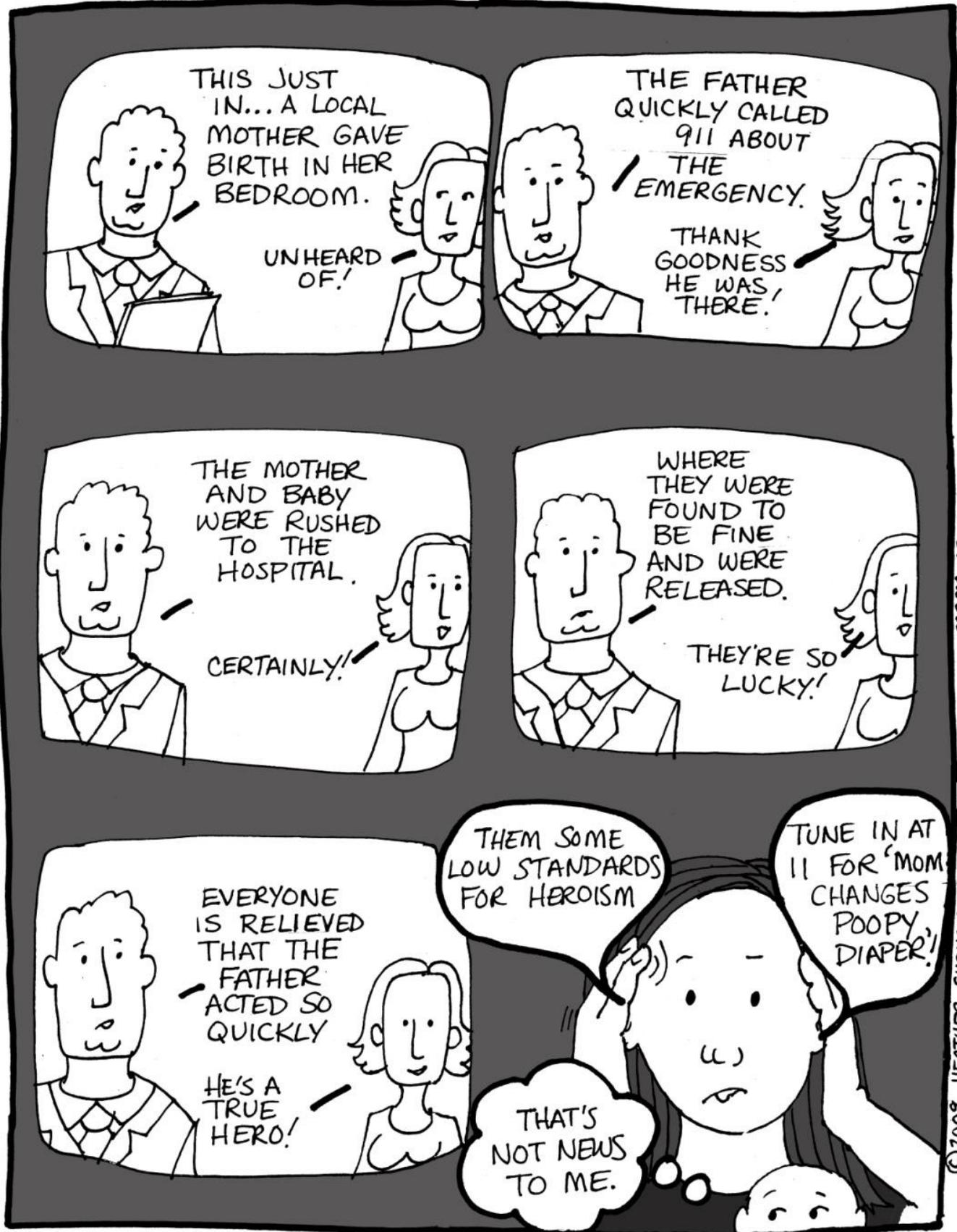


**BIRTH RITES -  
HUMAN RIGHTS**

**27 - 29 JULY, 2012 HOBART  
TASMANIA**

**SEE HBA WEBSITE FOR FURTHER DETAILS:  
[WWW.HOMEBIRTHAUSTRALIA.ORG](http://WWW.HOMEBIRTHAUSTRALIA.ORG)**

# Mama Is... 'NOT NEWS TO 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](http://www.mama-is.com). Heather is married to Kevin and is a homebirther, attachment parenter to 3 unschooled girls and a boy, and breastfeeding lactivist which inspires her cartoon creations.

