

BIRTHINGS

A HOMEBIRTH ACCESS SYDNEY QUARTERLY PUBLICATION



VARIATIONS OF NORMAL

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

www.homebirthsydney.org.au

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

CONTRIBUTIONS, PHOTOS, CORRESPONDENCE

Please send to Kirrilee Heartman 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 2013	No. 119	1 August 2013
Summer 2013	No. 120	1 November 2013
Autumn 2014	No. 121	1 February 2014
Winter 2014	No. 122	1 May 2014

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

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

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

CONTRIBUTING TO BIRTHINGS

The strength of Birthings is all the thought provoking, inspiring and challenging writing from members of our community. To ensure that the magazine is balanced, responsive to our audience's interests and needs, and reflects the priorities of HAS, we have developed a set of contribution guidelines. We also work with an editorial board, selected by the HAS executive, to reflect the range of people in our community. The founding board members are Maggie Lecky-Thompson, Adrienne Abulhawa, Jo Hunter, Sarah McLean and 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 1800 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 Kirrilee Heartman 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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Photo of Jesse and Jude Dopper. Photographed by Britt Janay Louwrens.

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Photo of Kirrilee Heartman with Lily, Zara and newborn Robin, March 2012.

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Editorial

I love telling people about my first homebirth in 2007; it was my third baby – my first two were born in a birth centre, then small Brisbane hospital. Both births were mostly uncomplicated and completely natural, and were 21 hours and then 10 hours respectively of active labour, with babies of average size.

My first homebirth had an active labour of just three hours, and Lily was born smoothly and joyously in the pool in my lounge room. My husband, the midwife and I were shocked when we weighed her; she was 4.9kg (10lb 11oz)! Despite a third degree tear with my first baby, this birth was injury-free.

My story demonstrates the intelligence of homebirth; labour that progresses more smoothly, an experience that is less painful, a birthing woman that is relaxed and able to birth a huge baby in a second stage of twenty minutes with no injuries! That healthy sized baby is probably as close as I come to having a 'variation of normal' experience. I've often wondered how that birth would have been had I gone through the mainstream medical system, as I was pretty obviously carrying a large baby.

As I have gathered the elements for this Winter Edition of *Birthings*, I have had the privilege to read birth stories that encompass a broad range of circumstances. I have come to the conclusion that there is no such thing as a 'Variation of Normal' – every pregnancy and birth experience contain their own challenges, which become the norm for that woman. Just like it is normal for me to carry and birth bigger babies.

As home birthers, we are all a 'variation of normal' – 'normal' in this case meaning the mainstream medical model of maternity care and childbirth. Thanks to the restrictive parameters held by this system, many women turn to home birth in the hope of achieving a 'normal' birth, in the physiological sense of the word. Tara Darlington addresses these issues in her thought provoking article written just for *Birthings*. Tara is a mother of six who has experienced birth in hospital, caesarean, and then homebirth. She has such a unique perspective as a woman and childbirth educator, and I am so pleased to include her musings here.

I am excited to present two articles from overseas; the first by Maryn Leister, a respected midwife in America, who writes of attending her first breech birth. It is a powerful piece of writing, and Maryn has generously allowed it to be printed in *Birthings*. Clare Connerton is a woman from the UK, whose birth story of her large and post-dates baby is contagious in its joy and sense of personal triumph.

Closer to home we have birth stories galore from the Sydney communitystories of twins, breech birth, big babies, hospital transfers, and smooth homebirths. Even a birth story from a Sydney woman now living in India! My hope is that these varied experiences inspire a sense of confidence and trust in birth within all who read them.

This issue does include accounts of birth that were planned to take place in hospital. These stories have been included because of the difficulty in finding 'variations of normal' births that occur at home, and to reflect the realities that higher risk pregnant women face when desiring a homebirth. In all but a couple of stories independent midwives are present as the main care givers. *Birthings* remains very firmly a planned home birth focused publication (including planned homebirths that end in hospital transfers).

What strikes me is the sense of ownership and strength that comes through these accounts – even when unexpected outcomes occur, or a caesarean is needed, there is a sense of peace and



empowerment – qualities that make all the difference when it comes to how a woman feels about her birth experiences. Home birth is so much more than just the day of birthing – the level of and continuity of care provided by independent midwives provide a strong foundation of support – no matter how birth turns out.

Our theme for the Spring Issue of *Birthings* is 'Life after Homebirth'. You've given birth, and now have... a baby! What happens next in the dance of life? How do you manage sleep, other children, your weight, your relationships, finances or returning to work? Has homebirth changed your vision of how things would be once the baby arrived? I invite you all to contribute to this interesting conversation. You don't need to be a proper 'writer' to contribute – you just need to have something to say or share! Please email contributions to editor@homebirthsydney.org.au, by August 1st.

I also wish to mention our 'Heart to Heart' page – a section dedicated to the creative gifts of our readers. It is there for artwork, poems, or a piece of creative writing that reflects your experience of pregnancy, birth or motherhood. I would love to see this page full of contributions from our local home birth community – inspiring all the mums-to-be that read this magazine.

Designing the magazine is a huge job and I must thank Kirstie Olah who did such a great job the last edition. This issue we welcome back Jacqui Fae to the role. We say goodbye and thank you to Amantha McGuinness and Jaia Baer, who are moving on from their volunteer posts of Distribution and Line Editing. And we welcome Rebecca Perrin, who takes over from Amantha.

My thanks go to Virginia and the HAS team for their support throughout the creation of this issue. I've enjoyed becoming part of a group of such lovely, dedicated women.

KIRRILEE HEARTMAN

APOLOGY: In Issue #118 "Creative Expressions", the author of the article on Page 30 entitled "A Birth Quilt" was omitted. It was written by Naomi Homel.

Letters to the editor



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

This issue, our prize goes to Vanessa Stasinowsky. Vanessa has won a digital print artwork, teabag set and handmade card from Pickled Tink – 'art with heart'. (www.pickledtink.com.au). Congratulations Vanessa, we will be in touch to send you your prize!

Send your letters to:
editor@homebirthsydney.org.au

Dear Kirrilee,
Thank you for the last edition of *Birthings*. I enjoyed your editorial and was so happy to read that you feel so passionately about including birth stories that don't end up being smooth, "normal" births at home, and I completely agree with you that "the act of engaging a midwife includes so much more than just the day of birthing". It also includes more than the place in which that birth ends up happening. It is the choice of care provider and the relationship that develops between the midwives and the parents-to-be while planning their homebirth that can make necessary transfers easier and less scary, and gives women a better chance of coming out the other side with good birth experiences. After I read your editorial, and saw that the next issue would be "Variations of Normal", I finally felt like I could submit our birth story. Our planned homebirth ended up being a hospital transfer, and for the past two years I have never really felt like our story would 'fit' in a homebirth magazine. I love reading the homebirth stories in every issue, and hopefully, one day, we will have our own homebirth story to tell. But for now, thank you Kirrilee (and the *Birthings* team) for acknowledging that all of our stories are important and wonderful, and that having a relationship with a private midwife (who can become your warrior in a hospital if need be) means these undesirable transfers can still be positive, empowering experiences. I'm very much looking forward to this issue! Thank you again,
Vanessa [Stasinowsky]

Dear Kirrilee, I just wanted to congratulate you on a wonderful Autumn edition of *Birthings*. We are lucky to have such wonderful women as yourself, donate all your time and energy to this fabulous publication. I truly do not know how you have managed to find the time, whilst mothering your five precious children. Keep up the good work, and please know that you are appreciated and supported by many.
Emma [Bedall]

Dear HAS,
Thank you so much for the beautiful flowers that were delivered to me for international midwives day. It truly brightened my day. Warmest Regards,
Megan [Barker]

A Big Thank you to the team of "Birthings", you have shown such dedication, from magazine to magazine, I love reading the new birth announcements, articles, poems and the birth stories. My clients enjoy receiving their magazines, and get inspiration for writing their own birth stories and some have even gone onto sharing their stories with others via your magazine. Keep up the great work, your dedication, long hours volunteering your time is certainly appreciated. I'd also like to thank HAS for celebrating International Midwives Day with us all, thank you for my flowers-they really did brighten my day.
In Birthing,
Lisa [Richards] x=

Thankyou HAS for my beautiful flowers on Monday! They brightened up my afternoon and have pride of place in the lounge room. Well done HAS,
Robyn [Dempsey]

Comments from the HAS Facebook page:

Thank-you for the beautiful flowers today. It is lovely to be a part of such a strong birthing community.
[Acorn Midwifery]

It was lovely to arrive home to flowers on my doorstep. Thank you HAS xx
[Jo Hunter]

Thank you wonderful ladies, for the beautiful flowers. I feel incredibly privileged. xoxo
[Emma Beddall]

Awesome mag guys! I loved all of the wonderful artwork, thank you so much for including mine! :-D
[Chantal Handley – Artist]

I have just received my beautiful and inspiring HAS mag. Well done to you all and thanks.
[Earthy Birthy Amber]



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Amanda

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Birth

Announcements

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



Isis Nerina Cumming born at 8:37pm on the 22nd of November 2012; weighing in at 3.78kg. She's a blessing to all who know her; a happy relaxed baby girl.



Our little **Leah** was born at home at 4:05am on March 7th 2013. A huge thank you to our wonderful midwife Jo Hunter and our dear friends Meggan and Simon for their support in making Leah's birth such a magical experience. With love, Korin and Chris Virgona.



Vivienne Frances Rowe was born in her caul, at home in the birth pool on the 4th of February at 7.11am. She weighed a whopping 4.25kg, was 55cm long and had a head circumference of 37cm. Her APGAR was a 9 and then a 10. Her birth was truly an amazing event for me.



Nik and Melodie Glass are thrilled to introduce **Maximillian Tobias Glass**. Born 28th April at 7.34pm into water at home in the loving presence of his two home birthed sisters Isabelle (4.5) and Stella (2.5), Nanna & Auntie. A huge thank you to our incredible midwife Gail Baker (Bun in the Oven Homebirth Services) and multitasking birth photographer Leanda (Studio 22 Photography). Weighing in at 4.18kg (9.1 pounds) and 52cm in length he is perfect and we are all over the moon as we reflect on his amazing, calm and joyful entry into the world.



Stacey, Sujith and older sister Symphony are proud to announce the arrival of - **Luminous Anthony Christie-David** - he was born beautifully at home in the water at 1:15am on the 8th of February 2013, weighing 4.930kg and 58cm! After 42 weeks and 4 days of being pregnant, he has already taught us so many lessons including patience, faith, trust and strength and it's only the beginning! Thank you so much for all your love, support and guidance Jo Hunter, our amazing midwife!



I would like to announce the birth of **Samara**, born at home in water on the 13th February 2013, with the loving support of my husband Daniel, Sonja MacGregor, Jo Hunter, and Natalie Forbes Dash. A beautiful, healing natural birth after two caesareans.



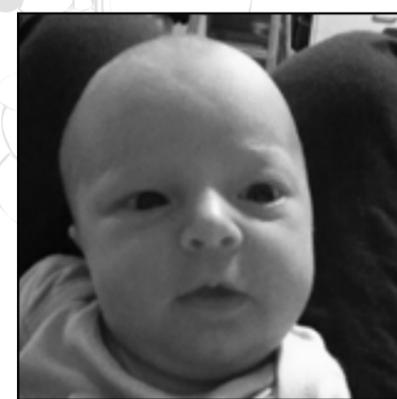
Ben, Olivia, 4 yr old sister Jacinta and 2 yr old brother Johnny-Ray would like to welcome to the world our little princess **Charlotte J Solomon**. Nickname Charli was born on April 3rd, 2013 at 6:40pm, at home into water. An amazing 20 minute active birth by 2 amazing midwives Sheryl Sidery and Tania.



Brooke and Nick are thrilled to announce the arrival of our VBAC baby, **Finley Samuel Humphreys**. Born into his daddy's hands at home in the water on 8th April 2013 @ 9.17am weighing 3.43kg. Another babe with a head full of hair! Big sister Mina was there to help and watched her brother being born. Big love and thanks to our amazing midwives Lisa and Megan from Bella Birthing and our doula Lauren Horton. We are so in love with our little man.



Kane Leonard Noel Jales was born peacefully at home in water on 22nd March 2013 at 12.55 pm, 3.9 kg and 54cm long. Daisy is now a proud big sister and smitten with Kane. A big thank you to my mum Kerrie Smith, sister Amy Rowe and ofcourse my husband Dave for your support. Another big thanks to my midwife Tanya Munten for your wisdom and support! What an amazing beautiful experience that will stay with me always.



Penelope, Jonathan and daughter Naomi are overjoyed to welcome daughters **Rosina Marion Bayl**, born head-first at 4.00am and **Lilian Joyce Bayl** (pictured), born both feet first at 4.07am on 27.3.2013, born spontaneously at 39 weeks at Westmead Hospital, as planned. They were welcomed into the world with the wonderful midwives Robyn Dempsey, Jane Palmer and obstetrician Andrew Pesce and Penny's sister Laura. Labour was superfast with no medical pain relief required and with a natural delivery of the placenta without haemorrhage. Penny and babies went straight home from the birthing unit that morning and both babies are breastfeeding nicely.



Vikki and Jason McIntyre are delighted to announce the birth of **Evie Rose McIntyre**, little sister to Isla. Evie was born by emergency caesarean at 12.09am on the 17th October 2012 measuring 3.34kg and 50cm. Much love to our wonderful midwife, Lisa Richards and doula Lauren Horton and a special thanks to my Mum x



Fiona, Craig and big sister Jasmine are proud to announce the arrival of **Sienna Jane Rothwell**. She was born at home on Thursday 31st January at 8:40pm after a very quick labour, weighing 3.71kg and 56cm long. We like to thank our wonderful midwives Jane Palmer and Melanie Jackson for their amazing support, and also our friend Anna who helped with Jasmine during the labour. Craig and I feel very blessed to now have two beautiful daughters.

Coordinator's Report

After months of cancelled HAS committee meetings between November and April due to low numbers, we finally managed to rally up our crew of volunteers for the April meeting and AGM. All committee members retained their current positions, with the exception of the previous resignation of our Birthings designer Kirstie Olah due to finding paid work, and no new volunteers came to take on any new positions. Fortunately for us, since then our previous designer Jacqui Fae came to save our magazine from almost certain death by volunteering to come back and work her design magic. Many thanks to Kirstie for all her hard work on the last issue, and welcome back to the fold Jacqui. Our only remaining position is Assistant Coordinator which has remained unfilled ever since I took on the Coordinator's role a year ago. Anyone? Anyone?

Last month was International Midwives Day on May 5th. Due to it being a Sunday with no deliveries available, we could not send out our annual thank you flowers to all the midwives on our list on the day, so we were a day late. A huge thank you to our Treasurer and Merchandise Coordinator Veronica Cerbelli who, while heavily pregnant, went through a mini hell getting them organised and sent out, after one company decided to cancel 1/2 hour before cut off time for same day deliveries, due to some addresses being outside of Sydney metro. Fortunately they refunded our Paypal money just in time for us to be able to pay another company before their cut off time, and then there was later a lot of apologies from senior management from the first company for such poor service from one staff member that they lost a large order and any future business with us! I think all of the flowers were well received and I would hazard a guess that our newest advertising midwives would have got a pleasant surprise with their unexpected gift!

Speaking of Veronica, she is getting quite close to birthing her baby this month and it will likely be here by the time you read this. We wish her all the best for a positive and empowering homebirth. Someone else in the committee who has just had a positive and empowering homebirth is our Advertising Coordinator, Laurel Cook, who birthed a little girl, Olive, on May 9th, supported by Robyn Dempsey and Jane Palmer. Congratulations to Laurel and family, and welcome to the world Olive. I can't wait to meet her, hopefully at the next meeting. Our committee members keep multiplying with new pregnancies and babies, just to keep us all relevant to the organisation (and me feeling less and less so as my babies grow older!). The latest announcement comes from our Website Admin Jennifer Lorange. Congratulations on your new pregnancy (due in January!). I look forward to watching your bump grow and meeting your newest addition.

My consumer representation continues with the ACM Privately Practising Midwives Advisory Committee. The third edition of the ACM Consultation and Referral Guidelines are currently being discussed, with feedback due this week after the usual short time frame for review. The Guidelines are much more comprehensive than the earlier editions which is more positive for midwives, however there is some concern that not only is it very long and repetitive, but that there has been no change to Appendix A which requires that women going outside of the Guidelines and against their midwives' medical advice, must have a form signed by herself, her midwife and another health professional, and if she refuses then it puts midwives in a difficult position when continuing to care for these women. I will keep you updated as to the final release. Also on the committee is Jo Hunter who is compiling a dossier of vexatious complaints reported from midwives around the country, to submit to the Board in an attempt to address concerns on how these are dealt with by AHPRA, and from what I hear they are apparently very distressing to read with the negative impacts these are having on the lives and mental health of these devoted women and their pregnant clients.

Apart from that, the Health Complaints Amendment Act 2013 has just been passed in the Senate which is not only worrying for many other areas of our health freedoms (ie. those who promote conscientiously objecting to vaccinations which the Bill was targeted towards, as well as those who choose natural methods of healing over pharmaceuticals), but it will possibly affect independent midwives also. The changes to HCCC will give them more powers to act



against any health professional they deem to be a risk to public health, without anyone in the health field or public having made a complaint, and it removes the complaint having to be referred to the relevant professional board, committee or tribunal. So potentially a midwife known to be taking on 'high risk' pregnant women, could be investigated and punished despite having no complaint made against her – and of course then she will be judged according to the different standards of health professionals who are quite out of context of normal midwifery practice. Or a midwife who is already before the AHPRA judiciary due to a vexatious complaint can have other areas of her practice investigated and judged without anyone else having complained. As if they don't have enough vexatious complaints to deal with! Once the government takes away our rights and freedoms they are very difficult to take back, and I fear we are moving more and more towards losing many of our autonomies and civil liberties. This is especially so during an election year when one political party goes down the road of fear mongering and the other political party fuels the fire by trying to whip up a frenzy of fear-induced consensus so as not to look complacent!

OK I have rambled too much already. In closing, I will finish by highly recommending you buy from our growing list of awesome merchandise, add yourself to the growing number of 'likers' on the Homebirth Access Sydney Facebook page if you haven't already (at the time of writing we number over 768!), and to come and volunteer or at least come meet us at one of our fun and friendly committee meetings – details on page 59. There will be at least a few new bubbas to coo over! Oh and if you are a business owner, we would really, really love a new sponsor to help with printing or postage costs. Contact us for this or any other enquiries at: info@homebirthsydney.org.au.

VIRGINIA MADDOCK

Secretary's Report

A year of Change
Since joining HAS early in 2012 and taking over as Secretary from Yvette Barton I have gained a healthy respect for all the HAS volunteers.

All our volunteers are busy mums yet they manage to pull together each month to meet and keep HAS, the website and Birthings running. Since April 2012 we have recruited a new Treasurer, Webmistress, Merchandise Coordinator, Advertising Coordinator & Editor. Our committee meetings moved from the Australia Doula College to The Arncliffe Community Centre and most recently to our HAS Media Watch officer's house in Marrickville.

I'd like to thank our homebirth midwives for their support in keeping our subscriptions rising as they kindly pay for client's memberships. We now have 15 midwives registered with HAS and 49 new members joined in the last quarter.

HAS's revenue sources are advertising, merchandise sales, events and subscriptions. During the last year we've maintained a relatively healthy bank balance considering we no longer have a postage sponsor to help out with what are quite high costs. We've also reinvested in the homebirth community by donating towards one of our midwife's court ordered course fees to enable her to return to work after having restrictions placed on her, and we have donated to various homebirth families who have experienced loss.

Our Merchandise Coordinator has gone to great lengths to update our stock including bibs, books and DVDs. If you're not familiar with what we have then please visit the website and click on the



merchandise link. All funds raised will go back into supporting this great organisation and homebirthing families in our community.

We now have a great network of homebirth support groups for women and their families interested in homebirth across Sydney and the surrounding region. Most recently the Eastern Suburbs Homebirth Group has restarted which was a great success.

Having become a homebirth mum for the first time in December 2012, I appreciate the choice I had in making the decision to birth my baby at home and I feel lucky to work for such a wonderful organisation.

NADINE FRAGOSA



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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 jane.collings@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



BirthKeeper Intensive Workshop

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.

One day workshop for women - pregnant, planning to be or Birth Workers. 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 address and let go of fears, update our belief systems, connect with our baby inside, soulbaby or Inner Goddess and establish our Birth Temple in preparation for our birth.

2013 workshops

Connecting With The Shamanic Dimensions of Pregnancy Workshop

One day workshops available in January, March, and later in the year subject to bookings
Venue: Sydney
9:30am – 5pm daily
Fully catered, non-residential \$160

Maidens and Mothers Gatherings

Preparation for menstruation information
Sydney and Southern Highlands
3 hour gatherings by arrangement

Pregnancy – The Inner Journey Workshop

Wednesday March 13th - Friday March 15th 2013
Venue: Jane's Place, 331 Kirkland Road, East Kangaloon, Southern Highlands, NSW
9:30am – 5pm daily
Fully catered, non-residential \$450

Moonsong Workshop

Saturday March 16th - Sunday March 17th 2013
Venue: Jane's Place, 331 Kirkland Road, East Kangaloon, Southern Highlands, NSW
9:30am – 5pm daily
Fully catered, non-residential \$350 or \$250 per person for two family members

Connecting With The Shamanic Dimensions of Pregnancy Workshop

Friday April 12th 2013
Venue: Sydney
9:30am – 5pm daily
Fully catered, non-residential \$160

Moonsong Workshop

Saturday April 27th – Sunday April 28th 2013
Venue: Sydney
9:30am – 5pm daily
\$450 or \$350 per person for two family members

BirthKeeper Intensive

Thursday May 23rd – Friday May 24th 2013
Venue: Melbourne
9:30am – 5pm daily
\$400 teas catered, bring lunch to share

Pregnancy – The Inner Journey Workshop

Wednesday May 29th – Friday May 31st 2013
Venue: Brisbane
9:30am – 5pm daily
Fully catered, non-residential \$550

Moonsong Workshop

Saturday June 1st – Sunday June 2nd 2013
Venue: Brisbane
9:30am – 5pm daily
\$450 or \$350 per person for two family members

2013 BirthKeeper Intensive

Thursday August 22nd – Friday August 23rd 2013
Venue: Sydney
9:30am – 5pm daily
\$400 teas catered, bring lunch to share

Pregnancy – The Inner Journey Workshop

Wednesday 30th October – Friday 1st November 2013
Venue: Jane's Place, 331 Kirkland Road, East Kangaloon, Southern Highlands, NSW
9:30am – 5pm daily
Fully catered, non-residential \$450

Moonsong Workshop

Saturday 2nd November – Sunday 3rd November 2013
Venue: Jane's Place, 331 Kirkland Road, East Kangaloon, Southern Highlands, NSW
9:30am – 5pm daily
Fully catered, non-residential \$350 or \$250 per person for two family members

Committee Member Profile

Holly Priddis:
Fundraising and Events
Coordinator.



When did you join HAS? Middle 2012

Details of your family? I am married to a wonderful man, and have four fabulous children – two boys and two girls - ranging in age from 9 to 19 years.

What did you do before having kids/ and since? Before children I was a professional model which seems like a lifetime ago! Since having all four children I have completed the Bachelor of Midwifery degree at UTS, my Honours which examined birth positioning in different birth settings, and I am currently in my final year of my PhD at UWS which is examining the experiences for women who sustain severe perineal trauma (third and fourth degree tears) during birth. I currently have a casual teaching position teaching the new cohort of BMid students at UWS, I also run a photography business where I specialise in birth and newborn photography (Holly Priddis Photography) and am co-founder and director for the Luke Priddis Foundation, we provide support and services for families with a child living with Autism Spectrum Disorder (like my 11 year old son).

Why did you choose homebirth? Unfortunately I did not have the experience of birthing my babies at home due to my own experience of severe perineal trauma. However I have been blessed beyond belief to be the midwife present at the birth of my two fairy god daughters, and have recently joined Midwives at Sydney and Beyond.

New and Renewed Members

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

Melinda Tursky
Louise McKervy
Emily Higginson
Laura Gauslaa
Susanne Evans
Bernadette Fitzpatrick
Verena Raschke-Cheema
Antonia Anderson
Alexandra Zabolotskaya
Megan Cuttriss
Brenda Prado
Jacqueline Cook
Jess Baird
Britt Louwrens
Kelly Pyne
Anastasia Davy
Trinity Pawlutschenko
Joelle Skinner
Jane Hoogesteger
Shubjeet Shangha
Mignon Baricevic
Alex Piper
Bec Beedie
Kaitlin Ellis
Kym Beaton

Edwina McCarron
Marie Heath
Jacquie Harsh
Larissa Chapman
Sasha Havlik
Brita Fowler
Millie Allbon
Erin Quinn
Elizabeth Bender
Alyssea Kemp
Paula Sonley
Ineka Hanepen
Emilie Ritea
Anna Herald
Jazlie Grygoruk
Carla Stern
Nicolle Kapustin
Emma Blenmann
Jaala Presland
Zoe Voss
Sarah Beck
Shirin Town
Sarah Beck
Beth Taylor

Membership

For new memberships or renewals please go to www.homebirthsydney.org.au and click on 'memberships'.

