

AUTUMN 2018, ISSUE 136

# Birththings

Homebirth Access Sydney's e-magazine

Healing

HOMEBIRTH

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## Share your story with Birthings

Birth Stories, Birth Announcements, Homebirth Related Articles

Submission Guide: <1400 words with high resolution photos and/or videos.  
Don't forget your bio (<100 words).

Winter 2018 issue is themed Healing homebirth

**Submission due date: 1st May, 2018** [editor@homebirthsydney.org.au](mailto:editor@homebirthsydney.org.au)

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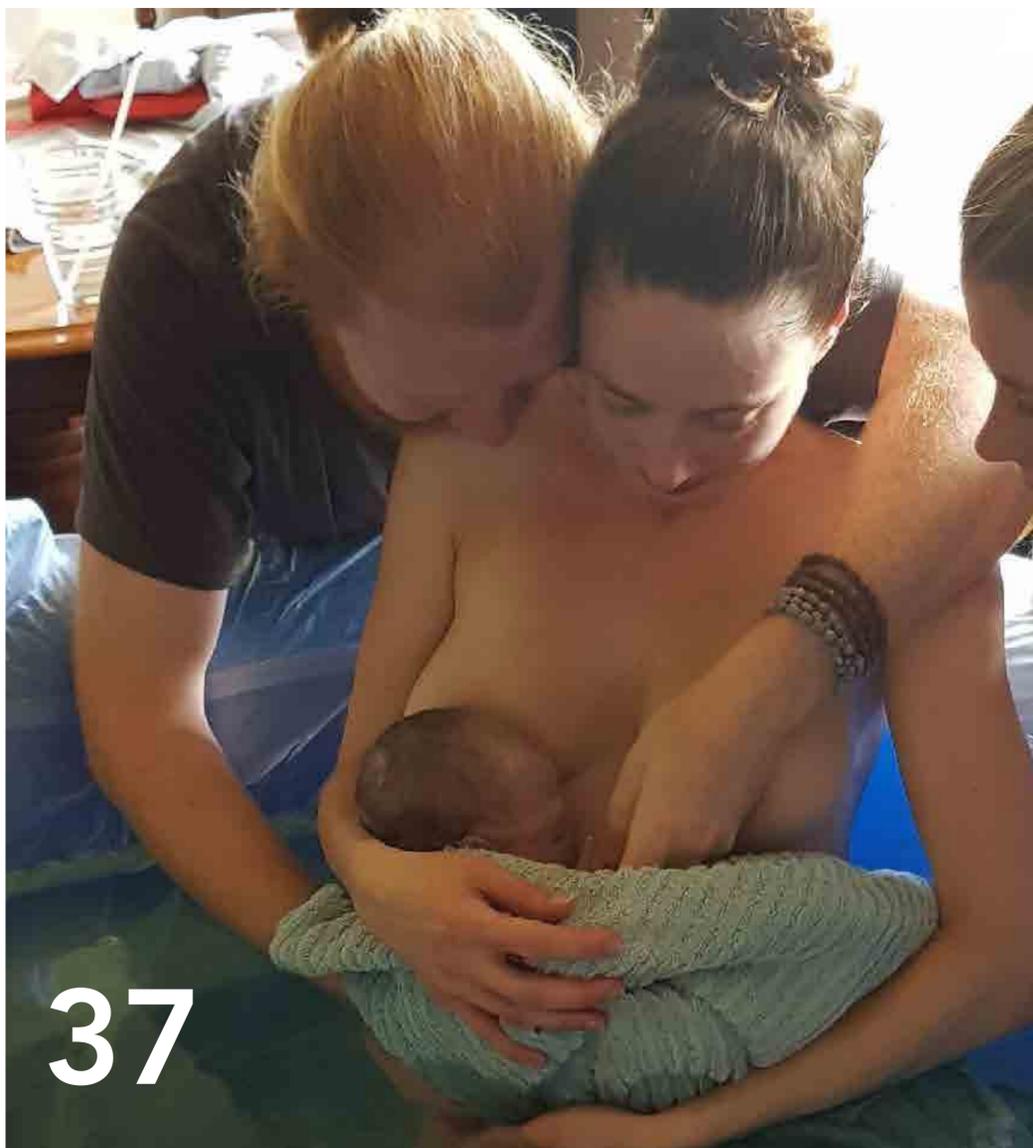
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[www.homebirthsydney.org.au](http://www.homebirthsydney.org.au)



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by Carmel Trickey

BACK COVER 'The Rebirth of Evelyn'  
by Jen

# HOMEBIRTH AUSTRALIA CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

**Homebirth Australia are calling for submissions from those who have had difficulty accessing homebirth midwives.**

**“We would like to hear from you if you are a woman that has had difficulty finding a midwife to support you to have a homebirth, or a midwife that has had difficulty securing a second midwife.**

**HBA has big plans for 2018 but we need to know specifics of how this is affecting women and midwives so that we can all work together and call for change.**

**Please share your story with us here or by emailing [info@homebirthaustralia.org](mailto:info@homebirthaustralia.org)**

**If you are able to share this request with any women you know who have been in this position it would be hugely helpful as we work to push back on the red tape smothering midwives and mothers around the country.”**

# Editorial...



## Welcome to the Autumn 2018 edition of Birthings!

Here we go, the Autumn 2018 issue of Birthings themed Healing Homebirth! This issue is enormous and I'm amazed at the quality, intensity and number of articles that have been submitted (thank you!!). Given the huge number of incredible articles, we have split the Healing Homebirth theme across two issues, so please do send your letters, articles, birth stories, birth announcements and birth art to [editor@homebirthsydney.org.au](mailto:editor@homebirthsydney.org.au) for Healing Homebirth: Part 2! The Healing Homebirth theme covers two separate questions: a) How can homebirth provide healing for women, babies, families and communities as a whole? and b) What do we need to do to heal homebirth? There are articles on both topics, beautiful birth stories, an incredible array of birth art and a wealth of information, experiences, perspectives and gorgeous images to be shared!

Many of the beautiful homebirth stories that have been shared through Birthings, and are shared via social media, speak of the healing capacity of homebirth. Some women seek homebirth as a refuge from a past traumatic or less than ideal birth experience, others find homebirth when looking for a change in their birthing environment, and still others find homebirth before they've yet experienced birth in any other form. Regardless of how families find homebirth, many women and men

report that the process of birthing at home provides healing to themselves, their families and their community. The power of homebirth to heal knows no bounds, and within this issue you'll glimpse situations where the choice to birth at home, and process of home birthing, has healed trauma, eased feelings of loss, and provided opportunities for women (and men) to rediscover their strength and power in birth, parenting and life!

Despite its incredible capacity to heal and awaken our communities, and to prepare parents and provide the strength they require to raise and guide their children, homebirth is progressively being marginalised. Within Australia, homebirth is currently limited to lucky women: those women who are wealthy, fit a particular set of criteria classing them as 'healthy', and/or happen to be in the same location as a privately practicing midwife or hospital based homebirth program willing to take them on.

Furthermore, women are often criticised for their choice to homebirth and declined referrals to their choice of care provider, and privately-practicing midwives are being reported and can face litigation, all for providing the option of homebirth to those women who want (or rather, NEED) it. This gradual reduction in our birth options must be addressed, and as such Birthings will be presenting articles of a different tone, asking what we can do as a collective to fight back against this oppression.

We at HAS are making a sincere effort to support and resurrect

homebirth in Australia, and while we are connecting with homebirth groups around the country, we are only as good as our supporters! We hope that with your support we can revive homebirth within our communities and country, and in doing so, heal birth for all women, babies and families. Keep your eyes peeled for upcoming campaigns and events, and please consider fronting up and participating in these. We'd love your support, either physically or via letter writing and social media, for our march for midwives on 5th May (International Midwives Day)! Join the Homebirth Access Sydney, Homebirth Australia and Melbourne Homebirth Association Facebook pages, become a member of these organisations (<https://homebirthsydney.org.au/membership/>) and support us to start a revolution! A revolution that sees the end of the oppression of women and homebirth, the resurgence of empowered women and families, and healing of birth for all!

I leave you with this quote from the incredible Dr. Sarah Buckley's Gentle Birth, Gentle Mothering:

"Birth is dying, but, like cells in her body, we each have the power to enliven her and to resurrect her in all her glory. What is needed, I believe, is the collective passion, love, surrender, and power that we pour into the ether as we birth our babies. And in healing Birth, we are healing ourselves, our babies, and the Earth."

Aimee xx

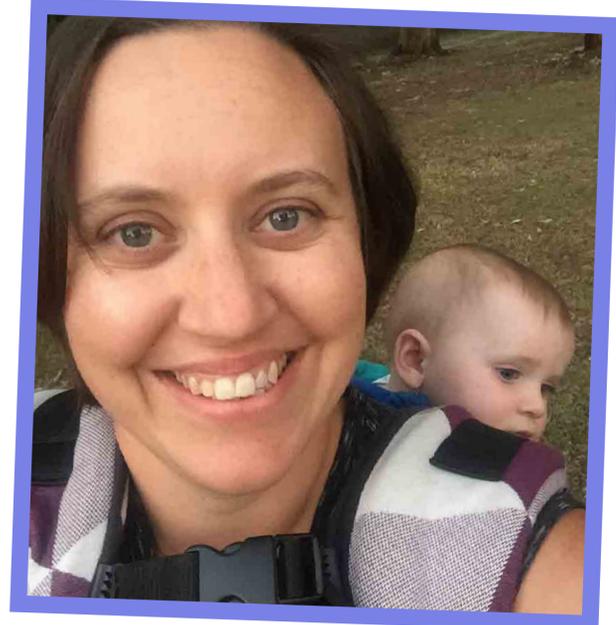
# President's Report

Healing Homebirth – There are two ways to look at our theme for this issue; Healing through having a homebirth and also healing homebirth itself in Australia. We take joy in the individual experiences of healing through homebirth and also step back and look at the wider issues facing homebirth access in our country. I do hope you both enjoy this issue and also feel inspired to take action.

