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# BIRTHINGS

A HOMEBIRTH ACCESS SYDNEY QUARTERLY PUBLICATION



## Homebirth & Feminism

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

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

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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 Bitna Castillo at editor@homebirthsydney.org.au Photos and written submissions must be emailed. Prior notice to the Editor of your intention to submit work is appreciated.

### DEADLINES FOR SUBMISSIONS

Autumn 2017	No. 133	1 February 2017
Winter 2017	No. 134	1 May 2017
Spring 2017	No. 135	1 September 2017
Summer 2017	No. 136	1 November 2017

**BACK ISSUES** Back issues of Birthings are like hens' teeth! But we will try to accommodate requests. Back issues cost \$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 gives an insight into the homebirth movement and HAS activities.

**CHANGE OF ADDRESS** Please notify any change of address to HAS, PO 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 by the HAS executive, to reflect the range of people in our community. The editorial board members are Maggie Lecky-Thompson, Adrienne Abulhawa, Jo Hunter 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. Submissions 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. Please no more than 6-8 photos per story, otherwise they will lose impact due to reduction of size to fit them in.

**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 send to Bitna Castillo 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.

# BIRTHINGS



Homebirth Access Sydney

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

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[amandagreavette.com](http://amandagreavette.com)

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by Deborah Wenzel  
[www.deborahwenzel.com](http://www.deborahwenzel.com)

# Editorial

Welcome to our Summer issue of Birthings 2016, 'Homebirth and Feminism'.

This is a really interesting theme, isn't it?

Homebirth has always been part of us. On the other hand, organised feminism is relatively new in history, which only really started in the mid 1800s and is still going today. So how do we connect the two dots?

I think the key is women. Women have been giving birth since the beginning of humanity. Pregnancy and birth is the most natural, powerful and significant event in her life as well as for the whole community. In the history of birth, women were the centre of attention for many centuries. She was the superstar and everyone supported her for the magic to happen. Then the Feminism Movement began which made a huge impact in the society we live now. Our ancestors fought to gain their voices, their rights and their power to make this world a fairer place for modern women to live. But the fight of gender equality is still persistent today, even when it comes to the most feminine of subjects such as Birth.

It seems very obvious that empowering the birthing mother should hold the key of bringing her baby into this world with the help of the best navigation and instruction; her mother instinct. Somehow, it's not the case these days. In Australia, women have equal rights to be educated, to vote, to choose their beliefs and many more. There seems to be relatively less disadvantages when it comes to being a female here... Until, they find out that they are having a baby, and even more so if they want to birth their baby at home. Suddenly, everyone else knows better than her. Women are often blindfolded about their choices and rights, and are expected to be OK to be pushed into uncomfortable policies and procedures by the name of 'safe birth'. This new generation of well educated, modern and powerful women are either totally unaware (or uninterested) in their instinct to birth and the choices they have, and they feel deflated when they have to argue their way through to achieve what they are already entitled to... TO GIVE BIRTH AT HOME (or wherever the heck they want to). So homebirth IS indeed a feminist issue!



We are blessed with full of interesting articles and beautiful birth stories in this issue.

We are delighted to have an article written by birth worker and reproductive activist Gaye Demanuele about why birth is a feminist issue. It is so important to raise awareness and support around this issue as it is not only a feminist issue but also a human rights issue. Once upon a history, there were times when women were empowered and insightful, especially when it comes to birth. Thanks to Cat Kerle for sharing a soulful article about the Goddess and birth. It gives us a nice reminder of the time when female divinities were worshiped, her magic of bringing life to the world lived within every birthing mother; when the connection between humans were strong and when the connection within us was strong.

We are glad that communities like HAS are supporting the new awakened generation of families who are well informed and motivated to reengage with their instinct and rights to choose to birth at home. There is an article about how we can be better prepared to achieve a desirable homebirth experience by designing our own path, thanks to the world first and only birth cartographer Catherine Bell from Bella Birth, who shares her insight and experience about birth from a feminist's point of view. Digging up the ground to find ancient tools, reading and studying about the drawing on ancient caves, life and societies of our ancestors and their impact on our modern life was one of my childhood dreams. I have to admit I am still super excited to watch all the documentaries relating to these topics. And that is probably why I get excited thinking about birth, because it has been there from the beginning of human history. A very interesting article from Holly High is which is all about reflecting on her own homebirth experience and feminism as a social and cultural anthropologist. And of course we have a handful of beautiful birth stories that are unique, heart-warming and inspiring in their own way. So hope you enjoy this issue as much as I have.

This is the first issue for 2017! Hope you had a great year in 2016.

We wish you all another awesome year ahead!

Birthing will come back with another great issue in autumn.

Enjoy your summer til then. xx

~ Bitna Castillo

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

**Membership**  
For new membership or  
renewals please go to  
[www.homebirthsydney.org.au](http://www.homebirthsydney.org.au)  
and click on 'membership'

# Letters to the Editor



Birthings has been missing a Letters To The Editor page for quite a while now but it's time that changed. Please write in and give our editor, Bitna some joy from your feedback.

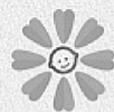
Letters must be in by February 1st:  
[editor@homebirthsydney.org.au](mailto:editor@homebirthsydney.org.au)

## Send Us Your Letter, Theme Article or Birth Story for Your Chance to Win This Amazing Prize!

The prize pack is  
GroVia ONE Nappy,  
GroVia WetBag and  
\$30 Flower Child  
E-Credit / E Voucher.  
Total prize \$79.95.



Flower Child is the home of modern cloth nappies, including GroVia, Pop-In's, Bumboo, Seedling, Babybehinds, Issy Bear and Bubblebubs. Their range of products includes baby carriers by Manduca and Caboo, Nursing chairs by Olli Ella, and absolute designer bebelicious Moses Baskets. At Flower Child, their vision is to simplify parenting, ensuring products are best for baby and best for you.



## Flower Child

Best for Baby, Best for You



# Coordinator's Report Dec 2016

We are really excited to be extremely close to launching our new website which I can assure you, has been a hell of a long time coming. For those of you who are not in the know, 2 years ago we decided to update and upgrade to a brand new website because the platform of our current website is old, outdated and not functioning to our needs. It also does some dodgy things like express numerous copies of the same names and addresses in our database resulting in the necessity to weed out all the extra double ups of labels so that people don't get numerous copies of the magazines, as well as it sending out about 647 emails to our members when their memberships and subscriptions are about to expire (sorry about that, it's honestly out of our control!). We contacted the lady who designed the old one for us to see if she could give us a little help but we were unsuccessful in convincing her.



So it was decided to have a new website built and the search was on to find someone who could do it at a discount rate doing all the hard stuff like transferring our complicated database and setting up the online shop for our merchandise, with our Treasurer and Assistant Coordinator Veronica Cerbeli doing the bulk of the work building all the easy stuff.

We found a small company who agreed to do the technical stuff for \$1200(?) with an agreement to pay 50% up front, and then pay the balance upon completion. Unfortunately it dragged on, and on, and on, with the lady in charge making excuse after excuse why it wasn't getting done. Then her husband took over the job and to cut a long story short, he took our log in details after promising it was almost finished, wrongly accused us of demanding things which weren't in the initial contract, then refused to release anything until we paid an extra \$2000! Of course we didn't agree to this.

Due to that business deregistering (and despite continuing to trade under another name with the same ABN), a frustrating and unsuccessful follow up with Fair Trading led to nowhere and we had to accept that we lost 2 years of work which Veronica had worked many hours late into the night on, and we lost our deposit. So we have had to start all over again from scratch. Fortunately our new Advertising Coordinator Jodie Powell has come on board, and both web savvy women have been working hard on it and undergoing training with a professional website designer and builder to learn what they don't know, particularly in setting up our member database which has different levels of membership, (such as for midwives signing up their clients, 1 year and 3 year memberships, as well as a new feature for PDF only Birthings subscriptions).

We are expecting to launch the new website in January with a brand new look, new photos, lots more merchandise, a more visually friendly Find A Midwife page, and a comprehensive list of advertisers so that the pregnant and birthing woman and new mother can find every service she is after, such as Doulas, Childbirth Educators, Birth Photographers, Complementary Therapists, Lactation Consultants, Maternity Wear, Yoga, Placenta Encapsulators etc.

So what we need is a big influx of repeat memberships and new advertisers to increase our revenue. Our bank kitty is starting to look worryingly low due to an increase in printing costs which are not being reimbursed by new memberships, and a lack of advertisers which have decreased due the waiting on this new website, and some instability with our Advertising Coordinator role during the last few years.

So if you have a service which you know our demographic of birthing mothers and families will use, please contact our Advertising Coordinator Jodie Powell at [advertising@homebirthsydney.org.au](mailto:advertising@homebirthsydney.org.au). She will send you a media kit as well as the results to the latest survey of our members, and give you an exciting 'new website launch' discount. Or if

you have a pregnancy, birth or baby friendly product you'd like to sell through our shop, please contact Arthur and Santina at [merchandise@homebirthsydney.org.au](mailto:merchandise@homebirthsydney.org.au).

We really need a new Events and Fundraising Coordinator. Rebecca Perrin sadly couldn't start the role as she'd liked due to the need to return to paid work, so we do need to fill that role ASAP. Experience in Events Management is a bonus but certainly not a necessity. Just a keen, social person who is motivated to organise an event such as the Homebirth Dads Night Out, our annual picnic, a market or conference stall, or whatever new ideas you may have to help us spread the word of homebirth and to raise money for our cause. Please send your expression of interest to [info@homebirthsydney.org.au](mailto:info@homebirthsydney.org.au).

Speaking of the Homebirth Dads Night Out, our last event was a bit of a dismal turn out. We didn't have the quantity, but we sure did have the quality, with one new expectant Dad, and a Dad who was expecting last time and had returned to tell his wonderful birth story! We love how each Dad who witnesses his wife or partner give birth at home becomes the biggest advocate, and plants the seeds for other Dads to want their babies to be born at home too! We will let you know the date for the 2017 events, as soon as we organise them! Wishing everybody a wonderful Christmas or [insert whichever joyous traditional occasion takes your fancy!], and a Happy New Year!

~ Virginia Maddock

# Birth Announcements



Zephaniah are thrilled to announce the arrival of our 5th child and little sister, **Estrela Melody Edwards.**

Born surprisingly in the shower, at home, after mama laboured in the birth pool, on the **12th of May 2016.**

Surrounded by love.

We knew there was another soul waiting to join our family and now we feel complete.

Everyone is thrilled and delighted and just enjoying this new life.

Thank you to our stellar birth support who held such beautiful space for us, midwife Jo Hunter, Doula Eloise Fisher, Bestie Kathy Johnson, kidlet wrangler Erin Quinn and photographer Holly Priddis. Could not have asked for a more amazing 5th and final birth. Xxx



**Saoirse Amy Lenzen.**

Born peacefully at home on **10th July** this year, aided by her dad and our midwife, Jo Hunter.



Welcome to the world little Lilah bird!

Carly and Ryan are overjoyed and so excited to announce the birth of our beautiful baby girl, **Lilah Grace Martin.** Born **October 21st, 2016** at 4pm. An amazing 'home away from home' birth, lovingly supported by Dad and by our wonderful midwife Leanne Chapman.

Could not have hoped for a better or more empowering birth experience. Special thanks to Leanne for our excellent care throughout and to Sarah, for capturing the moments so perfectly. Thank you little one, for picking us to be your parents, we cannot wait to watch you bloom

xx

# Committee Member Profile



Jodie Powell

## Advertising Coordinator & Assistant website admin

### When did you join HAS?

I joined HAS in September 2016 when the HAS secretary, the lovely Natalie Rees, (who was in my homebirth Mums group) invited me to apply for the volunteer role.

### Who is in your family?

My Hubby Andrew and our two sons Harry 3 & Caelan 1, and our cat Franky

### What did you do before children?

Before my first baby I worked in marketing as a Communications manager for a large charity– and then also as consultant at a digital marketing company while pregnant with my second.

I also enjoyed lots of travel and fun times with my husband who I met waaay back in 2000 in my home country of Canada.

### What have you done since children?

Learned to appreciate wine!

But seriously -since having children I have enjoyed being at home with my boys. Being a stay at home mum is a blessing and I am very grateful to be able to do so.

### Why Homebirth?

Honestly I was most interested in the idea of a private midwife. I wasn't super keen on homebirth just on continuity of care – but my initial due date for my first was Xmas eve and I really struggled to find a midwife available at that time. When I finally found Melissa she gently encouraged me to consider homebirth... and after reading a bit of Ina May - I became very excited about the prospect of birthing at home. I liked being in my own space with my own birth pool to use. My husband was super supportive of the idea – he is a chiropractor and understands the amazing health benefits of less intervention in birth. We were overjoyed to welcome our first baby at home in the water.

### What is the most amazing thing you have seen, learned about, or learned from Homebirth?

For me, I found the whole process of planning a homebirth to be an empowering experience – I feel like I learned so much and was so supported and cared for by my midwife throughout the whole pregnancy, birth and afterwards. Even if the birth ends up in a transfer to hospital (as happened with my second birth), the knowledge gained in the planning process made for peace of mind when my birthing needs changed. I know I gave myself and my baby the best chance at a natural, undisturbed birth by planning a homebirth.