**January 31, 2012 – Herald Sun****MUM DIES IN HOME BIRTH TRAGEDY**

<http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/more-news/mum-dies-in-home-birth-tragedy/story-fn7x8me2-1226257769959>

A LOVING Victorian mother who lobbied for more support for home births was died after delivering her baby daughter at home.

The 36-year-old, who had a planned home birth, was taken to Austin Hospital by ambulance on Monday morning. She passed away the following day. It is believed private midwives assisted with the birth of her second child.

A spokeswoman for Midwives in Private Practice said it was the first time she has heard of a maternal death following a home birth in her 15 years' experience working as a midwife. "It's very, very rare and it's just impossible to imagine what might have happened," she said.

A spokeswoman for Health Minister David Davis said he was saddened to hear about the death and it was now a matter for the coroner to investigate.

**February 28, 2012 – The West Australian****ANGER OVER CALLS TO CRIMINALISE HOMEBIRTH**

<http://au.news.yahoo.com/thewest/a/-/breaking/13032305/anger-over-calls-to-criminalise-homebirth/>

"Homebirth supporters have hit back at calls to criminalise homebirths where women negligently endanger their babies, branding it outrageous and taking away women's reproductive rights.

The Australian Medical Association WA wants the State Government to consider penalties when women with high-risk pregnancies choose a homebirth. The AMA wants it to be part of the Government's proposed foetal homicide laws to legally recognise the unborn.

Homebirth Australia spokeswoman Michelle Meares said yesterday that it was a frightening suggestion and breached international conventions aimed at stopping discrimination against women.

She said expanding foetal rights threatened a woman's right to have a say in medical decisions during pregnancy and birth and could also affect reproductive choices such as abortion."

**March 23, 2012 – The Advertiser (SA)****CORONER DECLINES RECOMMENDING CRIMINAL CHARGES AGAINST HOME BIRTH ADVOCATE LISA BARRETT**

<http://www.adelaidenow.com.au/coroner-declines-recommending-criminal-charges-against-home-birth-advocate-lisa-barrett/story-e6frea6u-1226308669443>

"Hearing closing submissions yesterday, Deputy State Coroner Anthony Schapel said he would not refer his findings on the October death to public prosecutors. "I would not make any suggestion of criminal liability as understood by the law and I would

not refer the matter to the Director of Public Prosecutions explicitly in my findings," he said. Mr Schapel will deliver his findings at a date yet to be fixed."

**April 2, 2012 – Sydney Morning Herald****INQUEST NOT POSSIBLE AS CHILD STILLBORN, MOTHER CLAIMS**

<http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/inquest-not-possible-as-child-stillborn-mother-claims-20120402-1w7rf.html>

A vocal home birth advocate is challenging the coroner's ability to hold an inquest into her baby daughter's death, claiming her infant was stillborn.

An inquest at the Coroner's Court in Glebe opened this morning, with the barrister representing the family arguing there should not be an inquest as the child was not born alive.

Counsel assisting the inquest, Kelly Rees, agreed the coroner could not hold an inquest if the child was stillborn, but said her ultimate submission would be that the child was alive when she was born.

Deputy State Coroner Scott Mitchell has yet to decide on the question of jurisdiction, but noted: "There's evidence that would suggest ... that this little girl was born alive."