This year is shaping up to be a busy one for us – we aren't going to ignore this slow erosion of our right to birth where and how we choose. This is a year for action! To connect and work with similar organisations so our message can be refined and heard, to listen and share the stories of women whose human rights are being ignored, and to find solutions and fight for them.

This month on the 29th April at 6:30pm we will be having our Homebirth Dads Night Out at The Hive Bar in Erskenville (see page 26 for details), we'd love to see you there! And PLEASE join us at the Mothers for Midwives March on the 5th May at 11am outside AHPRA (680 George Street, Sydney). More information is available in the 'Mothers for Midwives' media release on page 46 of this issue. Our AGM will be held straight after the march too, and we'd love lots of our members to come along - we'll see you there!

Warm Regards,  
Jodie Powell



## Join Us!

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

## Birth announcements



### Cara Mai

Rebecca, Lam and Scarlett welcome Cara Mai to their family. Cara was born into water at home surrounded by the love of her parents and big sister weighing 3.6kg and measuring 52cms on the **4th of February 2018**. They would like to thank the wonderful Hazel for guiding Rebecca through a peaceful labour and birth.



### William James Fox

How I Birthed would determine how I Mothered"...I birthed undisturbed, safely, calmly, surrendering to the beautiful power of Birth with so much love at home in water. Best moments of my entire life. William James Fox born at 1.05pm on the **1st February**.

# LUCY JOHNSTON

## Midwife

### **WHEN DID YOU JOIN HAS?**

November 2017

### **WHO IS IN YOUR FAMILY?**

My wonderful partner, Lee, and my two beautiful children, Noah and Willa (and one growing in my belly).

### **WHAT DID YOU DO BEFORE CHILDREN?**

I was a registered midwife.

### **WHAT HAVE YOU DONE SINCE CHILDREN?**

Worked casually as a midwife in hospitals and attended a few home births as second midwife. Advocating for homebirth and more options for women, organising monthly homebirth meets in my local community.

### **WHY HOMEBIRTH?**

It is the gold standard of care. It allows women to have personalised, tailored care that is not available to this degree in any other setting. It is holistic, loving, respectful, safe care that supports a woman in her different and varying needs as she grows and births her baby. Birth is not purely a physical event, it is mental, emotional, sexual and social. Women birth best when their care providers take all of these things into consideration and tailor their care to each woman. When this can occur, women have the opportunity to tap into their innate power, birthing their babies safely, full of love and trust and transforming into a deeper version of themselves; it is powerful.

### **WHAT IS THE MOST AMAZING THING YOU HAVE SEEN, LEARNED ABOUT, OR LEARNED FROM HOMEBIRTH?**

There are far too many things! Birth has been a part of my life since I was 3 when I witnessed my sister being gently born into my mum's hands; this was the catalyst for it all. I was so curious about birth from this point onwards and was in complete awe of what a woman's body can do. I never feared birth or believed it should be a medical event. When I was 19 I became a doula and birth once again taught me the absolute reverence we need to have for our bodies and birth. Birth taught me the lesson of self-love and growing deeper into my own womanhood. I watched many home birth films during my doula training and felt instantly transported to something bigger than myself. Birth connects us to all the women before and after us and, when birth is left to unfold peacefully and unhindered, there is so much raw power that is ignited. This was where I learnt about the absolute power of birth and how this power has the potential to flow forward and create change. After I became a midwife and witnessed far too many horrifying births it became more apparent than ever HOW IMPORTANT unhindered, supported birth is and that the



system we currently have does not in any way facilitate this. It made me clearly see the importance of birth at home and how special and sacred this space was. I witnessed my first two homebirths as a student midwife; I won't ever forget these women and the magic that was in those birth spaces. I had a connected relationship to both those women and there was a lot of trust and respect present during those births. I was only there to hold space for her and allow her power to ignite. Those births moved and humbled me greatly. The biggest lesson I have learnt is that as midwives we know nothing, it is the women who know and have the intuition and knowledge. It is simply our job to protect her space, support and listen to her. A lot needs to change in this current birthing climate. The system in place strips women of their innate birthing knowledge and power and instead instils fear and has the need to control the birthing process. Everything I know that is valuable knowledge to me has been learnt from listening to women, not from a textbook. Midwife is to 'be with woman,' so I really do hope we can create a new system of care that operates from this one simple, yet powerful, place.

With woman, for women.

# Mother Rites

By Emily Hallam

Photos courtesy of Rose Russell from Poppy and Brine Photography -

<https://www.poppyandbrine.com/>

## I. On mother becoming

I asked for this world,  
I walked through the garden to this particular door  
I opened it and I stepped inside.  
The house of motherhood  
A maiden's flight, tested and tried.  
I plotted the journey and I rode astride,  
Bold and red-blooded  
Metal on my tongue, sword by my side.  
I grew and I stretched,  
Skin taught and eyes wide.  
I lifted the lid, looked inside,  
Burned the candle bright,  
I was Aphrodite all through that night.  
Tumbling through the vacuum  
I roared and I quaked, swollen and ripe,  
Pitched toward death, no turning back.  
Bent over. Bent double. Borne open.  
And I, blue-vein mapped breasts  
Beating hard to the drum of each woman who walked before I.  
The procession of heat, fire-bellied, hip-swaying, heart twisting  
women,  
Wrenching flesh from flesh.  
One heart, beating, on bloodied knees offered up in exchange for  
two.  
In the seconds before birth,  
The sky filled with flowers.  
The goddess lay down at my feet,  
And it was my fruit which I caught.  
I picked and I plucked,  
From my very own womb,  
The child whose seed was laid down in the darkest of nights.  
Perfectly whole.  
I chose this house,  
I opened the door.  
I made the choice to draw down on a star, translating, transcribing,  
replicating  
The universe into mitochondrial ash.  
I have made clay dance  
My code is embodied in another.  
I am a mother.

## II. Unmothered

I drew the bow, the trigger I pulled and yet now  
I wear the bullet holes.  
This house was my choosing but I strain at its walls.  
In the night when the wind hits my skin, I pick and I pluck  
wondering.  
How did this begin?  
When I danced wild through my garden of dreams, my heart at full-  
speed.  
Before I rode the edge of life-times,  
That far cliff of death and the raw brim of birth.

There was a time, before, or maybe not, I'm not sure  
My eyes cannot close now.  
They belong to another.  
My heart, my body, my breast.  
My dance has been smothered.  
I watch the belly rise and fall, milk plump.  
I watch the lip curl, salt beads.  
I am ravaged by the intensity of this quest.  
Again and again I surrender in defeat,  
Retreating arms flailing, hot tears and deep shame.  
My bones dissolving, my identity aflame.  
To raise and to hold, to love and sustain.  
This task is the house I chose to maintain.  
My goddess, I am failing.  
I am unfit and untamed.  
I don't know what's wrong,  
But my tune cannot be found in this song  
I seek out my first goddess, my mother, in the dreams we still share  
I beg and I plead, mortal despair.  
She whispers, bone deep  
These words to me, are yours too, to keep.  
This mother-rite is not yours alone,  
Seek solace, dear one.  
Sink deep in the tide of despair.  
For all tides turn, and rare treasures are laid bare  
On pearly white shores after storms have raged there.  
While the bounty of a child is hard to keep,  
Your walls are high.  
Your foundations go deep.  
The wounds are your talismans, the scars, your guide.  
Go into the dark, mother child.  
Go tend to your heart.  
Come back and lay your tenderness down at their feet.  
No gift is worth giving more than your truth.  
Your love is your force, it is your proof.  
Later, in secret hushed times, I wrap this small body enclaved in  
mine.  
I whisper for Demeter to watch us, imperfect and lush,  
Bullet-riddled and heart-brimming.  
We are not fixed, but still riding astride, my child and I.

Emily Hallam is a student of philosophy, a doula, a poet and lover of courageous voices. After completing degrees in philosophy and political science, Emily first sensed her passion for women and their babies when learning about the historical events that shaped the current socio-political environment that seeks to disempower women. After studies in Naturopathy, and the birth of her first child in 2016, Emily's calling for supporting undisturbed birth was heard. She now works as a birth attendant and post-partum doula. She can be found writing, drumming and tending to her many pot-plants.

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# IT'S TIME

## Birth Time

By Zoe Naylor - @Kaftanmama

Photos courtesy of Jerusha Sutton Photography and Anna Todd Photography

It's now been 19 months since the homebirth of Beau Charles Jeffery – an experience that fundamentally changed my life FOREVER! Last year I had the great honour of MCing the Homebirth Australia Conference in Sydney and at the end of the job, I literally sobbed. Not because I was sad, but because of the power of the information I had had the privilege of hearing over those two days. My soul was stretched far beyond this physical body. As I stood there in front of the audience I remember reflecting,

“Why weren't more people privy to

the information? Why are we so in the dark as a culture around birth? Why is there so much fear everywhere? Why is it that the room only had a few hundred people in it, when the shifts we need to make around birth in our wider culture are so profoundly vital for the health of our future, our children's future and the future of the planet?”

As an MC I have hosted big corporate conferences with over 1000 attendees and believe you me, nothing has EVER come close to the relevance and depth of the topics that were

discussed at the Homebirth Australia Conference. My journey to choosing a homebirth with my second child, Beau, was a fascinating ride. As an actress, I have spoken quite publicly in the media about my history struggling with addiction and if you had said to me 10 years ago that I would now be homebirthing my babies I would have scoffed at the idea.

I was raised in a 'good' middle class home on Sydney's North Shore and went to Loreto College in Normanhurst. The culture of achievement was something I thrived



on. As school captain at high school and even vice-captain of my primary school, I felt very safe in the outward expression of success. As a child I was an avid participant in all extra curricular activities and the 'Type A', over-achiever classification was definitely what I identified with. Scholarships to University and outward success continued into my adult life. Red carpets, Logie land, opening soirees, media attention, blah blah blah – became the norm. Hollywood here we come!