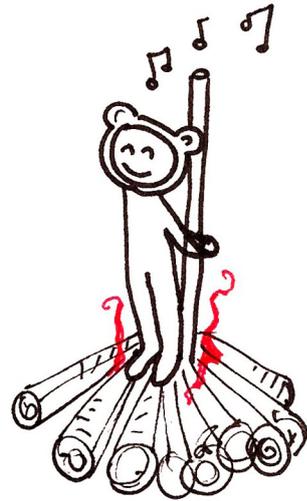
Amy Bell's  
daisychain

# ON BIRTH and FEMINISM



Amy Bell's  
daisychain

# Midwives in the Middle Ages

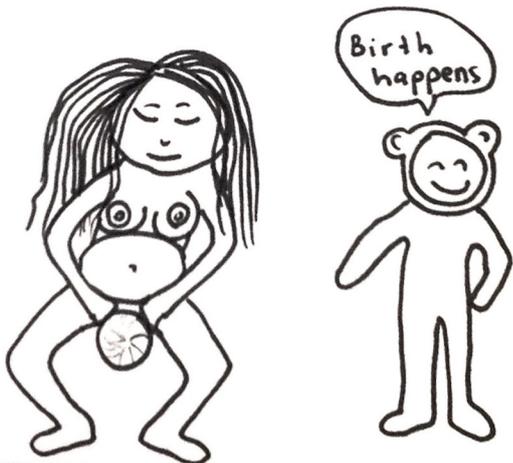


GREAT MYSTERIES :  
How do mermaids give birth ?



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# DON'T DOCTOR MY BIRTH!



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# ON BIRTH and FEMINISM



# Why Birth is a Feminist Issue

By Gaye Demanuele



this has caused.

These bodies demand that birth be “humanised” and that women have full autonomy in making decisions throughout their pregnancy and birth. November 25th marks International Day Against Obstetric Violence.

Worldwide, childbirth is in crisis. Medical interventions are at record highs, with no concurrent gains in safety for mothers and babies. Many women report feeling abused and disrespected in their experience of maternity care. They feel disempowered by their birth experience. In Australia, suicide is one of the leading causes of maternal deaths in the postnatal year. In the United States, the maternal death rate resulting from caesarian section is increasing; it is higher for women of colour.

Melbourne’s first birthing rights rally was held outside The Women’s hospital, June 2013. Right: Poster rallying for International Day Against Obstetric Violence.

In Australia and the U.S. (with the UK and Europe not far behind), one in three women now have their babies “delivered” by caesarean section—that is, via major abdominal surgery. Fifty percent of women have their labours induced or sped up with synthetic hormones. This disrupts the release of endogenous neuro-endocrine hormones, which primes love and nurturance in mothers and their babies. Women report being coerced through fear-based language to consent to procedures and interventions they do not want. A few are denied the procedure of their choice. Rather than feeling empowered through their experience of giving birth, they are left to cope, or not, with the effects of physical and emotional trauma. Women who speak out are demonised as selfish, as putting their birth experience above their baby’s safety. Who could care more about her baby than the woman herself?

Medico-legal complex in control. Obstetric practice is based on risk aversion, dictated by insurance underwriters—not on good evidence of where true need exists. More women are facing legal action, accused of acting against the “rights” of their foetus. Midwives and doctors who support women’s autonomy are similarly persecuted. By putting its trust in technocracy instead of the birthing woman, the maternity care system is failing women.

Why is the culture of childbirth saturated in fear? Why not trust women to make their own informed choices about their bodies and their babies?

The answer lies in the rise of private property and the division of society into classes many millennia ago. The ruling class needed to exterminate what remained of matrilineal kinship society and subjugate its respected leaders: women. So it invented patriarchy.

The witch-hunts that swept Europe in the Middle Ages targeted those who did not fit the gender roles for a social order in which women and children were chattel. Women who had traditionally been healers and midwives were condemned—for being female, sexual, knowledgeable and skilled, and for sharing what they knew with other women. Midwives were executed for “practicing medicine.”

Today, midwives are sanctioned, fined and, in some countries, imprisoned. Agnes Geréb, a Hungarian midwife and former obstetrician, remains under indefinite house arrest awaiting re-trial, after two years spent in prison for the “crime” of supporting women in their choice to birth at home. Several North American midwives

“Control of our bodies, control of our lives!” This chant has been sung out by women over many years. If self-determination applies to all aspects of women’s lives, childbirth belongs in the full spectrum of reproductive rights. A woman’s choice of how, where and with whom she gives birth is as important as her decision to become pregnant, to end or to continue a pregnancy.

The sexist stereotype of the “good mother” as selfless and uncomplaining has fostered a blanket silence about birthing. In the hard fight for abortion rights—now under renewed rightwing attack—the feminist movement of the last five decades has mostly bypassed women’s rights in childbirth. Until recently, feminist discourse has largely ignored them.

A notable exception in second wave feminism was the The Boston Women’s Health Collective, which produced *Our Bodies, Ourselves*. This publication gave women information to take control of their own health and reproductive lives. First released in the early 1970s (recently republished in its 9th edition), its clear message to women was that they can be “expert of self”:

We weren’t encouraged to ask questions, but to depend on the so-called experts. Not having a say in our own health care frustrated and angered us. We didn’t have the information we needed, so we decided to find it on our own.” —Nancy Miriam Hawley

Today, reproductive rights advocacy groups around the world primarily focus on abortion. But there has also been a rise in childbirth rights organisations. Formed by women, they challenge the technological takeover of childbirth and its questionable science—coining the term “obstetric violence” to expose the extensive harm



await trial, having been charged under state “foetal personhood” laws. In Australia, UK and Ireland, independent midwives, who have continued to support birthing women whose choices fall outside of “one size fits all” guidelines, are severely penalised. Traditional midwives in “developing” countries are demonised as dirty, ignorant and dangerous.

Where women’s choices go against the prescriptive obstetric model, they too are sanctioned, firstly with coercive and shaming tactics. Women who stand up for themselves are reported to child protection authorities or threatened with legal action. In a few cases, they are forced to undergo court-ordered procedures. Alicia Beltran, from Wisconsin in the U.S., was recently arrested and forced to undergo treatment that she did not want or need under that state’s “foetal protection” law. Alice’s “crime” was giving an honest answer to a question during an antenatal health check. She disclosed that she had suffered a past dependence to pain medication, which she is now free of. A lawyer was appointed to represent her foetus, however she was not entitled to a state-appointed lawyer. There is a litany of similar cases across the U.S. The slippery slope is edging closer in Australia, with similar laws being proposed here. Anecdotally, across Australia, there is an increase of reports of birthing women threatened with notification to child protection services for declining unwanted treatment.

Take back power. Women’s human rights are violated by a system that treats them as incubators. A system that uses “the best interest of the child” as a weapon; that deems women incapable of making “good choices” in order to police them. It is time that women claim back their power in childbirth.

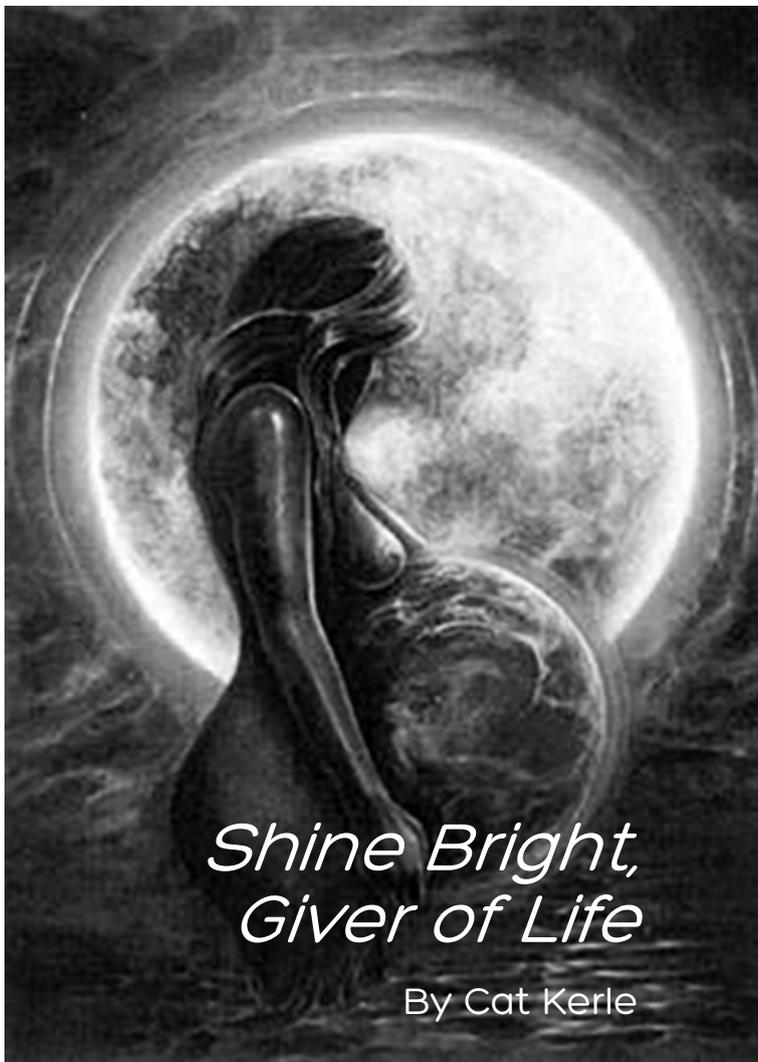
Few groups connect the dots of women’s right to make decisions in pregnancy, childbirth and parenting, the right to safe abortion and the right to direct the course of their lives. Radical Women sees this connection as vital for the feminist movement and its capacity to win

equality and justice for all women, mothers or not. After all, at its essence, feminism is about women’s liberation—and setting everyone free.



Gaye is a birthworker, reproductive rights activist and member of Radical Women. She sees human rights in childbirth as a core part of reproductive justice.

\*The terms “woman,” “women,” “mother” and related pronouns have been used throughout this article. The writer respectfully makes recognition that some people who give birth may identify with another gender term.



## *Shine Bright, Giver of Life*

By Cat Kerle

There was a time when the Goddess was worshipped in all her forms. Cities, temples and statues erected in her honour. Women and mothers were revered as sacred people, doing a sacred job. Giving birth to the children of society, and in turn, giving birth and life to us all. Since the 1970s Goddess divinity has made a comeback. Sacred rites of passage celebrations at puberty and pregnancy are becoming more common. The divine feminine acknowledged, and our divine femininity and deep, true power brought back into existence in our daily lives. Slowly, and surely we are reconnecting to our power within, and our power to birth our babies as we wish. Our journeys are more sacred and honoured. Our awareness expanded. We become radiant beacons of love. Glowing brightly, as the givers of life that we are.

### **The Divine Feminine**

Connecting with the divine feminine is my favorite way to honour the stages of life that most women go through. The Maiden and her discovery and self-exploration of her depths, and her abilities. The Mother stepping into that beautiful, powerful, nurturing aspect of self and expansion of awareness. The crone, or wise woman, owning her wisdom and truth, knowing herself. They are each an expression of our feminine power. When I say power, I am referring to the true resonance of ourselves and our own magic. Often called our heart and soul feminine power. It is in balance with masculine energy, not in competition with it or trying to over power it. The power that deeply connects us and rises up to meet our yang mates. The energy that empowers us, as women, being who we are.

I want to acknowledge the balance, and the equality of the masculine and feminine. When in true balance and connection the power is huge. We all have both within us, and the balance is about fluctuation

as different energy is needed, not equal split half and half. I see it from the angle of fluctuation and flow. In my feeling, the masculine holds the space, creating security, and feminine fills it with love and makes it cozy.

### **Gaia and Mother Moon**

Coming back to the goddess and birth of motherhood, the simplest and easiest connections to make are with Mother Earth (Gaia) and Mother Moon. Have you noticed how our cycles are in sync with these divine mothers? Our menstrual cycles and pregnancies are connected to the Moon's rhythms. Our gestation periods lasting 10 moons, and are very much like the Earth and her nurturing and growing life cycles (I certainly did feel it having spring babies). Our babies so commonly born at a full moon.

The phase and cycles of the Moon give us beautiful symbolic representations of the divine feminine to connect with. When she is in the waxing phase (from new to full) she is the maiden. She is growing her roots, showing those first sparkles of her truth. As the mother, she is the brightest, the giver of life. We see her in her full magnificence. As the moon wanes (from full to dark) she is releasing what she no longer needs and has gained the wisdom of those lessons.

### **Birth of the Mother**

Becoming a Mother, a giver of life, is such an inspiring, spiritual journey. Many women will tell you of their cascade of emotion when they discovered that they were pregnant and growing that tiny little human within their womb. I can still remember the moment of knowing my children's presence within my body; the moments they were conceived. I wonder when you first felt your baby's presence? Maybe it was the pregnancy test, or the official baby bump, the choice to conceive, or your first physical, visual or audio connection, or maybe it is yet to come. From that moment, your world expands. The birth of the mother has begun, and you enter motherhood. Your awareness has expanded beyond yourself and your partner. The world becomes a different place, the place your child(ren) will live in. We then bring that awareness into decisions about what we will eat, how we will change our lifestyle (or not), making choices about the kind of care and birth that we would like to have to welcome our baby Earth side, and so many more, as we align with ourselves and our values.

That expansion, is the divine feminine energy running through us. Those feelings of nurturing, care, joy and hope. The flowing and fluctuating feelings, although described as 'off the scale' at times during pregnancy, are empowering us. They guide us into a rhythm of natural ebb and flow, a surrender and fluidity that is part of the essence and embodiment of the mother. This energy connects us with our intuition, so we can enact the goddess energy, and create our vision for our family, bringing it forth into the world. Often we hear how 'women's intuition' becomes stronger, or is heightened once becoming a mother. We become clear on what we do and don't want, and what we'd like to surround ourselves and our children with. This comes in so many forms; finishing up everything at work before maternity leave, wanting to stay away from the 'horror stories', setting up the birthing space, nesting... I wonder what it is for you. I know for me it was very different between my two boys' pregnancies. This energy gives us such a beautiful clarity, as the energy of the divine mother within stirs.