HypnoBirthing®

BIRTH CLASSES

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- Glenorie

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

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

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

VARIATIONS OF NORMAL



I see so many women coming through my Prenatal Yoga Classes and Antenatal Classes that I've come to the conclusion that 'Variations' is 'normal'. No two women's pregnancies or labours are alike – each pregnancy, labour and baby is just as unique as a finger print, and this unique experience is imprinted on our souls for the rest of our life. So variations in labour and birth are quite possibly essential for the development and maintenance of a healthy society where diversity is paramount to our survival.

The umbrella of what is normal is very large and while certain characteristics (symptoms, behaviours, experiences et cetera) are more common than others, many lesser-known characteristics are still within the spectrum of normal, but as they are not talked about so much, they are less well known. As fear, insurance and corporations try to control birth with intervention, these skills and knowledge of normal in less common scenarios is being lost. This is one of the reasons why homebirth midwifery is so important. Independent Midwives practise with a much wider scope of normal and, with their knowledge and experience, comes trust in the process, themselves and, of course, women and birth – which is why one of their mantras is Trust Birth. But to Trust Birth we need to Know Birth.

My clients' view of 'normal' often comes from the media's misrepresentation of pregnancy and birth, and the often misguided-perception of birth from those around them. In general, our society is not so familiar with healthy pregnancy and natural birth and its variations, but more familiar with what is 'normal' when a woman is stressed, fearful, unsupported in labour and surrounded by people who project an expectation that they won't experience anything but helplessness, discomfort and pain. This view of normal perpetuates itself into a downward spiral of intervention, more feelings of helplessness and fear, more pain and more intervention – the normal in this situation usually translates into a traumatic and disempowering experience for mum, bub and those around them.

On the other hand, some experiences are considered 'normal' because they are common and there is a sense that there is nothing that can be done to change the possible outcome. For example, 'swollen feet', is considered normal by many of my clients. They are told by their caregiver, "It's normal, so stop complaining"; however it is often an early sign that your body is not coping in some way. We can choose to say it's normal or we can be proactive and try to give our body what it needs to become more in balance

with its needs. As my traditional Chinese doctor would say about period pain, "It's normal, but it's not good". Just because everyone experiences it this way or that, does that mean we can't do anything about it? That we have to live with the discomfort and the associated risks? No. We can then look for alternatives to make our experiences more positive, empowering and beneficial to us.

I personally chose my first home birth with my third child. It was to be a VBAC and I quickly realised that if I stayed within the hospital system that I would get a 'normal' hospital VBAC (which would be a trial of labour, a lot of fear and doubt and chance of another caesarean). At home, however, with an independent midwife, I was able to experience my labour in my way and have my own variation of normal birth – which meant that the imprint on me, my baby and my family was just as mother nature intended.

There are three definitions of normal here: Normal as in the negative expectations, fear and intervention that most people seem to be experiencing; Normal as in the everyday complaints and risks that Western society has forgotten how to manage with preventative medicine; and Normal as in when we are at our most supported, educated and proactive about our physical, mental and emotional health – this is when we see the true variations of normal birth.

Tara Darlington is a Birth Educator, Yoga Instructor, Doula and Mother of six. She currently offers her services in the Baulkham Hills to the mantra Supporting Motherhood.

She produced her Prenatal Yoga at Home DVD just weeks before giving birth to her 5th child, Ilaria and is currently writing her first book - "Pearls of Wisdom".

China (14) was born in the Royal Women's Birth Centre, Akira (9) was born by Caesarean Section at RPA and Aasha (8), Ayana (5), Ilaria (3) and our latest edition to the tribe Ayesha (15 months), were all born at her home in the Hills District.

www.birthwithdignity.com.



Heart To Heart

Two Poems

As I sit here beautifully round two spirits abound
Together as one until the growth is done

Life is blossoming within me
A mother I am soon to be
I greet each day in a miraculous way, still two spirits today.

Each night by the light of the moon
I watch my belly move and I begin to swoon

In this creation haze,
I know we will only be two for a few more days,
So I sit in quiet contemplation and wonderment of our
Transition to parent and infant.

Waiting to bring you earthside brings me deep inside.
My spiritual growth is a reflection of us both.
I already know your soul and
Love who you are.
My little being from the stars.

As I sit here beautifully round,
Two spirits abound,
Together as one until the growth is done.

Let's begin our dance
Cue the music
Assume the stance
An ancient rhythmic circle
Performed and perfected by eons of women
Waves of energy to bring life from skin
Out into the open from deep within
Baby drop down into the light
Ride the wave into sight
Mama and you from one to two
Drop down into the light
Let's begin our dance
Ride the wave into sight
Spiral out into this realm Earthside bound
It's time to come round and to be crowned
Baby drop down into the light
Ride the wave into sight

Poems by Erica, written at 42/2 weeks. Printed with permission from Ten Month Mamas FB group.

ARLO FINALLY

PUTS IN AN APPEARANCE



Let me ruin the end of the story by telling you the punchline at the beginning. Just in case you can't be bothered to read to the end.

I gave birth to our gorgeous son Arlo, an 11lb 2oz baby, at HOME. With no drugs save a teeny whiff of gas and air and no tearing or stitches. BOOM!

And also the baby was what they like to call "compound presentation" which means that in addition to having to push out his massive head (no truly, the size of his head was in the 98th percentile) he also had his hand against his head which makes the whole thing, well, BIGGER.

Ok, bragging over. I promise. But the thing is, giving birth to Arlo made me feel so amazing. It was just that, if I could do this extreme birthing myself then I can probably do any fucking thing I ever wanted to do in the universe ever. And you know a little bragging is justified. I am proud of myself. Because this was my second labour and my first was the opposite in every way (aside from the truly awesome outcomes both times). If you had asked me any time up to about 38 weeks through this pregnancy I would have told you that I was going to go into hospital at the first sign of contractions with a stack of magazines, ask for an epidural and wait calmly to be told when to push.

This was until a friend gently recommended I meet Rebecca. Our wonderful, life changing doula. Rebecca is like a cross between your best friend and your therapist only she's seen as many vaginas as a gynaecologist. She is an awesome tea maker too. Though I'd like to say that isn't her main skill. I'm pretty sure her main skills are listening and adapting to be whatever you need her to be. After our intro meeting to suss each other out, the first thing Rebecca did was listen as Dylan and I talked through the experience we had when I gave birth to Nate; the good (an amazing midwife called "Comfort" who rescued me in my hour of need), the bad (being shouted at by a less good midwife at another critical stage of my labour) and the ugly (you don't need to know). She listened and made me feel, just, well, better about the whole thing. She made us realise that we had been the victims of bad luck and unfortunate circumstance like shift changes and hospital protocols and that my labour needn't be like that again. Quickly she started highlighting some basic things we could do to make sure the experience would be more positive the second time around. After a few discussions with her I realised what I wanted was to feel relaxed and in control of my own labour. And I realised that my best chance of that happening would be at home. I am a private and self-conscious person, so being around as few people as possible and hidden away at home would put me in my most relaxed state. I understood that in this state I'd have a much greater shot at staying in control of my contractions.

I knew that some people might not approve of the idea of my homebirth, I didn't think my midwife would be one of them. Because I was presenting with a "larger than average baby" they felt that I was high risk. There doesn't seem to be any compelling evidence to suggest large baby automatically equals high risk and I knew that large babies were normal in our family (Nate was 9lb 8oz, and both my brother and I were 10lb babies.) Luckily I had Rebecca's support and she helped me by pointing me in the direction of some good reading about giving birth to larger babies. We talked lots, she gave me some books to

read about homebirth and put me in touch with the very supportive local Supervisor of Midwives. Soon I felt confident in a way I never had when I was pregnant with Nate. If I was relaxed through my labour and I felt calm and safe that my body would know what to do and I would be able to give birth to my son without drama or intervention.

I wasn't expecting to go 2 weeks overdue and to say I was fucked off is a massive understatement especially as I had been having Braxton Hicks from about 37 weeks AND my first baby had been on time. But Rebecca talked me down, and reminded me that the baby just wasn't ready yet and would arrive any day now. She supported us by explaining in more detail than I'd had from the midwife what we could expect from an induction and what our options were. In those final two weeks she gave me recommendations for treatments that I could have that could help bring labour on naturally (Acupuncture and Reflexology) and put me in touch with some brilliant practitioners. I liked doing these treatments because they made me feel like I was doing something productive (staying in control) whilst still relaxing. Everyday I practiced deep yogic breathing and tried to remain focussed on positive thoughts. This simply manifested itself as thinking excitedly about the arrival of our little boy rather than obsessing about the labour. I tried to focus on the labour as simply a means to the end.

Happily I went into labour naturally the day before my induction was booked in. I day shy of 42 weeks pregnant. I went to sleep on the Wednesday night saying to Dylan, "I don't think these are Braxton Hicks you know." We had a few hours of dreamy, cuddly sleep before contractions started to become painful and I asked Dylan to go and get my hot water bottle. For the next couple of hours I just lay on my side with my hot water bottle behind me on my lower back doing my deep breathing. Dylan lit a scented candle for me which smelled of lavender which I had become addicted to in my final

weeks of pregnancy. At about 4am I asked Dylan to run me a bath as contractions were much more painful and frequent. I think they were probably about every 4 minutes at that stage but we never timed them so I can't be sure. Getting into the bath was a massive relief. Dylan lit another candle and put my relaxing music on and sat with me chatting to me in between contractions (when I asked him to be quiet). I got out of the bath after about an hour and went back up to our cosy bedroom where I set myself up on the floor placing my head on a pillow and breathing deeply as the contractions came. At about 6am I asked Dylan to phone Rebecca to come, and also to let the team of midwives know that although I didn't need them yet that I was definitely in labour. At 7am I realised things were slowing down, it was getting light outside so I went downstairs and had some tea and toast with honey. I apologised to Rebecca when she arrived because the frequency of my contractions had slowed right down. She told me not to be silly and it was perfectly normal to labour well through the night only for things to cool down a bit when the sun came up. She sat with me for a while quietly in my room allowing Dylan time to go and speak with Nate and my mum who were both in the house. This was very reassuring for 3 year old Nate who was (somewhat uncharacteristically) a complete angel throughout my labour. After an hour or two we agreed that Rebecca should go home for a bit as the action probably wouldn't take place until later in the day. She recommended I take advantage of the break to get some sleep. On her way out our slightly over-eager midwife arrived to examine me even though we had explicitly said we didn't need anyone yet and I was fine. After quietly checking with us first Rebecca very politely sent her away for me. I just wanted to be left alone to sleep.

I stayed in bed labouring, and breathing for a few hours though it didn't seem like such a long time. About 11.30 I told Dylan I needed to get into the bath again as I felt I needed a change of scene from the bedroom and also because the pain was getting stronger. This time the bath had the opposite effect. Everything seemed to quicken and intensify in that hour or so that I was in there. The pain, which I had found difficult but manageable, was rapidly getting to be too much and I wanted Rebecca and the midwife there to help me with it. Dylan asked if he should tell them to come in half an hour. I "explained" (or maybe I shouted!!) that I would need them NOW. Looking back I realise now I was going through transition at this point. But at the time I had no idea. Based on my previous experience with Nate I didn't think that there was any way that I would have been able to reach this stage of my labour just

pottering around at home with some scented candles and a hot water bottle! I started to feel sick and dizzy so Dylan helped me out of the bath and once I was no longer in the comforting warm water the pain took over in waves. No sooner had I told Dylan that I'd changed my mind and to get me to hospital than I shut down and stopped being able to speak properly. Dylan rushed my mum and Nate out of the living room upstairs because we didn't want them to see me in pain. I knelt on the bathroom floor breathing through the contractions until

the midwife arrived and helped me through to the living room. Because we hadn't realised how far along I was we hadn't put the birthing pool out. It was too late. I was about to push. It felt like there was no break between contractions. I couldn't bear anyone speaking, touching me or moving while I was having a contraction. The midwife who arrived to help me (a different one from that morning) was amazing, she just went with what I wanted. She didn't try to examine me (I could not have laid on my back if you'd offered me £1 million to do it) and trusted me when I felt the need to push just giving me the gas and air when I wanted it and a hand to squeeze. I just had her and Dylan on either side of me as I knelt against our arm chair when Rebecca arrived. I was horrendous to them all telling everyone who moved or spoke to "shut up" as I couldn't bear any sensory inputs whatsoever but was able to go into myself completely as the brilliant, wonderful people around me did everything I asked without complaint or question.

The pushing took just over an hour. Quite a long time I suppose but not unusual with such a big baby. As his head was coming out I could feel him come down a little and then go back. As I'd had an epidural with Nate I had no idea this sensation is normal. Then the midwife gently told me that the baby was showing slight signs of distress. She wasn't overly concerned as we were making good steady progress and she expected him to be delivered shortly but I took this really, really badly. I started to cry, fearing that the baby's head was getting stuck as Nate's had and that they might have to do an episiotomy or worse take me to hospital in an ambulance. The latter of these options was the most terrifying as I couldn't contemplate moving a muscle from the position I was in. So I sobbed. Rebecca had been respectfully waiting in the hall because she saw that I was managing really well with just Dylan and the midwife up to this point but as soon as she heard my distress she came right in because she knew exactly what I was thinking, she came up to me and gently laid a hand on me and told me how brilliantly I was doing. She said that what was happening now was completely normal and natural and that the baby was coming out perfectly and it wasn't the same as what had happened with Nate at all. It was amazing. I hadn't been able to speak to voice my fears but it was like she read my mind. At the next contraction I started pushing again with renewed effort, determined to get this baby out on my own. Four or five contractions and huge pushes later and Arlo our delicious chubby boy was born.

Unlike my first labour as soon as the placenta was delivered, baby Arlo and I were reclining on the sofa breastfeeding and I had a cup of hot sweet tea in my hand. Then, as the midwives cleared up the living room and performed checks on Arlo I had the best shower in the world before getting into my pyjamas. Mum and Nate finally came downstairs to have cuddles with us all on the sofa. Rebecca looked after everyone and then she and the midwife left leaving my little family in the warm glow of our cosy living room filled with joy on that December evening.

After I'd had Nate I felt traumatised and was afraid of childbirth and was disappointed in myself. This time I was exhausted and sore yes, relieved it was over of course, but exhilarated and

on top of the world. Having that baby at home with my family around me was one of the best decisions I ever made. So I'd love for other women out there who are frightened because

it is their first experience of labour, or who have had a bad experience in the past or who just don't think they are strong and capable enough or who think their baby is too big, or not in the perfect position to know that if I can do it, anyone can.

Clare Connerton is an advertising director on maternity leave. She lives on the East Kent Coast in the UK with her husband and two little boys. When she isn't cooking dinner or pretending to be a tiger she writes a blog about the challenges of parenting, feminism and creativity. And food. www.lifeinthebubble.co.uk.

This article reprinted with permission from www.hackneydoula.co.uk.

Rebecca (the Hackney Doula) is a Doula UK recognised birth doula, offering support to birthing women and their families in London and East Kent. She Co-Chair Birthrights, the human rights in childbirth charity, and her experiences have led her to blogging and freelance journalism on related topics. Before entering the childbirth world she worked in the charity and NGO sector, most recently at Human Rights Watch.

@hackneydoula



BREECH!



Ten years ago, the Midwest. I was a brand new Midwifery apprentice, having seen maybe two other homebirths other than my own.

The call from the midwife came in, late afternoon.... First time mama was in early labour, her waters had broken and, surprise! There was fresh meconium. Breech.

I remember the moments of decision making between the midwife and the parents. Birth certainly wasn't imminent, but there was an urgency to the situation to decide whether this would proceed as a breech birth at home... or a c-section upon arrival at the local hospital.

What followed was trust in birth. Breech as a variation of normal; a mom's choice to stay at home and birth her baby in whatever way he would come. In the then (and current) political climate (both in birth and the legalities of midwifery), a decision that would likely be judged as risky, or stupid or dangerous. A real life lesson that a muma must birth where she feels safe and with who she feels safe, making as an informed choice as is possible. And an attendant that would support her no matter what.

The clinical details are fuzzy because I didn't know enough to know what I didn't know. But perhaps more important, as an observer, I have a very clear emotional memory of this experience. One that would change me forever, and set me on the path of becoming a 'birth-trusting' midwife.

My own memories are of sleeping on and off on this woman's carpeted bedroom; she laboured quietly on her bed throughout the night, and a couple of us (there was another student and two midwives, total) took turns listening to the baby. I remember the waiting for her body to completely open and the reminders not to push until it was clear this had happened.

Early morning and the birth pool was being filled. I felt excited and giddy for the birth (as I had for all of them so far!) and did not feel fear from anyone in the room. At the time, I didn't know how special this was; to allow this mama to birth her very first baby, in an unexpected way, without the energy of fear or disbelief that she could do it. Of course she could do it!

As we all looked on, her sweet husband supported her in the pool, and by the dim light of a flashlight I remember seeing more meconium.... and then a tiny butt crown into the water. My most distinct memory of this birth was the butt, and then the little legs kicking in the water while the body remained inside. Quiet, peaceful. Only the whisper of the elder midwife to the other, "Now, don't touch it!"

And there he was. All of him, birthed into the water. No panic, no emergency, no pulling. The perfect emergence of this special babe, birthed by his special mama, in a birth pool at home. No hands, only the water to support him. Breech.

To think that many people never see a natural, physiological birth; never mind a home birth. And to think that we all had the honour of witnessing this 'physiological breech birth' at home is a gift. It wasn't until recently, as a midwife myself, that I realised what a profound gift this was. And continues to be, as I serve women.

Because what this mama and baby did for me is plant the seeds of what birth is; breech or not. I respect birth, very much, but I am not scared of it. The decision to birth in a certain place or in a certain way or with a baby in a less-common position is the woman's to make. As attendants, we are aware of our strengths and limitations but we do not let our fear guide us. Because birth will happen. BREECH birth will happen, and we must be prepared in our hearts and minds to let it.

Maryn Leister is mother to 6 amazing beings; ages 10 to 1. She serves women in Minnesota as a traditional and unlicensed midwife and is an advocate for women birthing how, when, where and with whom they choose. Maryn loves guiding women to find their own power in pregnancy and birth and is a supporter of unassisted birth. She looks forward to a time when all babies are born gently into love, blissfully, at home. In addition to a private practice, Maryn helps educate women across the globe through the Indie Birth Association (<http://www.indiebirth.com>).



THE SCHOOL OF SHAMANIC MIDWIFERY

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, practitioners and teachers of the Women's Mysteries, for their community and beyond.

BIRTHKEEPER INTENSIVE 2013 - May - Melbourne | August - 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

ROSINA



with difficulty!), evening primrose capsules, breastfeeding my two-year-old, osteopathy, preparing 'labour-inducing' foods, a glass of red wine, and finally acupuncture and acupressure.

It came up to just before 39 weeks. We sold our apartment on the Friday night (another story in itself) and celebrated with a glass of champagne. I had a second round of acupuncture with a specialist obstetric acupuncturist on Sunday morning and the practitioner was satisfied with the outcome - I now had a tight uterus most of the time. I rang Robyn at about 10.30pm on Sunday evening to say I thought I was in early labour and to expect another phone call later that night. I was timing contractions but they were still irregular and mostly not all that strong. I went to bed and had the usual interrupted night's sleep.

Monday afternoon I began to worry that the babies - particularly the presenting baby wasn't moving enough and that the contractions were having a bad effect on the babies. I rang Robyn again and our whole family paid her a visit so we could listen with the Doppler. They were absolutely fine and I left satisfied that the babies could be born when they chose.

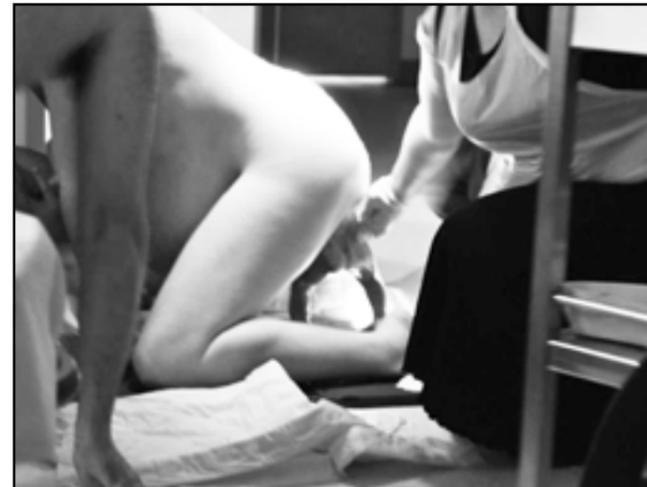
Tuesday I was 39 weeks. I had an extra ultrasound and had CTG monitoring at the hospital - two concessions to my obstetrician since I had declined being induced (now done routinely at 37 weeks for twins). I again asked not to see the sexes of the babies and I also asked not to be told their weights, as long as they were within the normal ranges for gestational age, which, according to the ultrasound, they were. The placentas were both working well. Previously the first baby had been head down and the second baby breech. A big surprise was that both the babies were now head down! Even though I had prepared myself for a breech birth, I felt like a weight had been lifted off my shoulders and now I could birth these babies more easily.

I texted Robyn to let her know. "No wonder they are staying in, they are still organizing themselves!" Robyn texted. "Also - have you seen the moon, it's coming up to full... Good time for birthing!"

We had steak and asparagus for dinner - for some reason I felt like I needed a large serving of protein and iron - and my husband Jonathan put our daughter Naomi to bed.

I was in a good mood but didn't feel overly tired. At some point I decided that the contractions felt more like I could be going into proper labour and I started timing them. Robyn had said to call if my waters broke, if contractions were less than five minutes apart, or if contractions were so strong I couldn't deal with them. None of these things had happened so I told Jon we should both get some sleep and if my contractions woke me up, then we would know it was real labour.

I went to bed with the contraction timer in my hand. I woke up for a couple of contractions and timed them but went back to sleep in



I am entirely amazed by how my babies entered this world.

The last two months of our pregnancy - our second, and this time with twins - was hectic to say the least, as my husband and I found and bought a house big enough for our new family, moved and cleaned up our apartment with family help, bought a big enough car, found a real estate agent and managed to sell our apartment.

In between all that, I was managing gestational diabetes, doing yoga, expressing colostrum in case it was needed in hospital, and looking after my two year old with the help of my mother. I also saw my osteopath regularly who helped immensely when the weight of my disproportionate belly threw out my hips and back.

Each week people would ask, "So when are you due?" and I would reply evasively "Soon. Probably in the next month" as I didn't want to enter into too many conversations about twins coming early. I also didn't want to discuss medical ideas about what is considered term for twins (usually 37-38 weeks), as I was quite determined not to be induced if the babies were - by these standards - 'late'.

I had felt Braxton-Hicks contractions since I had been 23 weeks pregnant and they had become progressively stronger up until the point where, at 34 weeks, I rang my midwife Robyn because I felt they were too strong and too many (a few at a time) at night. She suggested taking extra calcium and magnesium which I did and seemed to settle things down a little.

All the while part of me had been expecting the babies might still arrive at any time, since I had read somewhere that with twins you should have the hospital bag packed at 28 weeks.

At 35 and a half weeks I had the baby capsules installed in the car and breathed a sigh of relief that, if they were born now, at least I could take them home from the hospital. Also, at least by then we had moved.

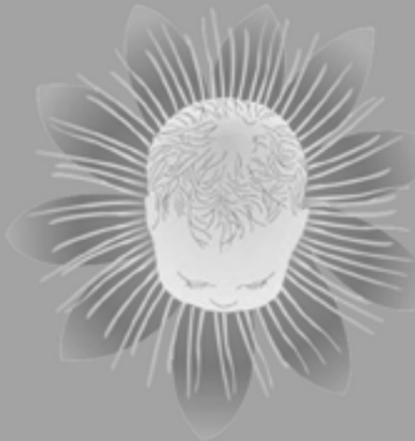
At 36 weeks I said to my osteopath (who had also had twins) "Do you think I could have them now?" "No" she replied, "37 weeks." She knew babies born earlier could have sucking difficulties.

Thirty-seven weeks came and my husband and I cheered, and I stopped taking the calcium and magnesium. To my surprise, 38 weeks came around and I started to do just about everything that was safe to induce labour naturally; imagery and affirmations, homeopathy, aromatherapy, sex (at this stage

AND LILIAN

between. They were only about half an hour apart. Then an almighty contraction hit and woke me up but it was so strong I felt like I couldn't move. I was lying on my side and I felt like a bus had hit me.