Addiction is a fascinating beast – especially within the construct of the Western World. I have learned after some eight years in long term therapy that addiction can indeed take on many forms. Of course there are the obvious masks like drugs and alcohol, which I deemed to be simply synonymous with the high life, but social media, shopping, drama, and achievement itself are indeed some of the strategies I engaged in to mask and escape my general 'dis-ease' or anxiety that was always lurking not far

from the surface. So, as long as I was out there 'making it', I was fine. Put me in a deep inter-personal relationship and ask me to slow down - Whoa Mama! And so finally, after a failed marriage, I decided it was time to turn the mirror and stop pointing the finger. It was time to begin the life long journey of the deep dive within.

My partner and I got together in the early stages of my recovery, and although that's not something I would EVER advise, his love, patience and kindness really held the space for me. We soon began to call in the children. When we finally fell pregnant with Sophia (after a miscarriage) I went straight to the Obstetrician in a

Private Hospital setting. I had never contemplated, thought about or heard about the importance of this most pivotal rite of passage called BIRTH. Where I came from no one talked about birth. The above model of care simply was THE BEST. My mother said she easily walked through labour and so I (as Rhea Dempsey calls it) had my head in the sand around all things related to birth; seemingly confident and somewhat ballsy, but totally ignorant. In hindsight, this was not an ideal way to enter labour.

I cannot recall how exactly it unfolded, but as it happens on all wellness paths (if you're open) angels come along who gently usher you to your next turn. Someone brought the word 'Doula' to my attention and so I thought it was appropriate that I found that birth support person for my first baby. When



I went to book into this 'prestigious' private hospital, however, they told me that my Doula wasn't welcome. Hallelujah for that road block! Thankfully red flags went up and I was guided to the Midwife Group practice at Manly's public hospital. The birth of Sophia was 'perfect' – only 5.5 hours in total and really seamless. I laboured at home and only just made it to the hospital. She was out in two pushes, although I tore.

Now, most women would be grateful for a birth like that. However, due to my family of origin trauma and my naivety going into the birth, when it kicked in one hundred percent full throttle on the third contraction I wasn't prepared. My Doula didn't come, thinking I wasn't really dilated yet and probably just being an anxious 'first timer'. Aaron and I hadn't discussed or prepped a birth plan and I had done no classes. I began that labour so totally overwhelmed by what I was feeling, and proceeded to navigate that steam train, roller coaster ride not only on my own physically, but also mentally and emotionally. I birthed Sophia (yes, naturally) but the look in

my eyes was one of 'What the FUCK just happened?', not one of joy and elation.

And so, motherhood with my first child was not only a one hundred percent about-face from having been conditioned to be a Prime Minister not a Mother, but also a total shock to my system. I have since learned that I had some birth trauma from that birth. I have also learned that how we birth actually can contribute to our attachment model as a mother and indeed how we mother. The presence required of me to be able to truly delight in that baby was not something I could embody, totally, at that time. I know I struggled with post-natal depression. It wasn't until I was again guided to the attachment mothers group on Sydney's Northern



Beaches, run at the time by the divine, divine, divine Rebekkah Moyle, that my world changed again for the better. These women changed the landscape around parenting for me. We weren't meeting in a coffee shop to suit the mothers, we were following the lead of the children. We were delighting in the play of children connecting of all ages. Homebirthing, co-sleeping, long-term breastfeeding, child wearing etc... was the NORM. Wowzers! After two degrees my true education about what's really important began.

And so, for our second baby we chose a Homebirth. I will never have the words to express what our midwife Jo Hunter helped heal, support, guide and facilitate for me. Not only in helping me 'achieve' the most empowering thing I have ever done in my life, but also for the healing of my mother wounds, my relationship traumas, my life traumas, my soul – my whole BEING!

To my mind BIRTH is and always will be THE most significant rite of passage we will ever go through!!!

I will never, ever, ever be the same after experiencing the deep, deep love, kindness and support of one on one, long standing midwifery care. And I sit here in tears as I write this because ALL women should know, deeply know, that kind of love.

My relationship with my man is more connected, the language Sophia has around birth is beautiful. At the age of 4 she witnessed her mother birth a baby - 10 pounds and posterior - naturally, at home, in the water.

Our school moto used to be 'Women, in time, will come to do much'. No private school moto will ever give her a sense of power more than the memory now etched in her brain of witnessing her mother, in her primal magnificence, the way nature intended, birthing her baby brother.

Women often ask me how do I really feel confident and a sense of self worth

in the world? And I honestly believe the most powerful way is to reclaim the birth space.

How could Aaron and I sit still after an experience like that? We have just shared the birth film (made by the magnificent Jerusha Sutton) on my @KaftanMama Facebook page and pinned it to the TOP! Please feel free to share it.

We have also joined forces with Jerusha, Jo and Selina Scobel to bring you a documentary, which we are in the midst of making. Head to [www.birthtime.world](http://www.birthtime.world) to read our vision, watch the crowd funding trailer and donate if you feel called.

I totally feel we are creating a movement not a moment with our @BirthTimeWorld work and we cannot wait to share the unfolding with you. Feel free to follow us across all social platforms.

I haven't had one moment of post-natal depression with Beau. The delight I am finding from motherhood and the simplicity of it astounds me. Yes, I have continued and will continue to heal, and my anxiety has been reduced a thousand fold since Sophia. But, since making the documentary and learning what I've learned, it breaks my heart to know that perhaps some part of my struggle leaning into Sophia also stemmed from my birth experience.

No woman should be denied the joys of mothering because of her birth

choices or lack there of. No child should be denied the unconditional love of a mother.

Change how women are Birthing and we change the world!

## It's TIME! BIRTH TIME!

Zoe Naylor is an Actress, MC, Keynote speaker and passionate wellness enthusiast, inspiring people globally to awaken under her @KaftanMama platform. She is no stranger to film, television and stage having graced our screens for the past 20 years in such shows as McLeod's Daughters, Seven's remake of Gladiators, Aussie feature films –The Reef and Book of Revelation, Nine's NRL Footy Show, MTV Australia, Qantas in flight, NZ's Orange Roughies, NZ's Sportscafe.... and much more. She is a national ambassador for Tourism Australia and Australian Organic and is passionate about her work as an activist and philanthropist. Zoe is co-creating the @BirthTimeWorld movement and documentary. She is a bonus mama and birth mother of two.

### OTHER LINKS

**Jerusha Sutton**  
[www.jerusha.com.au](http://www.jerusha.com.au)

**Jo Hunter**  
[www.midwifejo.com.au](http://www.midwifejo.com.au)

**Selina Scobel**  
[www.selinascoble.com](http://www.selinascoble.com)





# BIRTHTIME EVENT REVIEW: FEMINISM AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN CHILDBIRTH

By Erin Quinn

Photos courtesy of Jerusha Sutton Photography

"I always feel a little awkward at birth events. The room was full of familiar faces, but in most cases I don't know people enough to do anything beyond a smile and a wave. Fortunately I was rescued by a fellow homebirth mum I know and her sweet baby. Fortified with a friend and a drink, I entered the theatre. The crowd was of a size that would have gratified the organisers. We were all abuzz with anticipation, knowing the calibre of the night's speakers. They did not disappoint. Hannah Dahlen was as articulate as ever, and used the latest statistics and research to highlight the ways in which our maternity system hurts women. Bashi Kumar-Hazard emphasised the rights that women have under the law, and used numerous examples to demonstrate that they are not being upheld. Both women shared some of their personal histories, giving some insight into what drives their passion for the topic. Zoe Naylor was a congenial MC and facilitator, charming us with her self-deprecating manner. At one point she questioned the need for feminism in a Western society, and I wanted to call out, "If women were equal we wouldn't be having this discussion about human rights abuses!" But of course the speakers addressed the comment more eloquently than I could have.

The take home message for me came from Hannah Dahlen. I can't quote verbatim, but she said we need to keep being shocked by what goes on in medicalised childbirth ie. we have to stop normalising the routine trauma of women, the disruption to the mother/baby dyad. Losing your dignity in childbirth isn't funny and it shouldn't be normal. I've had two very medical caesarean births, and an unhindered homebirth. In my first birth I felt what it was to be less than human. In my last birth I felt I was reaching the very pinnacle of humanity; indeed the most dignified thing I could ever do. What can a woman who has felt this bring to her baby, her family and her community? And conversely, what does a woman who has had an experience that damaged her instead of uplifting her, what does she bring into the future? When you have personally experienced the difference, you can't help but believe what Hannah said, in the Birth Time trailer and on the night: We are afraid of powerful women. Perhaps the speakers were preaching to the choir. But the event was filmed, and the video will be an effective tool to get the message across to those who need to hear it - only less so than the Birth Time documentary itself."



Elaine Norling

# HEALING *Homebirth*

By Maggie Lecky-Thompson

**“There are no mistakes, no coincidences. All events are blessings given to us to learn from.” ~ Kubler-Ross (1977)**

This article explores ideas around the concepts of homebirth and healing. It is a very personal perspective and accordingly only a few influences are referenced! I hold the notion that homebirth has the potential to be a healing experience for those who have known trauma, loss and/or grief. I hope that by airing these ideas we (who want so much to see homebirth perpetuate) can gain inspiration and confidence for the task of healing homebirth and traversing this ‘road less travelled’ (Peck, 1978).

Remarkable potential for healing after a personal loss lies in the familiarity, sense of security and memories of simple domestic life that the home provides. There are so many memories of normality woven into the walls of a home. We are usually unaware of these small, meaningful factors until, or unless, we are hospitalised and we

feel their absence sorely.