### **Birth stories**

For me, the journey of birthing my babies, and motherhood is such a spiritual one. My children have given me an amazing opportunity to reconnect to my true self. It has been a rebirth of connection to myself, as well as a birth of the divine mother within. When I was

pregnant with my first son, I spent a lot of time connecting with him through meditation (something I have practiced regularly for years), asking his name, seeing that exact moment of his birth. I also worked through a lot of the typical fears that women have being pregnant for the first time. I definitely knew myself and my intuition far greater than before. My little one was born at 29 weeks, and spent almost two months in hospital. This was challenging for us, especially considering that we'd planned an intervention free birth at a birth centre. Thankfully, through accepting the invitation, and stepping up to our energy and opportunity to be in the space of divine feminine and divine masculine (for hubby) we were able to create and negotiate a birth experience that we were happy with, and learnt from too. I am so grateful that we were both able to connect, my husband's support and advocacy for our family during the labour and birth is so precious to me. Seeing our baby boy for the first time (as I had done in my meditation) absolutely took my breath away, and still brings me to joyful tears at the thought. This moment brings me back to connecting with the divine mother within. My son's early arrival gave me the most beautiful opportunity. The universe was inviting me to step up and say 'I am mother. This is my son, and I am taking responsibility (and with it, my power).' It was certainly a crash course in becoming my child's advocate, and to trusting myself. Through connections and mistakes, I have learnt to listen to my intuition and trust what resonates so much more through having my children. The birth of the divine mother continues.

My second son's birth was an amazing free birth (planned home birth). As the mother goddess in my family, I decided that I wanted to have my husband, son, and our dog at the birth of our latest family member. For me this birth was the epitome of the divine feminine power that is available to all of us on our journey. I wonder what that moment is for you, or if it's yet to come (what fun!)? If you are a radiant, pregnant mumma in bloom and soon to bring a new life to the Earth, I wish a divine love experience for you.

From the moment I was in labour, I was in flow and handled the ebb and flow with ease (okay, and the occasional snappy directive that happens at times during labour). I was 'in the zone'. I felt calm. My contractions started and I felt fine. I was talking, doing our usual stuff for the day, with some hip swaying when my body felt the need. I phoned one of my beautiful support goddesses (aka. midwives), Janine, and told her that labour had started and I felt fine, still talking through contractions and that I'd keep her posted. She did suggest I time the contractions. When I did they were 3 mins apart, and I was still talking and swaying so I felt that Janine could finish up with her appointment and then come by. I did call my husband and suggested he come home now. I was really feeling that I wanted him to be with us in this moment. Thank the goddess, he arrived home at a point where contractions were getting closer together. He and our son (3yrs old at the time) started to set up the birth pool while our dog kept watch in the hall. I am so moved by the love and support from our little boy, offering me so much reassurance and love while his brother was on his way (I'm teary eyed at the memory). My husband's love, kindness and support for me and our sons once again shining through. I asked him to "Call Janine!" (I may have raised my voice at that point). She was only 20 minutes away. In that time, our little bubba was born. And the moment was magical. I trusted my body and I naturally started to push, I reached down and I felt his head - the most empowering feeling of all! Thankfully my husband came over to 'catch' the baby in the next couple of pushes. In that moment, I was connected with my own power, and the power of the ancestral women before me.

Our family welcomed it's newest member into our home, together. Our 100 year old house likely to have witnessed all of this, creating a secure space for a birthing mother, before. In that moment, I felt the deep resonance of that divine power within us all. The birth of the mother, the father, and the brother, on a new level. Fully empowered!

## Support goddesses (aka. midwives)

Once Janine and Jane arrived there was the support of the goddess and feminine energy filling our space again. Their nurturing was a true embodiment of the goddess in themselves. The care given, the patience, the being with, the warm towel after my first shower (in my own shower), drying my toes, taking care of me and supporting our family (in our own bed) as we got to know each other and our new dynamic. All only small mentions of such deeply valued time. I still feel so touched through their pure loving connection, support and care (I'm tearful as I write this).

THIS is what the divine feminine is about. Holding you with love, and filling the space with love.

Robyn and Janine, and their antenatal care was so much more than giving me my options and information and making plans. They helped me to fully embrace the embodiment of the goddess in the exact moment that I needed to (even without their physical presence). Their trust in women, their bodies and their birthing power, gives rise to the mumma goddess within us all. I really honour this experience, and these three divine goddesses that were with me for the journey.

Through midwifery, blessingways, baby showers, personal rituals, women's circles, sharing our birth stories and listening to our own intuition we can connect that little bit deeper to the divine feminine. I invite you to moon gaze next time you see Mother Moon. Connect with her, in that space of stillness. We can honour the women who have birthed before us, call on our ancestors for support, and we can honour ourselves and those we love by sharing, loving and trusting the divine feminine goddess within.

May the Goddess bless you with warmth, love and connection. May this energy be with you now, birthing, and always.



**Cat** values listening to that little intuitive voice inside all of us, and that deep connection to ourselves, the earth and the cycles around us. She embraces the spiritual journey that is life and motherhood, and loves helping others reignite the spark of everyday magic. Bringing people's awareness back to that connection, and the power that comes with living in sync with the natural world. To engage in nourishing their soul, and listening to their intuition, and what resonates. She does this through one to one and group work in psychic readings, personalised rituals and observing the rhythms of the natural world.

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# Homebirth and Feminism

By Catherine Bell

“Each time a woman stands up for herself, without knowing it possibly, without claiming it, she stands up for all women.”  
- Maya Angelou

If You Knew Then What You Know Now...

Is there a piece of advice that you wish your pre-Mother-self had received?

As you planned for birth, is there a book you wish you'd read before?

Or a bit of information that might have led to a different decision?

Did you feel prepared?

Were you excited about experiencing birth, or did you dread it?

Had you heard Awesome things? or Awful things?

Did you decorate a nursery?

Were there things you bought or were given that you never used?

I remember how fixated I was on baby 'necessities'. It helped make things real (especially since my First had been a LONG wait, 3 years of 'not this time'), finally I was gaining access to The Club.

I had the ticket!

We were given a cot, which we sanded back and pain-stakingly spent hours with. That cot signified a making of space, a preparing for a new person into our well-established coupledom. One of the few new things we bought was a pram. This one was reversible. It wasn't too expensive, but I could touch it, admire it, imagine myself pushing my baby proudly down the street. I chose it, so I could still see my baby as I walked.

We set up a change table. I laid out the little clothes. I packed my hospital bag, carefully choosing baby's first outfit. I had little booties, long in my waiting-for-motherhood possession. I would gaze at these items, imagining my baby.

I would cut articles and ideas out of magazines (this was pre-pinterest, when scissors and glue were required). I was going to be a Great Mum. The Best Mum. EVER!

I planned to breastfeed for about a year, as I had been breastfed for 14 months (alongside my twin), and it did not occur to me to do otherwise. I took this for granted.

I attended my antenatal classes and all my antenatal appointments, dutifully checking off each test and requirement as they arose. Not always understanding why, or feeling I had enough time to consider things, but trusting the process.

My 'last hurrah' was to head off to The Kimberley for a month or so to help my friend with her PhD field work, followed closely by a couple of weeks on a UNESCO student exchange to Japan.

Your birth map is NOT a list of 'wishes' or 'preferences'. It is a series of statements containing your INFORMED DECISIONS.

The power of the document is in the statements it contains: Your Informed Decisions. You can present it anyway you like. Remember to

**Keep It Simple, Sister!**

You do not need to go into detail, be confident in your preparation. The purpose of this document is to simply state your Informed Decisions.



It was a blissful and beautiful pregnancy. A very special time.

Here I am, nearing my 10th Year of Motherhood. I have four children now.

The cot was mostly used to store the unfolded washing. For a time it was 'side-car'ed to our bed, and saw a little use. By the time number three was born, we no longer had the cot. I hope whoever has it now finds it useful!

The pram was wonderful, and hangs in the shed now...a little worse for wear, but it has seen some happy trails. I much prefer my carrier these days.

I recently found my folder of cut out articles. I never did revisit them. I was too busy Being a Mum. But I was surprised at the sheer volume of formula adverts littering the pages. I don't remember 'seeing' them as I collected them...I was going to breastfeed, so they did not grab my attention I guess.

And as for breastfeeding. After a few hurdles at the start, we powered onto that year mark...and then beyond and through a second pregnancy, to tandem feeding. My first baby had her last feed when she was a bit over 4. Thanks to the Australian Breastfeeding Association, I learned so much. About me, About babies. About Breast-feeding.

The antenatal classes were...adequate...better than nothing...

I am glad I took the time to have my last hurrah. I sensed Motherhood would change me. And those trips were a letting go.

I have changed. I have grown.

A real turning point came as my first baby approached 12 months old. I had been doing all the 'right' things, and it wasn't really working. Most of it just didn't make sense, and seemed to go against my instinct. It was about this time that I stumbled upon 'Night-time Parenting' by Sears. I found an old copy in the tip shop, how could someone part with this gem! In the pages of this book I found the information that confirmed that my instinct was intact! The book gave me permission, as it were, to follow my instinct. It explained why my baby woke, wanted to breastfeed beyond one and why cosleeping was the path for us. If there was one thing I wish I had known: it was about cosleeping!

Two very awesome resources (in addition to Night-time Parenting): McKenna's Breastfeeding and co-sleeping and the Kathy Dettwyler article on the natural age of weaning. These two resources appealed to my scientific brain. They just made sense.

I also discovered Michel Odent. In 'the Face of Birth', he spoke about Scientific versus Technological Birth. Oh how this spoke to me! YES! Science: biology, normal biology, natural, evolution, primal. Technology: interventions, interferences, interruptions, interactions, interrogations!

I feel I have found myself. I am coming into my Full Moon Phase of life, a guiding light for my children, a beacon and focal point. Always they will be able to look to me and feel comfort.

Looking back, with the power of Hindsight, on The Journey into Motherhood, the change, the transition, I feel a desire to support others through their transition. I want to make sure they never say "I wish someone had told me!" Knowing all your options is important. Understanding normal biology (scientific birthing) is important. And being able to Own your Journey.

It is not a coincidence that many women who choose homebirth are also feminists. They are very aware that 'The System' is insurance driven and not woman-centred. Even in continuity care models, midwives are held at the mercy of hospital policy. Increasingly homebirth midwives are being held by restraints we had long hoped had been destroyed.

As these shackles tighten, we need tools to help us navigate this system and break free.

As birth advocates and birth workers we can challenge the system, demand change and make noise. We can focus on the Big Picture of improving birth for all, and re-valuing Motherhood.

When we are pregnant, however, we must only be concerned with preserving our autonomy. We must have tools at our disposal to empower us and enable us to remain in control. We can not wait for birth to be women centred, we must claim it and demand it.

**Informed birth preparation** is the key to do this. Staying at home is the obvious choice for full autonomy, but transfer plans are an important aspect of a well prepared homebirth. Informed Decisions are documented, for various scenarios.

As more and more woman use Informed Birth Preparation to create Birth Maps, and encourage others to do so, we will see a shift. The power will be returned to the women. The System may still be Insurance-driven, but the women will no longer take in lying down. They will take a stand.

As more young midwives witness 'Informed Birth', they will be better able to support unprepared women toward an informed and empowering birth.

Unfortunately one of our biggest challenges is The Media.

Another negative 'news' story, claims the dangerous and irresponsible

nature of homebirth. It is billed as a reason to assume ALL homebirth is in need of more 'regulation' or that women who have the audacity to use the internet (!) to help find information to make an informed decision are irresponsible or misguided.

The calls to 'regulate' this 'industry' are not progress, but regression. How homebirth is regulated will essentially mean robbing women of choice and may leave them feeling helpless and in a more dangerous position.

Fear in childbirth is where the danger lies. Not education. Not preparation. Not choice. NOT LOCATION.

Not every woman wants, needs or should have an out of hospital birth. But for some women this is a valid and important option. Women require support, access to evidence-based information and freedom to decide. To regulate this option will remove her autonomy.

Just because someone has a degree does not make them an exclusive holder of knowledge...this concept is frightening and stinks like the dark ages. Knowledge is Power - so prevent 'the people' from accessing this knowledge, and you will have The Power. Public education and the internet has levelled the playing field. The internet is full of terrible information, but it is possible to find the valuable, useful information and decipher it to your own circumstances. You can have The Power.

Yes the advice of your obstetrician or midwife is valuable, it should be based on education, experience and your personal circumstances. I say SHOULD. But if it doesn't feel right, you can seek a second opinion, you can seek further knowledge based on studies. For example: The cochrane review provides 'plain english summaries' for this purpose. Only you can decide what risks you are willing to accept, only you can know what feels right for you.

In birth, the key is feeling safe, feeling supported and being able to relax and let go. Having confidence in your support, knowing your Birth Map and having the space to go within - no thinking required on the Birth Day.

And so, as I take some deep breaths and retreat back to the comfort of my rock, I want to leave you with this:

Beware the 'feminist' who says BUT, Beware the obstetrician who says BUT. Beware the mainstream media that implies irresponsibility in self-education.

Question everything. Assume nothing. Seek information. And Claim Your Power.