**April 7, 2012 - Montgomery Bureau (USA)****PROPOSED BILL AIMS TO LEGALIZE MIDWIVES' ASSISTANCE TO WOMEN OPTING FOR HOME BIRTH**

<http://www.timesdaily.com/stories/A-matter-of-CHOOSING,189295>

"Under Alabama law, women can give birth at home. But they can't do it with assistance from midwives. Alabama is one of nine states that can prosecute midwives who assist in home births. One Alabama lawmaker is hoping to change the law with a bill to license and regulate certified professional midwives.

"If we are going to allow at-home births, if they can have someone there with some experience, that is always going to be a better situation than doing it at home by themselves," Sen. Paul Bussman, R-Cullman, said. Bussman said he favors certifying midwives, in part, because 27 other states that have done it haven't seen an increase in infant mortality or any other reason to repeal their laws. His bill prohibits midwives from administering epidurals and anesthetics, inducing abortions or performing cesarean sections."

**April 13, 2012 - CBC News (Canada)****B.C. MOM STRUGGLES TO PROVE SHE ACTUALLY HAD A BABY**

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/story/2012/04/13/bc-birth-certificate-difficulties.html>

"A B.C. mother who gave birth to her son at home with some family members present, but with no doctor or midwife, has found it difficult to persuade provincial authorities that the birth actually occurred. The mother applied for a birth certificate after her son was born in January. But the B.C. Vital Statistics Agency said she would have to prove the child belongs to her.

Ultimately, photographic evidence of the birth in her home satisfied the government, and the baby got his birth certificate in late March."

**April 21, 2012 - The Southland Times (NZ)****INTEREST IN HOME BIRTHS INCREASING**

<http://www.stuff.co.nz/southland-times/news/6783413/Interest-in-home-births-increasing>

"The Southland Home Birth Association has doubled in numbers in the past year and association president Kylie Wilson believes it is because more expectant mothers are wary of the use of instruments – such as vacuum devices and forceps – in hospital deliveries.

Southland Hospital had the third highest rate of use in the country of the instruments, after Canterbury and Waikato hospitals, a February report from the Ministry of Health showed.

An executive summary in the New Zealand Maternity Clinical Indicators 2009, released at the end of February, said the variation among a group of women – who would be expected to have similar outcomes – needed to be investigated."

**April 23, 2012 - The Oxford Times (UK)****RESEARCH BACKS HOME BIRTH**

[http://www.oxfordtimes.co.uk/news/yourtown/oxford/9663594.Research\\_backs\\_home\\_birth](http://www.oxfordtimes.co.uk/news/yourtown/oxford/9663594.Research_backs_home_birth)

"University of Oxford researchers have found that home births may be safer and cheaper for women who already have children.

A study of 64,000 births in England between 2008 and 2010 found that low-risk pregnancies could be delivered at home or at a midwifery unit to save the NHS money without compromising the health of mother and baby."

**April 26, 2012 - Northern Rivers Echo****BIRTH OF A NEW ERA**

<http://www.echonews.com.au/story/2012/04/26/birth-of-a-new-era-homebirth-pilot-study-announced/>

"IT'S official - homebirth has at last become a legal option for Northern Rivers mothers who want it. Northern NSW Local Health District board chairwoman Hazel Bridgett last week announced a 12-month home birthing pilot program supported by Mullumbimby Hospital.

Women considered healthy and likely to have an uncomplicated pregnancy will be eligible.

"During the pilot period, two women a month will be accepted into the Home Birth Program," Ms Bridgett said. Ms Bridgett said the outcome of the 12-month pilot would be evaluated and the board would decide whether or not it would approve a home birth program."