It is unquestionable that the social choice of having a baby at home is endangered and thus in need of protection. Birthing at home has grown evermore contentious in Australia since the end of World War 2. Each preceding generation of my family till the late 40’s was home-born. My eldest brother, now 75 years old, was born at home. My next brother, just three years later, and me, another 18 months later, were born at cottage hospitals in Sydney and weighed over 5.5 kilos. Each of these later births occurred in a midwife’s home of four beds where the midwife would call a doctor in for the birth.

My mother was given gas for the birth of my placenta; she always believed she’d birthed a twin, not a placenta. She’d hoped for another son as she thought girls would be difficult (you can see I was!) and so mourned for this ‘other’ baby. She called me “Mark” when I was in her good books (Hmmm!). It was a typical third birth: fast and furious with a joyful reward in the sense of accomplishment.

However, my birth was ultimately marred by practices of the day (i.e. anaesthetised for delivery of placenta) that interfered with our bonding for a lifetime. Like child abuse, it only takes a seemingly small deviation from what is natural and right carer behaviour to destroy the empowerment that birth should be, to ‘throw a spanner in the works’ of attachment and, as in the case of child abuse, negatively impact on mental health.

When there has been an experience of trauma and/or loss we seek to close the wounds it’s opened. We seek to heal. Physical wounds seal over but scarring occurs. We assume it’s the same process when it comes to emotional wounds. The mind craves peace and respite from the anguish when we have had an experience that has left us feeling irrevocably changed for the worse. We hope it will ease or go away, but it’s not so easy; healing the spirit is much more complex. Sometimes the trauma is in the unconscious, obscured memories to sometimes be revealed in the birthing and postnatal days.



Sydney Morning Herald

I became a Social Worker after I was deregistered as a Midwife. It was my first experience of university as a student and it was healing for me. To immerse myself in study was a pathway away from all of the losses: my livelihood, my practice and assumed life long career, and my home; as well as the burden of humiliation and shame.

I discovered I could be equally as passionate about a whole range of social reforms and activities aside from childbirth. It was a privilege to counteract the years of what felt like persecution with this new childhood, where no one was going to die or be harmed. The most serious questions I faced were, "Will I get my assignments in on time?" and, "How many HDs can I get!" I sought fieldwork placements unrelated to midwifery and learned more about other social movements and my former career as a midwife in that broader perspective.

Birth is a social event, it is not a medical procedure. It's a journey a woman or a couple embarks on



Elaine Norling

where they hope to emerge well-armed for their lives as parents. While few might express this, it's a fundament of our biological instincts. Yet this is effectively obscured in today's conservative political climate by hospital propaganda of fear, and false popular understandings of our bodies' capacities; it is necessary and an immense triumph to extend our boundaries of pain and endurance for the ongoing requirements mothering asks of us.

Historically and to this day this social event includes caring for a member of our home or community through the rite of passage of motherhood, and of welcoming a new member into that community. When we partake or share in these vital experiences our lives are enhanced. We all feel a positivity that comes from knowing that by sharing a lot of love and energy, we have the innate ability to survive ANYTHING that can be placed in our paths. Our potential for healing is elevated when we are in familiar surroundings,



Photographer Unknown

amongst people who love us; those we know and trust. It is similar to the connection between people who have shared similar trauma or loss, and it helps us to make steps to firstly understand and make sense of what has happened to us and then to work out how we can live with it.

The grief of loss, be it a spontaneous miscarriage or a termination, the loss of a full term baby, the loss of a dream that falls short of a fulfilling birth experience, or the loss for a midwife of a beloved career, will involve pain and sadness, and the quality and nature of this bereavement may be different for each of us. We know about the stages of grief, that they don't necessarily occur in the order the wonderful Elizabeth Kubler- Ross (1977) predicted, and that there isn't always a much craved for end-date to mourning. The degree of grief may equate with the investment we put into our expectations of an experience, or it may not. Grief may completely blindside us. Take for example the couple with an unplanned pregnancy who assume their lives won't change and then, when the pregnancy ends prematurely, their feelings of loss are huge and accompanied by a sense of guilt and bewilderment.

"Inasmuch as there were no external results, it might be supposed that nothing of importance could be happening within. (However) ... pregnancy involves more than physical changes. The bearing of children is a biological task. The roots of the maternal instinct reach back into the

deepest layers of a woman's nature, touching forces of which she may be profoundly unconscious. When a woman becomes pregnant these ancient powers stir within her, whether she knows it or not, and she disregards them only at her own peril." ~ Harding (1970:155).

My interest in midwifery matters inevitably influenced my honours thesis in my Social Work degree. I chose to examine how practitioners in a post abortion bereavement agency conceptualise and integrate spirituality into practice. My findings in this research showed that there are fundamentally three 'interventions' that can assist in the processes of grief: metaphor, ritual and storytelling. These interventions don't necessarily heal the hurt, bring resolution or eradicate the past experience. However, the findings of my thesis revealed "the spiritually derived and theoretical basis for the use of metaphor, ritual and storytelling techniques" as powerful tools that had the potential to help. I additionally reported that referring to these three elements of metaphor, ritual and storytelling were equally as helpful in other areas of loss and grief that I encountered as a counselor in social work.

Whilst I won't explore metaphors and storytelling any further here, I do want to share sociologist Bocock 's ideas about rituals:

"Rituals relate to key areas of our lives – to our sense of community or

lack of it; to social cohesion or social conflict; to the human body, death, birth, illness, health, sexuality; and to symbols of beauty and holiness... (Rituals) deepen our experience of ourselves, our bodies and of one another." ~ Bocock (1974: 24).

And,

"... Rituals relate people to their bodies in ways, which few other social actions do... by using their bodies to express feeling and ideas. This use of ritual is therapeutic and healing, emotionally and bodily." ~ Bocock (1974:36).

To the question of how we can heal homebirth. I'm not sure it can be restored to its historical 'Call the Midwife' depiction as the most appropriate and loved-by-many option. The question calls for modern actions for our time.

In my short life-span, compared with the entire history of home birthing in Australia, I have witnessed and been part of awful court cases that rocked our movement and took away the livelihoods of good women and men. Some will remember the wonderful Victorian GP homebirth champion Dr John Stevenson who, upon being deregistered in the early 90's, chained himself to a court arena and went on a hunger strike (he was no longer young and never really recovered before he died). All of those caring carers, devastated and their wisdom lost to their communities.

Many other midwives and doctors have come under intense scrutiny and suffered at the hands of our bureaucracies, yet managed to emerge still able to practice, nonetheless wounded and shaken in confidence.

It's still happening! The persecutions continue and many forget or are afraid to be kind; to remember that midwives want to help, they make choices in assisting at births that in hindsight may be heavily criticised. While their protective behaviour may not enamour them to others, they are human and suffering and deserve kindness, if only because of respect for karma: next time it might be you.

I believe the answers to understanding and working towards a more positive trajectory for the right to birth at home, without creating dangers for pregnant women, lie in examining other social

movements over the past 70 years, both within Australia and abroad. Social movements usually succeed, but only after long and hard fought battles. Like female emancipation (i.e. the right to vote and for equal pay), the US civil rights, today's gay rights to lawful marriage and recognition of our aboriginal peoples' right to land and respect for their culture, the current battle for homebirth is uncertain, as is our movement's future.

Political leanings and social change can occur, and it's often astounding when it does. For example, I remember when the Berlin wall came down I took a beloved apprentice to the airport to fly home to Germany to celebrate with her brother; we were so amazed to see it happen in our lifetimes! Do hold onto hope, hope theory (Snyder, 2002) is so encouraging.

To bring about change only takes a few determined, hard-working people, with the right oratory and means to influence others to a more positive outlook and appreciation of homebirth. Perhaps social media will work for the movement as it did for Obama. Perhaps Birth Time, the wonderful film being made by Jo Hunter's remarkable team, can turn the tide of repression, suspicion and persecution and overcome the prejudice and fear mongering evident in the media, popular press and the courts. This demeaning process is evident in the rulings that demand austere measures of independent midwives. No other profession is required to account for their practice by enforcing the draconian and punitive reporting that is necessary of privately practicing midwives to provide care.

I believe it won't always be a downward trend. There will be more successes, great news stories, fabulous filmmaking, famous people choosing homebirth and shouting it from the rooftops and victorious breakthroughs in our influence to improve hospital birth options, all of which will serve to legitimise birthing at home. I don't know where help will come from, just like in the toughest of labours, but I do know that rituals, storytelling and reminding each other of metaphors such as I've given, are important for the survival of individuals and communities in the homebirth movement as a collective. Instead of viewing the movement

of homebirth as sick, or in need of healing, we can apply a different lens: one that anticipates that survival is about adapting and being able to change. We must also remember the importance of keeping a steady course. Keep publishing, keep supporting and keep holding space for each other. Celebrate each beloved baby's entry to our planet with ritual and storytelling; each small domestic triumph of every woman who claims her right to be in control of her birth and its environment.

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**Maggie's career as a midwife spanned 30 years, 20 of those as a homebirth midwife. Attending over 1200 births, Maggie was a founding member of Homebirth Access Sydney, commenced to support others like herself and to find midwives prepared to attend their homebirths. She began the Australian Society of Independent Midwives in order to lobby governments, and published its newsletter *The Communiqué* to liaise with and support other independently-practicing midwives in Australia. Maggie provided apprenticeships for twenty-two midwives.**

**Maggie was deregistered as a nurse and midwife in 1998. She then studied to become a social worker, employed**

**in mental health crisis work. She likens this work to midwifery, noting both careers are all about helping people out of tight spots! Maggie retired from paid employment in 2016 and now lives happily on Sydney's northern beaches.**



Greg McCarthy



Liz Raso

# Useful FAAS links

Information about homebirth, including why to choose a homebirth, preparation ideas, information on the safety of homebirth, links to homebirth and homebirth in the media - <https://www.homebirthsydney.org.au/homebirth/>

HOMEBIRTH AND  
NATURAL PARENTING  
SUPPORT GROUPS



Photo courtesy of Amy K. Zuercher

FIND A MIDWIFE

CHOOSING A MIDWIFE

GUIDE TO CHOOSING  
A MIDWIFE

HAS ONLINE  
SHOP  
containing books, clothes  
and past issues of Birthings  
magazine

SERVICES PAGE  
links to childbirth educators, doulas,  
fitness and exercise, homebirth  
supplies, lactation services, natural  
therapies, natural toys and clothing,  
photographers, placenta services,  
pregnancy and birth art, seminars,  
workshops and courses and wellbeing  
and food products.