It is Your Life. Your Choice. Make it Informed.

**Catherine Bell** is the world's first (and currently only) Birth Cartographer. She suspects Birth Cartography is a powerful way forward for women reclaiming Birth, and so created THIS IS YOUR BIRTH, which is set to explode in 2017.

You can find her on facebook (@bellabirth), instagram (@birthmapping) and [www.bellabirth.org](http://www.bellabirth.org)





## *Birthing Belief and the Calm in the Storm*

By Holly High

**Abstract:** This combined birth story and feature article on the birth of my second son concludes that feminism and home birth are connected in their common investment in cultural beliefs.

“No baby?”

People started asking this, on the phone or in texts, from about 39 weeks onwards. Not lots of people, but enough for me to start to bristle. It seemed to imply impatience with the baby and insensitivity to what I thought was the more important question: how are you feeling? I was in no hurry. Our first pregnancy ended with induction at 37 weeks due to my waters breaking, unaccompanied by labour, so I was just pleased not to have that awful hurry again. Besides, I was already feeling cramps now and again, especially at night, so I was confident the baby was on its way. It felt like a special secret between the baby and me.

I had “met” the baby already during the kind of shamanic pregnancy workshop you might to read about in this magazine. A surprisingly large group of women (some pregnant but most not) listened to drumming as we journeyed up our cervixes to meet our wombs and (if applicable) the then occupants. This was not my main reason for attending but I participated anyway, pushing scepticism aside in the name of getting my full money’s worth. Besides, I reminded myself, “there are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio...” I found my cervix was very assertive and communicative but the baby seemed quiet, responding to my questions only with a sense of great contentment and peace. The only other sense I had was that he wanted me to drink more water and eat more meat. At the time I thought this paltry result was due to a lack of imagination. But perhaps a connection was formed with the baby, because I felt very confident in the lead up to the birth that he was well and that he would come when the time was right for all of us.

The weekend before the due date, a terrible storm flooded our town, Picton. Ed had gone to the library to prepare for an exam, and so he was out when the rains started. When the electricity failed, Gadsby (our two-and-a-half-year-old) followed me around the house blowing

out the candles as I lit them. Then the Telstra network failed, taking down internet and landline. Fortunately, my mobile phone continued to work. I called Ed when I received a text message to evacuate. Luckily, during the pregnancy we had moved to a house on a hill. Our new house was fine in the storm: not even a leak in the roof. Ed decided to come home, but the usual route and many of the alternatives were closed. Eventually he took the inadvisable risk of driving through floodwaters, past some cars that had been washed away. We were very pleased to be reunited, and pleased, too, that the baby had not been due a few days earlier.

The following Tuesday, Ed had his exam. It involved a ninety minute drive, then two two-hour exams where he could not be contacted by phone. He wanted me to have someone to look after me that day, although I felt sure that I would not go into labour. Ed prevailed, and a friend joined me for the day. We walked down the hill but stopped when we reached the remains of the flood: cars that had floated down the street and sat on the footpath, downed trees, and mud everywhere. I remember commenting to my friend that I was pleased to turn back because it was quite a vigorous walk and I was not aiming to bring on labour just yet!

About 1am in the night after Ed’s exam, I had some bleeding and there was a gush of fluid. From then in, I wore a pad, which was consistently stained pink. At about 4am I had a loose movement, more blood along with intermittent cramps like period pain. These last were enough to wake me up but short and only occasional.

I was in touch with our lovely midwife, Rachele, the next morning to let her know. She said to keep in touch but carry on with my day: I planned to take Gadsby to playgroup. Ed had an important meeting an hour’s drive away. Even though our due date was the next day, the last thing I wanted was for the two of us to sit around at home anxiously looking for labour signs. Cancelling his meeting would have required telling people about my labour signs, which I wanted to keep private. I didn’t really even want to tell Ed, for fear he’d overreact. However, when he was making plans to go, I realised he was planning a carpool arrangement. I snapped: “just take your own car!” Baffled, he asked what was going on, and I had to confess I’d seen some signs. He

carpooled anyway, but told his colleagues about the possibility of labour and anxiously called me before his meeting. I was in Target, buying a present for a playgroup friend of Gadsby's. I told him I was fine, nothing unusual going on. However I did leave my credit card at the checkout. I would not be back to collect it for weeks!

At playgroup, I met the familiar questions from well-meaning mums: was I still waiting on baby? Was I overdue? I remember being quite pleased with the little secret that my baby and I shared: that he would come when he was ready. I smiled with genuine joy when I replied "Actually I'm not due until tomorrow" as if it was all the time in the world.

Ed took the afternoon off. We had promised Gadsby playground and a milkshake, not realising the gravity of the situation downtown. Mud, supermarket items, shampoo bottles from the hairdressers, uprooted plants and busy volunteers lined the streets. We felt terrible that we were not helping. Our hands were full with our very energetic toddler and my lumbering pregnancy. Gadsby splashed about in the floodwaters: revolting! Looking back, we surmise that our risk assessment must have been heavily impaired by rising oxytocin levels.

Next day, Gadsby went to day care and Ed started his parental leave. After one last call that he just could not get out of (a gelding), Ed met me at a café I'd walked to, moaning though the pangs as I went. When it was time to go, Ed walked to the car. I moved to join him but realised I'd been timing my movements in relation to the on and off contractions. I couldn't just jump up and go! Ed and I discussed this in the car. We were both excited: it was lovely that things were building so gradually. We drove to collect Gadsby. We were so happy, giggly even, with anticipation and oxytocin when we arrived. We encountered questions there: when will the baby come? You must be getting close? I smiled from that place of inner assuredness. Yes, soon, I replied.

It was nice having Ed around the home that afternoon to tidy up and get through some outstanding chores. I sang along to Sixto Rodriguez in the kitchen as I cooked dinner, feeling good but also seeking out the warmth of the stove on my belly: it eased the pain. We had steak for dinner and I was pushing it around my plate: no appetite. Ed did the bedtime routine— it was getting late, probably 9pm. He was on the sofa with Gadsby and a pile of books. The kettle was on and when it boiled he asked me to make him a coffee. I snapped: "You want ME to make it?"

I had been in the middle of a contraction and I realised that they had been strong enough to take all my concentration for a while, but I hadn't told Ed – again! We decided this was (probably) it: birth night!

I showered and then stuck on the TENS: these contractions were ramping up. Ed was texting our list of babysitters. We were over the moon when Alison said she was available. She greeted me when she arrived, then went to play with Gadsby: the bedtime routine had gone out the window. Ed looked in on me occasionally for updates. I requested water and a bucket in case I threw up. Ed cleaned up dinner and set up the birthing pool in the lounge room. The midwife arrived about 11pm.

In the dark bedroom, I was getting into the swing of labour. It was hard work, but it felt pleasant and possible. The pains would start slowly and then rise in intensity. I was vocalising to help me to breath through it and remind my whole body to relax. I loved the TENS machine. Part of the pleasure of it no doubt was the mindless, repetitive action of turning it up at the start of each contraction and down at the end, both done with the press of a button. It marked the passing of each contraction and put me in charge (it was my finger on the button!).

I enjoyed the breaks between the contractions. I was entering bliss. Sometimes when Ed came to check I could not muster

any words. At one point focused so I could explain to him that if I was not speaking, it wasn't because there was any problem. I was just too ecstatic. I asked him if he'd ever felt so high that he imagined entire conversations with people but when he went to speak, realised that none of it mattered because it was all beyond words? Well, that was how I felt now. Ridiculously happy, truly gone. By god, I thought at one point, am I going to have an orgasmic birth!?

Amongst this I heard Gadsby crying. Ed was going to try putting him in the car to get him to sleep, but he didn't want to go. From the bedroom I commanded "bring him here". Ed didn't think it was a great idea, but it was my birth night.

Gadsby curled up in my arms as I sat on the floor in the candlelight, moaning through contractions while rocking him. He looked up at me, curious but mostly sleepy. I relished letting the deliciousness of his gentle, drowsy presence, his blonde curls and angelic face, sink in, aware that this would be the last time for a while that it would be just the two of us. He'd been my top priority for so long. He'd taught me how to be a mother, and I'd tried to teach him that I would always be there for him, steadfast and truthful. I feared that the arrival of the new baby would cut our special bond and Gadsby's babyhood short. I'd struggled with being his mum at times, living up to my high expectations and his: how could I be a mother to two at the same time?

In this part of the labour, I met and calmed these fears. Here I was, putting one child to sleep while rocking through the contractions that would bring the other into the world. In this moment I found strength and love for both of them. I had developed a new belief that would sustain me as I rebirthed myself as a mother of two. The moans for my contractions felt like expressions of a powerful creature, not scared whimpers.

Gadsby slept. I laid him on the bed and rested next to him for a while, loving for one last time this sensation of his small body next to mine. The contractions ceased, and I must have fallen asleep or into some kind of doze. Perhaps twenty minutes passed. Ed came in to check, and I got up in that way you do when you are half asleep and for some unknown reason you try to act more awake than you are. Immediately, I felt a big contraction which grabbed me before I'd even left the bed. I rushed to the en suite bathroom and vomited. My bowels were emptying themselves too.

With Gadsby asleep in the bedroom, it was time to move to the lounge room where the pool was set up. I asked Ed to go ahead and turn down the lights, put on some candles and bring a clean bucket. I tried to find my rhythm there again, but it was not as easy or pleasant. The spell was broken. I didn't feel so dreamy and content. It was harder now. I was burping a lot and felt nauseous. I went to the



bathroom again and was caught out by a huge contraction on the toilet. I vomited again. I felt my waters break, too, into the toilet. Rachele offered me an anti-nausea tablet and it worked wonders. She set up the nitrous oxide, too. It was great, but the contractions were very strong. Adrenalin must have been kicking in because I felt very alert. She suggested I pop into the bath. I waited a couple of contractions, letting this sink in: did this mean the baby was close? It certainly meant taking off the TENS machine. Was I ready for that? A sufficiently strong contraction convinced me I was.

I stripped off and hurried to be in the water before the next contraction. "It will be hard to get me out of here" I exclaimed as I slid into the warmth and buoyancy.

The water was comforting but the contractions were very strong now. I was half thinking this was because I didn't have the TENS machine anymore, or because I'd lost my rhythm. A catch in my breathing suggested, though, that my body was beginning to push. I was floored by the pain. I remember saying "I don't know where I am" meaning I had lost my thread, that sense of "having the finger on the button" that had gotten me through the early part of the labour. Now it felt not so much that I was having labour but that labour was having me. I was being taken over; I was roaring until I was hoarse but the pain was still more than I could express. I felt the "ring of fire" that I had read about, but not registered in my last birth. I felt extreme pain in my lower back. Ed was in the pool, putting pressure there. On about the third contraction like this I felt for the head but was disappointed to feel nothing. On the fourth I felt a little saggy bag emerging. Surely that was the head?

In the pause after that contraction, I gave myself an internal pep talk. "These contractions must be stopped," I reasoned. "I don't want to feel this pain anymore and there is only one way out of it: forward. Are you holding back, Holly? Is it because you are scared? These contractions are going to keep on happening unless you go with them to the end. You need to push on the next one. Push with everything you have got, and then this will be over. Are you scared you will break? It's fine. They will stitch you up. They will take you to the hospital to put you back together again if they have to. You are not going to die from this. It is time to let go and end it."

The contraction started and I pushed. "There's the head," I said,

hoping I'd catch my own baby this time. Another push. "And there's body" I said as I felt it slide past my hand behind me, towards Ed. The midwife told Ed to pick up the baby, and the touch of concern in her voice was enough to trigger all my adrenalin soaked sense of hyper-worry. I hurried to lift the baby out of the water and into my arms. It was 2.21 am.

He was perfect. We relocated to the sofa to let Evander crawl up and self-attach. He looked with great fixation at my right breast, and I thought this was where he was going. However, he suddenly swung his head backwards and landed in a perfect position to feed from the left. We let him suckle to his content, and he went to sleep.

About an hour after the birth I wanted to move the placenta out: the birth crawl and extended feed didn't seem to have been enough to shift it. We tried lots of positions and I was a bit frustrated. Finally, when I was in a deep squat on the bathroom floor, the midwife walked in to give the baby his oral vitamin k. As she approached me brandishing the syringe, plop out it came.

I laughed that twice now it had seemed that my body finally let go when I felt the calming presence of Western biomedicine! The first time was during my internal pep talk, and now it happened again with the placenta. Later, I wondered what women who don't live in places where Western biomedicine is readily available think at similar junctures. How do they reassure themselves that it is OK to let go and let the birth proceed? When there is no hospital to go to as a last resort, no medicines to protect the baby, how is that final leap of faith made?

One might think that the answer is: "they trust their bodies directly". As an anthropologist who has worked in places where hospital is not a feasible alternative, I know this is not the case. In the contexts I study, women who die in childbirth are thought to become particularly vile ghosts that prey on the living.