I woke up Jon. My first thought was that even if it wasn't time to go to hospital, I wanted him to be awake with me now. I called my sister Laura to come over as she would be Naomi's support person during the birth - I felt like I wanted her to be around now too. Laura arrived as I called Robyn to say I was in labour. "So the contractions are different now?" asked Robyn. "Yes" I replied, trying to work it all out. I had another contraction and had to hand the



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phone to Laura. "We know you have a high pain tolerance" said Robyn. "You decide if we should go into the hospital". I wasn't sure but decided that we should, especially since it was a fair journey from our new house. "Ok I'll call Jane and we'll meet you at maternity" she said. "But take your time" I said to Robyn.

I set about making sure Jon had put everything we needed into the car, including the expressed colostrum from the freezer. I had a couple more strong contractions in the middle of this and then I changed tact. "We just have to go now". The contractions were too strong. We left Laura behind to wake Naomi gently. "I haven't timed this contraction" I said to Jon whilst almost in the car. "It doesn't matter now; we're definitely going to the hospital" he replied. "Besides, the last two have been three minutes apart." "Really?" I replied, surprised and pleased.

The trip to the hospital was smooth in the middle of the night and every now and then I had a very strong contraction which took all of my concentration. I estimated there were about four of these during the half hour trip.

We had so much equipment for the birth in the back of the car that Jon and I quickly decided what was most important as he could only take so many things with him in one trip. The antenatal folder, Medicare and health cards, and the original bag I had packed for hospital got priority.

We parked in a 15 minute drop-off zone right outside the hospital. I went in ahead as I knew I would be slow, clutching my enormous belly. "Maternity please" I said to the front desk without stopping. Someone said something about how I should have come through the other entrance. Another person looked at me and asked if I needed a wheelchair. "Maternity, I think I could be in the second stage of labour" was all I could say. She very quickly put me into a wheelchair and started speeding through corridors to the birthing unit. Jon only just found us and caught us up.

We arrived at the birthing unit doors and I said my midwife was Jane. At the desk I thanked my chauffeur and noted it was such a smooth ride in the wheelchair I hadn't had a contraction. And then promptly had one. I said to the woman at the desk that my sister would be arriving with my daughter; I had pre-arranged this via Jane by writing a letter to the Unit Manager.

We got into the room and I immediately had another contraction, groaning to stop the pushing sensation and I had to hold onto the end of the bed almost squatting. I was trying not to push yet but at the same time I was thinking "Open, like a flower", a mantra an old friend used when she home birthed her baby in the caul. Jon left me with Jane to get another load from the car. "RUN!" Jane mouthed behind me.

Jane straight away put out a foam mat and a bean bag with a sheet on it and I gladly took an all fours position onto it. "Pants off" said Jane, luckily putting a blue plastic sheet under me, as then I poed and peed on it. "Sorry, I think I poed" I muttered. "That's ok" said Jane. We both knew it meant the first baby would be born soon - and I had just arrived!

Jane and another midwife held monitors to my belly to try and get readings of the babies' heartbeats and the contractions. I think they gave up on the next contraction and I asked "Can I..." I meant to say "Can I push?" but couldn't get it out. Jane knew and replied something like "Do what your body wants to do" which was the permission I needed.

At this stage my husband Jon had returned with another load of things from the car and my sister Laura had arrived with our two year old, Naomi. Jon had found Laura by chance in the car park. Jane got Jon to call my other midwife, Robyn, and Jane said to Jon "Tell her I can see the head!"



Jane also got a hospital midwife to ring the backup obstetrician, Andrew. The other midwife wanted someone to have done an internal examination on me first, but Jane knew from the noises I was making that I was fully dilated. Jane had to ask me if I wanted the internal and of course I didn't; I think I muttered something like "Do I have to?" and Jane said I didn't give my consent. The thought of getting up onto the bed was ridiculous for me at that stage; I was so totally in just-about-to-give-birth land and in a perfect birthing position. I started feeling something pushing in my vagina. "That's your bag of waters" Jane said - she had a mirror beneath me and could see it. With the next push there was a pop and out gushed the waters. The next contraction and I could feel the first baby's head. I pushed a bit but not with 100 per cent of my effort for the next couple of contractions, and could feel my perineum stretching at the end of the pushes.

It was the same sensation as when I had prepared my body with perineal massage. The head had crowned then retracted then I pushed it out again. "She's birthing nice and slowly" said Jane to another midwife; I knew this was good as I was less likely to tear. At the same time I knew that to get the baby out I had to do some big pushing, so with the next contraction I pushed hard and the baby's head was born. I pushed again and the baby was born behind me and Jane immediately placed her between my legs. I picked her up - my baby! I had birthed her! It was about 20 minutes after we had arrived.

She still had her cord attached as I wanted delayed cord clamping and she was slippery, warm, coated in blood and amniotic fluid and just wonderful! I held her to my chest and she was opening her lungs with crying, just like she was meant to. Then I looked down and noted "She's a girl!" She kept crying and I said "I can feel another contraction coming on!" I told Jon to get his shirt off - I had prepared him to have the first baby skin-to-skin while I birthed the second. Jon sat just next to me and picked her up - she weed on him and kept on crying loudly for a minute. "She weed on me" Jon said in a daze. It sounded like a complaint but really he was in awe that she was doing everything right - he knew that the babies both had to wee so we knew that their kidneys and urinary tracts were working.

I felt another gush of waters and another hospital midwife asked the position of the second baby. I said "They're both head down!" I pushed and birthed part of the second baby. It felt different to the first and Jane confirmed that it was breech! By this stage I had birthed the second baby to the abdomen and Jane and Robyn watched the baby's legs cycling to help itself out - a good sign the baby was healthy. The baby didn't come out further with the next contraction and its feet were on the floor so Jane and then Andrew stepped in to make sure the head was born.

They turned the baby around and Andrew realised the baby was stuck because it had an arm above its head so he first gently pulled the baby's arms out one by one then tucked the head into its chest so it could be born. I felt all of this as a popping sensation, which may have been the legs being born, and felt some more pointy bits - probably arms or legs or Andrew helping with the arms. I thought that I could feel shoulders turning. I made a point of talking up the discomfort when Andrew was helping as I didn't want any obstetrician's help - even to the point of saying "Ouch" which is very unlike me. He did not really cause me any pain to complain about though and on reflection I am so very grateful for his skill and what he did, and for not intervening at any other point. He had taken on board all the discussions we had had at appointments about minimal intervention during the births.

Jon, Jane, Robyn and Andrew all told me to push as much as I could with the next contraction which I did with my now half-sized belly, and out came the second baby, only seven minutes after the first! My second baby was also placed under me so I could pick her up. Both babies had their cords still attached. She was a little slow to take her first breath even though she was pink and even though I rubbed her back with my hands, so Jane put a little oxygen near her face and then she did her first wonderful cry. I looked down at her and smiled - "It's another girl!" Jon grinned too.

I concentrated on her but also looked up to Naomi and Jon and our first baby - Naomi was quiet but interested and Jon was still next to me. It was wonderful to have all our family finally together and to have experienced it together as I had hoped and planned. I got another sudden feeling and said "The placentas are coming". "Why not?" said Jane, bemused at how very quickly every stage of labour had gone. I knew that I had to birth the placenta from a more upright position - I felt too stooped over holding the second baby to get the placenta out. "You've got to hold this beautiful baby" I told Jon. Robyn stepped in. "Do you mind if we cut the cords? They've finished pulsing." I didn't mind at all.



Naomi held the scissors with me and together we cut the second baby's cord, then Robyn offered Naomi to cut the first baby's but Naomi preferred Robyn to hold the scissors, while she looked on. Jane put a birth stool behind me and I sat on it to birth the placentas with three pushes. I had birthed the placentas physiologically - that is, completely naturally with no synthetic oxytocin. It was about 10 minutes after the second baby had been born. I almost couldn't believe that it had all finished and was quite in awe of what, and how quickly, it had all just happened. It was less than two hours since I had called Robyn. I went to the bathroom and did a big wee - much to my surprise I could even feel and contract my pelvic floor muscles straight away. (After Naomi's birth with a catheter and forceps it took me a long time before I could feel anything and wee). Robyn popped me into the shower while she and Jane quietly cleaned up. The babies were weighed - each baby was just over 3.3kg (7 pounds 3)!

I felt very faint getting out of the shower and had to call Robyn back to help me. Jane came in too as I felt like I could collapse, and I had to put my feet up on a chair to help my blood pressure. Robyn helped too with a technique she had learnt which involved putting her finger under my nose in the shape of a moustache. I recovered enough to make it back to the bed. I lay on my back and the babies breastfed together and properly now, supported by pillows on either side of me. Naomi wanted to join us on the bed and I let her come up, meet the babies and have a cuddle. It was wonderful to have all my three girls together and I think Jon was very proud too. I noticed that everyone had left the room except my family, to give us time alone. Throughout the whole birth experience Laura made sure Naomi was having enough attention and also, as a photo media graduate, she took some amazing photos.



Eventually Jane stitched me up - after such a fast birth I had just a second degree tear - and we made preparations to go home. The paediatrician had seen the babies while I was in the shower so there was little else to do. It was morning. The hearing screening person arrived and tested both the babies just before we left, and then it was home and, under Robyn's instruction, I went straight from the car to the toilet then everyone went to bed. A truly amazing morning. Here are some messages we sent about the births: We are still getting the word out. Our two beautiful girls, Rosina Marion Bayl and Lilian Joyce Bayl arrived very speedily on Wednesday morning at 4.00 and 4.07am, about half an hour after arriving at hospital. They each weighed just over 3.3 kg (7.3-7.4lb). Births were amazing, unmedicated, vaginal, Rosie head first and Lil breech, with both her feet first. Couldn't be happier. We came home Wednesday morning and being looked after by family. Thanks Bec, I'm still getting to letting people know. Birth was amazing, as are the girls. Less than two hours between calling midwife to go to hospital and babies both born. Perfect births - Rosie vertex, Lili surprise double footling breech, no drugs, physiological delivery of placenta, no PPH, home straight from birthing unit, Naomi there for both births, breastfeeding beautifully. Milk starting to come in now so will be a mess tomorrow. Tricky with less parents than children. Placenta pills good. My parents supplying yummy food. Xxx

Penelope Bayl is wife to Jonathan and mother to three lovely girls; Naomi (two years), Rosina and Lilian (both one month). She loves to learn and is trained as a Registered Nurse with a background in medical science. She is training to become a breastfeeding councillor with the ABA. She breastfeeds all her girls and believes in women's ability to birth naturally and breastfeed.

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JUDE AND JESSE'S

BIRTH STORY

My twin pregnancy was a long and arduous journey that tested all of my physical and mental limits. So it was with some relief that I noticed my mucus plug at 35 weeks, on a Monday. I was a little bit nervous about how 'early' this sign of impending labour was for the babies' sake, but I trusted my body and knew the babies would come when they were ready. I also knew it could still be days or weeks; so I didn't let my hopes get too high.

When I woke on the Friday morning at 35 weeks and 4 days, I tried to heave myself out of bed to tend to my son and felt a small 'pop'. Some water splashed to the floor. Again I was excited but not convinced labour was imminent. After all, when my waters had broken in my first pregnancy nothing had happened for a week. I called my husband Stuart and my midwife Jane to let them know what was happening and that I'd keep them posted.

I lost a lot of water throughout the course of the day, but was still not contracting by the afternoon. We decided to go to the hospital to check in on the babies via CTG.

Before we left, I'd been relaxing on the couch when my son came to me and climbed up on my belly and fell asleep. He hadn't fallen asleep on me in the longest time, and it was beautiful... I wondered if he perceived a change coming. I relished every moment of the last time it would be just the two of us.

The drive to the hospital was awful. It was a scorcher in Sydney at 48 degrees and difficult to breathe even for the non-pregnant! We arrived at the hospital, checked in and set ourselves up. The belts were awfully uncomfortable around my distended, itching belly even for a few minutes which, only reinforced my resolve to refuse continuous fetal monitoring in labour.



Andrew, our obstetrician came by and we chatted about premature rupture of membranes and the good chance of going into labour despite the notion I had in my head that it wasn't happening. He did notice a tightening when he felt my belly, but it was only barely uncomfortable for me; I was able to sit through it. I'd been having these 'silent' tightenings throughout the day but wrote them all off as Braxton Hicks because they weren't anywhere near as uncomfortable as my huge belly itself!

I spent most of the evening at home giving myself clary sage massages, burning clary sage oil and breastfeeding my son to his heart's content (something I'd been avoiding for weeks due to the nipple pain and Braxton Hicks!)

Stuart and I sat down to have some dinner while our son fell asleep on the couch. It was so strange for him to fall asleep in the daytime twice in one day! With the air conditioning running at full speed, it was still around 30 degrees inside the house! We left Knox to sleep on the couch and headed to bed ourselves.

Not long after Stuart fell asleep I began to experience some tightenings and noted that there had been about four within an hour. My son wandered in to our bedroom and snuggled in next to us. I texted Jane at around 10.30 to let her know that I was going to start timing them but she advised I ignore them until they take all my attention. At this point I realised it was on, as I knew they were definitely taking my attention!

I started timing the contractions at about 11:30pm. They were coming about 6-8 minutes apart and lasting around 45 seconds to a minute. I texted my midwife again at midnight after an extremely intense two minute long contraction to let her know I was really needing

to breathe through them now and was laying on my side trying to rest. I was so exhausted I did manage to sleep in between a few of them from midnight to 1am. I would wake up with the phone timer still going in my hand for the start of each one.

The point soon came when I couldn't lie down anymore so I decided to get into the shower for some heat and relief at around 1am. The contractions had become very intense very quickly and I was moaning through the contractions in the shower. I realised I should get to the hospital before the pain became any more intense. I woke up Stuart, called Jane and my mother-in-law and started getting ready to go between contractions. I made poor Stuart pack just about everything bar the kitchen sink, expecting another long labour! Blankets, oils, clothes and a million comfort items to set up my 'homebirth in hospital'.

My mother-in-law arrived in time to witness a strong contraction. They were coming fast now, super intense, long and strong. I went to the bedroom just before leaving to kiss my baby's cheek as he slept peacefully. I was excited that I would be bringing his siblings home soon and bid farewell to our time together alone. I made it down the stairs just as another contraction started which I walked through as Stuart started the car. I climbed into the front seat (the backseat of course being full of car seats!!) and knelt; absolutely unable to sit through the intense contractions.

I'd never been so grateful for how close we lived to the hospital because I experienced about four or five super intense contractions during the five minute drive. I was begging Stuart to keep a hand on me through them, despite his having to drive us there as quickly and as safely as possible! There was barely a break between contractions now, less than a minute. I began to have one as I got out of the car so the people in the hospital car park got to hear the loud harmonies of my birth song.

The front door of the hospital was locked so the staff had to buzz us in. The staff member, hearing the noises I was making mentioned she would get a wheelchair, as "Babies have been born in the foyer before!" I didn't think I could sit in a wheelchair but I couldn't walk anymore either, so thankfully the wheelchair was wide enough for me to be able to sit on my hip and not directly down.

It was quite nice to be 'alone' as I approached the birth unit. At least I was not aware of any other people around me and the usual chaos of hospital life was quiet at this small hour.

It was a sweet relief to see Jane's face as we wheeled into the birth unit and I was very happy that we'd checked in earlier for the trace so I could go directly to the birth room. I was also happy we were heading to room 12 which I'd visited a few weeks earlier;



as I knew it had a nice pool which I was intending to birth in.

I launched straight out of the chair and directly into the bathroom. After trying the shower for pain relief I decided to get the bath going straight away. I used the toilet (and had to reassure my midwife it was not a baby!) before getting into the bath as it filled. I lay a towel over the plug, thinking that if anyone wanted to get me out of the bath I was going to make them work for it and also to try and get a bit of grip, as the hospital baths are very large. The water was just reaching my belly as I climbed onto all fours. I started out with hot water but soon realised I couldn't bear the heat, so I cooled it right down.

As the bath filled, my contractions continued powerfully and I looked to Jane for comfort. I asked Stuart to get into the bath and as soon as I felt his strong body behind me I felt like I could birth with him to press against. The very next one I felt was a pushing contraction; a long contraction ending in an enormous grunting primal groan. It was as though the entire inside of my body was trying to come out. I pushed into Stuart, and he pushed back. I could feel the baby moving right down, preparing to come so powerfully.

I felt my perineum, which felt strong and stretched and this gave me confidence. I was grateful to be in the water to be able to feel myself so easily. I told Jane I was pushy, but I imagine it was obvious from the sound of my contractions. Once again the deep, overwhelming, powerful pushing urge took over my whole body and with some choice words ringing around the room I pushed Jude out of my body and felt Jane lift him to my chest. I held him as close as our umbilical cord would allow as the hospital midwife placed a blanket over him to help keep him warm. I thought I'd heard Jane refer to him as "She", but a quick lift of his tiny leg revealed my second son was born.

My joy and relief were interspersed with disbelief that I would have to do it all again and very soon! It was so wonderful to have my newborn son in my arms and some reprieve from the contractions. I had no idea what to expect for the second birth. I did have to leave the bath unfortunately as it was too cool for Jude, so we cut the cord once it had stopped pulsating and moved to the bed.

My second midwife Robyn and the obstetrician Andrew arrived at this point. Andrew was quiet and observant beside the bed, out of my line of sight. He only spoke to congratulate us on the first birth. Robyn's sweet and calming presence was wonderful and helpful as the contractions began to kick in once more at full speed. I really needed the strength of both my midwives to face the challenge a second time.

I was needing to vocalise loudly to cope with the contractions and felt awful moaning into my sweet new baby's face so I handed him to Stuart reluctantly, as I felt I needed him for the new round of contractions. But our baby needed him more. I told the midwives I was scared and didn't want to do it again and they calmly and sweetly reminded me that not only could I do it again, I was doing it again.

We knew that 'Baby Two' was in a breech position so Andrew asked if he could examine me. I was initially reluctant but also eager to make the birth as smooth as possible for the baby and myself, so I decided to go ahead. Thankfully he was as gentle as possible given the ferocity

of my contractions. He established almost instantly that the baby was coming foot first as the bag of waters was low in my vagina. The contractions were roaring through me and the baby was experiencing increasing decelerations between. Andrew mentioned that if he were to break the waters, the baby would probably come in the next contraction. So after some quick consultation with my midwives and another couple of contractions, I decided that that would be very nice indeed. It was most likely in the baby's best interest, given he had already experienced his brother's birth and was a footling breech.

Andrew broke my waters and grasped the baby's foot and I pushed his body down to the neck in the one contraction. Jane told me it was important now to push his whole body out even without a contraction, so I gathered my energy and strength for the last push and birthed Jesse.

He was placed up onto my chest. His cord was a little shorter than his brothers, but I managed to peek under his leg and confirm that we had another boy. We left his cord to stop pulsating before cutting it.

Both boys took turns being fed and warmed under the heaters in dad's arms, and they weighed in at 2.6 and 2.7kg each.

Exhausted beyond belief, I chose to expedite my 3rd stage with a syntocinon injection as I was bleeding quite profusely. The injection was surprisingly painful but the huge fused placentas came out without much fuss. I was beyond relieved to be at the end of this part of the journey and utterly blessed with two gorgeous, healthy boys.

Melissa lives in Winston Hills with her husband Stu, sons Knox, Jude and Jesse and dogs Herbert & Hamish. She is joyously outnumbered by the boys but wondering whether she should adopt a female cat to even out the playing field!





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JUNIPER

VALENTINE



In the following weeks I noticed occasional heavy smears of blood, and tried to restrict activities not to irritate my cervix. Yoga was off the cards, and when I finally felt well enough to swim again I did so cautiously, with a pullboy between my legs so as not to move them. My belly was expanding and it was summer, and despite mild frustration at not being able to frolic as I wished, I relished in my pregnant state.

I was 28 weeks when the next bleed occurred, working at the computer late one night. After my previous experience in hospital I was reluctant to rush there again, and as the bleeding stopped quickly and the baby kept moving, Chris and I felt we could manage the situation ourselves. We returned to bed and arranged a private ultrasound the next day. The scan showed the placenta still positioned well over my cervix, and in fact, moving further across it as my uterus expanded. Relief was had in the news that the baby was doing a fantastic job of growing, dodgy placenta or not.

Whilst Chris remained positive that we still had ample time for the placenta to move, I had lost some of that spirit. A couple of days later we met with Robyn, who gently told us we should be preparing for a caesarean birth.

The days following this news coincided with excessive rain and leaking ceilings, and saw us bunkering down on the living room floor. It was strange week, sombre and heavy. I cried a lot, and woke each morning to a split second of respite before reality came slamming down for the remainder of the day. In retrospect I conceive these feelings as grief and their related actions as mourning – for the awesomely intense experience of natural birth, and everything it entails.

It took about three weeks to begin to come to terms with the caesarean. I tried meditating to calm my mind but the noises of the street only amplified, piercing my ears and suffocating my breath. One afternoon I had an inspired visit from an artist friend who creates from her subconscious, and that evening I attempted the same. The drawings were terrible, but the act of moving my hand across paper calmed me. I practiced this meditative state every night for an hour or so, always stopping before I became judgmental of the images I was producing. Initially I drew shapes and lines and eventually they became big-bellied women. Through them I manifested my fear and pain.

By the time our first meeting with the Obstetrician came, at 32 weeks, I was much more at ease with the direction this birth was taking. I had another scan, and with the placenta now covering 3.5cm of my cervix – medically referred to as Grade 4 Major Placenta Praevia – any last scrap of hope I secretly held for natural birth was abolished. Our doctor – recommended by Robyn – was a kind and gentle man and through his subtle gestures we felt comfortable. He was open to the notion of a natural caesarean and supported our requests; of which formed a modest list to ensure the experience was kept sacred. Chris and I left the hospital feeling positive and confident in our birth team, with an appointment to see our doctor again in a fortnight.

Ironically, I woke that night bleeding. This one was heavier than the last, and continued longer than what was in our range of comfort. As we now had a cohort at the hospital, we didn't hesitate in going there. It was a short drive and this time we woke Rosie to come with us so we could all stay together. The bleeding stopped shortly after we arrived and my doctor visited me first thing the next morning. Despite everything we were both able to have a quiet laugh about meeting again so soon. I remained in hospital convalescing for two more days and after an iron infusion returned home.

The birth story of Juniper Valentine begins not with labour, but the incident that would ultimately forbid it from happening, and alter the course of the remainder of my pregnancy.

I was 21 weeks pregnant. Chris had been in Melbourne for the day on business, and returned jubilant after positive steps in a new venture. Our daughter Rosie was asleep and for once we were both awake and relatively operative at the end of the day, so we burrowed under the blankets to make the most of the situation. Afterwards – straight afterwards – a massive gush of warm liquid flooded out of me, and although the room was dark the contrast on white bed sheets was evident. It was unmistakably blood. Seconds later more came streaming out, and moments after that, more again. Chris called the ambulance and went downstairs to let them in, Rosie continued to sleep in the adjacent room and I sat paralysed on the bed, diverting my gaze from the blood for fear of seeing the baby amongst it, even though I felt nothing that large pass through me. When the paramedics arrived and switched on the light it was a horrific sight, and the thing I remember the most – so much blood.

Despite not wanting to be separated we decided not to wake Rosie to bare witness to the situation, and I went alone in the ambulance whilst Chris stayed home to clean up, and eventually soothe a distressed little girl who would wake to spend her first ever night away from her mother. Up until this point the baby had been uncharacteristically still but just before the ambulance door slid shut it gave me a nice solid kick. Through sobs and laughter I delivered this news triumphantly to Chris, who was standing, heartbroken, on the footpath.

I was wheeled into the hospital horizontally, watching the cheery face of the paramedic and Christmas decorations flying by overhead. The whole thing was surreal. I felt calm. I knew in my belly the baby was safe. When I arrived at delivery the monitors confirmed this, and an ultrasound reinforced what my scan showed the previous week – the placenta was sitting low. The conclusion was made that the act of sex had irritated my cervix, which is what caused the bleed. I was monitored for 2 days and nights, relentlessly bullied about transferring my care from a private midwife to the hospital program and eventually discharged myself and returned home.

We met with our midwife, Robyn, and discussed the possibility of the placenta – currently sitting about 1.4cm over my cervix – moving enough for a natural birth. It was highly likely, although the increased risk of hemorrhaging after delivery may affect our want for a home birth. The most probable outcome was a natural birth in hospital. No one was saying the C word yet.

I had completely let go of a natural birth, the thought of not having one no longer stung my eyes. I surrendered to the caesarean, embraced it and visualised the moment I would meet my baby. But, I was nervous about further hemorrhaging, especially as the last one happened in my sleep. No activity was safe. My greatest fear was a bleed which didn't stop, and eventually ended in an emergency situation. It's a given that the main objective is that the baby and I are safe, but the thought of having a general anaesthetic and not being present during the moment in which my child would take its first breath out of my body, filled me with dread.