# PRE-NATAL SERVICES

## City & Eastern Suburbs

### RED TENT HEALTH CENTRE

Naomi Abeshouse – Acupuncture, Chinese herbs & Doula Rebecca Mar Young – Acupuncture & Chinese herbs  
We specialize in gynaecology & obstetrics and have supported many women through conception, pregnancy, birth and post-natally. We gently and effectively treat many symptoms such as morning sickness, back and pelvic pain as well as preparing your body for birth and turning breech babies. We run workshops to teach you and your partner how to effectively use acupresure during labour. See our website for details.  
61 Queen St, Woollahra, [www.RedTent.com.au](http://www.RedTent.com.au)  
Naomi 0413 690 861, [naomi@redtent.com.au](mailto:naomi@redtent.com.au)  
Rebecca 0404 457 911, [rebecca@redtent.com.au](mailto:rebecca@redtent.com.au)

### REBECCA GOULDHURST

Doula, Naturopath, Counsellor, Pregnancy Masseur & Hypnobirthing  
I am a passionate doula practicing from a naturopathic and counselling background. I have been in practice for 14 years. Being a doula allows me to support parents-to-be with my wisdom and experience of the birth process and the know how to create the birth that you want. Birth is a magical time that I am honoured to be part of. I have experience both at home and in hospitals and have different packages to suit all. All enquiries welcome.  
Rebecca Gouldhurst, 93864243, 0415304369  
[counsellor@doula.net.au](mailto:counsellor@doula.net.au)  
[www.rebeccagouldhurst.net.au](http://www.rebeccagouldhurst.net.au)

## Inner West

### BIRTHSENSE WITH JACKI MCFARLANE

Birth Art Group, Prenatal Counselling, Hypnosis and Creative Preparation for Pregnancy Wellbeing and Positive Birthing.  
For group details and individual sessions please phone Jacki: 90433079 or 0419286619  
[ackichip@internode.on.net](mailto:ackichip@internode.on.net)

### MOTHERBIRTH – CONSCIOUSBIRTH

Erika Elliot - Birthing in Awareness  
Erika is a passionate and experienced doula and birthing mentor who offers support from pre-conception awareness through to the early days of post-natal care. Facilitating calmbirth® & Birthing from Within preparation courses, Erika also offers massage, blessingway ceremonies and birth photography. Monthly group sessions or private preparations are available. Birthing services are offered to couples in the Inner West, Eastern Suburbs and the North Shore.  
Erika Elliott 0425 217788 [erikabirth@gmail.com](mailto:erikabirth@gmail.com)  
Preparation \* Education \* Support

## North Shore / Northern Beaches

### ALL ABOUT BIRTH CALMBIRTH®

calmbirth® is an enriching prenatal course for women planning a homebirth, water birth, active and natural birth. calmbirth® affirms that birth is a normal process, and you will learn relaxation skills to use during pregnancy, birth and beyond. Learn how to work with your body, partner and discover a wonderful way to have a positive birth experience. Louise is an experienced midwife and childbirth educator and courses are held in Dee Why and Neutral Bay. Contact Louise for more details and dates.  
Louise Luscri / 0408 231 759  
[info@allaboutbirth.com.au](mailto:info@allaboutbirth.com.au)  
[www.allaboutbirth.com.au](http://www.allaboutbirth.com.au)

### HEATHER CRAWFORD

Acupuncturist, Doula, calmbirth® classes  
Please see my listing under "Birthing Services: Midwives"  
Heather: 9777 7888 or 0423 171 191  
[heather@heathercrawford.com.au](mailto:heather@heathercrawford.com.au)  
[www.heathercrawford.com.au](http://www.heathercrawford.com.au)

## Sutherland / St George

### CALMBIRTH® PREPARATION COURSE

The calmbirth® course is an amazing course, it imparts the knowledge of birth preparation techniques such as deep relaxation, visualisation, breathing, positive imagery, attitudes/expectancy to achieve a rewarding, easier, more comfortable stress-free birthing experience. Many women who have done the calmbirth® course during their pregnancy are far more likely to have positive feelings about their birthing experience. Their partners and midwives are quite often very impressed with how beautifully they've worked with their body during the labour. For enquiries of dates and available times and bookings phone 9544 6441 available weekends, weekdays, evenings.  
Visit: [www.julieclarke.com.au](http://www.julieclarke.com.au) see website for dates and discount. Special note: Julie's calmbirth® course is very reasonably priced.  
Julie Clarke / [julie@julieclarke.com.au](mailto:julie@julieclarke.com.au)  
0401265530 / 9544 6441. 9 Withybrook Pl. Sylvania (20mins south of airport).