Their bodies are unceremoniously disposed of in unmarked graves. The safety of woman and child in pregnancy, birth and infancy is not taken on trust, but rather is actively and carefully sought out through things like particular diets, behavioural rules and spirit invocation. A direct trust of the body might well be true for some people some of the time, but on a societal level, I'm not aware of any examples in the





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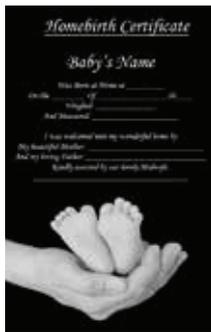
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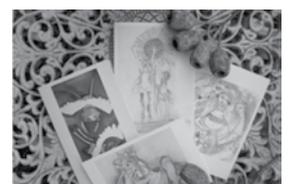
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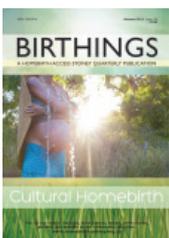


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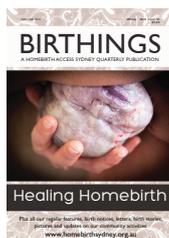


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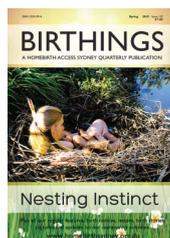
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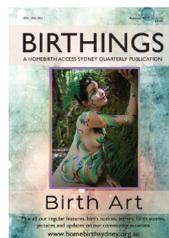
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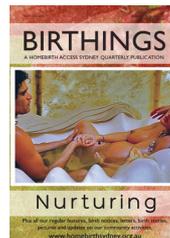
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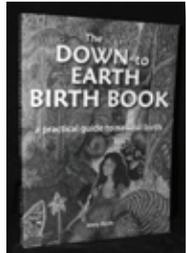


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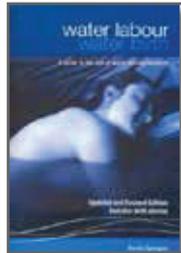
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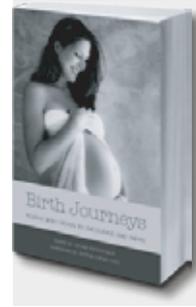
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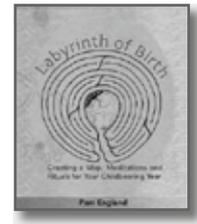
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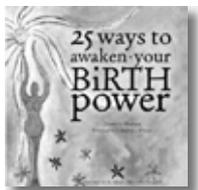
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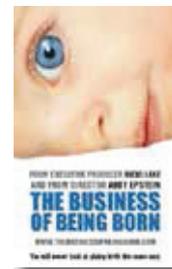
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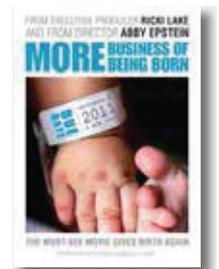
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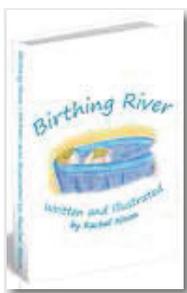


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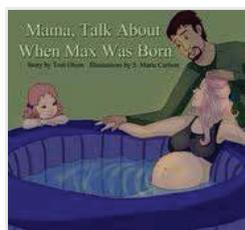


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## *Breaking Blake into the World*

By Carris Geyer

At almost 42 weeks pregnant I was beginning to get impatient for our baby's arrival. I had been getting Braxton hicks since I was about 36wks which I had never experienced with my first pregnancy so I had thought perhaps this little bub would be joining us sooner than my first daughter did at 40+5, but here I was almost at 42wks still cooking!

On Thursday 21st of May my midwife Andrea came over to my house to check in with me and bub. She got me into a second belly belt which made me look about 25 weeks pregnant. It pulled baby right in to assist bub to get into a good position. We listened to baby's heart beat which was perfect and we also spoke about booking in for an ultrasound to check on the fluid levels around baby and made an appointment for the next day at lunch time to have the ultrasound done.

When Andrea left I walked around the house for a bit and could feel baby's head moving and dropping down from wearing the belts, I googled acupuncture clinics in the area and found one who could fit me in that day. I made an appointment for 2pm.

Getting to the acupuncture clinic, I was experiencing Braxton hicks on and off and paced the office waiting for my turn in the hopes the constant movement would encourage baby down even further and keep the contractions happening. I completed the acupuncture session and drove home with not much action after having been still on the bed for the last hour.

When I arrived home I pretty much decided that this was going to be my birthing day. I asked Corbin, my husband, to get out the birth pool and pump it up. I hung my affirmation posters around the room, put on my relaxation track, put on my fairy lights and got some essential oils burning. I told Corbin I needed to concentrate, I paced the room and timed my contractions that were roughly every 5-7mins. I decided to text my birth support team, my mother, mother in law and best friend, to let them know something might be happening. Corbin

decided to take our daughter Haydee out so I could focus on my own for a while. He was gone just under an hour and while he was gone everything stopped. I ended up texting him saying I needed him and Haydee to come home. It was about 5:30 when they got home and we did our nightly routine with Miss Haydee. Contractions had basically ceased, as I scooped up Haydee and took her down to her room to say night night.

As I shut Haydee's door and walked back down towards the lounge room I got a contraction. I resumed the pacing of our lounge room floor rug as I had been doing before. It was 7:30pm and I started to time my contractions. I timed 5 in a row and looked at the app on my phone telling me these contractions were 2 minutes apart! Already! At 07:45 I asked Corbin to text everyone and call our midwife to tell her to come over!

My mother was the first to arrive only living around the corner and the rest not long after. By 8pm every one was there. The birth pool was being filled. There was lots of chatter which at first I was worried would distract me, but every time a contraction came I just shut my eyes and breathed through them. The contractions became sporadic but still just as strong and got stronger as the night went on. I let everyone know if I had my eyes closed to not talk to me which helped me focus.

I spent almost all my labour walking/pacing in the lounge room. I was hesitant to stop movement and when I did rest on the couch sitting down for 5 minutes I didn't have a single contraction, so back up and pacing it was. My hips and feet got a little sore from this but it was quickly relieved when I eventually got into the birthing pool.

Unlike my first labour, I was handling my husband touching me during the contractions. He gave me light touch massage and told me how amazing I was doing, reminding me to relax.





When I wasn't having a contraction I was talking with people in the room and swaying or pacing on the next one. With every contraction I felt more and more confident that this was it and that we would be meeting our baby soon. I can remember at one point I was concerned about the sporadic nature of my contractions, but my midwife told me to put the phone away, and just listen to my body!

It must have been just before 11pm I wanted to get into the birth pool. I let Corbin know and I took myself to the toilet to empty my bladder and when I came back I stripped off and got into the pool. It was amazing relief on my back and hips from the standing and walking. The first 5 minutes in the pool I didn't get any contractions. I changed position to lay as much of my body in the water as possible and so

with the birth of Haydee our first daughter Blake's pushing phase gave me not many breaks from the urge to push. It was near constant sensation of needing to push or bear down. I felt Blake's head crowning and midway through the crowning I forced myself into a break where I had to concentrate on breathing and I actually remember thinking that I needed to do this so baby could get oxygen too not just me!

I asked for water and moaned about being hot, I think we topped up the pool with fresh hot water right before I began pushing and exerting a whole lot more energy so I got hot quickly! Luckily my amazing support team were taking it in turns to fan me and give me water and fresh cold face cloths! It all happened seamlessly! Or so it

so I could move my hips and legs. Still in this position I could feel my contractions immediately ramp up in intensity. They were lasting longer and I could feel that baby was moving down further. I was asking Corbin to rub my lower back whenever a contraction came and for the first time I began to vocalise during the contractions a low "ahhhh" which helped me focus on the noise rather than the sensation. During this phase I remember thinking and rationalising the sensations and would tell myself, baby is moving down, that's baby's head getting lower, you are getting ready to meet your baby.

I told Corbin to tell Andrea I felt that I would need to push soon. Everyone else had been in the kitchen for a tea break and immediately came back out I was sure I heard my mother say "what? Already?" when Corbin told them I was going to push.

I was moving my body as much as I could even in the water as I was on my side. Corbin asked me if I wanted to flip my body over to push and I remember thinking no, because that would mean pushing, but my body did it as soon as he suggested it anyway. With both of my arms out of the birthing pool leaning on the sides and legs straight out, as soon as I was in the position, I felt Blake's head move down and Andrea told me to put my hand down to see if I could feel her head yet.

I remember saying I wasn't sure, but it wasn't long before I was sure! Unlike

seemed that way to me, I am sure they were running back and forth for me.

Right before I started pushing again in my little break (all of 5 seconds I am sure) I said I can't do this to which I heard a resounding (from everyone in the room) "You ARE doing this" so I began to let me body push again and soon Blake's head was out, and the room was on fire with excitement! I could hear my darling mother shrieking with excitement. Corbin behind me was firing constant "You can do this, you're doing so well! Look! Look!" and the click click of the camera as my Mother in Law, Kylie, captured the moment!

Once her head was out I so clearly remember my hand on her head – something I never did at my first birth, and it was amazing! I soon got the urge to push more and I don't remember working much to bring her shoulders and body out, but I think her being in her caul still helped that process. She slid out of me and into the warm water. My midwife told me to come and get my baby. I sat up and put my hands out to her under the water and my midwife and I broke the caul and I scooped her up towards me. I realised her cord was wrapped once around her neck and I told my midwife. She had me come closer to her to get enough length in the cord to unwrap it from her neck and then I took Blake towards my chest and rested back against the pool. I lifted her leg and announced we had another baby girl! Blake!

Blake let out a big cry and that was the moment that Corbin lost his composure too. I spent a long time just looking down at Blake and chatting to everyone in the room. It wasn't long before my midwife suggested I get up on my knees and see if the placenta will come out. I had been worried about this stage as with Haydee I was made to have an injection to help my placenta release which I didn't want again, but as soon as I was on my knees (quite a feat even in a pool after having given birth mind you) I felt pressure and my midwife gave a gentle pull as I pushed out the placenta.

The rest of the evening was amazing too, my support team helped clean the house and get the birth pool draining. Blake was weighed 4kg exactly! My pride just shot through the roof. I did just birth my 4kg baby at home with no 'pain' relief. Super happy about that one. My midwife had helped me out of the pool and onto the couch, to check me over. While I got out of the pool, Corbin got to have skin to skin with Blake.

Our support team all went home and we lay on the couch as my midwife filled out her paper work, and Blake fed from me for a good hour. Once I felt up to it my midwife helped me up off the couch and helped me shower and get into bed. Corbin brought in Blake and we settled in for the night I said goodnight to my midwife and thanked her! And Corbin walked her to the door and came right back to bed and we snuggled up with our new addition!

In the morning, Haydee and Blake's first meeting was glorious. Haydee couldn't get enough of her little sister. This amazing tiny human that has a nose, ears and eyes! It was all very exciting but quickly replaced by a demand for breakfast. Toddler priorities!

Hands down, this was the most amazing experience, my midwife was worth her weight in gold! I can't imagine ever going to hospital to birth future babies (yes, after this I have decided I simply HAVE to do that all again, and I can't wait)! Being at home assisted my labour and birth amazingly. I don't have the right words to describe just how amazing it was. We had a great labour and birth with our first daughter Haydee in the hospital, mostly intervention free, drug free labour, most things the same, and left the hospital 5hrs after her birth, but my oh my, it is just so much better being at home. I am in love.

**Carris Geyer** is 27 year old mother of two beautiful girls and wife to one amazing husband. She runs her own business from home and is passionate about birth and women's rights.



# *The Birth of Maya*

By Tara Greczek



**M**y name is Tara Greczek. I birthed my princess at home on the 23rd December 2015. Here is my story.

It all began on the 22nd December 2015, the day before my 'due date'. I had enjoyed a trip to the hairdresser, a lovely lunch with friends and a much enjoyed visit from our beautiful midwife, which as usual included a lot of love and laughs and of course, plenty of cake!

My husband, Alex, and I chose to have a private midwife, Emma, to care for us throughout our pregnancy. Emma left our home at around 5pm and we had planned to again meet in one week. As Alex and I began to cook dinner, there it was, my first contraction. It stopped me in my tracks! These continued and a short time later I remember Alex excitedly saying 'what was that?! Are you in labour?' 'No way' I replied, 'this could go on like this for days'. We continued cooking dinner and the contractions kept coming. We ate dinner and I sent Alex off to his mate's place as I was assured this would fizzle out! I jumped in the shower around 7pm, only for these contractions to continue and I thought it was best Alex came home! I made the call and Alex arrived shortly after.

The night progressed and I didn't leave the bathroom from this point onwards. I remember getting a lot of relief and feeling very comfortable in the shower. Alex ran me a candlelit bath but sitting down just wasn't for me. So back in the shower I went. We had been to the 'calmbirth' course so I was totally calm, relaxed, and breathing through each contraction.

At around 10pm the shower all of a sudden went cold. No hot water! What the? We have never ran



out of hot water!

Alex made a phone call to my dad and within minutes he was around and fixed that little issue quick smart!

Back in the shower I went! At around midnight I called out to Alex, who by this stage had made the bathroom my sacred birthing space by lighting a special candle and ensuring the room was quiet and relaxed. I asked him to call Emma, as I felt it was time to go into hospital. I remember hearing Emma's voice on the other end of the phone and feeling instantly at ease. Emma was on her way! I had decided I wanted to be checked over before heading into hospital. Emma was to arrive in 40 minutes. So Alex stayed by my side and I continued breathing through each contraction, only to realize a short time later that I had actually began to push. 'This couldn't be' I thought.

Next thing you know there was a splash on the floor. 'What was that?!' I said to Alex. He turned on the light only to discover I had ruptured my membranes! Alex checked it out and said 'the water is all clear, everything is ok' (looks like he did listen in those birthing classes haha).

Shortly after there was a quiet knock at the door. Emma had arrived!