On March 14th, Chris turned 33. He commemorated the occasion with a day of hard work and a small store bought cake adorned with Smarties. Rosie celebrated her third birthday nine days earlier (albeit with a much more elaborate cake) and our baby's birthday was scheduled in three weeks. I realised we were just missing out on welcoming the third Piscies into our family. Or so I thought.

It was almost 1am that night when bleeding disengaged me from my sleep. I was 35 weeks pregnant. Quietly I made trips from the bed to the shower for thirty minutes before worry set in. I gently woke Chris, who was up in a flash and ready to go to the hospital, Rosie in tow. We arrived to the familiar routine of drips, monitors and on this occasion a group of night staff gravely lacking in bedside manners. One midwife, annoyed at having to assist me and my entourage of monitoring equipment to the toilet every half hour, chided me for poor bladder control. The night registrar appeared and reappeared with unhelpful comments about major medical catastrophes and grave outcomes of placenta praevia in third world countries. His readiness to take the baby out was clear and the thought of him delivering my child brought me to a state of despair. I feared not for our safety, but an unnecessary early delivery by a man who lacked compassion towards a birthing woman and her family. Luckily for us, as quickly as the drama arose it subsided, and eventually everyone left us in peace.

Over the next hour or so I noticed an increasingly strong correlation between the bleeding and my Braxton Hicks contractions, which had intensified over the last week and had now moved even lower and deeper into my cervix. Although the monitors weren't picking it up, instinctively I knew this was the beginning of labour. I was grateful to be receiving some of the birthing hormones, but also knew it could result in a large amount of blood loss at any moment. We had accepted that we wouldn't be making it to full-term, and excited to be meeting our baby soon. But first, we had to make it to the morning safely, when the staff changed over and our own doctor would arrive.

By 5am we were all exhausted. Chris had awkwardly fallen asleep on the small sofa in the birthing suite we were in and Rosie, having spent the majority of the night adventuring in the hallway entertaining passing staff members, was nestled in next to me on the bed. I tried to sleep but adrenalin kept me from it, and I lay on the bed silently and secretly labouring, watching the clock above my head and willing it to go faster.

Robyn arrived at 7am and less than an hour later we were gifted with Amanda, the most beautiful, kind and considerate hospital midwife we could have hoped for. My own Obstetrician came shortly after and the three of them combined assuaged my fears. I was tired and ready to birth, but it would still be some hours before I could get into theatre. Despite bleeding consistently since my arrival I was stable and the baby was happy, and we would remain in the care of these two amazing women until it was time. I had said my goodbyes to Rosie who was now with her uncle and a family friend, and between short bouts of

almost unconsciousness I contracted and bled through early labour. Amanda had rallied strongly to get me moved up the list, and finally, it was our turn for theatre. We had made it to our conscious birth.

I had visited the operating theatre previously and was aware of the procedure, but nothing could have really prepared me for the inhuman velocity at which the staff around me moved. Chris and Robyn waited outside the door whilst I was taken in for my spinal. I felt no pain from the injection, but the coldness of the room made me shiver violently and my doctor held my hands as it was administered. I tried to oppose the numbness as it enveloped my lower body, but found it too distressing. I let go and surrendered every muscle I didn't need and knew I couldn't move. Watching what was happening in the reflection of the giant operating light above me, I waited, and when I was prepped and ready, Chris and Robyn entered the room.

Chris stood above my head, crying. We spoke of love and pride and birth, but mostly he just held me tight as we looked at each other. I felt intense tugging and pulling in my belly, and within minutes heard a newborn cry. As I saw the red screaming bundle get lifted over the screen I also heard the anaesthetist announce, very matter-of-factly, it was a girl. At the time I was too elated to care, but I've since had mixed feelings about it. Nevertheless, when she was placed on my chest, tiny and perfect, nothing mattered, and I loved her with all my heart.

In recovery the mood was joyous and elated. The whole team was thrilled with such a positive outcome. We carefully examined the poor, sad-looking placenta and discussed the incredibly healthy and enormous umbilical cord. I nestled in with my beautiful new baby, who took to the breast immediately.

Juniper Valentine was born on a Friday and we took her home the following Monday. I had lost 2 litres of blood during the birth and needed a transfusion. Although in hospital, we tried to keep those first few days of Juniper's life sacred, holding off on visitors and enjoying the new dynamic we had as four. Robyn would call on me every morning and for her dedicated continuity of care we will be forever thankful. Despite everything Juniper's birth was as sacred and beautiful as it could have been, and Chris and I will never forget the people that made that possible.

Anna is a Graphic designer living in Sydney with her husband and 2 daughters. She tries to make the most out of each day by living playfully and purposefully. She is happiest in the ocean or at home with a book in one hand baby in the other.



EVIE'S

BIRTH STORY

It's been nearly 6 months since Evie Rose McIntyre was born and I have finally got around to writing our birth story!

My eldest daughter was born in 2010 by emergency caesarean due to failure to progress, I was 13 days 'overdue' and was induced. This time I wanted my labour and baby's birth to be different, this time I wanted to do it my way!

During my pregnancy I came across lots of battles with the hospital regarding my wishes for a VBAC. I had learnt so much from the wonderful ladies on this VBAC group, so I knew what I wanted and didn't want to give it up, I just didn't think I'd have the confidence to stand up to them. So at around 31 weeks and after a lot of soul searching and deliberation, my husband and I made the decision to hire our wonderful midwife Lisa so I could attempt a VBAC in our home.

As I went over with my first daughter, I wasn't expecting to go into labour on time, and I wasn't even sure if my body could do it without any interventions. Except this time, for a few weeks before, I had felt lots of twinges and BH and was sure that I was going to go early, I even kept telling Lisa that I felt things were happening.... but the time passed and no baby! I waited until my Mum got here (2 days before my due date), convinced that once she arrived things would happen, still nothing. There was quite a bit of stress for me around that time as I still wasn't sure my Mum was onboard with the whole homebirth thing and this possibly caused more delays as I needed to feel safe and trust that my support people were 100% committed. Mum and I did have a big chat about it and I told her how I felt, she came through good which was a huge relief! Anyway, even after this was resolved.... still no baby.

It was 40 + 6 when I had the first stretch and sweep, but my cervix was posterior and only half a cm dilated so it wasn't successful. At 41+2 I had my second round of induction acupuncture and later that day, Lisa gave me another exam and my cervix was 1cm dilated, so she managed to do the stretch and sweep and said it could be anytime now!!!

That evening, I started to feel mild contractions every 10 minutes, wow, this is it!! I went to bed as usual, but had a fitful sleep because of the contractions and the excitement of it all. I remember waking pretty early and wondering whether to tell my hubby (Jason) to stay at home today, but I didn't want to tell him to stay at home unless something was going to happen and I really wasn't 100%, so he went to work as usual. But by about 6am, I started to regret this decision as the contractions started becoming more intense and were about 5-6 mins apart. I remember trying to change my daughter's nappy and having a contraction midway and her getting annoyed with me and crying cos I was bending over in pain and not talking to her! At that point I knew that I wouldn't be able to have her with me while I was in labour so we called her daycare and luckily there was a spot free, so my Mum took her there which was a huge relief and meant I could get on with things!

I called Jason and asked him to come home, poor guy, he'd not long arrived at work over an hour away! My waters broke around 8am, I texted Lisa and she told me just to rest as much as I could. By the time Jason got home, I had noticed that there was a little meconium on my sanitary pad so I asked Jason to let Lisa know. She said wasn't too worried about it, but when we phoned to say that it had got worse, and I was anxious about this, she dropped what she was doing and came straight over to see how I was going and then she stayed the rest of the day as things seemed to be speeding up.

As soon as Lisa arrived I felt more relaxed, she assured me that she wasn't worried about the meconium and that I shouldn't be either.



At around 10am I had VE and was only 2cm dilated, so Lisa advised me to rest in bed as long as possible. Meanwhile we'd phoned our doula Lauren who arrived as things were getting more intense. Unfortunately I had lots of pressure in my lower back which was starting to get really uncomfortable....Bubs had gotten into the posterior position so Lisa and Lauren got straight into doing some rebozo. I also had use of a TENS machine which was a lifesaver. I seem to remember asking for an enema because there was so much pressure on my back and I really wanted to release everything, but couldn't (I think Lisa talked me out of it). I remember moving from our bedroom into the bathroom and sitting for some time on the toilet...my waters were leaking the whole time with meconium so it was a messy business! After trying to keep moving and then sitting on the loo, I decided to give the shower a go. I was a bit unsure as I really didn't want to part with the TENS, but I somehow managed it! Jason got in with me and aimed the soothing warm water at my back during contractions, which was bliss. I must say, in hindsight I should have stayed in there longer. He also got the hang of where to press the pressure points on my back so I made him press there at every contraction...poor guys fingers must have been very sore from doing this... I know I had bruises for days afterwards! While I was in the shower, the birth pool was being filled so it was ready for when I wanted to jump in (hmmm, jump is probably the wrong word lol!). I was a bit worried that we were going to run out of hot water in the shower, so I decided to give the birth pool a go. It was early evening by the time I finally got into the pool. It was a mammoth effort getting from the bathroom to the lounge without any help with the pain, but I managed to get into the pool and it was a lovely relief. I think Jason got in pretty much straight after to help me through my contractions which were happening approx every 4 minutes and lasting 60 seconds. When I was in the pool I had lots of attention from everyone, they were taking it in turns to push the pressure points and give me drinks, breathe with me and pour lovely warm water over my back and belly. I remember someone gently touching my leg and it felt so lovely, soon I had lots of hands just gently caressing my legs and belly trying to get that oxytocin working nicely. I was feeling the contractions really intensely and wasn't sure how I would keep going, but I just kept breathing through them and tried to take one at a time. I think most of the preparation I had done for my labour had gone out of the window, all the hypno phrases, the affirmations, the visualisations and photos I had printed off...I just needed to keep my mind on my breathing and couldn't bear any distractions. In

the pool I found it hard to get comfortable and wasn't sure where I wanted to be. I'm not sure how long we were in there (I know Lauren had given Jason a plate of food to eat while he was in the pool, so it must have been getting on a bit!). I had worried about our eldest daughter, but Jason had talked to her carer (who is also a friend) and they had arranged for her to stay there the night... thank goodness, although I would have loved to have had Isla there, I couldn't have handled her intensity so it worked out very well.

The next thing I remember after getting out of the pool was feeling an urge to push, the pressure was so intense. I was thinking that surely things must be happening by now, they can't get any more painful, I didn't think I would cope. I had on a few occasions said I can't do this, I really can't do this and I was hoping that all these signs meant transition, but it wasn't to be. So after some time in the pool, we moved over to the sofa and Lisa asked if I wanted an exam, I refused as I didn't want to be disappointed if my cervix wasn't dilating and I was getting to the point where I was exhausted and couldn't have handled hearing a low number, so we carried on. Lisa told me to push if I felt that was what I wanted to do, she said that there were signs that bubs was close and I'd been working so hard and everything was so intense that was what I needed to hear. So I started pushing... and pushing. I was crouching in front of Jason, I had Lauren and Lisa in front controlling the TENS and my Mum, who had been hovering in the background trying not to get in the way, started to get involved and held my hand through my contractions, god love her! At one point there was a swap around with the TENS machines, but there was a mix up with the setting of the intensity and it ended up being

set to HIGH by mistake, I jumped a mile... looking back it was funny, but at the time I screamed so hard it stopped my contraction!!

I was beginning to find it really hard to muster up enough energy to push, so Jason came into his own and stepped in with his coach voice even louder and firmer than before (he was definitely building up lots of confidence throughout my labour!) He was ordering me to push and telling me 'This is your last chance to do this, you have to do this, come on don't give up!!'. This gave me the incentive I needed, so I kept trying. Lisa had been monitoring bubs heartbeat throughout the whole day because of the meconium leaking and at one point she said that I really needed to get the baby out as it was in distress which obviously scared the living sh!t out of me.... so I tried and tried. Jason even gave me a cloth to clamp my teeth down on when I was pushing and just shouted at me constantly, so everytime a contraction started he just shoved this cloth in my mouth and I PUSHED while moaning through the contractions in my low labour voice (funny looking back at it, I do hope my neighbours didn't hear!!). Wow, I couldn't believe that my hubby was getting into this so much, amazing....and I was previously worried that he would just be standing on the sidelines!! And that, just thinking about it now is something I am truly grateful to Lauren for as she let Jason be the one to get involved, she just gave him guidance without taking over.

Anyway, I digress, I can't remember how long I was pushing for, the contractions were coming every 3 mins.... but Lisa was getting concerned, but instead of asking if she could give me another VE (which she correctly assumed would worry me) she asked if she could help me with assisted pushing to get the baby out, but that I would need to lie on the bed to do this. I remember thinking at the time that sounds a bit strange, but I didn't argue and slowly went to the bedroom to lie down. By this stage things were really full on, so having to lie down still and have Lisa check me was tough. Anyway, all I remember next is Lisa saying, 'Vikki, bubs is breech, we're going to have to transfer'.....Nooooooo I thought, this can't be right, what has happened!!! As soon as those words were spoken I knew this beautiful labour was all over. I can also clearly remember Jason's strangled cry when he heard those words and that killed me, I'd let him down, I wouldn't be able to do this, our dream of a vaginal homebirth was over.

I remember Lauren sitting next to me on the cot by the bed and giving me Reiki and asking Lisa if there was anything we could do to turn bubs, she dearly wanted to help us with a solution bless her heart, but Lisa said that we had to go to hospital as bubs needs to be out soon as I wasn't dilating quickly enough for a vaginal birth (only 4-5cm dilated and swelling) - although it wasn't an emergency right at that moment. Something Lauren said at the time was that bubs wanted to be close to my heart which is a lovely way of thinking of your breech baby. Anyway, back to the story and my whole resolve had gone out of the window by this stage and I just wanted someone to get my baby out, those contractions were killing me and I had lost any positivity I had previously which made the pain unbearable. After lots of running around and trying to organise my hospital bag - noone knew where anything was, so I was losing concentration trying to remember everything we needed to take and where it was kept...where are those bloody maternity pads????!!!!.

After what seemed like an eternity, we were ready to go. I had declined an ambulance after discussing with Lisa that this wasn't an emergency, so we opted to go in our cars. I think I lost Jason's support for a few minutes while we were waiting outside for the car, just when I needed him, he seemed to be worried that the

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house wouldn't get locked up properly, inside I was begging 'please stay with me' and I felt like he was annoyed that I'd failed him which didn't help with my contractions. The journey to the hospital was pretty horrible, I was sat in the back of the car facing out the back window wishing we were there already so I could have some pain relief. We arrived at the reception and I was immediately given a wheelchair and whisked upstairs to the birthing suite where we were promptly taken to an examination room to wait for the doctors. On examination by the doctor, he told me that I was dilated 5-6 cms (I think), but that because of bubs being breech and my cervix being so swollen and not dilated enough, they would need to get her out straight away by c-section, so I was wheeled off to get prepped for surgery and I'm thinking god, here we go again. It was so tough having those last final contractions without pain relief, I was desperate for the anaesthetist to stick that bloody needle in my back!

I was so lucky with the midwives at the hospital, Lisa had been advocating for us and had requested all the things I had written in my birth plan if a caesarean was to occur, and they came through really well. My little Evie Rose was born at 12.09am on Wednesday 17th October weighing 3.34 kilos. I was just so relieved to hold my beautiful baby after the shock of her being breech. I was lucky enough to have skin on skin contact with her as soon as she was born which was fantastic. We even were allowed in recovery together and Evie had her first breast feed, so we were hardly separated which was something I had struggled dealing with from my previous caesarean. I am forever grateful to Lisa and those midwives for making my surgery as positive as it could have been. Jason even joked about naming our baby after one of them!! (we were still getting over having another little girl...we were absolutely convinced she was a boy!!!) I felt so safe with all the people I had chosen to be in my birth space. Lauren was always mopping my brow and making sure I stayed hydrated, making sure that my birth space was ready and how I'd

wanted it to be and giving us both much support, Lisa who kept me calm and was caring and kind and made me feel safe, and my darling hubby Jason who was my rock and I couldn't have got to where I did without him. Also a thank you to my Mum who although wasn't really one of the team, held my hand when I needed her (it must have been scary for her to have me go off to hospital and I know she was worried sick (thank you Lisa for reassuring her!))

So there is my story, I feel pretty good re-living it now after a bit of time. I still don't feel I have fully come to terms with not getting the beautiful vaginal homebirth I had dreamed of, but there were so many positives, I went into labour on my own without medical intervention, I coped with the intensity of the contractions, I witnessed what an amazing man my husband is, I laboured for 18 hours without pain relief and I didn't get separated from my baby girl after she was born! Not bad going when I really think about it!!

Vikki is a stay at home mum to 2 beautiful girls. She is married to Jason, who she met 8 years ago when she arrived in Sydney on a working holiday around Australia. They moved to the Central Coast 2 years ago where Vikki has been lucky enough to meet some inspiring like minded Mummas who gave her the confidence to go for that longed for natural birth.



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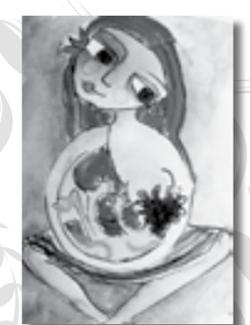
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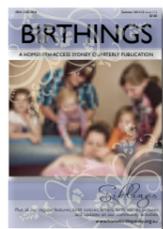


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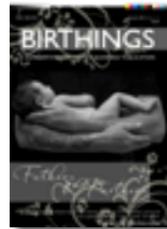
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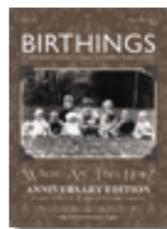
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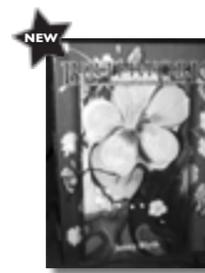


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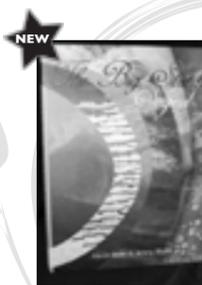
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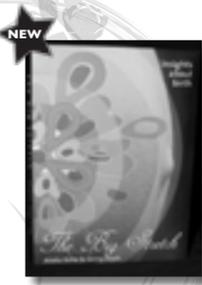
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Women reflect on how the experience 'stretched' them - physically, emotionally and spiritually, with a bonus extra on baby massage. Includes booklet with birthwork topics such as pain, breathwork, and challenges. Made in Australia, approx. 60 mins. Price: \$42.00.



THE BIG STRETCH DVD SEQUEL
Alieta Belle & Jenny Blyth
DVD sequel explores different kinds of birth including many 'variations of normal'. A celebration of natural birth. Made in Australia, approx. 2hrs. Price: \$42.00.

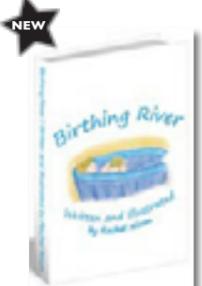


THE BUSINESS OF BEING BORN DVD.
"A Must- See for every parent to be." From Executive producer Ricki Lake and Director Abby Epstein. Price: \$19.99.



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"The rare documentary that's truly changing the world. It deserves to be called Revolutionary." The complete set of all Four Films. Over 5 hours of footage. From Executive producer Ricki Lake and Director Abby Epstein. Price: \$29.99.

CHILDREN'S BOOKS



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Rachel Nixon
Written in simple rhyming verse, with soft watercolour pictures that speak to the very young. Includes the stages of birth and lotus birth. Price: \$20.



MAMA, TALK ABOUT WHEN MAX WAS BORN
Toni Olson
Children's book depicting a pregnancy journey and homebirth. Price: \$25.00



WE'RE HAVING A HOME-BIRTH
Kelly Mochel
Colorful, contemporary book about homebirth. Covers the role of midwife, noises during birth, and breastfeeding. SKU: KMBK. Price: \$12.00



MY BROTHER JIMI JAZZ
Chrissy Butler
Beautifully illustrated children's book about a homebirth, written from the perspective of a young girl. Aust. 2006. Price: \$20.00.



THE WONDERFUL PLACE BOOK
Chrissy Butler
Unique picture book that affirms the sustainability of breastfeeding. Printed on 100% post consumer recycled paper. Price: \$20.00.

Book Review:

'PEACE, LOVE & KHAKI SOCKS'

BY KIM LOCK

'Peace, Love & Khaki Socks' is the debut novel by Kim Lock, who is the writer for The Little Leaf blog.

I was very excited by the prospects of reading a book in which a woman choosing homebirth was the main focus of the book, especially as I hadn't given myself the time to read in a long time, (and what other subject would be half as intriguing?) In fact I had read only 1 novel in the 4 years since Jetsun's birth, apart from all the non-fiction parenting books I had read in the early days of having 1 newborn only to care for! So I opened the book with glee and spent every spare moment I had absorbing myself in the life and times of Amy Silva who lives in Darwin with her army man.

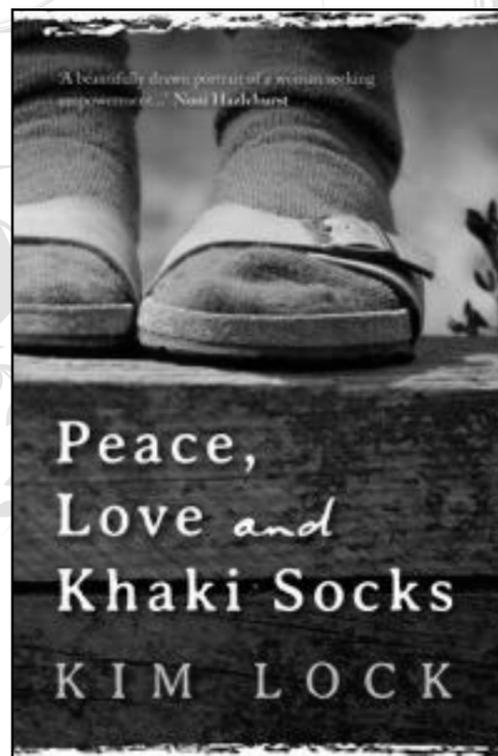
Amy is a character that I (and many friends I know) can really identify with. She's basically an organic peace-loving hippy partnered to a more conservative man. But they have a lovely relationship, full of warmth and fun. Dylan affectionately calls her 'Mungbean' (which gave me fond memories of an old friend, now deceased, who used to call me 'Moonbeam' for similar reasons of hippy taunting!). Amy is very down to earth and keeps a healthy distance from the other bitchy gossip-loving army WAGs, but their anecdotes add some amusing stories to the book.

Early on in the book Amy finds herself unexpectedly and unpreparedly pregnant. As she struggles to come to terms with this, she does what everyone expects of her and books in with the 'best' obstetrician in town. But she becomes increasingly uneasy with the brevity of appointments, the lack of information, the barrage of routine testing (including a urine sample at each appointment!) and the lack of any warmth or personable character from Dr Lavina... and Amy starts to wonder if there is another way.

After meeting a woman who had spoken positively about her homebirth experience and the care she received from her midwife, Amy becomes increasingly interested in choosing this option and is more and more uncomfortable with her Obstetrician's coldness and dismissals of her questions. This dissatisfaction and deviation from what is the accepted norm causes rifts in the relationships of those closest to her, as her best friend Hannah is confronted with her own past pregnancy loss, and Dylan is concerned that she is putting their baby's life at risk.

The ending is exciting with a fully pregnant Amy driving through a tropical cyclone to find her man who she'd walked out on after an argument and feared he'd been injured, followed some time later by the long and challenging homebirth of their child. I didn't want it to end and was left wondering what the next chapter of their lives held. I wanted to keep reading about the newborn days and beyond.

The whole book was difficult to put down as the characters were entirely believable and I wondered if I was reading an autobiography. The fact is that the author's first pregnancy was unexpected, and she also had a baby born at home, but they were two separate babies. She also lived in Darwin, but neither baby was born there. Some of the army anecdotes are based on real-life and sensationalised for the story, and others were entirely fictitious.



I know many of you would also enjoy reading this book because the main character is likeable, strong, humorous and easy to relate to, and her story is similar to so many women who come to choose homebirth against an impersonal medical system that disrespects autonomous thinking women. Kim has done an excellent job in portraying the emotional and physical challenges of pregnancy and the realities of choosing homebirth in a homebirth-hostile environment. If only it could be turned into a Hollywood movie to empower more women around the world to wake up and choose homebirth!

Virginia Maddock is the Coordinator of Homebirth Access Sydney as well as the Assistant Editor of Birthings. In a former life she played saxophone in a heavy metal band, was a sponsored skateboarder, skateboard coach, horticulturist and 3rd world backpacker. Since then she has become a herbalist, nutritionist, doula and placenta encapsulator for her business 'Natural Beginnings'. Her sons Jetsun (4yo) and Keanu (21 mo) were born at home with her husband Dan by her side, and they continue to bring her her greatest joy (as well as her greatest challenges in patience!) www.naturalbeginnings.com.au

BIRTH STORY OF VIVIENNE FRANCES - A HEALING HOMEBIRTH

In order to fully understand what Vivienne's birth means to me, you will need to first know a little bit about my two previous birth experiences. In January 2008 I gave birth to our first son, Benjamin James. I had had an uncomplicated pregnancy and he was born in a delivery suite at a major hospital in a capital city.