### NATURAL BEGINNINGS

Herbal Medicine, Nutrition & Birth Support  
I have a very personal interest in treating preconception, pregnancy and children's health, naturally. With some help from herbs and nutrition, my partner and I prepared our bodies' health naturally for conscious conception, and I enjoyed 2 trouble free pregnancies, and gave birth at home to my 2 healthy, full term baby boys and they continue to enjoy perfect health. You too can benefit from my experience in natural health care. I can assist you with:  
~ preconception health and natural fertility  
~ preparing for a healthier baby  
~ overcoming health conditions, (including during pregnancy)  
~ preparing your body and mind for a better birth  
~ birth support for mum & dad, and/or siblings  
~ treating your children's health naturally  
~ chemical-free home-made herbal skin products  
Natural Pregnancy, Birth and Post-Natal Kits also available which make great gifts for the expectant or new Mum!  
Virginia Maddock  
Herbalist, Nutritionist & Doula  
0415683074. 5 Balfour Ave Carlingbah 2229  
[www.naturalbeginnings.com.au](http://www.naturalbeginnings.com.au)

### TRANSITION INTO PARENTHOOD

Childbirth and Parenting Preparation  
Wonderful, comprehensive courses focused on natural active birth including waterbirth, including practicalities of baby care. Participants receive professionally presented well organised course notes. Very suitable for homebirth, birth centre and delivery suite.  
See Julie's website for more details, birth stories and pictures, information [www.julieclarke.com.au](http://www.julieclarke.com.au)  
Julie has a great sense of humour and a very gentle approach, she is supportive and flexible in her teaching approach. Good variety of courses to choose from: 6 wk course 1 night  
per week or 2 Saturdays condensed or 1 Sunday super condensed.  
Reasonably priced and discount available.  
Julie Clarke / [julie@julieclarke.com.au](mailto:julie@julieclarke.com.au) / 0401265530 9544 6441 / 9 Withybrook Pl. Sylvania (20 mins south of airport).

## Southern Highlands

### PREGNANCY WORKSHOPS

Midwife Jane Hardwicke Collings gives regular workshops – "Pregnancy The Inner Journey" – in the Southern Highlands and in other places by arrangement. As well as "The School of Shamanic Midwifery" – a women's mysteries school for doulas and midwives  
Jane Hardwicke Collings  
48882002, 0408035808  
[janecollings@bigpond.com](mailto:janecollings@bigpond.com)  
[www.moonsong.com.au](http://www.moonsong.com.au)  
[www.placentalremedy.com](http://www.placentalremedy.com)

# BIRTH SUPPORT SERVICES: DOULAS

## Northern & North-Western Suburbs

### JACQUI JAMES

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

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

Mob: 0418 445 653

jacquij@people.net.au

## Southern Suburbs

### NATURAL BEGINNINGS

Holsitic 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

# HOSPITAL HOMEBIRTH PROGRAMS

### BELMONT MIDWIFERY GROUP PRACTICE HOMEBIRTH PROGRAM

Our service provides individualised women centred continuity of care throughout pregnancy, birth and for two weeks postnatally.

Healthy women have the choice to birth at home if they are within 30 mins to our supporting hospital, John Hunter Hospital (New Lambton Heights in the Hunter/New England area).