By Elli Miller

Photos courtesy of Tara Mahoney

**C**hoosing where and how you will birth your baby is one of the most important decisions you will make. For me, this was also a very healing experience. Pregnant with our first baby, homebirth was never considered, not because I couldn't or was against it but because I never really realised it was an option. I always wanted a natural birth and thought I could achieve that through my local hospital.

After a pretty normal pregnancy, at 39 weeks I showed all the signs of pre-eclampsia. This was the start of a very long cascade of interventions rife with unwanted procedures which led to the birth of our daughter via emergency caesarean. How did I come out of that birth? Grateful we had a healthy baby girl but so sad, powerless and angry. I didn't want to announce the arrival of our daughter and cried for weeks. I was hurt, I was broken and I had birth trauma.

Having more children was always something I had wanted and a few months after our daughter was born I started my healing experience. I requested a copy of our daughters

birth documents and sat down and read what I could understand, crying with every word read. I joined some VBAC Facebook groups and started researching like crazy. I knew having a natural birth was the only option for me and eventually I came across homebirth. At first it sounded so logical, I knew I wouldn't have to put up a fight and could birth in water without monitoring the way I wanted to. It just seemed so right. After convincing my husband (thanks to my amazing midwife should I say!) homebirth it was and I never looked back (and neither did he).

Our second baby and first son, Hugo, was born beautifully into water in March last year. During this birth, I was surrounded by my husband, midwife and doula while our daughter Annie slept right through. Hugo's birth was one of the most incredible, powerful and healing experiences I've ever had! My anger, pain and sadness from my previous traumatic birth were finally laid to rest. Hugo's birth completed my healing journey and this is the case for many other women who have had a homebirth after previous traumatic

births. As my rock star midwife Jo Hunter said, "A woman choosing to have a homebirth is placed at the centre of their own experience, supported to empower themselves with knowledge and skill, given time and encouraged by their midwife, as well as surrounded by those they love and people who believe and trust in their ability to give birth."

THIS was everything I felt and more! Giving birth at home gives mothers and babies the best start in life with a higher chance of enjoying a natural, physiological birth, continuity of care and a much lower chance of experiencing unnecessary medical interventions. For many women like myself, homebirth provides us with the healing experience we need. Elli is a wife to John and stay at home mum to Annie (2 years old) and Hugo (10 months old). She loves baby wearing, breastfeeding and has become a real homebirth advocate. Elli hopes in sharing her story she gives other VBAC and pre-eclampsia mums the inspiration and courage that 'you can do this!'

# WELCOME TO MY SACRED CAVE

By Yumi Takahashi

This work is about female spirituality and the sacred rite of passage of pregnancy. Welcome to my sacred cave is the permission every woman gives during birth. The permission of opening her body up for life, the people around her and divine energy. The energy we experience during birth is very powerful and comes from a source much greater than us. Whether this is conscious or not, it is overwhelming and is felt, and is sacred. I believe female spirituality and connection with the divine lies in this moment.

The female forms are self-portraits, but I also see these as universal forms representing all women, birthing and non-birthing. These figures contain female sacred energy; the sacredness we are all born with and release during birth. The caves represent that inner sacred space where divinity becomes materiality. The rocks represent the entrance to the cave: a tomb, a fortress.

I feel pregnancy and birth is the moment where divine energy communicates to our conscious earth energy. This work is exploring these ideas of feminine spirituality and its important role around birth.



# REFLECTIONS ON A *Homebirth Miscarriage*

By Grace Sweeney

Photos courtesy of Grace Sweeney

**T**his is an edited version of a series of posts that were first published on the Melbourne Homebirth Association Facebook page in November last year.

It was the weekend of the Homebirth Australia Conference, and I'd left my husband and toddler at home in Melbourne to travel up to Sydney. I was 9-10 weeks pregnant. I started spotting during the Friday workshops, and by Saturday afternoon, despite knowing that spotting was common in early pregnancy, I knew with certainty that I was having a miscarriage.

I withdrew from the conference dinner and sequestered myself away in my apartment with sushi and chocolate - a pity party for one. By Sunday morning, I thought I had things together and felt I was capable of returning to the final day of the conference. I'd already missed the last Saturday afternoon session, and didn't want to miss any more if I could help it.

But my body had other ideas. I stood up in the morning tea break and felt everything I was wearing instantly soak. I quickly got myself to the toilet and watched in horror as blood and clots continued to gush. My previous miscarriage had ended in a D&C, so I naively had no idea to expect so much blood. It felt like a nightmare - alone in a disabled toilet, far from home, surrounded by more blood than a thriller film, and no idea how to make it all stop so I could get the hell out of there, get on a plane, and get home to my family.

But I wasn't alone for long. The cubicle was quickly full of incredible women, holding me, hugging me, being with me. My midwife was on the phone. A hotel room was found for me to rest in, and I could start to piece myself back together. I took a bath and tried to connect with my baby and my womb - a wordless mourning song came out of me unbidden. I told my womb no more outbursts, that it

wasn't the time or the place, and that I needed her to keep things together until we were safely home. She listened.

I numbly got on the plane, arrived home without incident and I took myself to bed. I was on bedrest for five days, in the hope that bubs might still be hanging in there, as I'd had no more cramps and the sac hadn't passed. I continued to crochet the blanket I started when I learned I was pregnant (I'd declined dating scans, and other conventional 'evidence of pregnancy', so this blanket had been my way of knitting my baby together in my thoughts and actions).

But it wasn't to be. My midwife called me on the Friday with my HCG results - too low for an ongoing pregnancy. That night, I finished my baby's blanket. Soon the cramping and bleeding resumed in earnest, and two hours after I tied the final knot, my body released my baby. I don't believe in coincidences of this nature.

We held a little family ceremony in our garden to say goodbye to our son. I crocheted another small blanket to wrap him in, and my husband and I wrote letters which we added to the precious bundle. And we cried, and we hugged, and it felt right to honour the transition in this way.

Since then, I've spent a lot of time reflecting on this experience. This is what the miscarriage-birth of my son taught me:

## THE IMPORTANCE OF REST

Jane Hardwicke Collings teaches that, "You have the birth you need to have, to teach you what you need to learn about yourself to take you to the next place on your journey to wholeness," and this was so true for me in this miscarriage-birth. The lesson I needed to learn was rest, and that up until that point in my life, I had no idea how to do this.

In the weeks leading up to the

miscarriage, I was busier than I'd ever been. I was working, teaching, studying, running MHA projects and trying to be a wife and mother. I was already struggling and the usual first trimester exhaustion and nausea didn't help. I'd been feeling less and less vital and I found myself having to summon my very last dregs of energy just to keep putting one foot in front of another. I misapplied one of Rhea Dempsey's quotes during this time and told myself that I didn't have to like how I felt, in order to do it brilliantly, and kept forcing myself onwards through sheer force of will. I commented to my husband several times that I didn't know where I was going to find the life-energy to grow this baby, because I felt so depleted. I don't blame myself for losing this baby, but at the same time, I am not surprised it happened. The writing was always on the wall.

I believe that the miscarriage unfolded the way that it did because it was the only way that my body could make me stop. I know myself to possess a formidable inner strength and I'd used this to power through every challenge that I'd faced before. My husband's cancer, miscarriage, intense morning sickness, returning to work with a six week old, general baby-induced sleepless nights, an autoimmune condition - you name it, I'd pushed myself through it. Resting was something reserved for other people, who truly needed it.

It was incredibly confronting to hold those beliefs and to then come to the end of myself. To know that despite my yearning to keep pushing on, I'd reached my limits - my body had thrown in the towel and was saying no more. The five days I spent on bed rest were the most challenging part of the experience. So much of my identity and self-worth is tied up in being productive - it really shook me to be forced to stop.

I've been told that, "Blood is meant



than the standard model of care. In the standard model of care, pregnancy and birth are viewed as medical conditions, not spiritual events, and women don't have an appointment with a hospital midwife until they're 16 weeks along. This is in the context of a society that says pregnancies don't count until you're 12 weeks and should be invisible until then. How the hell do we expect women to emerge whole from the all too common experience of miscarriage if they don't receive any holistic care in this time? I needed 'with woman' support during my miscarriage just as much as I needed it when I birthed my daughter. I was lucky I had it, and I am so grateful, but I grieve for the women who must walk this path alone.

As discussed above, my experience of miscarriage under the medical model left much to be desired. I was treated as an inpatient due to the perceived extra risk with twins, and I cried alone, in a shared toilet with two men in their room on the other side of the sliding door. The following morning I was told that my body had failed to work with the drugs and so I was wheeled off for a D&C. The whole experience was devoid of human connection - no one was unkind, but no one was particularly kind either. Curtains were drawn, my vitals were taken, the boxes were ticked, my emotional state wasn't a consideration.

In contrast, during this miscarriage, I felt held, I felt loved, and I felt whole. I was hugged, and those with me listened as I told the story of my baby's blanket. No one told me my body was defective, space was held for my grief, and I was reminded that this was a birth, to trust the process, and that my body was wise in what it was doing, painful though it was. This is woman centred care. This is why birth needs to be kept in the domain of those who view it as more than a medical condition. This is why our homebirth community, our tribe of women who 'get it', is so important.