Emma quietly came into the bathroom. I remember her touching me on the shoulder to let me know she had arrived and a sense of instant relief washed over me. Emma asked did I want to move to the bedroom for an internal to check progress but I wasn't able to move from standing at the basin! Emma had a look and there was head on view! She assured me everything was looking great. She had a listen to baby's heart rate and reassured us that baby would be here soon. Before I knew it Emma was passing my precious little princess up to my arms. I kissed her soft head and Alex and I instantly fell in love.

What followed was the arrival of our second gorgeous midwife, a physiological third stage, skin to skin and our first breastfeed!

Emma tucked us in to bed and there we were, a family of three!

I never intended on birthing at home. I had booked into our local hospital. Being our first baby Alex and I made the decision to labour at home and birth in hospital. But birthing at home was by far the most amazing, empowering and inspiring thing that has ever happened to me! Not a day has gone by since then that I haven't thought about



Maya's birth. And what a positive experience it was.

Perhaps it's something to do with stepping into my sacred birthing space (aka bathroom) on a daily basis?! I'm proud to tell people about my birth. I would hope that it would help to normalize birth and promote the marvellous experience that home birth is!!

Tara and Alex got married in March 2014. Tara is a midwife and Alex is a registered nurse, currently working as a medical sales rep. The bought their family home in September 2014. Tara always had this feeling that she would birth their first baby in their family home. It was more like a subconscious thought and when it actually came true she just couldn't believe it! She enjoyed a healthy pregnancy and credits their amazing birth to their commitment to a natural labour and birth, calmbirth education, regular chiro and acupuncture visits, swimming and of course to their precious midwife!



## *The Birth of Jackson Cruz*

By Bernadette Pittams

**M**y first baby was born in hospital in 2010. I wasn't fully aware of my care and birth options, other than that I could use an obstetrician or a midwife in a hospital. I decided to go with the midwives in the labour ward, and had a different midwife for each of my appointments. I found the hospital birth class informative, but a bit hard to relate to, and made myself feel more confident about birth by reading Juju Sundin's *Birth Skills* and watching loads of birth videos on Youtube that mums had uploaded. Even though I never knew those mothers, they shaped my view of birth - to see exactly what it was like in a real sense, and that took away all of my fear.

At 10 days "overdue" the hospital induced me, in line with their hospital policy. If I knew then what I know now, I probably would have refused the induction, but that being said, it all went great. I only needed 1 round of Cervidil and went into labour with no other intervention and my 3.9kg baby girl was born quickly and healthy.

After her birth, I learned a bit more about the hospital/birth centre difference, and about the benefits of continuity of care. When I became pregnant with my 2nd baby, I booked in to my local birth centre, where I had 2 midwives care for me during my pregnancy. I ended up having a spontaneous labour at 41+4 and my son was very nearly born in the car on the way to the hospital. My labour had lasted about 90 minutes from first pain to baby on chest but my 4.6kg baby boy was healthy, and I felt a lot more satisfied with my care and birth.

By the time baby number 3 was coming along, I knew I definitely wanted a homebirth, and was thrilled that I could have this through the birth centre and that one of the beautiful midwives who delivered my son was now the homebirth midwife. My pregnancy had a few hiccups along the way - I had to be admitted to hospital at the beginning, and put on a drip for hyperemesis, and then I got appendicitis at 18 weeks and had to have surgery to have it removed. But despite the hiccups, I was really looking forward to the birth.

Since my daughter was born, I have been fascinated by birth and absolutely taken in by its transformative powers. I wanted to have a homebirth for a few reasons, not just because I had a history of rapid births but because I wanted to be somewhere familiar and comfortable and surrounded by my family, including my children. To me it was really important to make my 2 kids part of the process and to normalise birth to them, especially my 5 year old daughter.

I prepared them by reading some great kids books about having a baby, explaining what happens and watching videos with them. Kids are really amazing how keen they are to learn, and in the end, my daughter used to come home from school and ask if she could watch videos of babies being born, and she would get emotional each time the baby came out!

I looked forward to all of my midwife appointments, even though they were all pretty standard. My midwife, Christina felt like a friend, and this further improved my confidence. I was excited about birth! I knew that I would go beyond my due date, as I had with the other 2 and it was amazing how serene I felt about that. With my other 2 babies (especially my first), I put so much focus on that due date, and was very frustrated when it came and went.

Funnily enough, my midwife was having her birthday dinner with her family on the Saturday night when I was 41 weeks and jokingly asked me not to have a baby that evening. I remember mentioning to her that now she'd put that out there, I'm sure that it would happen that evening, and sure enough...! Around 3:30am on the Sunday morning I woke with extremely mild tummy pain, but I knew that labour was beginning. I remember checking the time on my phone and thought, "well, at least Christina got to have her family dinner!" I got out of bed and had a shower, and even though the pains were coming and going, they were SO mild that for a second I actually doubted if this were the real thing or not, but I was too excited to go back to sleep.

At 5am my husband woke up to find out what was going on and I said "not much, I can still barely even feel anything", but he insisted I call my midwife. I actually felt silly for calling, but I put her on notice anyway and she suggested we get the birth pool up and filled and to check in in half an hour to let her know any progress. By 5:30am the pains had increased very slightly but were less than 2 minutes apart and Christina let me know that her and the backup midwife, Heather, were on the way. I remember thinking "I barely even feel like I'm in labour, I'm not sure they should be coming this early!!" My husband Neil managed to get the birth pool inflated and filled in record time, and Christina arrived at 6:15am. It was almost like as soon as she arrived, my body went "right, we can go ahead and have this baby now" and the labour pains finally started getting some bite to them.

I was feeling everything in my lower back but kept upright by walking around the lounge room and leaning up against the wall when a contraction came. I know all women in labour are really different but I actually prefer to be left to just do my thing. Heather arrived a short while later and by then it was getting quite painful. I said "I think I should get in the water soon". Around this time, my son and daughter woke up and joined us all in the kitchen and my husband said "mummy is having the baby now", and my (almost 3 year old) son just looked more concerned about the extra people in our house first thing in the morning.

Just as I was getting ready to get into the pool, my waters went and I had one almighty contraction and was really relying on my midwife to coach me through it and breathe. Christina asked my husband if he wanted to come around and help deliver the baby and I quickly said "I can do it" as I really did not want anyone touching me or near me at that point! The next contraction, his head was born and with the final contraction his body followed and I caught him and brought him up to the surface. Instant relief! He was born at 6:42am, less than half an hour after Christina arrived. Unlike with our first 2 babies, we decided to keep the sex of this one a secret. We were all so thrilled to find out it was the boy that I had suspected all along.

We had decided on the name Jackson. The look on my son and daughter's faces were so priceless - they were beyond excited! My daughter was pointing out the umbilical cord, and we waited until it stopped pulsing before her and my husband cut it together. Neil made breakfast for the kids while we waited for the placenta and the kids asked if they could watch cartoons. I loved how normal it all was for them, which was one of my goals all along.

Jackson weighed in at 4.3kg, and my daughter helped to put on his first pair of clothes. Shortly after, my parents arrived to meet Jackson and then took the older 2 kids for the day. It was so wonderful to hop



into fresh sheets in my own bed and have new baby snuggles - it was heavenly!

Funnily enough, the next day when my daughter came home from kindergarten, she told me that she had made a card for her teacher who was soon leaving to have her first baby. When I asked her what she wrote in the card, she said "I wrote - have fun having your baby. Are you having him at home in the birth pool?" which made me laugh.

Jackson is now 12 months old and has fitted into our family like a little champ. We cannot imagine life without him!



I feel like I have had 3 very different births, but all very positive and I have loved each and every one, but none of them compare to my home-birth. Since Jackson's birth I have become an advocate for homebirth and continuity of care, and I hope my birth story can inspire someone else, the way all the mothers whose YouTube videos I watched all those years ago inspired me to have empowered births!

**Bernadette** is 33 year old stay at home mum living in Sydney with her husband and our 3 children. She spent the first 22 years of her life training as a National swimmer. Upon retirement from swimming, she went travelling solo around Europe and then moved to London for 2 years where she met her now husband. She's recently become a Personal Trainer and hope to someday have her own business. Some day...when she has some time...!



## *The Birth of Onyx*

By Karlie Schaad

I never considered having a baby anywhere other than a hospital until I met my husband and his family and I feel eternally grateful that I was able to make the decision to have our baby at home.

There was a stigma attached to the idea of birthing outside of a hospital and many people doubted my choice. I was determined that a homebirth was right for me; I just want to stress that I'm saying it was right for me... I strongly believe that all mothers should have the choice to birth where they feel comfortable. I was supported, it was beautiful. This is my birth story.

All my life I wanted to be a mother. Some people know from a young age that they want to be a doctor, teacher, dancer, etc and all I knew for sure is that I wanted children. It took me and my husband a long time to conceive, despite being told by several doctors that everything was fine. I was starting to think it might not ever happen. So when I came out of the bathroom one morning holding a positive home pregnancy test, I felt like I was dreaming and that was one of the happiest days of my life.

During pregnancy I was given a stack of books and a few people strongly suggested that I read Ina May Gaskin's Guide to Childbirth. This book changed my life. I had a new outlook and once finished I felt empowered and ready to bring my child into the world at home. I've doubted myself a lot in my life but this was something I strongly believed I could do. I had my husband's full support and I had been assigned a lovely midwife named Jacky through Belmont Birthing Group. My pregnancy was straight forward and low risk so I was accepted as being able to birth at home. As long as I got to 37 weeks and all was fine, I could do it.

Two days before I gave birth I went to see a Bowen therapist as I had sciatica and the baby was really digging its feet under my ribs so I was hoping she could do a bit of magic and get the baby to move for me. She was amazing! After what seemed like very minimal hand movements she said to me "Now the baby is going to move in a minute" and just like that, the baby started moving!! I couldn't believe it. The baby hadn't moved around like that in weeks so it felt great and it really relieved the pressure on my back and under my ribs.

23rd May 2014..

On an unusually warm autumn day at 6am, I woke to the first signs of labour. I was a little unsure if it was really happening but I can remember feeling really excited at the possibility of it all starting. I told my husband Zach and we contacted my midwife. Once we knew for sure that I was having contractions we made our way to Zach's mum's house. We decided a long time ago that this would be the perfect place to birth our baby as it is where my husband and his three siblings grew up and it is also where our sister in law had her baby just 9 months earlier. It is a beautiful old house surrounded by trees and bush so it created the perfect setting for us.

When we arrived, my mother in law was busy looking after some of the grandchildren so she left us to it and checked in every now and then. Not long after we got there my mother arrived and she met us out in the garden. I was leaning forward over a medicine ball and having regular contractions. She rubbed my back and asked me how I was and reminded me to keep breathing. I didn't last long out there as the mozzies were starting to get really annoying and that was the last thing I wanted to deal with. I made my way carefully back down to the birthing space which was dark like a cave and Zach started filling up the pool. The room was beautifully decorated with candles and colourful banners that my friends made for me at my baby shower with encouraging words to help me stay positive, focused and in the zone. Once in the pool I felt a bit better and I spent the next couple of hours in roughly the same position leaning forward over the edge and squeezing Zach's hands with each contraction ;- ) Zach was so wonderful, calm and present. Everything I needed in a birth partner.

When it came time to push I tried so hard to do it in the pool in different positions but it wasn't working so my other midwife, Fiona suggested I stand up and sway my hips and then get out of the pool to try to give birth on the birthing chair instead. I agreed and I got set up on the chair. Right then, my sister in law Tash arrived and it was such perfect timing because I really needed someone there to help hold my leg up for me. After about ten minutes of strong contractions and pushing I gave birth to a huge baby boy!!

My mum, who has had three children of her own told me I was her hero and that was such a special moment as my mother is my best