For further information contact Kelley Lennon: 49232291

### 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

### 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.

### 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.

# 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](mailto:bpvella@optushome.com.au)

## THE ELLA MAY CENTRE

[Midwives @ Sydney And Beyond]

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](http://www.ellamaycentre.com)

## EMMA FITZPATRICK: MIDWIFE IN PRIVATE PRACTICE

[Midwives @ Sydney And Beyond]

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](mailto: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](mailto:hazelkeedle@gmail.com)

## HEATHER CRAWFORD

[Midwives @ Sydney and Beyond]

I am based on the Northern Beaches and provide pregnancy, labour & birth and postnatal care in the community, serving families in Northern Sydney, the Eastern Suburbs and Inner West. As well as providing midwifery care, I also work as an acupuncturist & herbalist specialising in fertility and pregnancy. I love being with women and their families through this transformative time and believe that every woman should be able to journey through pregnancy and birth in a supportive environment where she feels safe and loved, surrounded by people who respect and support her choices. Heather Crawford 0423 171 191 [heather@heathercrawford.com.au](mailto:heather@heathercrawford.com.au)

[www.heathercrawford.com.au](http://www.heathercrawford.com.au)

## INDEPENDENT MIDWIFE: JACQUI WOOD

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

Jacqui Wood (Blue Mountains, Western Sydney and South West suburbs) 0430 109 400

[www.independentmidwife.com.au](http://www.independentmidwife.com.au) [jacqui@independentmidwife.com.au](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:bellabirthing@live.com.au)  
[www.bellabirthing.com.au](http://www.bellabirthing.com.au)

## NEW BEGINNINGS MIDWIFERY PRACTICE

[Midwives @ Sydney and Beyond]

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

Robyn Dempsey (North Ryde) 9888 7829  
[midwiferobyn@optusnet.com.au](mailto:midwiferobyn@optusnet.com.au) [www.homebirthmidwives.com.au](http://www.homebirthmidwives.com.au)

## PREGNANCY, BIRTH & BEYOND

[Midwives @ Sydney and 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](mailto:jane@pregnancy.com.au) [www.pregnancy.com.au](http://www.pregnancy.com.au)

## 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](mailto: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](mailto:sonjamac@bigpond.com) [www.birthathome.com.au](http://www.birthathome.com.au)

## 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](mailto:rachele@withwoman.com.au)  
[www.withwoman.com.au](http://www.withwoman.com.au)

# 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 from different practices
- 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 homeopaths, 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 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 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!

### Northern Beaches Homebirth Group

3rd week of the month

Time: 10am-12.30pm

Dates:

Friday 22nd June, Monday 23rd July, Friday 24th August, Monday 24th September

Location:

The Highest Intent: 23 Lady Davidson Circuit Forestville

Contact: Beryl Truong 0411769881 beryl@thehighestintent.com.au

Please bring a plate of food to share!

### Sutherland Shire Homebirth Group

Every Thursday

Time: 10.30am weekly

Location: 5 Balfour Ave Caringbah.

Contact: Virginia 0415683074 or maddvirg@yahoo.com.au

If 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.

### \* New Western Sydney Homebirth Support Group

Every 2nd Wednesday of the month

Location: 20 Millard Cres Plumpton

Time: 10.30am - 12.30pm

Contact: Veronica ph. 0415-107-601 email: veronica1530@yahoo.com

All mamas or mamas to be are welcome. Your little ones are welcome to come join and play. If you can, bring a healthy snack to share together, if you can't, don't worry come anyway.

### Pregnancy & Parenting Network meeting - Dundas Valley

4th Thursday of the month

Time: 10am-12pm

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

Contact: Jane Palmer 1300 MIDWYF (1300 643 993) or email

jane@pregnancy.com.au

Dates / Topics: 21st June - Vaccination

19th July - Siblings at Birth

23rd August - Open Forum

Info: <http://www.pregnancy.com.au/resources/support-groups/index.shtml>

Please bring a plate of food to share. All welcome.