I had done little to prepare for his birth other than attend a couple of the antenatal classes at the hospital, have a quick tour of the delivery suites and read Kaz Cooke's book 'Up the Duff'. His labour was quite long and hard; I spent much of it in the shower as this helped me deal with the contractions, although I was also sucking away on the gas too. After 16 hours or so the midwife examined me and said I was almost ready to push. My waters had not broken though and so she suggested breaking them for me in order to get things really going.

With no further thought than, "Yes, let's get things really going, the end must be in sight", I agreed. She ruptured the membrane and then said, "Oh". I will never forget the look on her face then. "You're not 10cm" she said, her voice full of regret, "you're only 5cm". Apparently the amniotic sac had bulged so much that my cervix appeared to be more dilated than it actually was.

At this point I totally lost the plot. I felt utterly defeated. I had worked so hard to get to that point and thought I was nearly at the end. The thought that I would have to do all that hard work again to be fully dilated was horrific. The midwife suggested an epidural and I sobbed my agreement despite it being something I had wanted to avoid.

Our son was born 7 hours later following the predictable cascade of interventions from the epidural: catheter, oxytocin and an episiotomy. Despite all this, I was ecstatic; our son was here and he was healthy, and the midwives had all been lovely. Overall I felt very positive about my first birth experience.

In 2010, I gave birth to our second son, Alexander Matthew. We had moved states since Benjamin's birth and I registered with the birth



centre at our city hospital. I was keen to try and have a water birth this time as the shower had been so soothing in my first labour and I hoped to have a more natural birth. I was disappointed by the birth centre rooms when I visited for the antenatal tour. They were simply delivery suites on the same floor of the hospital as the normal ones, with just the addition of a large bath. They still felt very medicalised and not at all 'homey'. I wish I had known enough then to choose a homebirth, but it wasn't even on my radar at that time.

Sadly, Alexander's birth was not the experience I was hoping for. I had never met the midwife who attended the birth before and she was totally uncaring and unhelpful. She didn't tell me that my son was in a posterior position (even though she made note of it in my records after her initial palpation of my belly). I could not understand why, only an hour into labour, I was in more pain than I had ever experienced in my first labour.

I couldn't get any relief from the contractions in any position and the bath didn't help. All she told me was to keep sucking on the gas, even though I hated how it made me feel and it did nothing to relieve the pain I was feeling. The contractions rolled into one, there was no downtime, no relief, nothing but pain and fear. I honestly thought I might die and truly thought that it would be welcome relief from the pain. At no point did my midwife help or reassure me. There was no positive encouragement; nothing at all.

Our son, Alexander, was born just three hours after arriving at the hospital in a full posterior position. I gave birth on my back, on the bed, in agony and shock. I had second degree tears and several labial tears which were excruciating.

I went home that morning in a daze. I spent the first several weeks sobbing. I was in so much pain from the physical injuries of birth and I was in total shock at the way I felt I had been treated. No one was interested though; I had a healthy baby, so I should be happy. But I wasn't, I was miserable.

I remember very little of Alexander's first year. Coupled with the traumatic birth experience, Alexander also suffered from severe reflux and was a very unsettled and unhappy baby who would sleep for only 45 minutes at a time. Months later, I was finally diagnosed with post natal depression. I was depressed, but there was more to it than that. I was suffering from horrific flashbacks, anger and insomnia. I would lie awake at night thinking about Alex's birth even months and months after the event, reliving it over and over.

I saw a psychologist, who suggested I was suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. It seemed ridiculous to me that a birth experience could trigger such symptoms, but it was true.

A year after Alex's birth, I undertook EMDR (eye movement desensitisation and reprocessing) therapy from a local counsellor who specialises in trauma and, in particular, birth trauma. It was amazing. In only five sessions I was able to process my feelings about Alex's birth and move past the trauma. I felt fantastic and positive and ready to take on the world again.

I fell pregnant very soon after my therapy. After Alex's birth I had been adamant I would never have any more babies because I was terrified of having another bad experience. But after the EMDR therapy I had decided that a third baby was not quite so terrifying a thought now and part of me wanted another go at getting the birth experience I knew was possible.

I was determined that my third birth would be a totally different experience than my previous ones. I straight away chose to see the midwives at Belmont Midwifery Group Practice for my care. Since the trauma of Alex's birth, I had become much more informed about pregnancy and labour and knew that having a relationship with a midwife whom I trusted was going to be key to my experience this time.

The team at Belmont support homebirths and it seemed obvious to me that we would be more in control and more comfortable birthing at home. Luckily, my pregnancy was again uncomplicated and we booked in for a homebirth. For the first time ever I was actually looking forward to giving birth.

My midwife, Kim, saw me for almost all my antenatal appointments. We discussed in great depth my traumatic birth experience and we broke down any fears I had about the birth this time. I had two main concerns this time; the baby's position and the chance of tearing badly.



For the entire third trimester, the baby had her head down but was lying with her back against my right hand side. I wanted to ensure I did everything I could to encourage a good position for labour. I spent lots of time on my hands and knees, avoided sitting in a reclining position and swam every couple of days in the lead up to the birth.

I had already decided that I wanted to birth in water this time and we'd bought a pool to birth in. Kim and I discussed how I might labour, positions I may find helpful and, importantly, how I could control the final stages of the baby's birth and simply breathe the baby out to minimise the chance of tearing. I also listened to hypnosis for birth CDs and tried to really focus on how I would get through the labour in the most positive way I could.

On Monday, 4th of February, six days before the guess date, I woke up at 3am with a pain in my belly. It took me a minute to work out what had woken me. It felt like a contraction, but I wasn't sure. I stayed in bed and waited to see if there were more. Ten minutes later, the next contraction came. Ten minutes later, another. I was excited but wary of getting carried away in case they petered out.

By 4am, the contractions were still coming regularly and now slightly closer. They were quite manageable at this stage and I went and woke my husband up. We already had the birth pool inflated to about 90 per cent so that we could set it up quickly when the time came. Bryan brought it through to the room where I wanted to labour and finished inflating it. I got him to start filling it as soon as it was up and ready. I knew that the water was going to feel good and I didn't want to be waiting for it to fill when I felt the need to hop in.

At 5am I called Kim's mobile. Another midwife, Julie, answered as Kim wasn't on duty. We chatted briefly about the contractions so far and how I was feeling. I didn't want them to come to the house too early but wanted to let them know that I didn't think it would be too long before they were needed. With Julie half an hour away, I said I'd give her a call back when I thought she should set off. I hung up and got back on the birth ball which I was using to help me rock through the contractions as they came.

It was only half an hour later when I called Julie back and said I thought she should come. She told me Kim wasn't on duty until later that day, so it would be Julie and another midwife who came. Though I was a bit disappointed, I had met some of the other midwives on the team and knew they were all lovely and would be a great help. A few minutes later though, Julie called me back. She'd text Kim to let her know I was in labour and Kim was going to come with her. I was so pleased that my number one supporter was going to be with me.

As soon as the pool was ready, I hopped in. It was just in time. The contractions were coming much more often now and were getting intense. The warm water felt wonderful. It was deep enough for me to feel supported and the water eased the intensity of the contractions as they came. I had thought beforehand that I would labour kneeling over the side or on my hands and knees. But when I got in the pool I sat down with my legs in a V in front of me. I leaned my back on the wall of the pool and rested in the brief pauses between contractions. As each contraction swelled, I put my hands on the floor of the pool in the water either side of me and pushed down with my arms, lifting my body off the bottom of the pool slightly and moaned away the pain.

I am a noisy birther. As the contractions grew in intensity, so too did the low moaning noise that I made. It felt good to me; a way of directing the energy and intensity of the contraction out of my body while I envisaged the baby moving down. For the first time in any of my labours, I didn't fear the contractions or the pain they caused; I saw them for what they were; my body doing an amazing job of moving the baby down and getting her ready to be born.

Kim and Julie arrived at 6am. I was so focused on my little world in the pool that I don't really remember much about what they did as they arrived. I know they got set up quickly and quietly. Kim came around to sit behind me. She whispered

words of encouragement to me when I needed to hear them. She gave me sips of ice water between contractions. She held a cool flannel to my forehead when she could see I was hot.

By this stage, our eldest son Benjamin, now five years old, had woken up. He came in and said hello to me and we chatted quietly between the contractions. We had discussed the birth with him during the pregnancy and he knew he was welcome to stay and watch if he wanted or he could go to our neighbours if he preferred.

My husband made him some breakfast and he went to watch the TV in the other room while he ate it. He came back in to us a few moments later saying that he'd like to go to the neighbour's house as I was being too noisy and he couldn't hear the TV! Well, "Fair enough" we laughed, and my husband took him next door.

No sooner was he back than Alex, now two and a half years old, woke up too. Again, we'd spent lots of time during the pregnancy talking about the birth and what it might look and sound like. We offered to take him next door as well but he was adamant that he wanted to stay with me.

By now, I knew that the baby was going to be here soon. Kim suggested I check myself to see if I could feel the baby's head. I could, and it wasn't far away! The intensity of the contractions was still growing every time. I was louder each time too as I moaned my way through them. I felt strong though and in control.

I was getting the urge to push now and I followed my instincts and did what my body was telling me. I could feel the baby's head, every contraction pushed her nearer to being born - she felt so close but I knew I had lots of work still to do before I met her. Her head had now almost completely come through the pelvic cavity but seemed to have got stuck somehow and still hadn't been born. Julie said she could see the baby's head trying to turn to the side to come out, but it was being held back by my perineum. It just wasn't letting her past.

We talked about how we might get her head past the perineum. I got onto my knees and leaned forward slightly over the wall of the pool. As I pushed with the next contraction, I applied pressure to the front of my vagina, while Kim applied pressure at the rear. We were hoping we could get the baby's head to slip in front of the perineum but it didn't work.

I could feel her head there, almost out with us, but seemingly caught behind my amazingly stretched but intact perineum. I turned back over and sat down. I thought for a few moments and then I asked the question outright, "Would an episiotomy fix this and let her through?" "Well, yes", both Kim and Julie agreed. "Then let's do it" I said.

I knew how Kim felt about episiotomies; as a homebirth midwife, she was loathed to do them. But we had tried to get her head



through with a change of positions and even with the strength of my contractions and my body's efforts to push her through, it just wasn't working. As the next contraction started to build, Kim very carefully made a tiny incision. I didn't even feel it. It was what was needed and as the urge to push continued I tried to let my body to do so gently. My moo became a roar and, with my hand on it as it came, my daughter's head was born.

I was so full of joy. I could feel the amniotic sac around her head, still intact. I took a moment to marvel at what was happening and I shifted position slightly in order to be able to see her head. I could see a shock of dark hair on her head and I kept gently touching her, cradling her head in my hand. It felt wonderful. Time does funny things in a labour I've realised. Looking back it feels like that moment lasted a long time when, in reality, I know it must only have been a minute or two at the most.

The next contraction was coming and I tried to breathe into it and let my body do the work of birthing her shoulders. In the blink of an eye, she was here. Her shoulders and body were out and both Kim and I had a hand on her and brought her up to my chest, with Kim clearing the caul away from her face as she reached my chest.

She was perfect and I had done it! The joy, the relief; such strong feelings and such love for my daughter. I marvelled at her as I cradled her to my chest. My husband quickly ran to our neighbours to get Benjamin back home to meet his sister. I stayed in the pool while our little family got to meet its newest member. The boys were thrilled and touched her head and kissed her gently. The midwives took some pictures for us and Bry put the kettle on for a well-earned cuppa.

After about half an hour, Benjamin, aged five, cut her cord. I felt so happy. Everything was as I had hoped. The birth had been intense but empowering and my first daughter was here with us safely. While I hadn't planned on an episiotomy I was totally at peace with the decision I made to have one. And I was happy that even with such an experienced midwife as Kim, I had still managed to make her 'first' list; her first ever water episiotomy!

Kim wasn't relaxing just yet though. She was keen for me to deliver the placenta. She suggested that maybe I could move to the toilet to see if it would be easier to deliver it there as after 40 minutes it still showed no sign of coming. I handed our beautiful new baby to her daddy for some skin-on-skin together and started moving in order to stand up to make my way to the bathroom. As I did, I felt a strong contraction and in just one push, I delivered the placenta. Yay - now I was all done and I could have a cup of tea and a muffin!

It was such a wonderful feeling to be in my own home, surrounded by my beautiful family and my wonderful midwives meeting my new baby. She had taken to the breast like a champ 10 minutes after she was born and was content to stay there. I got cleaned up and we moved to a mattress on the floor where my husband and the boys gave us cuddles and lots of attention. It was so relaxed and happy. How different to my other births!

Vivienne Frances Rowe was born in her caul, at home in the birth pool on the 4th of February at 7.11am. She weighed a whopping 4.25kg, was 55cm long and had a head circumference of 37cm. Her APGAR was a 9 and then a 10.

Her birth was truly an amazing event for me. My fears, my anger and my pain from my traumatic birth were finally laid to



rest once and for all. Vivienne's birth completed my healing journey and gives me such joy as I cannot adequately describe. I only know that when I think back to that morning, when I look at the photos of me in labour, I know that I wouldn't change one single thing about it. The birth and the baby; both absolutely perfect.

Nicola Judd is 37 and lives in Newcastle with her husband, Bryan, and their three children, Benjamin, Alexander and Vivienne. She moved to Australia from England 10 years ago in order to study Special Education at Griffith University in Brisbane. She has worked in training and education in a variety of industries as well as working as a proof-reader and editor. Nicola became interested in homebirthing after a traumatic hospital birth and has ambitions to become a doula or midwife in the future.

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MY PREGNANCY

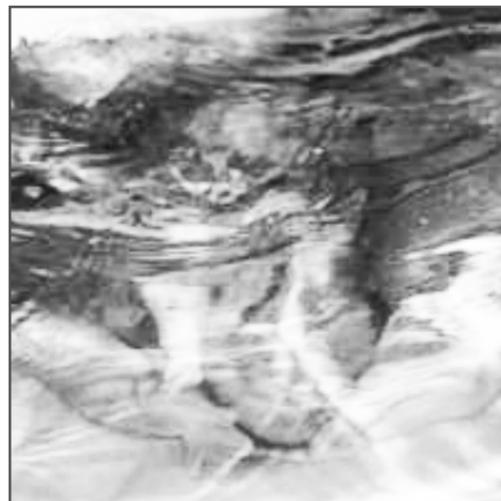
JOURNEY



another little bit of progress! I had a contraction not long after that was quite sore in my lower belly, and took me by surprise. Craig got home not long after and I excitedly told him the news. Then I had another contraction and this one hurt a lot! Ouch! He noted the time and I decided to try sitting on the fitball again – I jumped straight back up as it hurt too much to sit down! Then I had another contraction and felt that I really needed to kneel down and lean over the bed. I had pillows under my knees and one on the bed end that I propped my arms on. I had a couple more contractions like that and then decided I wanted to move into the bathroom in case my waters broke – I didn't want the carpet to need cleaning later, especially as that spot was where the pool would be going. I set myself up in the bathroom with my pillows on the floor and I leaned over the bathtub, trying to breathe through the contractions but they hurt so much that the breathing just wasn't doing it. I tried making a low roaring sound like I had heard women talk about using during labour and it felt really good! In between contractions I was jumping up and using the toilet to empty my bladder and bowels, twice I got caught out on the toilet and those contractions were so much worse! While I was in the bathroom Craig jumped onto my parenting community forum Joyous Birth for me to let everyone know I was in labour, and then tried to send an sms out to close friends and family but it was taking too long to send each message (phone would only let him to send to each person individually) so he gave up after a few messages as I needed him to help me. He was busy running around getting the pool filled in the bedroom, and ducking back in to support me through contractions, and I was oblivious to what was going on around me.

He gave me my blessingway necklace and bracelet to wear and showed me a printed page from Joyous Birth that had a lovely message from one of my friends which was beautiful to read. I really felt like the circle of women was around me then. Craig gave Jane a call to let her know it had started up again and contractions were 5 mins apart. She had just arrived at the beach with her family, and put on her sunscreen and bathers! She asked him if I wanted her to head back and I yelled out YES! I had no idea how long labour was going to be but it was already hurting so much and I felt like I needed her for emotional support.

At about 10am the pool was filled, and I told him I wanted to get in right away – I didn't care if it slowed the contractions down, I just needed something to help with the pain. I tried lying on my back in the water to immerse my belly but it was really uncomfortable so I leant over the edge of the pool instead and continued to roar through each contraction. We have no idea when my waters broke – I never noticed any popping or gushing sensations. Jane arrived about 10:45am and I felt reassured she was there, it was all moving very quickly but having her there alongside Craig seemed to help me feel centred. Our second midwife Jo arrived not long after and sat down in front of me to see how I was going. After she got up to go and chat with Jane, Craig came over to sit with me and I told him Jo's perfume was really strong. Another contraction hit and I went within again. After it was over I remember hearing Jo say it must have been her body wash – apparently quite mild but my sense of smell must have been really strong, and she had she changed into one of Craig's t-shirts.



They were all quietly encouraging me during the space between contractions, reminding me to slow down my breathing and to take sips of water as I was so thirsty – the water was really refreshing and I think I drank several bottles during labour. I also had a damp face washer I would rub over my face when I could – I didn't want anyone doing it for me as they weren't firm enough on the back of my eyelids! At some stage Jane asked if it was ok to check on bub's heartbeat with a doppler, and I was fine with that so she listened between contractions. It was lovely to hear it and to take the focus off the pain for a moment and remember that I was soon going to have my baby in my arms! I reached a point where I felt I couldn't do it anymore, and then not long after I said "I feel pushy!" but I wasn't sure if that was right as it felt too soon! Jane and Jo encouraged me to go with how I was feeling and remember to breathe and just let it all happen. A few contractions later I felt the urge to push so I helped my body push but it hurt more, so I stopped and just let my body push by itself which was a bit easier. It felt really good when my body was pushing then – I was yelling "oh yeah" and just going along with it. It felt like the pushing stage went on forever – the pain was so intense that I don't remember feeling her move down at all, but I do remember telling bub once or twice to stop moving as her wriggling was very uncomfortable and felt really weird! I had my knees spread out really wide to open up my hips and I ended up with leg cramps, so Craig had to rub them for me to knead out the tightness.

When I felt like I couldn't possibly stretch anymore, and each contraction was burning but didn't feel like it was progressing further than the previous one, I started helping my body push again. It hurt more, but I didn't care – I just wanted it to be over with. Apparently bub had crowned to her forehead and gone back in several times. They could see that she had one hand over her head so as she started to come further out, Jane helped ease her hand to minimise the risk of me tearing and Craig cradled her head in his hands as she slid all the way out. Then Jane told me to sit back and take my baby between my legs and lift her up on to my chest.

Craig said she came out with a big smile on her face. It was a totally surreal moment to hold her in my arms, and she just lay there quietly for a minute gazing up at us both with a little smile. Then we encouraged her to take a breath and she started to pink up and had a little cry. Then Jane and Jo went downstairs and let us have some quiet time together in the pool, just the three of us. It was a really special time to start our bonding as a family. She started to bob around a little on my chest, so I helped her to find my nipple so that she didn't dunk her head down into the water. It felt weird but wonderful at the same time. The water was getting cool and we wanted to take her out of the pool but I felt a bit shaky and wasn't ready to stand up yet. The cord was rubbing on me and it really stung, so the logistics of trying to hang the cord up and over the pool with bub still connected to me was not very comfortable and I decided to cut the cord. I hadn't chosen beforehand whether to lotus birth or not, so I was a little disappointed but my comfort and bub's warmth was more important at that stage than a lotus birth. Craig cut the cord while I



explained to her what we were doing and gave her a feed, and then she snuggled up in his arms. It took 1.5 hours to birth the placenta as I was feeling really shaky if I tried to kneel or stand. I hadn't eaten anything all morning, so they gave me a drink and a cheese sandwich and I took my time in the pool to rest a bit. When I felt able to, I stood up and it only took a few gentle pushes to birth the placenta, no pain at all which was a relief! Then I was bundled up in bed and they checked me out – one 1st degree tear and some grazes – we decided to leave them without stitching as they were minor. I got snuggled up with pillows and then gave bub her first proper breastfeed. It felt great to be holding her and feeding and be so comfy in my own bedroom! We had a look at her placenta which was really interesting, and then Jo put it in the freezer for us, to plant at a later date.

Craig brought up her birthday cake which we had made the day before, complete with the "0" candle and we sung happy birthday to her. Jane and Jo then packed up their gear and tidied up for us and went home, and we spent the next couple of hours snuggled up in bed gazing at our beautiful baby. Around 5pm we decided we should go through our list of names, so we crossed off all the ones that didn't suit and we agreed on Jasmine Kayla. It suited her perfectly. For the first few days after her birth I just felt really really calm. I think my mum was more hyped up about Jasmine's birth than I was! To me it just felt "right" and I was peaceful. I didn't feel like the birth wasn't a big deal or anything, it was just how it was supposed to happen. Then I remembered the birth stories I have read of friends – who didn't get to experience birth at home, without intervention, with only loving support around them – and that's when I realised how lucky I was to have this for our family. I feel pure joy for our experience!

At my motherway on Sunday 7th Feb 2010 I shared my birth story, and we cut our wrist ties from my blessingway. We defrosted the placenta and made prints onto paper with it, then planted it beneath a dwarf jasmine plant along with the wrist ties. Everyone that came to the gathering helped place some soil into the pot as well as place a stone or rock on top to honour Jasmine's birth and placenta. Mine was a piece of brick from the house she was born in. It was a beautiful afternoon and I felt honoured to be among strong wise women as we closed the circle for Jasmine's birth. I feel so grateful to have had the loving support of my husband Craig throughout the pregnancy, birth and our new adventure in parenting Jasmine together. I also want to thank my wonderful midwives Jane and Jo, for their wise words and wonderful advice. The beautiful women I have come to know so well at Joyous Birth have given us a true community to feel a part of, as well as our loving family and friends. Homebirth rocks!

Fiona Rothwell lives in Sydney with her husband Craig and two gorgeous daughters, Jasmine (3.5 yrs) and Sienna (3 months). Fiona is a web and graphic designer, and one of her favourite jobs has been working with her midwife Jane Palmer on the websites and print material for www.pregnancy.com.au and the PBB Health Centre over the last two years. Fiona also started an Attachment Parenting playgroup in NW Sydney three years ago which supports AP families in the local community. Her freelance design website is www.aqually.com

Jasmine was born on Saturday 21st November 2009 at 42+1 weeks. Her birth was much anticipated, especially as I had been having braxton hicks contractions on and off for over a month before labour started, and gone past my "guess date" by two weeks. On Friday morning I woke up around 4:30am with bad back pain and couldn't get back to sleep. It came and went and seemed to settle in a pattern of waves every 5 mins or so. I found that sitting on a fit ball and leaning over the end of the bed was a fairly comfortable position, so Craig kept a heat pack on my lower back as I breathed through each contraction. We kept going like that until about 9am when I just felt exhausted as we'd gone to bed after midnight the night before. I needed to lie down even though my lower back was hurting a lot – I didn't care anymore. Craig called our primary midwife Jane to let her know that it looked like things may be starting, and then he curled up next to me with the heat pack still on my back and somehow we both fell asleep. When we woke about an hour later the contractions were still happening but were much more irregular in timing. I felt dispirited but reminded myself that it was going to happen eventually and so we both went downstairs to hang out and find a distraction. We watched some Will & Grace DVDs and had a good laugh and then Craig suggested we bake a cake. When we had been to Calmbirth classes one of the couples whose stories we watched on a DVD had baked their baby a birthday cake during her early labour as a distraction – and we had bought a "0" number candle a few days earlier with this idea in mind for my labour. So we baked a yummy chocolate cake and popped it in the fridge and then had a quiet evening in, all the while my back pain contractions were becoming more and more staggered and easing off in intensity. We called Jane again to let her know it looked like it there was no action that evening, and she suggested coming over to check on me and bub. When she arrived we had a good chat and she had a feeling it would start up again over night so suggested we get straight to bed and get some rest. That was about 9pm. Jane was supposed to go up the coast (an hour away) for the weekend with her family, but decided to stay home on Friday night just in case. Saturday morning I had been up to the toilet at 4:30am and again at 6:30am and nothing had happened over night, so I sent a message to Jane and told her she may as well go up the coast for the day with her family. She replied saying she was having brekky and then would head off. I went back to bed and sulked myself back to sleep – I was so tired of waiting to meet our bub! Around 8:30am Craig and I woke up and he suggested getting some fresh bread to make French toast for brekkie to cheer me up. While he was gone I got up to go to the bathroom and noticed a lot of thick clear mucous tinged with a little blood on the toilet paper. I felt excited that there was



THE HOMEBIRTH OF SIENNA JANE



Jasmine's birth had been three and a half hours so we figured it would probably be another quick labour. By now I had to stop and breathe through the contractions but they were still not really painful and Craig noted that they were coming about six minutes apart.