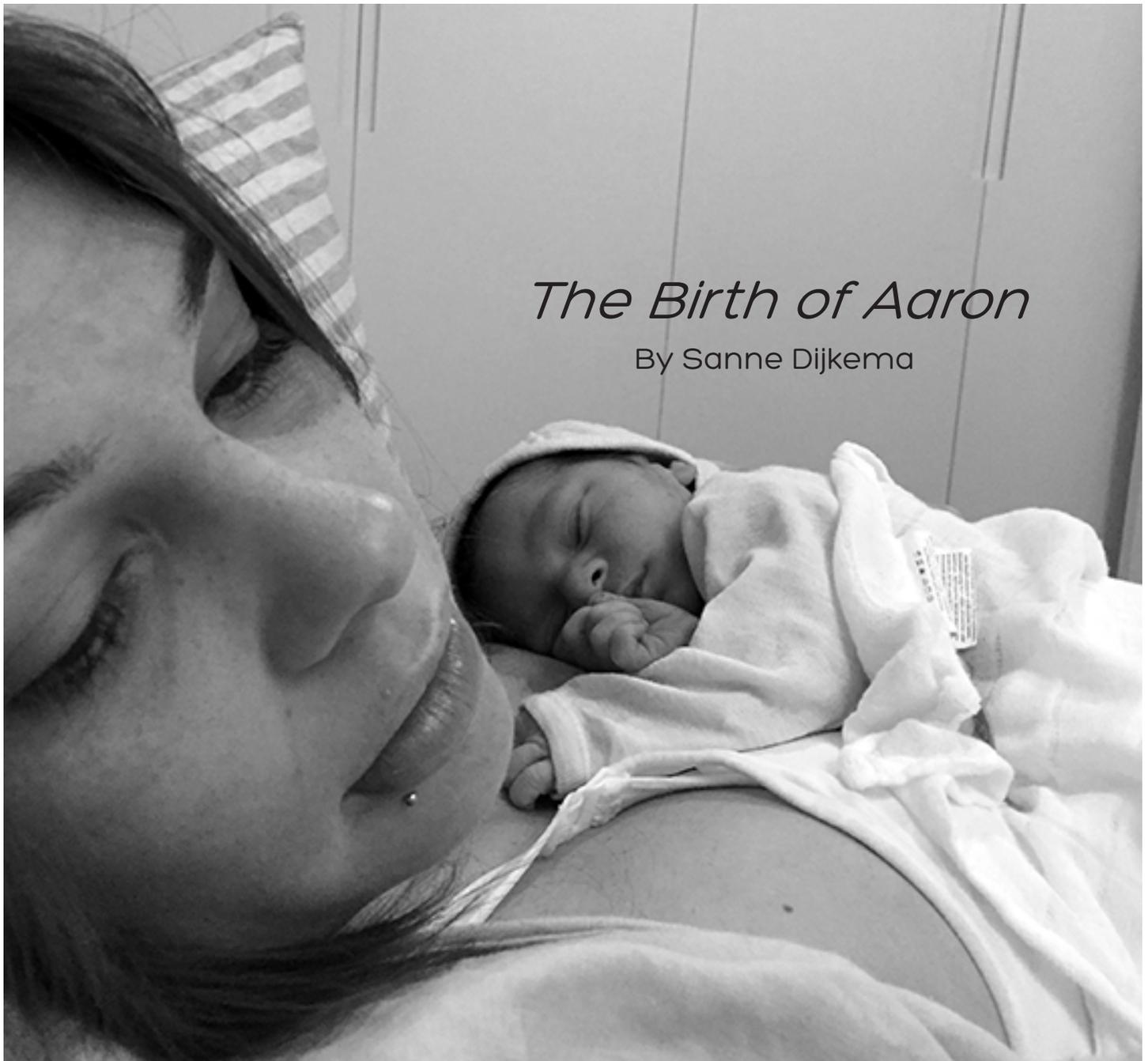
friend and I have always looked up to her. She is so giving and selfless and I'm so happy she was with me. She had never seen a birth before so she did tell me afterwards that when the baby's head came out and wasn't moving she panicked as she didn't know this was normal but she did very well not to show this as she knew it would scare me. She realised that since the midwives weren't concerned that everything must be alright ;-)

Onyx Orion Schaad was born at 4:30pm and he weighed 9lb 10.5oz (4.39kgs) and 52cm. Zach somehow always knew a little boy was on his way and the look on his face when we found out for sure was priceless! I've never felt so proud of myself in all my life and I will never forget that feeling. There was so much love and joy in the room.

Almost straight away members of the family came around to celebrate. We ate some dinner, took lots of photos and went to sleep. This was it. Our new journey as a family of three had begun..

**Karlie Schaad** is a wife and stay at home mother of one who lives in the Great Lakes area of NSW, originally from the Central Coast NSW. Mostly working in childcare, hospitality and tourism, she is a great lover of people and natural beauty. She lives on a farm with her husband, their son, three dogs and four chickens. After the birth of her son she fell in love with all things pregnancy and birth and so began studying to become a doula. Raising children who are healthy, kind and well informed is her contribution toward a positive future.





## *The Birth of Aaron*

By Sanne Dijkema

I've always wanted a home birth. It's something that I've always instinctively felt right. So when I unexpectedly fell pregnant and went through the motions of shock, anxiety and then elation, my instincts for a home birth grew even stronger. The only hurdle was convincing my partner, Shane. The concept was completely new to him but he trusted me and went whole-heartedly with me into the unknown.

We began to educate ourselves with books, information, birth stories and birth videos (more than I can count). But what prepared us more than anything was our midwife Janine O'Brien. Words cannot express the gratitude I have for this woman. She guided us along our journey like a shining beacon of light. From the very first time we met her we started getting very excited and visualising a beautiful birth.

On the morning of the 28th May I woke up feeling like my period was about to start, I felt my stomach move and ache. I went to the toilet and my mucus plug had come out. I sat still, thoughts rushed through my head, I was scared, I was excited! This was it! I was going into labour! I called my midwife Janine and she told me to rest and sleep as much as possible as my rushes would calm down with the rising sun and start again in the evening. It sounded strange but as this played out exactly as she said. Shane went to work and I rested, as I

needed to save all my energy for later. My thoughts were running all over the place, I could hardly sleep.

That evening, Shane came home at his usual time and we decided to make a hearty meal to fill my body with as much nutrients and energy as possible. We put on our birthing playlist we compiled and made a cottage pie with cauliflower topping. We ate dinner and like clockwork I started getting my rushes as soon as we finished. We decided it was a good time to blow up the birth pool, light candles, turn the lights off and take the oils out. My rushes started getting more intense, I moved from the couch to the shower, shower to couch, couch to birth pool several times. Shane gave me massages and applied pressure to my acupressure points but during my rushes I wanted to be left alone, no talking, no touching, just silence. This allowed me to connect to what was happening to my body and really focus on what was happening.

We decided to give Janine a call. Shane told her that my waters had just broken but I was still okay and my rushes were still quite far apart but intense. She gave Shane some beautiful words of encouragement and told him to call her when I really wanted her to come. About an hour or 2 later, my rushes were quite close together. They were getting really intense. I felt hot, quite tired and managed to empty out my bowels.



just entered. Shane held him while I birthed my placenta. The contractions were mild. I felt so weak but so strong and in awe at same time! I then held him skin to skin waiting for the cord to stop pulsating, letting him make his way up towards my breasts. It was surreal. We made this perfect human being! He weighed 3,38kg. He was so awake so alert, observing everything. We couldn't stop staring at him and him at us. It felt like we were all on cloud 9. The love, the emotion, the strength, the fear, the absolute wonder of this miracle.

Aaron Jordan Geffen has only been adding love joy and amazement to our beautiful family. We are learning more and more everyday not only about each other but about ourselves. Aaron is teaching me to be the best human I can be. I feel like I am discovering my true self. I feel honoured to be his Mum. Thank you Shane. Thank you life!

I am Sanne Dijkema.

Two years ago my partner Shane Geffen and I moved to Sydney Australia from Cape Town South Africa.

We welcomed our beautiful baby boy Arron Jordan Geffen into this world on the 31st May 2016.

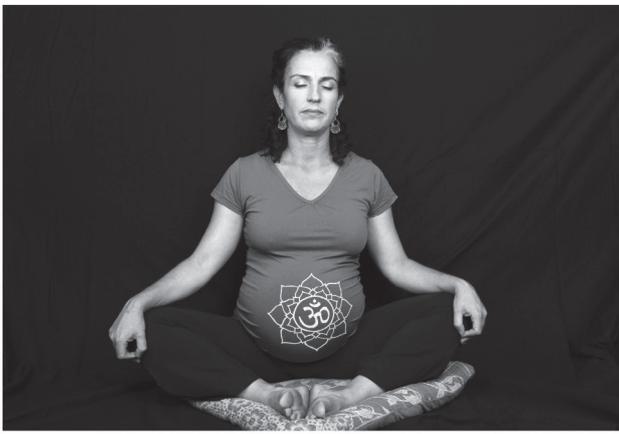
I come from a holistic background, having experienced a Waldorf school (Steiner school) education and feel extremely lucky to have had such an incredible foundation. So having a home birth was exactly the kind of start we wanted Aaron to have. The first experiences of life are the most important ones. We want to encourage play, creativity, individuality and natural positive outlook on life. Shane and I both can't wait to guide Aaron on his life journey

Shane called Janine again and told her I wanted her to come. I was struggling to deal with the intensity of it all. So many emotions were going through me but I stayed completely focused. Janine arrived about an hour and half later. She checked me and kept giving me words of encouragement. I was in and out of the birth pool, changing positions, and working with my rushes to relieve some of the intensity. Janine kept checking the heart rate of our little human. It kept dropping and coming back up. This was a good sign as we all knew our bub was making his way down the birth canal. She checked me again and there was a lip covering the entrance for him to come out. She asked me gently if I would like her to push it back or if I would like to work through it. Although it was extremely uncomfortable I had her move it back.

I was now feeling extremely exhausted. I felt very hot and it was getting more intense. Janine suggested I move out of the pool into a squatting position, as this would help move our bub down working with gravity.

Janine kept checking our bubs heart rate. It was going down but not really jumping back up. I felt like giving up. At this point Janine put on a serious voice and gave me some amazing words of encouragement but also said if I didn't push with the next few rushes, I would need to transfer to hospital. I knew she was being serious. I could hear it in her tone. I at this point made the decision and gave up resisting the intensity and let my body take over. I surrendered and I put all my trust in my body. With about 3 pushes at 4:47am the most beautiful baby came out and Shane shouted it's a boy! He came out with wide eyes, no crying, just in complete wonder of this new world he





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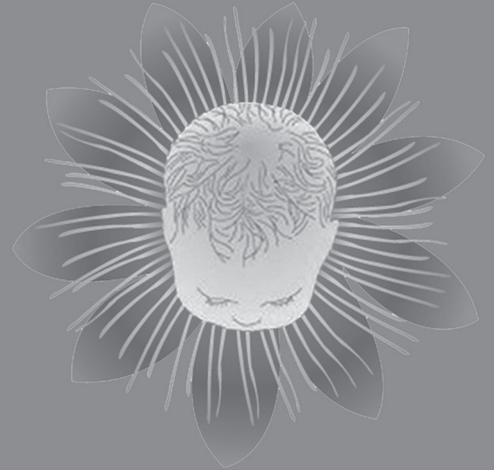
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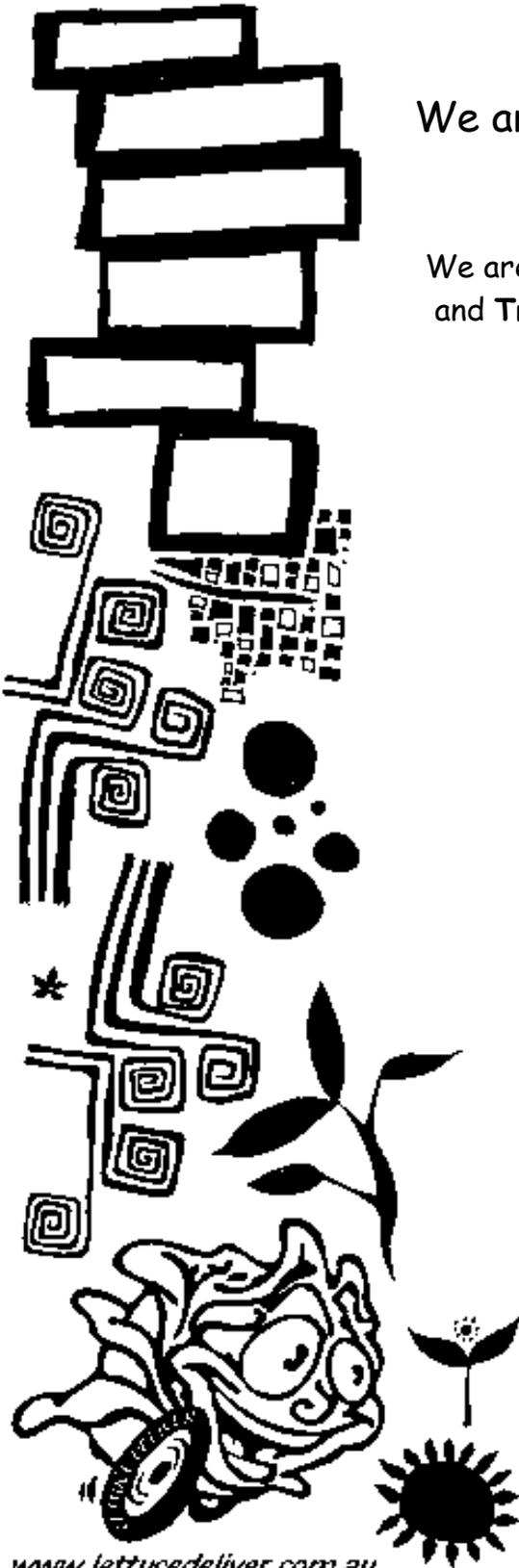
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# BIRTHING SERVICES: MIDWIVES

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

## **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

## **HAZEL KEEDLE**

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hazelkeedle@gmail.com

www.midwifehazel.com

## **IBIRTH - INTIMATE BIRTH & BEGINNINGS**

### **[Midwives @ Sydney & Beyond]**

My name is Janine O'Brien and I have been a midwife for over 10 years, committed in women centred care and providing a continuum of care to women and their families. I am the mother of two beautiful young women and have been practicing with Midwives@Sydney & Beyond since June 2013.

Servicing Northern Beaches, Sydney & surrounding suburbs.

Janine O'Brien

0422 969 961

janine@ibirth.com.au

www.ibirth.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

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Jane Palmer (Dundas Valley)

9873 1750

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## **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

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## **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

# GUIDE TO CHOOSING A MIDWIFE

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

Different midwives have different personalities and practices, and different responsibility. When selecting your midwife, we recommend you:

- Interview as many midwives as you can from different practices
  - Talk to as many of their clients as you can
- Here are some questions you might consider asking midwives you are considering for your care:

## QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

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

## ELIGIBILITY

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

## PHILOSOPHY AND ATTITUDE

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

## COLLABORATION /TEAM

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

- What will happen if my baby needs to see a specialist?
- In what circumstances would you recommend my baby see a pediatrician or doctor?