**Grace Sweeney leads the Melbourne Homebirth Association, and is a Victorian representative for Maternity Consumer Network. Outside of birth activism, Grace works in construction management with a background in construction law. Grace lives in Melbourne with her husband, daughter and three-legged boxer dog.**

to get our attention," and this experience certainly got mine. It was an inescapable wake-up call from my body, after I'd ignored and pushed through all other messages for so long. This experience forced me to pay attention to my body and showed me so many things about my life, about my usual way of being, that weren't working. The process of writing this piece three months later has also shown me that some of this busy-ness has crept back in, and I've now put some structures in place to mitigate this. This is going to be the work of a lifetime, but it's worth it. I want my daughter to grow up in the knowledge that it's not shameful for her to rest and this motivates me to learn this too, as I can't teach what I don't know.

### **THE HEALING POWER OF MISCARRIAGE**

My previous miscarriage with the twins was a disempowering experience - the message I received from the hospital was that I needed an operative procedure to complete the miscarriage-birth process after my body had failed to act in the required timeframe, and then further failed to work with the drugs. The experience taught me that my body couldn't do what it needed to on its own, that I needed others to manage the process for me. These messages knocked my confidence and I carried some of those messages into my daughter's birth. In contrast, throughout this miscarriage I marvelled at the wisdom and competence of my body and at the perfect timing with which this process

has unfolded. My womb moved strongly and powerfully as it began the miscarriage-birth, stopped when I asked her to let me get home safely, and continued the reprieve while I held on to hope for my baby. Once my body, mind and soul were aligned in the knowledge that this baby had passed and were ready to let go, my womb resumed the process, and was quick and efficient in birthing the tiny being.

Being able to hold my baby afterwards was also incredibly healing - I didn't have this with the twins, and it just added to the sense of loss and incompleteness. This time, my son was wrapped in a blanket woven with love, and we held a ceremony to celebrate, honour and farewell him.

I do not know why this much loved baby didn't stay, but his journey is not my own. Because my body's wisdom was honoured throughout this miscarriage, I have faith in my body's ability to grow and birth another baby the next time around, however that pregnancy ends. This experience has meant that I'm in a good place as we start to contemplate inviting another soul into our family.

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF OUR HOMEBIRTH TRIBE**

The support I received over the conference weekend from midwives and the homebirth community underscores why homebirth and independent midwifery are important, and why we need to fight like hell to make sure that women continue to have more options available to them

# THE FACE OF HOMEBIRTH IN 2018

By Lucy Johnston

Photos courtesy of Lee Niass and Holly Priddis Photography

**A**s every year passes the legislation surrounding homebirth continues to change and limit options for women and the way Privately Practicing Midwives (PPMs) are able to operate and provide care for women and their families.

As of this year, in order for PPMs to legally continue providing care to women seeking homebirth it is compulsory that they are registered, endorsed midwives. This includes the requirements that they: a) Have a minimum three years of experience working full-time as a qualified midwife in a hospital setting (which actually goes against the recommendations of the International Confederation of Midwives), and b) have Professional Indemnity Insurance (PII). The only remaining insurer that will provide PII to PPMs is MIGA, and they only offer insurance to Medicare eligible (endorsed) midwives, which means that, c) PPMs must be Medicare approved. Despite this, there remains no PII for PPMs that covers the actual birth at home; only antenatal and postnatal care. The Federal Government has issued an exemption that has been ongoing for several years now, allowing midwives to continue to be able to provide care to women wishing to birth at home. However, as of 2019 this exemption ends and the future of homebirth is, once again, unknown.

## THE FACE OF HOMEBIRTH IN 2018

The new legislation greatly restricts how PPMs are able to practice and accordingly the women who are able to access their care. In

order to be eligible for the exemption for intrapartum insurance, midwives are required to follow the safety and quality guidelines for PPMs. You can view these guidelines here: [www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au](http://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au)

### THESE RESTRICTIONS, AND THEIR FLOW-ON EFFECTS, INCLUDE BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO:

- Two registered midwives must now be present at every birth. In theory this sounds reasonable, but in reality it is impractical due to the massive shortage of PPMs and ever-increasing experience required for student midwives to begin working in private practice.
- Women deemed as 'high-risk' (read: not 'low-risk') often find it difficult if not impossible to find PPMs willing to support them. The Australian College of Midwives (ACM) provides guidelines for referral and consultation, and while PPMs can work within these guidelines by asking those mothers not classed as 'low-risk' to read and sign the relevant forms, it serves to introduce fear into both midwives and women when risk factors are involved. Accordingly, and in combination with continued vexatious reporting, 'high-risk' women are less likely to find midwives willing to support them due to midwives being (understandably) fearful of litigation and reporting. This, in combination with the mother's location and midwives availability, often results in the exclusion of a large percentage of women from homebirth.
- PPMs are being audited, and their notes read through with fine-tooth combs, to ensure that they comply with all rules and regulations as outlined in the above-linked guidelines. In no other profession does an entire group of health care professionals get audited in this way.
- The cost of birthing at home has increased due to every PPM now needing to employ a second midwife, on top of her increased insurance expenses, making this option less and less viable for a lot of women.
- Another hurdle which has presented itself is the requirement for all women hoping to employ a PPM to go via a third party to obtain a referral. This is a requirement set by Medicare, so should be straight forward, yet many GPs and obstetricians have been refusing this simple referral due to confusion about the current legislation and misinformation surrounding the legality of homebirth. PPMs are legally required, within the Medicare guidelines, to collaborate with GPs and obstetricians, yet GPs and obstetricians are not expected to



collaborate with PPMs.

- Instead of employing a PPM, there is also the option for women wishing to birth at home to go through a publicly-funded homebirth program attached to a hospital. However, there are only a handful of these programs running and, although they are free of monetary cost, they have very tight parameters restricting which women they allow into the program. This option leaves many women unable to access this care or at risk of being taken out of the program if she at any point falls outside of the lines of what has been determined as low risk.

It is apparent that these new laws are not serving women or midwives. This is a system that is failing to function when put into practice. It is a system with far too many grey areas and gaps in care that has unfortunately made homebirth less viable in the current climate than ever before. So where do we go from here? What things can we do to heal and support homebirth...?

Make a complaint

To begin the momentum for change, it is important that women formally report any care that was/is negligent and/or disrespectful. Our current hospital system is letting a lot of women and their families down and they must be made aware of where they are failing and be made accountable for their actions. If every woman let it be known how this current maternity system failed or is failing her, the amount of out-cry could not be ignored. The discussion needs to be had as to why it is that so many women are falling through the cracks and are not happy with their care. One stream of care is not the answer, but this is quickly becoming a reality as birth centres continue to close and homebirth becomes less accessible; the time to stand up and speak out is now! If all women and families reported negligent care and demanded better this may be the push needed for maternity care to be reassessed.

### **SHARE, TALK, EDUCATE!**

Sharing positive stories really is

powerful! Don't be afraid to tell your story. It not only normalises different ways and places to birth but it also educates and plants those seeds for women who are pregnant or planning on having babies in the future. So many women aren't aware of what options are available to them, or aren't aware of the legislation around homebirth. Additionally, homebirth can perhaps seem taboo due to hospital birth now being the only version of 'normal'. Sharing stories and information demystifies birth and creates a space for women to ask questions and inform themselves further so as they can access the right mode of care for them.

Demand more options and change! It really has come down to the fact that the consumers hold the power. Homebirth midwives have been so selflessly fighting this fight for such a long time, but the reality is the demand for better modes of maternity care outside of the hospital system has to come from women. Birth workers can only do so much with tight regulations and restrictions constantly breathing down their neck. When women, partners and families demand more on a large enough scale the change happens.

### **SUPPLY AND DEMAND**

More demand will hopefully instigate enough pressure for change and the necessity for more midwives working in homebirth. Consequently, this will create a more appealing case to insurance companies to provide PPMs with an insurance package that covers birth. Or better yet, the Federal Government can do this! The time is now to use your voice and demand change; we have the power! Rallies! (People power) While letters and signatures have a time and place, they can also unfortunately be left unread and swept aside. People power cannot be ignored! In 2009, more than 2,000 women, babies, men and children came from all over Australia to rally at the steps of Parliament house in Canberra for the option of birthing at home to be kept legal. This kind of presence cannot be ignored and was reported on nationally. This is the way to be noticed and to provoke change;

to show up and visually represent the importance of birth choice and the demand for it. Get out into your community, connect in and begin using this avenue of People Power to the advantage of the homebirth community. Also, we need another rally at Parliament house: who's with me!?

### **ONLINE PRESENCE**

Connecting in with other families online and spreading the word can be a really powerful resource. Having this platform allows information, storytelling, and support to be more free-flowing and for the message to be carried far and wide. Social media has become such an amazing portal into the worlds of others' birthing experiences. Through this simple medium, women have the opportunity to gather information about different birth options, in effect normalising birth in all its forms outside of the medical setting. We are also able to connect in via social media (Twitter, Facebook etc) with other influential people, keeping the pressure on and continuing to broach the important topics surrounding birth options and choice. Again remember, we have the power to make change. People Power and the demand for better and more cannot be ignored when we all unite. There is no quick fix to this deeply ingrained issue, but the beginning is women reclaiming their birthing power, not settling for sub-par care. It is time for us to use our voices: shout them loud.

**Lucy is a doula, a midwife and a mum to two beautiful children with a third to be born in the next month! Originally from Melbourne, Lucy migrated up to the Blue Mountains to follow her wonderful man. She has been in love with birth since the age of 3 when she attended the birth of her sister, and from then on, as they say, is history. Lucy says, "Birth inspires me, it moves me and I am in awe of women and their capabilities. It's such an honor to be a birth worker and be welcomed into a woman's birth space."**

## CALL FOR A NEW SOCIAL MEDIA COORDINATOR AND A NEW ADVERTISING COORDINATOR:

- Calling all social media addicts and aspiring writers! HAS needs a new social media coordinator!