At around 7.00pm I sent a message to my friend Anna to let her know I was in early labour and that I would call her if I needed her to come and look after Jasmine. I also sent a message to some family and friends to tell them I was in labour so they could light their candles and be thinking of us.

I made a few trips to the toilet and then thought I should get dinner ready for Jasmine. She was running around very excited but it was difficult for me to focus on much at all. I put the pasta on the stove but have no idea when it was finished or served up!

It was not long after that Jasmine was really distracting me but I still was not in much pain. Craig started to fill up the pool and was trying to keep Jasmine occupied but her chatter was annoying me. I called Anna and asked her to come over and then retreated to the main bedroom to put on some music and lean over my fit ball on the bed. I sang along to Missy Higgins between contractions and at this point I needed a heat pack on my lower belly as it was starting to become more intense. Contractions were now about four minutes apart.

Anna arrived not long after so I went out to the lounge room to let her know how it was going. With each contraction I had to stop and kneel beside the couch and she pressed firmly on my lower back, which relieved a lot of the pressure. She had brought a craft activity for Jasmine which kept her quiet. Anna suggested we call Jane as it was all happening quite quickly now. Craig rang Jane and asked to her to come and to let our second midwife Melanie know as well.

Sienna was born at 8:40pm on Thursday 31st January 2013 at 41+3 weeks.

There was a lot of joy on the morning I confirmed my pregnancy. Craig and Jasmine were still snuggled up in bed when I snuck out to the bathroom to do the test. It was lovely to announce it to both of them and enjoy a few moments together soaking it all in. Jasmine declared that she also had a baby in her tummy and seemed very excited for both of us!

My pregnancy with Sienna proved to be very challenging; I was sick with adrenal fatigue during the final months while still trying to work part-time and look after three year old Jasmine. I was lucky to have a very understanding boss (who was also my midwife Jane!) and a supportive husband who helped me when I was so unwell.

I finished up at work a month earlier than planned and there were many weeks spent resting on the couch unable to do much at all. This was very frustrating as I like to keep busy. We also usually get out of the house most days but I could only cope on my feet for an hour or two so going out was exhausting.

I was fortunate to have a great chiro/osteo who diagnosed the adrenal fatigue in October when all my blood tests showed up normal. I saw him weekly for acupuncture and took several supplements a day to treat the fatigue. I also started taking a stronger iron supplement around Christmas and by mid-January I finally started to feel more normal. My energy increased and I was able to slowly start doing more each day.

I had a beautiful blessingway surrounded by loving friends and finally felt able to start focussing on the birthing journey I was soon to take. Jane painted henna on my belly, friends shared inspirational stories and we feasted on yummy food. It was a day of nurturing that was just what I needed.

At 40 weeks my friend Anna came over and did a belly cast for me then I spent the next week and a half nesting and waiting. I seemed to alternate between feeling very huge and over it one day to feeling quite peaceful the next day. I expected another 42+weeks pregnancy so decided to settle in and wait.

On the day of Sienna's birth Jasmine and I potted around the shops in the morning and then went to a 1st birthday party. I felt relaxed and really enjoyed spending the day with my friends and our kids at the party. We came home mid-afternoon and watched some TV.

It was around 6.00pm that I noticed I'd been having some Braxton's for half an hour that felt quite regular but only mildly sore. I wondered what time Craig would be getting home from work but decided not to call him as it would probably be soon. He walked in the door about 15 minutes later and I let him know what was going on. He decided to start getting things set up for the birth and called Jane to let her know things were starting.



I really needed to do a poo and wanted to do it before I got in the pool but sitting on the toilet was too painful. I asked Craig to help me squat over the potty instead and I was greatly relieved to feel it come out. At the same time I felt a big pop as my waters broke and gushed out.

Not long after that the pool was ready so I hopped in. I had wanted it really hot this time as for Jasmine's birth it didn't feel hot enough. Craig said it was really hot but it felt perfect to me. The contractions finally started feeling painful and I remembered the intensity of Jasmine's birth. I complained about how much it hurt but also recognised I was probably close to transition so just went with it. I didn't want to kneel like I had in my last labour so luckily this pool was just the right size to recline in and push my feet against the other side to lift my bottom up slightly. I placed a wet terry across my chest to stay warm. Jasmine came in and out to check on me while I was in the pool telling Anna it was okay, "Mummy is just stretching!"

Craig had lit some of my blessingway candles and there was drumming music playing in the background but it was dark and peaceful in the back bedroom and I was ready to go within. During each contraction I would focus on my birth song (a loud deep humming) and this took me away from the pain and into the sound itself. There didn't seem to be many contractions before I started to feel like pushing. I felt the baby wriggle and move down deeper. After a couple of pushes I felt the familiar burning sensation but instead of it easing with the end of the contraction it continued to burn. I decided to feel what was going on and discovered a very soft silky head was halfway out! I also felt my perineum and was amazed at how thin and stretched it was. I really didn't want it to tear so I instinctively began blowing my lips like a horse as I waited what felt like an eternity for the next contraction.

Jane arrived but I'm not sure when I became aware she was there. I pushed the head all the way out and felt sweet relief that the hardest part was over. Jane told Craig to get ready to catch the baby but I told them I wanted to do it this time.

With the next contraction I pushed out the rest of her body and then scooped her up into my arms. She was peacefully looking around at everyone and I was entranced. I kept exclaiming how soft she was and gently blowing on her face to get her to take a breath. I was unaware that she was taking quite a while to start breathing but Anna filled me in the next day that she had been vigorously rubbing Sienna's back while Jane had run to get her labour kit. A few puffs of oxygen didn't help so Jane used suction to clear some gunk out of her airways and then Sienna finally started to breathe and pink up.

It was too hot for Jasmine to hop in the pool for a cuddle so she came around behind me and I asked her to see if she had a brother or sister. It was a sister! We had another beautiful girl just as I had suspected. We also discovered that she had a true knot in her cord.

Our second midwife Melanie arrived to find she had just missed the birth. We took some photos of our new family of four and then I decided it was really hot in the pool so I hopped out and carried bub with me down to the main bedroom. I was keen to push the placenta out so I knelt on the bed and after a few big pushes it came out and I was able to relax in bed with both my girls.

Jasmine helped Craig cut the cord and I gave Sienna a feed. We called our parents to let them know the news and then Jasmine had her first cuddle with her baby sister. It was so beautiful to see them together. Mum came over with my brother Brad for a quick visit and when they left I had a shower. I felt fantastic and was on such a high! We finally got Jasmine to sleep about 11:30pm and I sent out a text to everyone announcing Sienna's birth. I was awake for a few more hours that night; I couldn't sleep, I just wanted to soak up my gorgeous new baby.

We chose Sienna's name about midday the following day and we had a blissful babymoon over the next two weeks. Jasmine still talks about and re-enacts Sienna's birth three months later and I'm so glad she was able to see it and for birth to just be a normal occurrence for her.

Fiona Rothwell lives in Sydney with her husband Craig and two gorgeous daughters, Jasmine (3.5 yrs) and Sienna (3 months). Fiona is a web and graphic designer, and one of her favourite jobs has been working with her midwife Jane Palmer on the websites and print material for www.pregnancy.com.au and the PBB Health Centre over the last two years. Fiona also started an Attachment Parenting playgroup in NW Sydney three years ago which supports AP families in the local community. Her freelance design website is www.aquality.com

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JASPER'S BIRTH STORY



It was late one night, our sweet daughter Elkarnah was asleep in bed, and my husband and I had just finished a beautiful conversation on spirituality and meditation. As I went to stand up to get a glass of water I felt a trickle...shocked I looked at my husband stunned, "Did I just pee myself?" Then there was more of a gush, not a Hollywood movie 'gush' but a gush none the less. My waters had broken! My husband grabbed my arm and walked me to the shower, we were giggling in shock the whole way – "It's happening!" The next 24 hours were slow but at 1am the next evening, things started to intensify.

My husband called the '24 hour taxi' we had organised in advance. No answer. He called another number. No answer. And then another. No answer. Then running around the streets of Fort Kochin, he finally found an auto rickshaw driver who was willing to take us the 45 minutes (I'm not sure how many of you have ever been in an auto rickshaw on Indian roads; the prospect of taking a rickshaw in the throws of labor did not inspire visions of splendor!).

Just as we were about to all pile into the rickshaw, my husband received a call from one of the taxi drivers! "PRAISE GOD!" So 10 minutes later we were on our way to 'Birth Village' in a taxi, not a rickshaw! Phew!

Arriving at 'Birth Village' (It is just a house, where the midwife lives with rooms devoted to the birthing mother) I was



This birth story may not fit the norm for 'Birthings' but I thought I'd write anyway – After all, this edition is 'Variations of Normal'. As a long time reader and after sharing my homebirth story of my first child Elkarnah Halcyon two and a half years ago, I'd like to still think of myself as part of the Sydney Homebirth community. However, I now no longer live in Sydney and neither did I have a homebirth for my second child (although I strongly desired one).

My small family now lives in North India. When I found out I was pregnant with my second child, I knew the only option was homebirth again. The question was, "Where do I find an English speaking homebirth midwife in my very traditional Indian town?" And as for a back-up hospital, well...there isn't one (well, that we trust anyway!)

"Should we go back to Australia for the birth?" I knew that meant months of leaving our home and work here, to birth where? At our parents? At the in-laws? O Lordy!

So after a few failed attempts at finding midwives and then losing them again, I found the closest I could get... a free standing midwife-run birth center in South India; The 'Birth Village'. Letting go of my 'homebirth ego' was hard, as that's what I really wanted (I'm not ready to free-birth), but life in India seems to be full of constant sacrifices.

So down we went. A flight and 29 hours of train journey later, we arrived in Kerala. I was 38 weeks pregnant. And so the waiting began.



greeted by the very sweet Kate, an American midwife and Priyanka, an Indian midwife in training. My surges were 10 minutes apart at this stage but felt very low down in my pelvis. They took my blood pressure, checked the baby's heart beat and then left me to myself to labor through the night –

ahhh...just the way I like it. At around 5am I called Kate in as I was no longer able to sleep between surges.

I then hopped into the birth pool... my sweet husband massaged my back and brought me fresh drinking coconuts, mangoes and Bliss Balls! Heavenly. My dear friend and support person read letters from my friends back in Australia that were sent for my Blessing Way. She read passages from our sacred scriptures and prayed over me. What a beautiful memory.

Unfortunately things seemed to slow down for me and I decided to get out of the birth pool. My midwife suggested examining me, something I had said I did not want in our appointments prior. After about an hour of thinking about it, I decided to let her – I was just so tired but felt like I was getting nowhere. My surges were STILL only 10 minutes apart.

4cm! 4CM! WHAT! I've been working on this for 28 hours so far! The midwife asked me if there was anything going on for me emotionally that might be holding me back. I knew instantly; my daughter Elkarnah. She was all I could think of. I felt so guilty that she wasn't here with me. I missed her and I felt torn by an overwhelming feeling of not knowing how to care for two little people at the same time.

A little crushed and a little teary, I decided to try and get some sleep. I awoke 2 hours later with surges, this time 4 minutes apart – now we were getting somewhere! At this stage, we asked for just me and my husband to be in the birth space. Sweetly, the two midwives and my dear friend left the room for some chai.

My husband and I labored on, holding each other. He was being so strong and so encouraging. Labor seemed to progress steadily and I felt myself 'go into myself'. I decided to get back in the birth pool. The water was so amazing as I ducked under for surges, grabbing my husband's arms and resting my forehead on his. I felt so tired, but yet determined. As each surge ended, my body floated up in the water. Rest. If only for a minute. Rest.

As I began to push, I felt somehow restricted by the water. Whilst I had wanted a water birth it just didn't feel right at that stage, like somehow I couldn't push hard enough, long enough or strong enough. I clambered out of the pool. The midwife suggested a birth stool... (To be honest it looked a little scary to me), but why not?

Sitting down, my husband behind me holding my hands and supporting my back, I began to push, I felt my strength return. I heard the encouraging voices all around me; my husband, my dear friend, my midwife. "You Can Do this!"

Can I? I remember drawing in my breath and pushing so hard to the point where I had no more breath in me. I knew I needed to keep pushing but I also needed air, and taking a breath meant I would lose my power. I felt so determined. I could feel my son's head trying to come earthside, but how was I going to do this? I can't breathe! I then focused on an ancient Christian practice of a "Breath Prayer",

repeating constantly over in my head, the words "Guru Jesus, give me strength".

That feeling... maybe it's transition or maybe it's just a point that I feel every woman gets to in birth (at least so I am told) where you somehow just have to surrender and

let something bigger take over. Whatever other people think that 'bigger thing' is. For me it's God. It's a feeling of being totally empowered yet also having to 'let go' of my own strength and let the beautifully created birth process take over. For me this is God's strength, God's power.

Somehow I managed to draw enough air into my lungs and our son's head was out! The encouragement and affirmations from my support people continued... their words inspired me! I can do this! He is here! Just a little more! I continued my breath prayer, "Guru Jesus, give me your strength".

After what felt like an eternity, our son's body finally slipped out. As I looked at my beautiful son, there was suddenly tension in the air. My midwife calmly joked "O dear you got all dressed up for the occasion with your neck tie on", as she quickly yet calmly unwrapped the cord from around our little boy's neck, arm, and neck again, flipping him upside down and back again. His perfect little face was blue, but he let out a small cry and we knew everything was alright! I held him close, he was PERFECT. The words "I love you, I love you, I love you" overflowed from my heart and my lips "I love you!"

Climbing into bed with my beautiful son, 36 hours after labor had begun, was the most beautiful feeling in the world. Resting with my husband and my son, I longed for my daughter but I knew it wouldn't be long until I saw her again – just a few hours.

So after having a homebirth with my daughter and then going to a birth center for my son, was there a difference? Do I regret it? I have to say that whilst I don't regret my decision, I wished there had been another way to stay in our home and birth our son. 'Birth Village' was great. But there is truly nothing like being in your own home, your own space, your own environment and with your other children, with a trusted midwife. I am a little sad that I won't get to tell my son he was born at home, but I will get to tell him he was born in Kerala, India... and I think that's pretty great too.

I adore you Jasper Sacha Antarayami Pryde.

Naomi lives with her husband Joshua, daughter Elkarnah and son Jasper in North India where they help run "The River Ashram", a Jesus Devotional Community.



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LACHLAN'S STORY



Melanie arrived silently around 7am. I looked up from the pool and there she was, quietly encouraging me. I felt so safe and supported. Hannah and Mel held my space so beautifully like floating guardians, watching carefully without getting too involved.

Some time Sunday morning, my labour changed. My contractions became further apart and lost some intensity. After another feel of my belly, we realised that my baby had turned posterior. I assumed we were veering a little off course, but had no concerns as Hannah and Mel stayed just as quiet and calm. They started watching a little more closely and started suggesting changes in position. Knowing that baby and I were healthy and fine, I was happy to continue and be patient.

As the sun set on Sunday, I felt us moving further into the grey zone of uncertainty. My contractions were so irregular, to the point of being considered back in early labour (which was very disappointing). Hannah and Mel remained so calm and unobtrusive. They balanced themselves so beautifully between being patient and trusting the process, and being on alert for signs that things had become risky.

Because I was considered to be back in early labour, Hannah and Melanie went home to get some rest (Melanie was less than five minutes down the road if we needed her). Although I knew that my body and my baby just needed time, I couldn't help but feel disheartened. I hit a dark point. I tried to rest but found it very difficult to get comfortable. Joel was so tired by then that he went into such a deep sleep that he was now sleeping through my contractions. I felt alone and left behind. I felt disappointed in myself and guilty for making everyone so tired (Hannah had been with us for around 15 hours; Mel for around 12). I felt like I was failing and feared needing interventions. I felt I had let everyone down. I cried sitting on the edge of the bed.

At some point, Joel woke up and I cried to him. He was so apologetic for falling asleep and tried really hard to stay awake and support me. He got me some chocolate to cheer me up.

I eventually snapped out of it and realised that no one could do my labour for me - I had to do it myself. I had to get out of my head. I tried some of the Calmbirth relaxations I had learnt and focused on my baby. I promised my baby I would be more patient and that it could come when it was ready. In my calmer state, I got a bit of a rest and eventually labour intensified again. Melanie returned (after being gone only a few hours). I felt better having her back with us. I got back into the pool around midnight and although my contractions slowed slightly again, I was finally comfortable. The warm water made me incredibly drowsy and I finally got some sleep (between contractions).

I heard the birds outside which momentarily brought me out of labour-land and made me realise it was Monday - it had been two days. Hannah returned and Mel left again to get some proper rest. I knew we had not returned to our "normal" course, but I was happy and optimistic. Hannah commented on how amazing my energy was and I felt proud of myself. Baby was still posterior, and his head was not in the right position. No wonder this was taking a while!

Hannah took my BP which was starting to rise, and we discussed transfer. Our grey zone was becoming darker. After a discussion with Joel, we knew it was time to go. We trusted Hannah implicitly and knew that she would continue to be our guardian. We went with the plan of having my membranes ruptured (hoping this would be enough) and this made the idea of transferring easier.

Moving out of my "cave" started a very different phase of my labour. Stepping into the hospital with the



bright lights and noise was a complete change of atmosphere. I felt my barriers go up and my focus change. I had to concentrate more on blocking everything out. Having Hannah there as my ally and cheerleader meant I felt strong enough to find my inner warrior and continue to fight for myself. I never felt as though transfer meant handing myself over, or giving up. I knew Hannah would help us to negotiate where we could and I knew I could trust her if interventions were suggested. Hannah tried to keep as many negotiations in the hall as possible, but the contrast to home was stark. Suddenly everything was in my face. I had doctors looking at me in pity, saying "you poor girl", and, "there's no need to keep torturing yourself"; insinuating that Hannah had somehow forced me to go on for the last 30 odd hours. Being called a "poor girl" leaves you feeling very differently than someone calling you an "amazing" or "incredible woman". The former undermines your confidence; the latter fills you with pride and motivates you to carry on. I felt under pressure from the consultant on duty and was fearful and nervous whenever he walked in the room.

At about 1pm Monday, we noticed some meconium and by 4:30pm, we unfortunately had to agree to some Syntocinon. The consultant examined me before leaving and said that because I was only 7cm, I should not push.

Suddenly the contractions had no gap in between them and I started to lose it. (I will never know if that was the effect of the Synto, or if I was just transitioning!) With each contraction came almighty pressure. It felt like a train was moving through my body. I didn't think he had affected me that much, but the consultant's words kept running through my head. All my rational thinking disappeared and I imagined my cervix ripping apart.

I started crying to Joel - "I can't do it!" He was so lovely and calm and said, "Yes, you can". I told Hannah I couldn't stop pushing. The look she gave me calmed me, because she didn't look worried - she looked relieved! Her suggestion to move into the bathroom gave me the permission I needed to let go. It felt much more private - like moving into a cave. I felt instantly better. As soon as I stopped fighting, it became much easier and was not at all frightening.

I originally sat on the toilet, but the hospital midwife went and fetched a birth stool. After 40 minutes of pushing, I gave birth to a beautiful 2.3kg baby boy, drug free and upright with Hannah beside me and Melanie, who had arrived just in time to grab the camera and video the birth for us. He was born into his daddy's arms. I felt like I had reached the top of my personal Everest on a high!

Unfortunately my high didn't last for long as my baby was whisked away to a resus trolley outside of the bathroom (he was pink and crying by the time he got there) and then off to the Special Care Nursery for monitoring (escorted by his dad and Melanie) because of his weight and a slight breathing issue. But that is another story altogether. Another story of dancing through the system, and two days of emotional turmoil that I feel was completely unnecessary. I feel so fortunate for the birth I had, and can't help but wonder how different things would have been without those incredible women "dancing in the grey zone" with me (as Hannah later called it). It's pretty safe to say that I probably would have ended up with many unnecessary interventions and an unnecessary caesarean that mentally and emotionally would have left me raw, feeling as though I'd failed.

Instead, thanks to the strength and courage it took for my midwives to "dance" with me, I came away from my son's birth so confident and in awe of my own strength and endurance, and amazed by what I was capable of. And what better way to start my parenting journey!



Lachlan Joel Stasinowsky
Monday 27th June 2011
5:10pm
2.32 kg
50cm

Vanessa Stasinowsky is married to Joel and loves being mum to (almost) 2 year old Lachlan. She studied Primary Education and currently teaches extension programmes to gifted and talented students in Baulkham Hills. Since 2009, she has had a passion for all things related to pregnancy, birth and birth choices, and she hopes to study midwifery in the near future and to "pay it forward".

My husband Joel and I received quite a shock when we found out we were pregnant, but we were filled with joy!

I thoroughly enjoyed being pregnant and was lucky enough to avoid morning sickness completely and managed other symptoms well. Initially I was unsure about where I wanted to birth (at home or in a birth centre) but knew that I wanted to be in the care of independent midwives. I loved the idea of that kind of care and educated myself about my options.

I was ready to book in with Hannah and Melanie at our first meeting - I knew that they were the women I wanted to accompany me through this incredible experience. The more we met with them, the more comfortable I was, and my confidence grew. We developed such a close relationship with them that a homebirth started to feel more appealing.

We had a booking-in visit with the hospital birth centre but when we walked in, I knew I definitely wanted a home birth. We started gathering supplies and I felt excited and ready. I packed a "postnatal" bag that we could pick up if transfer became necessary but for the remainder of my pregnancy it sat in a cupboard so I didn't have to think about it.

On Friday 24th June (37 +6) I woke up crampy and this continued throughout the day, but I put it down to Braxton Hicks.

Overnight, the cramps became wavelike. When they started waking me up, I realised it was probably labour. I waited until Joel woke up to let him know. I texted Hannah and Mel and we decided to carry on with our day and to keep things as normal as possible. We had lunch with friends (pausing conversation every ten minutes or so to concentrate on a contraction) and bought some labour snacks from Coles. We even bumped into Melanie in the shopping centre! We had a quiet afternoon, and set up our birth space. I knew I should have been trying to get some sleep, but I was uncomfortable lying down, so I stayed in the living room rocking over my gym ball. I eventually went to bed (and took the gym ball!) The contractions intensified and at about 2am, I decided I wanted Hannah and Mel's support.

Hannah arrived at about 3am Sunday and I was back in the living room. She tiptoed into our dimly lit house and knelt next to me. When my contraction ended she whispered, "Hello beautiful woman". At that moment, I felt like everything was in its right place. Hannah had a feel of my belly when I was ready and said baby was in an excellent position. I got quite excited that we would be meeting our baby soon.

I was desperate to get into the pool, but was trying to leave it as late as possible. I got in at about 5am, and soon after, Hannah called Melanie to let her know that baby probably wasn't too far away.

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OF MY LIFE: BIRTH STORY



help me relax and ease the pain. I hated labouring in the water. It did help with the pain in between contractions but when a contraction hit I felt helpless, out of control. It was horrible! The bath did manage to slow down my contractions though, I guessed they were five or so minutes apart, maybe as much as seven so we went to bed and our midwife bunked down on the lounge.

That was a bad night. Full of fear and loneliness. I felt like they'd abandoned me to the pain. But rational Miriam told me not to wake anyone, because this was hard on them too, they needed sleep. I told myself to let them rest. I snatched some sleep too. You know, in five minute blocks. Mmm restful.

One of my greatest fears going into labour was that the baby's head would block my tubes, I'd be unable to pee, it would stall labour, and if left unchecked could cause real damage. I let the fears get the better of me, and then the pain started to get the better of me. Rational Miriam would have recalled reading up on fear-tension-pain syndrome, but she wasn't in control at that stage. I remember at one point, I was kneeling on the bed with a contraction, fighting the urge to get up and go attempt to pee again, fear was thick in my throat – like an air marshmallow – and I'd started to cry.

I'd tried to be quiet. I'd taken two showers. I tried to lay in bed and breathe through the contractions. But nothing was working. I knew I needed help. At 5am I'd woken everyone and had another dreaded internal. 4cm. That was demoralizing. I was afraid for my baby, being in there with no water and already overdue. I was equal parts resigned that I'd wind up in hospital and stubbornly determined that I would not. I said to her "If I transfer, I'm going to end up with the Synto which will increase the pain I'll have to go through. I know I can't handle a greater level of pain than what my body is throwing at me. So I'll end up with the drugs too..." And she's like "Miriam, if we transfer it's so you can have those things." Oh, yeah. I suppose it would be, hey? Not interested. I couldn't maintain my contractions so I asked for more homeopathy, just in case it would do something and then our midwife decided it would be best to give us some space, and went to run errands nearby telling me to try and rest. The contractions came back slowly, but they came back. After some time, I even managed to climb into bed with Dustin and just relax in his arms. I slept in patches between the contractions and started to feel calm and safe again. Just when the waves were coming too often for me to sleep anymore, and I was barging Dustin out of bed, our midwife rang. She told me that the backup midwife was in the area, so she was going to pop over for ten minutes to check up on us.