### Pregnancy & Parenting Network meeting - Hawkesbury

2nd Tuesday of the month

Emma Fitzpatrick's home

Location: 5 Rowland Ave Kurmond

Time: 10am - 12 noon

Contact: Melanie: 0425 280 682 mkjackson@live.com.au

Dates / Topics: 12th June - Vaccination

10th July - Siblings at Birth

14th August - Open Forum

11th September - Parenting Styles, nurturing yourself and elimination communication

Info: <http://www.ellamaycentre.com/Events.html>

Please bring a plate of food to share (anything you can manage). As always, mums, dads, friends and kids are all welcome! See you there!

### Blue Mountains Homebirth Support Group

Every 2nd Thursday

Time: 10am-12pm.

Dates & Topics:

14th June - 'Traditional Homebirth' with guest speaker Traditional Homebirth

Attendant, Natalie Forbes Dash

28th June - 'Choosing a midwife chat'

26th July - 'Planning meeting'

9th August - 'Meet the midwives morning tea at the park' @ Wentworth Falls Lake (near the pirate ship)

23rd August - "Homebirth Journeys"

13th September - 'Conscious parenting' (and babywearing with guest speaker Meredith Crawford-McKay)

Location: Lawson Family Day Care room, unless otherwise specified!

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

Contacts: email Krystal: bmhomebirth@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.

### 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.

Dates / Topics: 118th June - Private house - The Political Birth Scene

16th July - Russell Vale Hall - Yoga and Meditation for Mothers

20th August - Private house - Prenatal and Pregnancy Screening Tests

17th Sept - Russell Vale Hall - Breastfeeding through the ages

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

[candlebark@hotmail.com](mailto:candlebark@hotmail.com). Everyone welcome!

### Central Coast Homebirth Group

First Wednesday of each month

Time: 10.30am - 12.30

Contact: Lisa Richards 0404422617 [bellabirthing@live.com.au](mailto:bellabirthing@live.com.au)

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.

Dates / Topics:

13th June - Third Stage

11th July - Alternative Therapies in Pregnancy & Birth

8th August - Honouring Pregnancy, Birth & Motherhood:

Blessingways and Rituals

12th September - Positive Birth Story Sharing

Location: New Lambton Uniting Church Hall. 10-14 Grinsell St Kotara (off Orchardtown Rd).

Contact: Rachel 0415 435 045 or email [hnbgroup@gmail.com](mailto:hnbgroup@gmail.com)

### Armidale and District Homebirth Support Network

First Sunday of every month

Contact: Rebecca Pezzutti [hbsarmidale@gmail.com](mailto:hbsarmidale@gmail.com)

## Interstate & National

### Homebirth Australia

Contact: Chris Wrightson 0414 812 144 [homebirthaustralia@gmail.com](mailto:homebirthaustralia@gmail.com)  
[www.homebirthaustralia.org](http://www.homebirthaustralia.org)

### Homebirth Queensland Inc.

Contact: 07) 3839 5883 [info@homebirth.org.au](mailto:info@homebirth.org.au)  
[www.homebirth.org.au](http://www.homebirth.org.au)

### Alice Springs Homebirth Group

Contact: Anne Yffer 0402 424 780 [wildisha@gmail.com](mailto:wildisha@gmail.com)

### Darwin Homebirth Group

Contact: Justine Wickham 0438 888 755 [dhbinfo@gmail.com](mailto:dhbinfo@gmail.com)  
[www.darwinhomebirthgroup.org.au](http://www.darwinhomebirthgroup.org.au)

- 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.

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

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

YOU ARE WELCOME TO ATTEND

Homebirth Access Sydney (HAS)  
Committee Meetings

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:

12th June, 10th July, 14th August, 11th September

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.

The topic for the next issue is:  
'Bellies & Boobies'



Birthings is your magazine. Please contribute!  
Submissions are welcome on anything to do with 'Bellies and Boobies'. This could be the pregnancy and/or breastfeeding journey, or you might prefer to write about body image before and after birth. As always, we also welcome your birth announcements, birth stories, photos, letters, art and poetry.

Submissions are due by August 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](mailto: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](mailto:member@homebirthsydney.org.au)*