Please contact **info@homebirthsydney.org.au**

- Are you a great communicator? Passionate about homebirth? HAS is looking for an advertising coordinator!

Please contact **info@homebirthsydney.org.au**



## Community Happenings:

We know that there are several homebirth communities around Sydney. We'd love to hear about and celebrate events, fundraisers, meetings, campaigning and any other interesting news you have!

Please send your news to **editor@homebirthsydney.org.au**

## Advertisements request:

Do you have a business you're trying to grow? Are you a Sydney based pregnancy, birth or parenting business? If so, we'd love to advertise for you! Please send an email to **advertising@homebirthsydney.org.au**

# DADS NIGHT OUT

**29th April, 6:30pm, The Hive Bar,  
93 Erskineville Rd, NSW, \$10 donation.**

Food and drinks available for purchase. This fun night will be for expectant Dads, Dads who have already had a homebirth or those Dads who are just curious about learning more about Homebirth. ~Homebirth dads story sharing ~Networking and fun ~Homebirth merchandise for dads will also be available for sale on the night.



# HOMEBIRTH HEALING

## *During Pregnancy*

By Yumi Takahashi

I gave birth to my first baby two years ago at a small hospital in Sydney's North West.

I had a straight forward pregnancy and was considered 'low risk' and so my intention was to have an intervention-free, drug-free, natural, vaginal birth. I had always seen myself birthing peacefully, quietly and going deep within. At around 24 weeks this began to take a different course. The hospital was concerned with our baby's weight; it wasn't growing fast enough. I was told that they would most likely induce us around 38 weeks. There was no discussion around this, no space for dialogue and that was the road the hospital was going to take us down. As I'd read so much about, I could sense the 'fight' of birthing in hospital slowly creeping in. Maybe we were naïve, but I thought surely things would be different when you're considered 'low risk'. We didn't want to do this

on our own and I immediately found a doula to help guide us through this system. Things progressed and we were pretty much left on our own until the 38th week when I had an ultrasound; baby was measuring 2.7 kg. The next question we were asked was when would we be free to come in for an induction?! We didn't agree with an induction straight away; when everything else was showing signs of a healthy baby my husband and I questioned this necessity. However, every time we responded with a 'no', and questioned the reasons behind an action, we were told that our 'still birth rate' had gone up. When the language shifted to 'still birth' and 'death' we didn't take our decision lightly. We wanted further discussion and research or specific statistics behind this. For us, it made more sense to leave the baby inside to grow than to think that we could grow it better on the

outside. Again there was no space for discussion, and no indication that this was our choice to make. Left on our own, we discussed our options with our doula and kept positive until around the 41.5 week mark; the pressure from the hospital was beginning to feel too much. I was asked to come in for CTG scans and have ultrasounds every second/third day. It felt like the hospital was just waiting for us to break, bullying our decision to the point where we handed over our power. At this point we went and saw an acupuncturist to help trigger labour and it did the following night. I had my show and then contractions started. They were 30 minutes apart and went down to 10, 8 and then 5 minutes, then back to 30 minutes again. This continued over three days throughout which my waters were also leaking. On the fourth morning, we went to hospital and I was 4cm dilated. I was

exhausted but pleased and it took another half day to get to 6cm. At this stage the hospital wasn't happy with this progression; my body wasn't moving fast enough and they wanted to introduce a dose of syntocinon.

'Not fast enough?' I thought, 'if only they knew this was the result of three days of pre-labour contractions!' I honestly didn't want this! I was worried that it would trigger the 'spiral of intervention'. However, after discussing with our doula, we agreed and I was given one small dose of syntocinon. It did get things moving, but I didn't know that this also meant having to be strapped to a CTG monitor. I didn't know that I was no longer able to move freely through my contractions, or that I wouldn't be able to get into water, and that as I reached 10cm they would attach a scalp electrode on my baby's head. I had cords coming out and tied to me everywhere. I remember that moment so clearly; as soon as my mobility was restricted my contractions shifted from powerful surges I could work through to complete pain. At 10cm the midwives got me off the bed and told me to start pushing. Things again weren't progressing fast enough, my body wasn't performing to the hospital's needs and they wanted to do an episiotomy. This was not in my birth plan and I said, "No," as the head midwife handed over a pair of scissors to the student midwife. She was reluctant and voiced that she had never done one before and the head midwife said, "Well, now's the time to learn." I yelled another big, "No!" and the midwife argued back, "You're not pushing, the baby's head has just been sitting there for 20 minutes and it's starting to get stressed" (even though both CTG and scalp electrode showed no signs of stress?!). My doula spoke up, "She doesn't give consent and you are not learning on my client." I was given one last contraction, one last chance before they would go ahead with this. It was enough, my baby came out! She was posterior, healthy, crying and latched on immediately. She was born at 42 weeks, weighing 2.7 kg with my perineum intact. I didn't have a single physical scar on my body from this birth yet when they laid her on my chest all I could think of was, 'I survived. I survived you. I survived this fight. I survived your language.' Then I felt fear creep in; fear of what might have been. How lucky was I? This could have ended so differently.



When I found out we were pregnant the second time around I was six weeks along. I called my doula immediately and I got in contact with a homebirth midwife. We had no hesitations this time around, we knew exactly what we wanted and I wasn't interested in going through the hospital system again. It was during this time that I began getting flashbacks of our first birth along with deep pain in the middle of my chest which I later discovered was right on my heart chakra. I was reading and listening to homebirth stories and all I felt was pain and deep sadness followed by uncontrollable tears; it all started to feel overwhelming. My first birth experience had left mental and emotional scars and they were resurfacing with this pregnancy. I began opening up to my midwife about this and I knew I needed to clear this energy before our next birth.

Through kinesiology I came to realise some painful truths from my first birth. I had felt an emptiness, a lack of connection and maybe lack of love? I couldn't really explain it and I had buried these feelings deep down, caught up with the exhaustion of a newborn. It affected my relationship with my daughter and my identity as a mother. I didn't really open up to anyone about this, I didn't feel that I had the right to feel these feelings. I lost my connection with my inner self, that inner sacred space with my first birth, and I didn't realise how damaging that would be. I see now, I was stuck in an environment where there was no space for this connection. I was stuck in a system run on fear, and that fear doesn't respect the sacred

and it doesn't respect feminine instinct and strength.

Through our regular home visits, my midwife gave me the space to feel these feelings for the first time. I felt I was finally free, it was ok! She gave me the permission, the space and time that I needed. I am an artist and along with this pregnancy I have started exploring ideas of female spirituality: where it exists, how we connect, how I connect. I see birth as a connection to an energy much greater than us. It is an opportunity to connect with our own spirituality and the divine, and it is powerful. When I fell pregnant, I started painting a self-portrait every day. I see these figures as an expression of myself, but also of all women. Birthing, non-birthing; it's our fears, our strengths, our loves and that sacredness that we hold so closely deep within us. At 29 weeks pregnant I feel this journey has been the most difficult, most rewarding, most awakening experience. It has been healing not only for me, but also for my husband and my daughter.

**Yumi Takahashi is an artist living in Sydney with her husband, Taka, and their two year old daughter, Mina. Yumi has been making art under the name Dear Plastic, a collaboration with her husband, for the past five years. They have held workshops and created large scale installations for different spaces, looking at ideas of everyday happiness. You can view their work at [www.dearplastic.com](http://www.dearplastic.com). Yumi began developing her own practice in 2017. You can view her personal work on instagram @\_yumi\_takahashi\_**



# REBIRTH STORY

By Kate Russell; Peaceful parents, confident kids

Photos courtesy of Jen from The Heart of Motherhood

**A**fter two traumatic natural births at the hands of a highly interventionist OB, I sought a different experience for my third birth. I chose to be supported by a private midwife who had access to beautiful birth suites at my local hospital. Unfortunately, I developed serious pregnancy complications which robbed me of my envisaged natural, empowering birth. Instead, my baby was born under theatre lights while I was unconscious. It was as far from my birth plan as I could get.

I struggled physically and emotionally following my daughter's birth. I had no recollection of her arrival into this world and hated that her birth story had huge holes in it. I had cancelled my birth photographer, Jen Shipston from The Heart of Motherhood, on the morning of her birth as she was not permitted into theatre with me. This is a decision I have since regretted because she could have captured images that might have filled in some blanks surrounding my daughter's birth.

I phoned Jen when my preemie daughter was a couple of weeks old to organise a newborn shoot, and I discussed my feelings around the birth and my regrets for not having her there to take images. She was so supportive



and understanding and held space for me to grieve the birth I wanted. She also mentioned that a rebirth might help. I had never heard of a rebirth, but I was intrigued. Jen herself is a doula and, although she had never conducted a rebirth ceremony, she had been to a few. She talked me through it and told me she would be happy to facilitate a rebirth in my home and take photographs to document the occasion.

This was exactly what I needed. We organised the date to be the date my daughter was due to be born; she was four weeks old. I arranged for the people who had travelled closely with me on my pregnancy and birth journey to be there with us that day; this would be my birth team. My midwife and my very close friend and midwife-in-training played a very important role in my rebirth ceremony, they held my hand and listened to the letter I read

aloud to my daughter as she was re-born through water into my arms. The room was candle-lit and my birth playlist played softly in the background. Bath herbs and rose petals surrounded us and, as I closed my eyes, I imagined that this was her birth day. I held her on my chest for a long time, I soaked her in and felt calmness and peace wash over me. I wasn't fighting, I wasn't fearful, and through tears, I felt loved, supported and empowered.

'Fight Song' by Rachel Platten was an anthem I played continuously through my difficult pregnancy and its aftermath. Jen made a beautiful video incorporating photos from my actual birth and the ones she took from the rebirth, using 'Fight Song' to accompany it. I must have watched this video a hundred times on my healing journey. It still gives me goose bumps and has helped me process that time in



my life with more clarity.