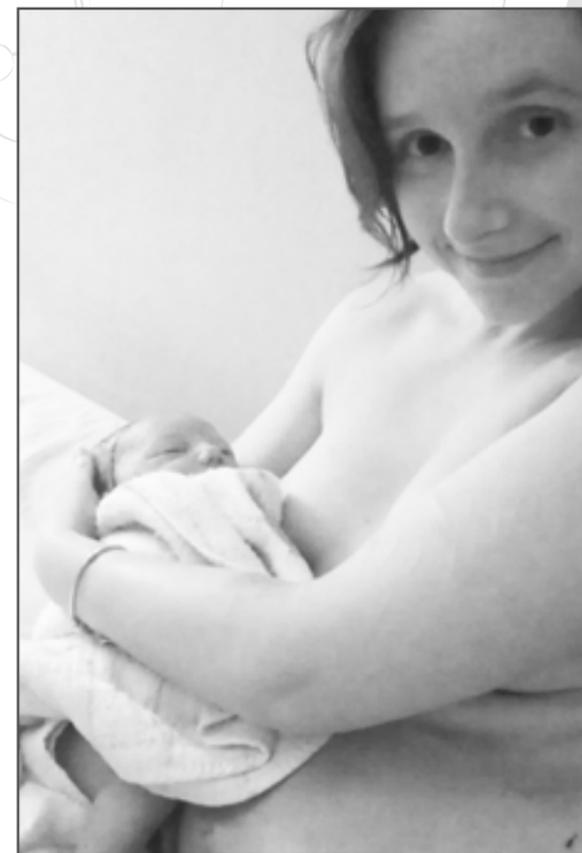
When she showed up, I was topless, kneeling on the lounge legs spread, facing the wall and swaying my arse. Wonderful. When that contraction ended, we introduced ourselves. I'm like "Hey, I'm Miriam. I don't usually greet people with my boobs out" and I told her to make herself at home. So she went and made herself a sandwich, full serious. That's my kind of woman. She examined me and gave me the best news of my life. I was 9cm! The feeling of relief was overwhelming; I started confessing my undying love for her and my husband who was still being marvellous. It was a little after midday. Time passed and the baby wasn't just magically falling out like I might have hoped, and the backup had things she needed to do. So she left and we went back to bed. Bed seemed to be the place that stuff happened. While I rested it occurred to me that through everything, my fetus had done everything right. From day one, her placenta was in the right spot, she developed at the right rate, she turned head down early and didn't make



me worry. She engaged in exactly the right position – the easiest position to be born in. I might have been absolutely hopeless, but she wasn't. My baby girl knew what she was doing and suddenly I had this wave of trust wash over me. I could trust my baby to get us through this. I would follow her lead. The backup came back and said she'd be sitting in her car outside reading if we needed her. Not long after that I was perched on the loo talking to Dustin "Something moved!" "what does it feel like?" "... Jupiter!"

I didn't have an urge to push - my body just started pushing! Oddly enough I could choose to join in and help or just ride through it. It hurt less to push though, so I pushed for all I was worth. Dustin was worried; asking if he could go get the backup but I wouldn't let him leave and we didn't have her phone number. Luckily our midwife and the backup came in just at the right moment. I was clinging to the wall, half standing over the toilet, and Dustin tells the midwife "She's about to crown" I'm thinking "no way, it can't get bigger than this..." Then she was crowning and I'm chanting "Don't push when it burns" doing my best to slow down and avoid tearing. "With the next contraction, the baby will turn" the midwife told Dustin I heard him say "What?" and then my baby spun inside of me; the most incredible feeling. "I can feel her cheek!" he exclaimed in wonder.

In another push, there was a slippery screaming Isis in his hands. I've never loved him as much as I did in that moment. We hi-fived. I wanted to let the placenta come naturally, so while we waited Isis and I had our skin to skin time. I'd never seen a face so heartbreakingly perfect and tiny - I couldn't stop staring at her face! We made some calls and my sister arrived to cut the cord. Eventually I managed to push the placenta out in the shower and I called for a bowl. I didn't want to get out of the tub until the blood stopped. But it wasn't stopping. Then the midwife was there. I told her I was dizzy and there seemed to be a lot of blood. "There is a lot of blood" she said, in the way that means "there is too much blood"



I heard her yell for Dustin, but I'd lost my vision. They picked me up and ran me to the bed. I felt her working on me, punching the synto into my leg, crushing my uterus with her hand. I heard myself yell with the pain. I wanted it to be over. Dustin bought me a breakfast drink, and the midwife bought me a morsel of warm placenta. I swallowed both. One thing people worry so much about is "what happens if something goes wrong and you're not in hospital?" well that's why we have midwives, and I'm super grateful for mine! I look back on Isis's birth the way some people look back at their weddings. I've never felt such deep love for my Husband or been more proud of myself. Isis has truly blessed me!

Geeky Wiccan mum, **Miriam Cumming**, works as an advice columnist when she can tear her eyes away from her daughter's perfect face. She's 25 years old, has a passion for writing and loves her husband to the moon and back!

Geeky Wiccan mum, **Miriam Cumming**, works as an advice columnist when she can tear her eyes away from her daughter's perfect face. She's 25 years old, has a passion for writing and loves her husband to the moon and back!



My labour started with my waters breaking at 5:15 am on the 21st of November.

My husband and I took it easy that morning. Dustin let his work know he wouldn't be in, and then we went out for breakfast and bought some flowers for my birth altar. I didn't want to get too excited, or focus too much on what was happening because I didn't want to get tired and overwhelmed. At some point my midwife had said to me that one of the most common reasons women transfer was exhaustion, so I was determined to avoid that by not getting all worked up – I stopped for each contraction, and then just continued to go about my day. I can't remember if we called our midwife when I got to a 1:15/3 for each contraction, or if she fluked out and called us. I was quite distracted; I lost all sense of time. Before long my mind was elsewhere and I couldn't ignore the surges anymore. I'd been taking some homeopathic stuff that was supposed to help labour progress but at that stage I thought it was a load of bull, and I stopped taking it sometime in the mid afternoon.

The day wore on, but I felt good. The contractions didn't feel as long as the clock said they were. There was pain, but I knew I could handle it. Dustin stayed with me and coached me, the midwife looked on – lightly monitoring baby and I. We were both physically in pretty top shape. Dustin danced with me, lead me through a ritual to help me focus, rubbed my back in between contractions and then got clear when another wave came because I couldn't stand being touched. He read to me, brought me cold lavender cloths for my face, helped me in and out of the shower and told me I was beautiful and strong. My midwife told me I was doing great, she reassured me that everything was as it should be. There were many times on that first day where I was really enjoying myself. Yeah, there was discomfort, but it was peaceful and productive and I was loved. It truly felt like I'd entered sacred space.

My contractions got weirder as the night wore on. They got so close together that I thought I would stop coping, I'd have 2 -4 without a break, and then a five minute rest. Then more contractions. Some of them were terrifying. Others were so easy to get through, it concerned me. When the midwife started asking if I thought I'd be able to sleep, a small part of me was alarmed and disappointed. I didn't want to think about not being able to finish this thing tonight. But, I was only 3cm open and my cervix was as thick as a wedge of cheese, so they ran me a bath against my better judgement to



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KANE LEONARD



I envisioned that my birth would start in the early hours of the morning, after a good sleep, and to make it easier for my mum, sister and three year old daughter to be there. The day before my labour began my three year old daughter and I spent the day like most other days that summer. We had lunch with one of my best friends and her little girl and then we went to the beach for a lovely afternoon. I had only just moved house a few months earlier so I was starting to unwind after a sometimes stressful pregnancy.

I had been ready for this baby for weeks, looking forward to my birth journey and thinking he would come early but he was in no hurry, in fact, he was just about on time. He came at exactly the right time, when the universe had intended him to arrive. I woke up around 5am having mild cramps but they were frequent enough and strong enough to stop me from sleeping, so I knew this was it.

I got out of bed and left my husband and little girl asleep and enjoyed the excitement on my own for a short time before I realised it would be peak hour traffic soon as it was a Friday and, although I didn't want my midwife and support people (my mum, and sister Amy) to come and be waiting around for too long, I was anxious that if I left it too long to tell them then they might not get there in time as it was over an hours' drive.

It didn't take long for the intensity of the contractions to build up, and when Daisy woke up we told her what was happening. We had prepared her pretty well for the birth and really wanted her to be a part of it. Tanya, my midwife, arrived at around 7.30am; she was fantastic and knew I was worried she wouldn't make it if we left it too late so she came as soon as I wanted.

In the weeks leading up I had some of my favourite calming music picked out and my husband, Dave, made me a birth CD. I had been wearing my blessing way necklace for weeks - made with love from all of the nearest and dearest women in my life and all of their beautiful messages hung on flags around the birthing pool. I created a sacred little place to be calm and comfortable and I felt so blessed to be able to experience this in our home; my own environment.

At 7.30am contractions were three to five minutes apart with back pain (another posterior labour ahead). Dave was amazing and massaged my lower back so hard with every single contraction that I felt bruised for days. I just needed him to push down as hard as he could with me and asked for him to push harder and harder; somehow it made me feel better. Dave had the birthing pool ready by 8.30am. It felt private and I was totally in control and in my own world with contractions really getting strong around 9.30am.

But at around 10.30am everything seemed to slow down; my contractions spaced right out. As much as I welcomed the break, because by this point, I'll be honest, I was really exhausted, I was worried that it was slowing so much. I'm not sure if the labour stalled because was I was in the water not moving

around so much or because of the stress I had carried through my pregnancy and especially in the last few weeks before with moving house, my husband out of work and my Pa passing away.

After the birth my midwife said that at the time she wondered if Daisy being there was slowing the labour because she knew that my only concern for my birth was how Daisy would cope. I understand why she thought that because at one point when Daisy did come into the room and need my attention in the middle of a rush it quickly faded.

I knew that could happen but it was so strange - it shows how strong the body and mind are. Such an amazing and powerful thing. But I don't think it was Daisy that I was worried about as I was really surprised at how good she was, only coming in a couple of times while I laboured. My sister was an absolute angel and entertained her the whole time in the backyard. It wouldn't have been the same without her and my mum, the most important women in my life there to support me and help with Daisy.

I was having the urge to push for quite some time but not feeling the descent of the baby and starting to worry a little. I gave my midwife consent to do an internal and it was thought that I was fully dilated but I was so uncomfortable so it was very quick and so not 100 per cent. Dave and I had some alone time outside of the pool around 12.30pm and this is when my waters broke and I got back into the pool. At some point Dave climbed into the pool with me.

Things started to pick up again and I started to feel more in control and just tried to ride the waves of each contraction - concentrating on my breathing. After much encouragement and much pushing things were finally developing and baby was on his way. I was leaning over the edge of the pool holding on tight to Mum's hands and at 12.45pm I asked for Daisy and everyone to come in. A few minutes later his head was out.

The next few minutes seemed like a lot longer and it definitely felt like I was pushing for such a long time compared to my daughter. I remember letting out the loudest roar and out he came. I didn't even stop to think what sex it was, I was just so relieved; I did it, it was over; all the pain washed away and I wanted to hold my baby in my arms. My sister was so excited and announced it was a boy, the cord was wrapped around him so he wasn't able to be passed through my legs underwater but I was so happy to hold my beautiful baby boy for the first time.

At 1.30pm we climbed out of the pool a little awkwardly with the cord still attached and the placenta not yet delivered. After a little while though, at 2pm, Dave cut the cord since it had stopped pulsing as it was quite short and felt uncomfortable, as though it was pulling as well as the general pain down there. At 2.30pm the placenta was birthed.

I lay on the lounge for some time while he fed for the first time (and pooped all over me) and we decided on his name 'Kane Leonard Noel Jales', his middle names after his two grandfathers. I wish my Pa

NOEL JALES



who had just passed away a few weeks before the birth was there to tell him that, yes, I had a boy just like he thought I would. But this is the circle of life and now we continue our life journey as a family of four and I hope that we live a happy beautiful life like he did.

We are so happy and proud. I fall more and more in love with Kane each day, he is such a joy and Daisy is absolutely besotted, so gentle and loving. I am so glad that she was there for the birth and I hope that the memory stays with her forever and teaches her how normal and beautiful the whole experience is.

I can't begin to express our gratitude to our midwife Tanya, she held our birthing space with such love, trust, confidence and guidance and

I didn't have a birth photographer but I have so many beautiful photos of the birth thanks to my second midwife Katie. I felt so proud of our birthing experience. To be able to choose the birth that was right for us and to be supported in that choice is truly a precious gift.

Katie Jales and her husband and I have recently moved to the Central Coast from Sydney with their two children Kane (birth story of) and Daisy (3 yrs) for a lifestyle change.

Are you interested in any of the following?



- Natural birth
- Breastfeeding
- Babywearing
- Co-sleeping or gentle sleep methods
- Cloth nappies or elimination communication
- Connected parenting of toddlers and older children
- Natural parenting or attachment parenting

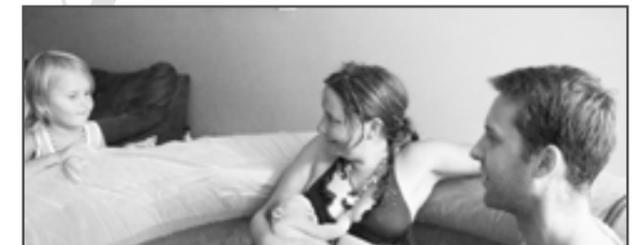
Then here's a group for you with local meet-ups and playdates, an online support forum, recommendations for books and resources, and much more!

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BREECH BIRTH, A VARIATION OF NORMAL

In early 2009 I was riding the delicious high of an almost-full-term expectant mama, counting down the weeks and days until I would experience the ultimate high... birthing and meeting my wee precious bubby. Little did I know at the time though, the high that I was riding on was a rollercoaster, and it was about to tip over and take me on a terrifying ride.

This was my second pregnancy. I employed a private obstetrician for my first because it was the thing to do and I like ticking all the boxes. That said, I was keen to have a drug-free natural birth, so I chose very carefully. My obstetrician was one of a select few who attends births in a birth centre (connected to a public hospital) and respects physiological birth like I respect my body. He and my two lovely midwives helped me have an amazing experience, and aside from a managed third stage and subsequent PPH (post partum haemorrhage), it was everything I wished for - calm, unhurried, gentle and joyful, just like my beautiful daughter.

I knew I didn't need an obstetrician the second time round, so I chose the care of our local Community Midwives. Once again, my pregnancy was easy and uneventful... until 35 weeks, the tipping point. Due to my previous PPH, my midwives had informed me that hospital protocol dictated I would need a precautionary cannula inserted upon my arrival at hospital (whilst in labour), as well as a managed third stage... neither of which I wanted. They were bound by this protocol though, so at 35 weeks I went into the hospital to meet with the Head of Obstetrics, who alone had the power to waive it.

I like to 'throw the road out ahead' that I plan to travel on, and there was no PPH, Syntocordin or cannula on my road ahead (why assume it would happen again?), but this Head of Obstetrics didn't hold back letting me know that I was irresponsible & stupid to take such selfish risks. Getting his signature of approval on my file was like trying to get blood from a stone, but he eventually conceded after making a bold note on my file that he didn't support my choice and had counseled me against it. His bullying tactics got me so angry and started me thinking that homebirth is the way to go... but that's another birth story.

I was celebrating my little win and the fact that the worst was surely over, when he expressed concern that I looked small for my dates, and after measuring me, said he wanted to do a scan. I don't like the idea of exposing my babies to unnecessary ultrasound waves during pregnancy, but I was passed the point of arguing with him at this stage, still reeling from our last debate, so I let him go ahead. I wasn't worried about my size - like last time, I was consistently measuring 2cm under - I carry small and have small babies. The first thing he deduced from the scan was that my baby was in frank breech position. He actually laughed as he declared "well there's no point worrying about the third stage now because this baby will be born via caesarean section". I immediately thought back to one night during that week when a massive movement from bubby actually woke me up - s/he must've done a 180, a little acrobat... the hard little bowling ball wedged under my right breast that I'd been stroking was a head, not a bottom!

He then proceeded to tell me the following things with the most appalling bedside manner that plunged me straight into a pretty severe state of shock: "Your baby is too small for dates, it has probably stopped growing. There isn't enough amniotic fluid



surrounding it, a dangerously low level actually, hardly any... it is likely that your placenta has stopped functioning so the baby is being deprived, hence the lack of growth, and will need to come out very soon - you will definitely be having a caesarean now, most probably an emergency within the next few days". All as though he was telling me what he was going to order for lunch.

At that point I was floating above myself, looking down on the surreal scene, straining to hear what he was saying on the phone as he ordered more urgent, immediate scans, but barely hearing him over the sound of my pounding heart, and my screaming insides... trust your instincts, trust your body!

Three hours later I was still stuck in the surreal nightmare as I lay on the bed at the specialist ultrasound clinic, searching the stoic face of the sonographer for any little clue, hoping that her protracted silence was an indication of concentration & nothing more... surely she would have reassured me by now?? So I closed my eyes and focused on my calm breathing in an attempt to hijack that train of thought. Still without saying anything, she went and found someone for a second opinion... their whispers stayed out of my earshot as they scrutinised a screen which stayed out of my view.

Finally... I remember the immense relief that flooded every cell in my body when I eventually heard them say the magic words, that my baby was in fact OK... my level of amniotic fluid was on



the lower end of the normal range, but normal nevertheless and nothing to be concerned about. My baby was also on the lower end of the normal size range for its gestational age, but normal again, and considerably bigger than the obstetrician had deduced from his measurements, not in any danger. My instincts were right, and everything this obstetrician had said was wrong... except for one thing: that my baby was in breech position at 35 weeks.

So my midwife informed me that if s/he was still breech at term, a natural delivery was unfortunately not an option and they would have to hand me over for a caesarean, performed by whichever obstetrician was on duty at the time - perhaps the very one I never wanted to see again. Suddenly I was invaded again with every birthing mother's worst enemy... fear. Fear of having no choice at all in how I was going to birth my baby... fear that we would be forced to endure the polar opposite birth experience to the one we were excitedly anticipating... fear of unnecessary major abdominal surgery... fear of putting my body and my baby into the hands of someone I absolutely could not trust.

They said that if I laboured at home until the last minute I might get my natural birth, but it wasn't a guarantee. They had seen women presenting at hospital with buttocks on view and still being taken to theatre. These were risks I was just not willing to take, so at this stage I thought I should just stay at home for the whole thing... but with a breech on board I wasn't so sure.

Knowledge is an effective adversary to fear, so I spent hours researching everything to do with breech birth, and then hours on all fours with my bum in the air, doing handstands in the pool, waving moxa sticks at my toes, shining a torchlight & pressing my ipod earplugs down on my pelvis, and road-testing countless other methods that google informed me might encourage my baby to turn. That was Plan A. However after learning that only 5% of breech babes turn back around after 37 weeks, I realised that I needed a Plan B, pronto.

We explored all options and decided to make use of our private

health cover and try to find an obstetrician who would take me on at such a late stage, who would consider delivering a vaginal breech. I knew it was rare, but in all my research I hadn't found any reason to believe that this method would present a higher risk to my baby or to myself than a caesarean would. I know a lot of people, including my husband, who were born breech without any dramas back in the day when it was considered a variation of normal.

One pleasant local obstetrician agreed to meet with me straight away and take me on. He also agreed to 'attempt' a vaginal delivery, having had some experience with it, but... well there were a lot of butts, which



again all came back to risk. I felt a dreaded sense of déjà vu. He was very quick to quote the results of a big research study called the 'Term Breech Trial' of 2000, which concluded that there was a very small percentage increase in the infant mortality rate with vaginal breech as opposed to planned caesarean section for term breech babies. I had researched this study and its numerous flaws, and discovered that it has been solely responsible for most obstetricians worldwide deciding not to practice vaginal breech at all anymore. He asked me if I was willing to put my baby's life at risk, which made me feel again as though I was an irresponsible and selfish mother... and yet he never disclosed the risks that I know are inherent in all caesarean operations. My inner voice was screaming yet again... trust your instincts, trust your body!... so needless to say, after yet another unnerving experience that made my stomach churn, Plan B was quickly aborted.

That night, desperate to get off this rollercoaster, I gave my friend Peter Jackson (founder of Calmbirth) a call. His reassurance and gentle words of wisdom instantly lifted my spirits and put me back on track, leading me to the turning point I so desperately needed. He kindly gave me the contact number of the Head of Obstetrics at John Hunter Hospital in Newcastle, Dr Andrew Bisits, who apparently was a bit of a guru on natural breech. I left a message for him the following morning and was delighted when he personally returned my call and invited me straight up to meet with him. Our conversation was brief but it left me with such a good feeling that I immediately binned all my private hospital admission forms and told my husband that our baby was a little Novacastrian.

Andrew is my hero. He made me feel like a mother about to have a baby rather than a troublesome patient with a life-threatening disease. He respected both my desire and my ability to birth my baby naturally, and he answered all my questions and addressed all my concerns with a wealth of knowledge and vast experience. Like the obstetrician I had for my first birth, he cared about me and my instincts and what I wanted, because it was my experience and I was in the centre of it. I knew instantly that I was in the right place and I didn't care anymore whether bubby was going to turn back around or not... I was actually secretly hopeful that s/he wouldn't so we could remain in his care, and secretly glad when the gentle ECV he attempted at 37½ weeks was unsuccessful.

Vaginal breech deliveries occurred so often at John Hunter under Dr Bisits, that all staff on the labour ward were very experienced, confident & positive about it – undoubtedly a much better situation to be in when giving birth than if your caregivers are inexperienced, anxious or negative. Risk was measured & managed through adherence to a strict set of criteria which had to be met in order to qualify for a vaginal breech. Some of these included: size & position of baby (frank/extended position best), size & shape of mother, attitude of mother etc. I got ticks in all boxes and had the added advantage of having given birth before, so Andrew told me that he expected the birth to be very straightforward- 'textbook' even. He said he could picture me just breathing my baby out, exactly as I had been visualising... what a vote of confidence!



He gave me an internal exam at 39 weeks (which was when my first child was born) and found that I was already 1 cm dilated. It was two days before my husband's birthday and we were predicting that bubby would probably arrive then, given how much s/he already took after him!

During the early hours of the next morning I felt the familiar tightenings which I immediately recognised as the probable onset of labour. Even though they had subsided once I got up, we organised for our 2 year old to be picked up by her grandparents, and David & I spent the day quietly getting ready... all the drama of the recent weeks had distracted me from even packing a bag yet! It was a Thursday, so we went late night shopping at about 5pm, and David didn't even notice that the waves had returned and I was calmly breathing through them. When we got home at 7, I suggested that we go for a walk - I wanted to stay active to keep things moving, and also upright so that gravity would assist me this time (I laboured for a long time with my first because I was mostly horizontal). Still David had absolutely no idea that it was happening, until we were quite some distance from home on our walk, and it dawned on me that we had almost an hour+½ drive to hospital and I didn't really want to be giving birth to a breech baby on the side of the freeway!

So we got home at around 8pm and David organised dinner in a mild panic while I called the hospital, still very calm & collected, to let them know that I'd "probably see them up there sometime during the night", before getting in the shower. Only a few minutes later Andrew himself rang and asked David to get me out of the shower. After speaking to me and ascertaining that I was in established labour and extremely relaxed about it, he very calmly told me that he didn't want to alarm me, but that I should get dressed right now, hop in the car, and head straight up there... pack the dinner "to-go".

We left home at 8:30pm, and David did the trip in only 1 hour... he told me later that if it had come to it, he was worried an ambulance might take me back to Gosford if he didn't get far enough up the freeway. So once we were passed halfway and on the home stretch towards John Hunter he relaxed a bit, but he was still determined to get pulled over by the police, believing that he had the best & only excuse for speeding- "my wife is in labour with a breech baby & we've got to get to Newcastle". I think he was a bit disappointed that he was denied that little thrill... however he was anticipating a much bigger thrill - his birthday was only 3 hours away now, and he was going to get the best pressie ever! We spent the car journey marveling at that prospect with great excitement, and (in-between waves) we also debated baby names... another thing that had been put on the backburner over the last few weeks.

After we arrived in our peaceful Birth Centre room, our lovely midwife Christine took me through all the 'check-in' questions whilst I rolled around on a fitball, still quietly breathing through my waves. In for 4, out for 6, releeease. She then busied herself getting things ready whilst David dimmed the lights, got the music set up and the aromatherapy oils burning, and I slipped off to



the bathroom. Once again I found the toilet the most comfortable place to sit. By this stage my exhalations were audible - I sighed as I surrendered to the strength of each wave and visualised the muscles of my uterus doing their job so well, bringing my precious baby closer to me and our much anticipated first cuddle.