## PRACTICAL MATTERS

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

## TIMING

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

## SPECIFIC ISSUES

### ...DURING PREGNANCY

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

### ...DURING LABOUR AND BIRTH

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

### ...DURING THE POSTNATAL PERIOD

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

# PRE-NATAL SERVICES

## MASSAGE FOR WOMEN AND BABIES

Mobile Massage Service for All Areas in Sydney.

Supporting women before, during and after birth, offering:

- Pregnancy Massage
- Postnatal Massage
- Labour Trigger Massage
- Baby Massage Class
- Reflexology
- Remedial Massage
- Massage and Acupressure Lecture for Partner
- Doula Service
- Placenta Encapsulation
- Child Care/Housework Support

Private health fund rebates are available.

Noriko Amies

Health Funds Registered Remedial Massage Therapist and Doula

[www.norikoamies.com](http://www.norikoamies.com)

0410547980

## 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

0248882002, 0408035808

[janecollings@bigpond.com](mailto:janecollings@bigpond.com)

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

[www.placentalremedy.com](http://www.placentalremedy.com)

## Sutherland / St George

### 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](http://www.naturalbeginnings.com.au)

### JULIE CLARKE’S PREPARATION SESSIONS ARE:

Calmbirth and Transition into Parenthood 2 reasonably priced, very popular courses, with many couples in Sydney selecting to attend both courses and taking advantage of the big discount for the combo booking.

Calmbirth(r) Classes are provided by Julie Clarke almost every weekend of the year for pregnant couples who would like to prepare for a stress free comfortable birthing experience using breathing, relaxation, visualisation, positive expectancy, to reduce fear and increase their confidence. Pregnant women and their partners find the classes wonderful to attend which enhances their pregnancy experience. Julie facilitates the Calmbirth course in such a beautiful way that it’s easy to participate, provides plenty of time for group participants to ask questions, an easy going comfortable atmosphere of genuine empathy and support. Julie’s lovely calming voice takes you easily into relaxation and the benefits of doing the course with Julie are continuous phone and email support well after the sessions are completed. All tea, coffee, chai, delicious snacks provided. Parking easy, free right at the front. Venue perfect. Brilliant website rich with information for you  
[www.julieclarke.com.au](http://www.julieclarke.com.au)

Transition into Parenthood are also conducted by Julie every second weekend throughout the year covering pregnancy, labour, active birth, all the self help strategies for women to use but also very importantly for partners all the labour companion support skills to use during the labour and birthing so partners can be very confident in their ability to help during the process and not feel scared or useless as many partners put it. Very importantly the TiP course answers all your important questions around caring for newborn babies, feeding, sleeping, settling, calming, reading their body language and signals, what to buy, what not to buy, and a myriad of other important ways to become ready, prepared and organised for new parenthood. This is a very practical course and that’s why everyone loves the TiP course.

Julie Clarke conducts the courses in a spacious classroom lounge area purpose built for teaching classes which is very comfortable for pregnant couples. Sylvania is a suburb south of Sydney which is a peaceful, pretty, leafy area easily accessed on any weekend morning. Parking is free and plentiful.

The Baby Care Support Service is a convenient “in home” service available exclusively to all the couples who have attended Julie’s courses and require assistance and guidance during the first year with their baby, so too is the Pram Walking Club run by Julie for free for the mums, which includes the most delicious breakfast at a beautiful cafe at the local beach.

Julie has thought of everything to help pregnant couples experience a very positive, memorable happy journey into parenthood together and she provides this with a sense of humour at a very reasonable cost.

See Julie’s website for all the details

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

Julie Clarke’s mobile 0401265530

Landline 95446441

email: [Julie@julieclarke.com.au](mailto:Julie@julieclarke.com.au)

### HYPNOBIRTHING AUSTRALIA™ COURSE

Hypnobirthing Australia™ program is a unique, modern and comprehensive antenatal education to suit Australian needs.

Be Prepared for an easier, safer, gentle and empowering birth experience through discovering and optimizing the power of our mindset, deep relaxation, visualisation, self-hypnosis, specific breathing techniques and other practical information covered in our classes.

w: [www.birthingbreeze.com.au](http://www.birthingbreeze.com.au)

f: [www.facebook.com/birthingbreeze](https://www.facebook.com/birthingbreeze)

e: [bitna@birthingbreeze.com.au](mailto:bitna@birthingbreeze.com.au)

m: 0433 952 104

### LIVING CHIROPRACTIC

Living Chiropractic having been assisting women before during and after birth for over two decades.

At Living Chiropractic we believe that looking after yourself during pregnancy can lead to a healthy and natural delivery giving you the best possible start for your baby.

Pregnancy is a time of miraculous beginnings and copious amounts of excitement, but it’s also a time filled with stress and changes to the body. As the baby develops mum’s bodies begin to adapt to the extra weight and pressure that is placed on the muscles, ligaments, joints, discs and bones that can lead to general discomfort.

Research shows that Chiropractic care helps to relieve back pain for up to 85% of pregnant women.

Seeing your Chiropractor before during pregnancy simply ensures that your nervous system is firing on all cylinders and your body is performing at its peak which allows for ease of delivery, and less stress and pressure on both mum and bub. Which can provide a quick recovery assisting your body to function at its best with the changes.

Available to see clients in both our clinics located in Liverpool and Blacktown.

(02) 9600 6900

[www.living-chiropractic.com.au](http://www.living-chiropractic.com.au)

[info@living-chiropractic.com.au](mailto:info@living-chiropractic.com.au)

# PRE-NATAL SERVICES (cont.)

## KRISTIANE HEIDRICH

In Adults CranioSacral Therapy Treats a wide range of conditions such as:

- Sensory Integration Disorders/ Learning Disabilities
- Dizziness
- Tinnitus
- Emotional Difficulties: Depression, Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome, Anxiety
- Digestive Issues including Irritable Bowel Syndrome
- Sleep Disorders
- Unexplained (Tooth) pains
- Migraines and Headaches
- Chronic Neck and Back Pain
- Motor-Coordination Impairments
- Stress and Tension-Related Problems
- Traumatic Brain and Spinal Cord Injuries
- Chronic Fatigue/ Exhaustion
- Scoliosis
- Central Nervous System Disorders
- Temporo-mandibular Joint Syndrome (TMJ)

Kristiane Heidrich is a mother of 3 children aged 24, 22 and 19. She is a Physiotherapist, Massage Therapist, CranioSacral Therapist,

SomaticoEmotional Release Therapist, Visceral Manipulation Therapist and a teacher of these therapies. CranioSacral Therapy enabled her to realise that instead of pushing against the body's restrictions causing 'dis-ease', that she could follow the body's own innate patterns and wisdom to facilitate the healing process. Kristiane has a special interest in working with mothers in the pre-conception (fertility) phase, during pregnancy, and the post-partum period. She also treats children of all ages in her clinic (0-90). She is a Registered Midwife, Doula and Placenta Encapsulator.

For fees/conditions and further information contact 02 9798 6115 or visit the website:  
[www.ashfieldphysio.com.au](http://www.ashfieldphysio.com.au)

## DOULA SERVICES

### NATURAL BEGINNINGS HOLISTIC HEALTH AND DOULA SERVICE

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

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

As an ex-nanny, I can help look after older siblings so that Mum can focus on birthing, Dad can focus on Mum, and older sister or brother can still feel important and included in the process, without fear. My birth package includes 3 prenatal visits, birth support incl. herbs/flower essences and reiki massage, birth photography, follow up visit, and all your edited digital photos 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  
0415683074  
5 Balfour Ave Caringbah 2229  
[www.naturalbeginnings.com.au](http://www.naturalbeginnings.com.au)

## PLACENTA SERVICES

### NATURAL BEGINNINGS

Doula, herbalist and nutritionist Virginia Maddock is now offering placenta encapsulation 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 (or dream catcher), and make a placenta balm infused with herbs and essential oils for many skin conditions.

Please see my website for more information and prices.

Virginia Maddock 0415683074 [Virginia@naturalbeginnings.com.au](mailto:Virginia@naturalbeginnings.com.au)  
[www.naturalbeginnings.com.au](http://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 Jane Crosbie, Phone: 0428 112 192,  
<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Friends-of-Belmont-Birthing>

### ROYAL HOSPITAL FOR WOMEN HOMEBIRTH SERVICE (Randwick)

This public health service is available to women within 7km of the RHW and within the RHW geographical area. Continuity of care is provided by two midwives throughout pregnancy, birth and the postnatal period.

For further information contact: 9382 6100

### WOLLONGONG HOSPITAL HOMEBIRTH SERVICE

This public health service is available to women in the Helensburgh to Kiama region. Continuity of care is provided by two midwives throughout pregnancy, birth and the postnatal period. Contact the Antenatal Clinic on 0242534256 and ask to book in with the Midwifery Group Practice (MGP). Your details will be taken down and MGP will return your call.

# HOME BIRTH SUPPORT GROUPS

## Sydney & NSW

### EASTERN SUBURBS HOME BIRTH SUPPORT GROUP

3rd Wednesday of every month Time: 10.00-12.00 Location: Clovelly  
Contact: Nadine Fragosa 0468 382 580 or nads@jonads.com  
Please feel welcome to join us if you're pregnant, have children or are just curious about home birthing.

### INNER WEST HOME BIRTH SUPPORT GROUP

First Tuesday 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!  
(Search for Sydney Inner West Homebirth Group on Facebook!)

### NORTHERN BEACHES HOME BIRTH GROUP

Last Thursday of the month Time: 10am-12pm  
Location: 12 Collaroy St Collaroy  
Contact: Jenna Richards with any questions 0476 197 683  
Please bring snacks to share and keep in mind this is a NUT FREE event as some families have allergies.

### SUTHERLAND SHIRE NATURAL BIRTH & PARENTING GROUP

Every Monday 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

Midwives @ Sydney & Beyond:  
1st 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  
Info: <http://www.pregnancy.com.au/resources/support-groups/index.html>  
No booking is necessary. Please note that the group is held on the first Thursday of the month. The venue is Jane's place (27 Hart Street, Dundas Valley) from 10am until 12pm. 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!

### PREGNANCY & PARENTING NETWORK MEETING - BLUE MOUNTAINS

Midwives @ Sydney & Beyond:  
3rd Tuesday of the month Time: 9.30 - 11am  
Location: Cafe 2773 Ross St Glenbrook.  
Contact: Melanie: 0425 280 682 mkjackson@live.com.au  
Dates / Topics: Info: <http://www.ellamaycentre.com/Events.html>  
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.  
Contact: info@birthchoices.info

### HAWKESBURY BELLIES & BABIES

2nd Thursday of every month from 9:30-11:30am  
· 14th April · 12th May · 9th June · 14th July  
Contact Heather Sassine 042317191 / heather@heathersassine.com

### BLUE MOUNTAINS HOME BIRTH 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\*

### MOTHERS & MIDWIVES OF THE SOUTH (SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS)

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

### CENTRAL COAST HOME BIRTH 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 & NATURAL BIRTH SUPPORT (HHNBS)

Email hhnbsgroup@gmail.com with enquiries or to join our mailing list.  
You can also find us on Facebook- Hunter Home and Natural Birth Support Group, <https://www.facebook.com/HHNBS>

### ARMIDALE & DISTRICT HOME BIRTH SUPPORT NETWORK

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

### CENTRAL WEST BETTER BIRTH GROUP

1st Friday of the month  
Location: Various homes around Orange and Central West, NSW.  
Contact: Hazel Keedle. Ph: 0408661503  
Informing, supporting and empowering women in their birth choices.  
(Search for Central West Better Birth Group on Facebook!)

## Interstate & National

### HOME BIRTH AUSTRALIA

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

### HOME BIRTH QUEENSLAND INC.

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

### ALICE SPRINGS HOME BIRTH GROUP

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

### DARWIN HOME BIRTH GROUP

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

### HOME BIRTH NETWORK OF SA

PO Box 275, Seaford, SA 5169  
Contact: Clair at admin@homebirthsa.org.au  
[www.homebirthsa.org.au](http://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.

YOU ARE WELCOME TO ATTEND

### Homebirth Access Sydney (HAS) Committee Meetings

Meetings are generally held on the 2nd Wednesday of each month at venues TBA, but dates are subject to late changes according to availability of attendees.

Please contact Virginia on 0415683074  
or email [info@homebirthsydney.org.au](mailto:info@homebirthsydney.org.au) for  
submissions and agenda confirmation.

All welcome, including children!

## HAS POLICY STATEMENT

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

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

#### MAGAZINE ADVERTISING RATES

	Single (1 Issue)	Annual (4 issues)
Service Pages		
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 Serene Johnson  
[advertising@homebirthsydney.org.au](mailto: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 of Birthings is:

# It Takes a Village



Birthings is your magazine. We would love you to contribute!

Theme for the Autumn 2017 issue is 'It Take a Village'.

It has been said that it takes a village to raise a child.. Does this start from the pregnancy? How does "the village" help the birthing woman? - What kind of wider support gathers around to assist the new life coming into the world? Do neighbours drop food around? Did your online "due date" group provide extra emotional support? A Village could mean many things these days – from the people you live near, or work with, hire to assist you or even just interact with online. Who is your village? and How did your village help when your family expanded? We would love to hear your story.

Submissions are due by February 4th, 2017.

Please check our submission guidelines on page 2 and don't forget a bio!

Email the Editor at [editor@homebirthsydney.org.au](mailto:editor@homebirthsydney.org.au)

REMINDER: Please ensure that we have your correct email address so you can receive membership expiry reminders as well as our newsletter. If you have recently moved, please send us your new address: [member@homebirthsydney.org.au](mailto:member@homebirthsydney.org.au)