It's protocol to have a CTG machine strapped around the belly to monitor the baby's progress during a vaginal breech delivery. Chris kept popping her head in to check it and commented that bubs heartbeat was consistently strong & steady, so she was happy to remove it. David stood in front of me as the waves began to peak and tumble in with considerable force. I held onto his arms and completely 'let go' as they flowed through me, letting him take my weight... it was impossible to be 'dumped' by these waves when such strength was keeping me afloat. Hardly any words were spoken as the weight shifted instinctively and effortlessly between us and we swayed together slowly back and forth, back and forth. Soon I felt the urge to lean over and vomit into the shower, which we celebrated as a sign that I was fully open and transitioning now... not long to go bubby, we're doing so well. At that point Chris seemed quite shocked to hear a subtle change in my sighing, which obviously indicated to her that I had started to push. I remember the incredulous look on her face as she poked her head into the bathroom and asked me if I thought my labour had progressed any since we arrived – she hadn't examined me and apparently didn't realise how far along I was, perhaps because I was so calm. She asked me to hop up on the bed so she could take a look, but then David announced that he could see a water sac emerging, so she got a bit of a shock and rushed out of the room to call Andrew.

When she returned and helped me onto the bed on all fours, my waters broke and a little bottom was crowning, so there was no need for any examination. I was moved straight onto the birthing stool and was vaguely aware of more people entering our sanctuary... the registrar on duty assumed catching position (Andrew wasn't there yet), a second midwife and a paediatrician stood by (another protocol for vaginal breech)... and then Andrew appeared just in time to quietly talk the registrar through the birth, which was a very "hands off" experience that unfolded seamlessly. One hand supported the little bottom as it descended, but it was really just all my baby and me... we knew exactly what to do.

Our precious bubby was born at 11:45pm, a little over 2 hours since we had entered the room & just 15 minutes shy of her Daddy's birthday. Another beautiful little girl, and a headstrong one at that who clearly wanted her own day, her own way! She was lifted straight up onto my chest and let out a little cry which sent the paediatrician away with a big smile. Everyone was smiling, it was such a joyful event... who would've thought that it could be so normal and uncomplicated in the end? Even the third stage was easy - my placenta fell spontaneously to the floor within minutes, before the cord was cut... so no Syntocinon was required, and there was no hemorrhage. The irony that I even achieved a physiological third stage after everything that had happened, after being told that I would need the highest form of intervention to birth this baby, still floors me. Andrew subsequently told me that it all unfolded exactly as he knew it would, and



Christine thanked me for "restoring her faith in birth" - she spent the rest of the night bragging to the other midwives on duty and couldn't wipe the smile off her face... and neither could we!

Aside from a bruise on her left butt-cheek, our little cherub was perfect in every way, gorgeous, alert & content. A healthy 3kg, she was exactly the same birth weight as her big sister. When Andrew asked us the following day what her name was and we said we were leaning towards 'Sophie', his reaction made it official... "Absolutely perfect" he said, a very fitting choice given its meaning ('wisdom'), which resonates so strongly with the story of her birth.

I do sincerely hope that this story becomes part of a collective wisdom about breech birth, which will encourage women and caregivers alike to view it as a variation of normal, as opposed to a high risk complication. I hope that women with a breech on board find Dr Bisits (now at Royal Women's Randwick) or the new breech clinic at Westmead, and don't have to endure the perilous & unnecessary rollercoaster ride that I did. In retrospect I have to be thankful for it though, because it has steeled me for the 'perils of parenthood' as I raise my three beautiful babes – one stubborn & sassy 4-year-old in particular who always thinks outside the square and continues to challenge the status quo at every given opportunity!

SELENA MALONEY is a stay-home Mum to Ava (6), breech born Sophie (4) & home born Benjamin (14 months), and wife to David. She is a music & drama teacher, actress, writer & Maternity Coalition member who is passionate about conscious attached parenting & informed, intuitive natural birth. She has represented consumers on panels at the Beautiful Birth Festival in Adelaide (2011) and the Hands off the Breech Conference in Sydney (2012), and hopes that sharing her experiences will inspire other Mums-to-be to trust & embrace birth, and caregivers to reduce their rates of unnecessary intervention.



Hathor the Cowgoddess

'WOMEN ARE WEAK!'



Heather Cushman-Dowdee is mother, mom, or mommy, depending on who you ask, to four children and the creator of the long running comics: *Hathor the Cowgoddess* and *Mama Is...* Her comics follow the antics of a goddess-type mother and her side-kick babies as they attempt to save the world through breastfeeding, homebirthing, attachment parenting, and homeschooling. Her comics have been translated into Spanish, French, and Portuguese, and have been included in publications in Norway, Sweden, Australia, and England, to name a few.

27 February 2013

The Advertiser

Raising awareness of home birth options

<http://www.cessnockadvertiser.com.au/story/1329211/raising-awareness-of-home-birth-option/?cs=12>

An increase in the number of roadside births has again prompted questions in regards to Cessnock Hospital's maternity ward – or lack thereof. Abernethy mother-of-two and professional birth support person Chrissy Grainger, holds grave fears for local mothers who are currently faced with very limited options when it comes to their own child's delivery.

9 March 2013

The Age

Inquiry over infants death amid home birth scrutiny

<http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/inquiry-over-infants-death-amid-home-birth-scrutiny-20130308-2fr9g.html>

An evaluation of the state government's free home birth program, which has been running through the Casey and Sunshine hospitals for the past three years, has revealed one baby born to a woman in the controversial trial died. The baby was born to a woman enrolled in Sunshine Hospital's program. A spokeswoman for the hospital would not comment on the circumstances of the death, but said "there is no suggestion that the death is related to the homebirth program" and that the coroner was investigating.

21 March 2013

The Telegraph

Duchess of Cambridge, open your eyes to the home birth revolution

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/mother-tongue/9943365/Kate-Middleton-open-your-eyes-to-the-home-birth-revolution.html>

A seldom written fact is that the Queen had all four of her children at home. Ahead of a new ITV documentary this evening, *Home Delivery*, Beverley Turner, a strong advocate of such births, hopes Kate Middleton is tuned in.

25 March 2013

The Telegraph

Home delivery: why independent midwives are key to the fight for birth freedom

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/mother-tongue/9949281/Home-delivery-why-independent-midwives-are-key-to-the-fight-for-birth-freedom.html>

Birth matters greatly; it is the start of life, and the beginning of motherhood. Every woman should have the continuity of care she needs to birth at her best. She should be made aware of her right to birth where and how she chooses, and not be 'guided' into hollow choices. And every midwife – Independent or otherwise – should have the right to think, feel and work openly without her hands being tied by protocol and fear. For whilst we give birth in a climate of fear and mistrust, freedom remains a long way off.

28 March 2013

Australian Medical Association

Maternal Decision Making

<https://ama.com.au/position-statement/maternal-decision-making-2013>

The AMA have released a 10 point position statement about maternal decision making.

9 April 2013

The Guardian

Independent midwives: why we can't afford to lose them

<http://m.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2013/apr/08/independent-midwives-cant-lose-them>

In February 2009 I gave birth to my second child at home. I had no idea as I feasted on post-partum pancakes (not made of placenta) and wondered whether to fully carry out my birth plan ("martini after the birth"), that I was in the presence of an endangered species. Or that were I to do the same thing come October this year, a criminal offence would have taken place. I was attended, you see, by an independent midwife (IM).

19 April 2013

Northampton Chronicle and Echo

Home Birth is a family occasion says

Northampton mum of seven

<http://www.northamptonchron.co.uk/news/community/community-news/home-births-are-family-occasion-says-northampton-mum-of-seven-1-5020569>

Births in your own house can be a real family affair according to one of the most prolific users of Northampton General Hospital's home birth team. Beverly Yiangou, aged 42, from Kingshorpe, Northampton, has given birth at home five times, three times with the help of the award-winning NGH team. The mother of seven prizes the comfort and safety of her familiar surroundings at what can be a stressful time and says she would recommend it to anyone over a maternity ward.

21 April 2013

Sydney Morning Herald

Trauma pushes mothers to home birth

<http://www.smh.com.au/national/health/trauma-pushes-mothers-to-home-birth-20130420-2i6wu.html>

Women are turning their backs on the health system after being traumatised by childbirth in hospitals, according to a new paper from University of Sydney researchers. The findings come as the Australian Medical Association updated its position statement on maternal decision-making to greater emphasise a woman's autonomy.

29 April 2013

Los Angeles Times

Planning a home birth? Here's some advice from paediatricians

<http://www.latimes.com/news/science/sciencenow/la-sci-sn-home-births-risks-aap-policy-20130429.0.6697024.story>

Home birth is not very common in the United States – fewer than 1% of babies are born outside of a medical setting on purpose. But among a certain subset of white women, it's becoming a trendy thing to do. In 2009, 1 out of every 90 babies born to white mothers was born at home, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. That rate was 36% higher than in 2004.

29 April 2013

TIME

Paediatricians issue new home birth guidelines...and rattle some midwives

In general, doctors aren't thrilled with the idea of home birth. And while less than 1% of U.S. babies are ushered into the world at home, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) decided to collaborate on guidelines they say should govern home births, which are attended mostly by midwives.

10 May 2013

ABC News online

'Misguided' mother's home birth tragedy

[http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-05-10/misguided-mothers-home-birth-tragedy/4681946?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+Oodd%2FMelbourneWiki%2FABCNetAuMelbourne+\(abc.net.au+Melbourne\)](http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-05-10/misguided-mothers-home-birth-tragedy/4681946?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+Oodd%2FMelbourneWiki%2FABCNetAuMelbourne+(abc.net.au+Melbourne))

The inquest into the boy's death heard his mother Kate Thurgood-Gates was intent on giving birth to her third child at home and avoiding medical intervention. The court heard she researched data on the internet and thought she was well-informed about the risks. Ms Thurgood-Gates repeatedly ignored advice from obstetricians at the Monash Medical Centre that a home birth was unwise because she fell into a high-risk category.

11 May 2013

The Australian

Coroner seeks home birth law

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/health/coroner-seeks-home-birth-law/story-fn59nokw-1226639700606>

A CORONER has called for tighter regulation and supervision of home births after ruling that a Victorian midwife contributed to the death of a newborn baby by failing to rush the mother to hospital when warning signs arose.

15 May 2013

The Guardian

Independent midwives- and homebirth- are under threat

<http://m.guardian.co.uk/science/blog/2013/may/15/independent-midwives-benefits-natural-birth-threat>

I was accused on national radio last week of risking my son's life by giving birth at home. I had been talking on the BBC's *Woman's Hour* about the threat to independent midwives, who work outside the NHS and offer a natural approach to birth. A change of UK law in October will ban any healthcare professionals from practising without indemnity insurance. That means no more independent midwives, because no insurance provider will cover them. The consultation period for the legislation ends on Friday.

PRE-NATAL SERVICES

City & Eastern Suburbs

REBECCA GOULD-HURST

Doula, Naturopath, Counsellor, Massage (including pregnancy) & Hypnobirthing.
Birthing is a magical time that I am honoured to be part of. I have experienced both home and hospital births and have different packages to suit all. I am a passionate therapist having practised for 17 years and support people to create healthy, happy lives.
All enquiries welcome.
Phone: 93864243 or 0415304369
Email: counsellor@doula.net.au
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
ackchip@internode.on.net

North Shore / Northern Beaches

HEATHER CRAWFORD

Acupuncturist + Midwife
Please see my listing under "Birthing services: Midwives"
Acupuncture and Chinese Herbal Medicine for fertility, pregnancy and postnatal home visits.
Crows Nest Ph: 0423 171 191
Manly Ph: 02 9977 7888
heather@heathercrawford.com.au
www.heathercrawford.com.au

Sutherland / St George

ACTIVE CALMBIRTH® COURSES SYLVANIA

The calmbirth® course 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. Julie Clarke is an experienced homebirther. 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 95446441 - available weekends, weekdays, evenings. Visit: www.julieclarke.com.au see website for dates and discount.
Special note: Julie's calmbirth® course is very reasonably priced.
Mobile: 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 Caringbah 2229
www.naturalbeginnings.com.au

TRANSITION INTO PARENTHOOD

Active Birth and Newborn Care Courses
The most comprehensive and best value birth and parenting courses in Sydney. Facilitator is Julie Clarke who is respected as a specialist in natural active birth including waterbirth. Importantly she also presents information beyond the birth to encompass the newborn period, specially on the practicalities and reducing stress, helping you to enjoy the first weeks as a family. Pregnant couples 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, and information. www.julieclarke.com.au
Julie has a great sense of humour and a very gentle approach, she is regarded as one of the most inspirational educators in Sydney. Good variety of courses to choose from: 8 wk evening course 1 night per week, or 2 full Saturdays condensed or 1 full Sunday super condensed.
Julie is a unique birth educator who also provides post natal in home baby care support service exclusively to the couples who have attended her courses.
Julie Clarke / julie@julieclarke.com.au / Mobile: 0401265530
Landline: (02)9544 6441

Southern Highlands

PREGNANCY WORKSHOPS

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

Northern NSW

BIRTH INTO BEING AUSTRALIA

Do you remember why you came here? Are your early life experiences, your limbic imprint, impacting your intentions?

Workshops or private sessions - Insightful, incisive, healing processes for birth trauma, childhood wounding and realignment of intention.

Conscious birth preparation - for birthing projects, babies, a new sense of self... for evolution. Explore primary relationships, gestational experiences, generational patterns, and how our own entry to life impacts our flow of love, birth of babies and experience of life.
www.birthingtobeing.com.au

DOULA SERVICES

ADOULA4YOU

I'm happy to offer Birth/Postpartum services; I trained through ADC and hold Cert 4 in Doula Services.
I offer support and encouragement to families during pregnancy, labour and birth. No matter where you choose to birth, at home, in hospital or at a birth centre. I can tailor a doula package to suit you. Feel free to contact me for Doula or Placenta encapsulation services.
Amanda Macdonald (Certified Birth/Postpartum Doula)
P: 0431892458
E: adoula4you@gmail.com
www.adoula4you.com.au

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/

PLACENTA SERVICES

ADOULA4YOU

There are many benefits that come with encapsulation. It's my pleasure to offer this service with a range of products listed below:
TCM Inspired- Placenta Encapsulation
RAW Placenta Encapsulation
Placenta Tincture
Placenta Smoothie
Placenta Printmaking and Cord Keepsakes
Feel free to contact me to discuss your requirements, for this healthy use of your placenta.
I also offer Doula packages, please see Doula listings.
Amanda Macdonald (Placenta Encapsulation Specialist)
P: 0431892458
E: adoula4you@gmail.com
www.adoula4you.com.au

NATURAL BEGINNINGS

Doula, herbalist and nutritionist Virginia Maddock is now offering placenta encapsulation in the St George and Sutherland shire areas, to give back what your body has lost after birth. The placenta can be ingested in a palatable way once it is dried and encapsulated, to nourish your body and replace nutrients and hormones that will help with post natal bleeding, mood regulation, breast milk production and energy boosting.
I can also make your placenta into a tincture to be taken by you or your baby for years to come, create a beautiful tree of life artwork, have the cord dried into a heart or spiral shape keepsake, and make a placenta salve infused with herbs and essential oils for many skin conditions. Please see my website for more information and prices.
Virginia Maddock 0415683047 Virginia@naturalbeginnings.com.au
www.naturalbeginnings.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

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.

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 six years as a doula I have been witness to many natural and gentle births. I believe strongly in a women's ability to birth her own baby and in her wisdom and instinct as a mother. I've also been teaching Pre-Natal Yoga for the past eleven 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 supported 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

THE NURTURED BEBE

For ten moons your placenta nourished, supported and grew your precious bebe. Once you have welcomed your bebe earthside, your placenta can still continue to nourish both of you. The most common benefits of placentophagy include;
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~ Replenish iron stores
~ Assisting recovery post-partum
~ Reducing the length of postpartum bleeding
~ Increasing general wellbeing in both mother and bebe
I offer a variety of services including encapsulation, tinctures and salves as well as mementos such as artwork and dried cord keepsakes.
Alicia Langlands 0400684464
www.thenurturedbebe.com.au
info@thenurturedbebe.com.au

LOTUS BORN - Lotus Birth Supplies.

Lotus Birth Kits, Placenta Bags, Placenta Wrapping Cloths and Drying Herbs.
All Lotus Born products come with full Lotus Birth instructions. We welcome custom orders.
www.etsy.com/shop/lotusborn
lotusborn@y7mail.com

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.

ACORN MIDWIFERY: KATIE SULLIVAN

I am a midwife in private practice on the NSW Central Coast and have been a midwife for 10 years, having worked in continuity of care models for all of my clinical experience. I can tailor your care to your needs. Antenatal or postnatal care individually or as part of the suite of services including labour and birth at home. I am a placenta specialist certified to provide placenta encapsulation, placenta tinctures and placenta salves. I will travel to Newcastle/Hunter Valley/Port Stephens and Upper North Shore/Northern Beaches area to work with women and their families.
Katie Sullivan: 0408614029 katie@acornmidwifery.com.au

BIRTH WITH GENTLE CHOICES

Offering continuity of midwifery care during pregnancy, birth and postnatally. Birth is a natural, and empowering experience that is part of a normal life journey rather than a medical event. Providing support for women and their families and encouragement to believe in herself and her ability to birth instinctively.
Betty Vella (GyMEA)
9540 4992 bpvella@optushome.com.au

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
www.bellabirthing.com.au

BELLA BIRTHING: MEGAN BARKER

Hi my name is Megan and I have practiced as a midwife for the past 15 years. Throughout my career I have always enjoyed every aspect of midwifery care. My philosophy of care is that pregnant women have the natural ability to nurture, birth and care for their babies. I provide information and education about pregnancy and birth options, and above all respect the informed choices made. I am a guest in the birth space and feel very privileged to be there. I see my role as guiding and supporting women and their partners throughout the pregnancy, birth and early parenting journey.
Megan Barker (Central Coast, Hunter Valley and Newcastle)
0458 160 185 megan@bellabirthing.com
www.bellabirthing.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

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

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
www.heathercrawford.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.
Jo Hunter (Blue Mountains, Inner west and Western Sydney)
(02) 47519840 midwifejo@bigpond.com
www.midwifejo.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
midwiferyrobyn@optusnet.com.au
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
www.pregnancy.com.au

SHERYL SIDERY

Hi my name is Sheryl, I live on the northern beaches and have been in private practice for over 23 years. I believe that pregnancy and birth is a transformative process that is essential for mothering. I cover the northern beaches, eastern suburbs and the inner west. Having Medicare eligibility provides women with a rebate for some of their pre and postnatal care.
I can be contacted on: 0409760548 email: secretwomensbiz@bigpond.com or via my website: www.sherylsidery.com

TANYA MUNTEN

Having trust in the normal process of birth is Tanya's foundation for her midwifery practice along with the understanding that every pregnancy, birth and pathway into parenthood is a unique and profound life experience.
As an eligible Independent midwife from Sydney's Northern Beaches Tanya is able to provide a Medicare rebate for your antenatal and postnatal care for up to 6 wks after the birth of your baby. All visits take place in your home at a time that suits. Areas covered are Sydney's Northern beaches, Nth Shore & Eastern Suburbs.
Tanya Munten 0412 210 222 tanyamunten@hotmail.com
www.tanyamunten.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
www.withwoman.com.au

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 homeopathics, acupuncture, etc
- What is your attitude to circumcision? Immunisation?
- What do you expect regarding self-care during pregnancy?
- What is your view on nutrition and weight gain during pregnancy?

COLLABORATION/TEAM

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

- What will happen if I need to see a specialist during my pregnancy or labour?
- What will happen if my baby needs to see a specialist?
- In what circumstances would you recommend my baby see a paediatrician or doctor?

PRACTICAL MATTERS

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

TIMING

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

SPECIFIC ISSUES...

...DURING PREGNANCY

- Where will the prenatal appointments be? What do they include? How long will they take? How many antenatal visits do you recommend, and why?
- How and when can I contact you if I need help or advice during the 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

Eastern Suburbs Homebirth Support Group

3rd Wednesday of every month
Time: 10.00-12.00
Location: Bondi Beach
Contact: Nadine Fragosa 0468 382 580 or nads@jonads.com
Next Meeting: 17th June (Monday due to holidays), 17th July, 21st Aug
Please feel welcome to join us if you're pregnant, have children or are just curious about home birthing.

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

NEW Weekly Meeting
Time: TBC Dates/Location: TBC
Location - Different each week
Contact: Kristie Ussher on ussher.kristie@gmail.com to find out more.

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.

Pregnancy & Parenting Network meeting - Dundas Valley

4th Thursday of the month
Time: 10am-12pm
Location: Jane Palmer's home: 27 Hart St, Dundas Valley.
Contact: Jane Palmer 1300 MIDWYF (1300 643 993)
jane@pregnancy.com.au
Dates and Topics:
6th June - Conception preparation and natural conception support during assisted reproduction
4th July - Vaccination
1st August - Natural therapies for pregnancy, labour and birth
5th September - Baby moon - postnatal support and mental health
3rd October - Baby wearing
7th November - Unexpected outcomes
5th December - Parenting a new baby: Settling techniques, co-sleeping and elimination communication and Christmas Party
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
Time: 10am - 12 noon
Location: Emma Fitzpatrick's home: 5 Rowland Ave Kurmond
Contact: Melanie: 0425 280 682 mkjackson@live.com.au
Dates / Topics:
18th June - Conception preparation and natural conception support during assisted reproduction
16th June - Vaccination
20th August - Natural therapies for pregnancy, labour and birth
17th September - Baby moon - postnatal support and mental health
15th October - Baby wearing
19th November - Unexpected outcomes
17th December - Parenting a new baby: Settling techniques, co-sleeping and elimination communication and Christmas Party
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!

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.
Next Meetings:
June 17- Introducing a new sibling, host: Louise Christensen, Figtree
July 22- Breastfeeding, place: Integral Energy Park Dapto
August 19- Choosing Good Support People, Host: Michelle, Balgownie
September 16- Models of Care, presented by Sarah, place: Figtree
Dragon Park, back up: Samantha Rudd, Mount Keira
October 21- Homebirth, host: Samantha Contri, Dapto
Nov 18- Antenatal Testing, place: Austinmere park
Dec 16- Coping with Labour and end of year picnic, place: Figtree
Dragon Park- Antenatal Testing, place: Austinmere park
Contact: info@birthchoices.info

Mothers & Midwives of the South (Southern Highlands)

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

Blue Mountains Homebirth Support Group

Every 2nd Thursday
Time: 10am-12pm
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

Central Coast Homebirth Group

1st Wednesday of each month
Time: 10.30-12.30
Location: Various venues in group members' homes
Contact: Lisa Richards 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.
Location: See below
Contact: Rachel 0415 435 045 or email hhnbsgroup@gmail.com
Next Meetings:
Jun 12th - Alternative Therapies in Pregnancy & Birth - Jersmond Park, Newcastle Road, Jesmond
Jul 10th - Snack & Chat (school holidays) - TBA
Aug 14th - Birth plans and Homebirth Transfers - TBA
Sep 11th - Honouring Pregnancy, Birth & Motherhood; Blessingways and Rituals - TBA
Oct 9th - Planning a homebirth - TBA
Nov 13th - Birth Sharing - TBA
Dec 11th - Fourth Stage - The Babymoon and Motherway

Armidale and District Homebirth Support Network

1st Sunday of every month
Contact: Rebecca Pezzutti hbsarmidale@gmail.com

Interstate & National

Homebirth Australia

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

Homebirth Queensland Inc.

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

Alice Springs Homebirth Group

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

Darwin Homebirth Group

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

Homebirth Network of SA

PO Box 275, Seaford, SA 5169
Contact: Claire at admin@homebirthsa.org.au
www.homebirthsa.org.au

HOME BIRTH ACCESS SYDNEY (INC)

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

HAS POLICY STATEMENT

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

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

YOU ARE WELCOME TO ATTEND

Homebirth Access Sydney (HAS) Committee Meetings

2nd Wednesday of every month

Time: 10.30am

Location: Naomi's House

9 Essex Street Marrickville

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

All welcome, including kids!

Next meeting:

July 10, August 14, September 11.

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:

Life After Homebirth



Birthings is your magazine. Please contribute!
The Spring issue is on the topic of "Life After Homebirth". You now have a baby...how has life changed?
Has homebirth affected the choices you make as a parent or family? In what way have your priorities changed?
And how do you manage all the elements of life – relationships, finances, careers, health and children!
As always, we look forward to your letters, birth announcements and birth stories.

Submissions due by 1st August 2013.

Please check submission guidelines on page 2 and don't forget your bio!
Email the editor at editor@homebirthsydney.org.au

Reminder: Please ensure we have your current email address so you can receive your membership expiry reminder, as well as all the important homebirth updates in our e-newsletter. And if you've recently moved, send us your new address so you don't miss out on the next issue of Birthings.
Email member@homebirthsydney.org.au