My daughter is now one and while we celebrated her actual birthday at the end of last year with a small gathering, I reserved my true celebration of her birth for her re-birthday. Unlike her actual birthdate, it holds so many positive and uplifting memories and is now permanently marked on our calendar.

When I speak to my friends about my daughter's rebirth many of them have no idea what I am talking about. It makes me sad to think that rebirths are so uncommon that people who might benefit from having one can't because they do not even know they are a possibility. I am forever grateful that I was given the opportunity to have a rebirth experience. It has become a true stepping stone in my journey to acceptance and peace around my birth.

Excerpts from the letter Kate wrote to her daughter

*"I dreamed of your birth. I saw us in the water, me, breathing you down with each contraction. Feeling the loving hands of your father on my back...There were candles, soft music, soothing smells of oils. All the beautiful things your sisters and I missed out on in their births..."*  
*"Baby girl, I couldn't give you that. It was taken out of our hands. I did everything I could but it wasn't enough...I'm so sorry I wasn't there to welcome you into this world and comfort you as you took your first breaths and adjusted to life outside the our womb. Please know, I wanted*

*to be."*

*"And now you will be reborn. I promise you that from this day, the day that marks the end of what should have been a 40 week journey, I will always be there to hold you into my chest if you need me to. I will keep you safe and warm and love you unconditionally."*

*"I now know, your birth WAS special. It has forever etched a scar in me and one day, I will show strength and courage and be proud to tell you all about it."*

Kate Russell is a mother of three beautiful children. When she is not running around after them, she works as a parent educator, writer and secondary school teacher. Kate is the owner and editor of Peaceful Parents, Confident kids (<https://www.facebook.com/peacefulparentsconfidentkids/>), a blog which advocates for the respectful treatment of children from infants through to teenagers. After the traumatic birth of her third child, she also co-founded the Caesarean Warriors Project (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/330490444065220/>). This project aims to provide a space for all women who bear the scars from caesarean births to share their experiences with others, have their feelings surrounding their birth validated, and to learn to love their scars as a rich part of their motherhood. Kate is also a wannabe minimalist and enjoys creating nourishing and wholesome meals for her family.





# BIRTHING LIFE AFTER DEATH

## THE BIRTH OF LILY

By Emily Hallam

Photos courtesy of Carmel Trickey from Captured by Carmel

**T**he lily was a symbol of renewal and reincarnation in ancient Egyptian culture, representing the cyclical nature of life and death. Lily is also the name of my daughter. Her birth was 16 months after the death of my mother and 19 months after the death of my father. My pregnancy and birth transformed me in the most profound way, taking the spaces in my life that had been left hollow after the passing of my parents, and filling them with such promise and lush, overflowing love and knowing that I will never truly find words for.

Death and bereavement are just words until you have walked to the end with someone, and had to let go of their hand and walk back alone. My father was a potter, my mother an insatiable op-shopper and mother-to-many. One month, they were both diagnosed with terminal cancer. My mother was given eight weeks to live, my father only six. I immediately left my busy city life and relocated to serve as a full-time carer. After holding both their hands as they passed from this life, I was left hollow and directionless. I set about numbing myself so fiercely that I managed to

put a stranglehold on my emotions. This strategy was destined for disaster, but I felt my loss so acutely sometimes and didn't trust my capacity to hold it fearing it might spill over my edges into those around me, meaning I may lose more than I already had. This disconnection from my emotions coloured my entire landscape to the point where I couldn't imagine joy or envision a future for myself.

When I found out I was pregnant I felt my wingspan extend overnight. I knew that I could bring the bleakness I felt into the light, and I knew that I would be okay. I knew in a way that I had never known anything before. I **KNEW**, not intellectually, but with my entire being. My pregnancy woke up my intuition; it woke up my wildness and my connection to life again. I knew from the beginning that pregnancy was a sacred time, and I set about honouring my body back to life, using long walks and ocean swims to feel into my changing body. I consciously allowed tears to flow as I mourned for the family I had lost. I used my pregnancy to clear space, both practically as I painstakingly sorted through my parent's belongings, and spiritually, as I breathed into all

the density of fear and softened it, allowing my heart some buoyancy after months of crushing sadness. It was not always pretty and it certainly was not easy.

One day, I opened a drawer in my mother's desk to find a bag of newborn babies' clothes and blankets that seemed to have been left for me. I found quotes from Frida Kahlo tucked into books: "At the end of the day, we can endure much more than we think we can," and somewhere between the delirium of third trimester hormones, dust and grief, I would hear them cheering me on and I would sink into the carpet and cry for hours in their empty house.

I had the extraordinary privilege of being supported by Mary Ewen, an independent midwife of many years, and the only homebirth midwife in the entire region of South West Victoria. With a soft Kiwi accent and an unwavering trust in the process of undisturbed birth, she affirmed that my instinctual choice to opt out of the hospital system that I had seen dehumanise my dying parents was both safe and possible. Her visits to my home were quiet afternoons



of chat, of talking about my fears and excitement, of her steady hands palpating my belly and her eyes looking off into space as she felt my baby and nodded calmly. Her presence gave me total confidence that if my birth was to veer from the trajectory of a normal physiological birth, that she would guide and support us. Her unconditional support and irreverent humour was so authentic that I was able to speak with her about my transition into motherhood, as I would have spoken to my own mum, and in her natural and unassuming way she filled a void in my life that I desperately needed for healing.

I was 42 weeks pregnant, and my labour had not begun. Several 'tricks' to encourage this baby's journey had been tried. Needing reassurance, I contacted my doula. She sat on my bed and simply asked, "What are you afraid of?" Every tear that had been held back stung at my eyes as I answered, "I haven't felt safe for over a year, I know how bad things can happen and I can't unknow it." I cried for all the times my mum wouldn't get to see her granddaughter, for the

times they were infantilised by doctors, for the feelings of powerlessness my whole family swam through as we tried to make sense of a healthcare system that would not allow death to be at home, to be on the person's terms, or to be a transition of ultimate surrender. I cried for the birthing women facing the same maze of heartbreaking systemic failures. After some time, I took the boxes containing my parents' ashes, wrapped them in beautiful green cotton cloth covered with peacocks and vowed that I would give birth to my daughter in the way that they lived (and had hoped to die): unapologetically themselves, self-aware and open to the possibility of magic.

I lost some blood the next morning and took a walk to the beach just down the road. I saw an incredibly vivid rainbow in the sea spray blowing back off a huge set of waves rolling into the rocks, and I knew my baby was coming. I walked slowly home and contacted Mary, my sister and my doula. My partner met me at home and we went to bed for some card games and our final afternoon as a family of two.

Around 7pm, incredible pain rose up in my hips and coccyx after a massage from my sister. It was sharp and bitey and I yelped through it. I instinctively got on all fours and swayed, and I felt a deep sensation which shifted pressure within my pelvis instantly. I felt the slow build of a real, deep contraction rising, leaving me shivering and utterly ecstatic. Soon, my doula arrived and her sweet presence and suggestion of a bowl of soup grounded me back to the knowledge that managing my energy in early labour was vitally important.

Mary came and suggested rest for us all. I was guided to my bedroom where I was alone in the total dark. Within 15 minutes of this setting, I was on the floor next to my bed feeling my labour intensify and force me to my knees. The weather outside also picked up, with sideways rain and the sound of waves belting the beach nearby. I left the bedroom for the bathroom around 3am, and a new level of intensity gripped me while I gripped the door frame, the toilet bowl and the bathroom vanity. It felt like each wave crashed on top of the last and I



was using a deep inward count of 10 for each breath, knowing 3 would see me to that small window of rest. I woke my support team by vomiting in the hallway outside their door.

Within minutes, my partner was setting up the pool and Mary had arrived; the energy was calm and expectant. I started vocalising and realised I needed to be in water. I felt my mum's presence strongly and I never doubted myself as I walked to the pool and crouched in the water as it filled. Reaching between my legs, I felt the soft bulge of the sac and realised I was well into my labour. I requested all the lights be turned off, and leaned back into the wall of the birth tub, breathing deeply. In no time I was in a crouch, moaning from deep in my belly. With my innate reflexive surges pushing my baby out, her head was born and

her body followed. She was in my hands, en caul, under the water. Mary calmly suggested I pinch the sac and it instantly ruptured. The moment of bringing her up to my chest, rubbing life into her before she drew her first breath was the moment I was reborn as a woman.

I felt the soaring terror, as well as the love and adoration, and I realised that I could feel this exquisite love not despite my loss, but because of it. I now know that dying and birthing share many similarities, and each are profound opportunities of transition that need to be protected and honoured. I am learning that in that liminal space between existence and the unknown, you can only trust, surrender and make every breath count.

Emily Hallam is a student of philosophy, a doula, a poet and lover of courageous voices. After completing degrees in philosophy and political science, Emily first sensed her passion for women and their babies when learning about the historical events that shaped the current socio-political environment that seeks to disempower women. After studies in Naturopathy, and the birth of her first child in 2016, Emily's calling for supporting undisturbed birth was heard. She now works as a birth attendant and post-partum doula. She can be found writing, drumming and tending to her many pot-plants.

# HOMEBIRTH IN THE MEDIA

**Welcome baby Max Henry McDonald**  
29th December, 2017

**Northern Daily Leader**

[www.northerndailyleader.com.au/  
story/5143329/little-max-born-at-home/](http://www.northerndailyleader.com.au/story/5143329/little-max-born-at-home/)

**Three-year-old girl helps deliver baby  
brother in heartwarming photo series**  
9th January 2018

**Independent**

[http://www.independent.co.uk/life-  
style/girl-helps-deliver-baby-brother-  
photo-series-toddler-add-in-name-and-  
location-ready-set-chaos-a8149491.  
html](http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/girl-helps-deliver-baby-brother-photo-series-toddler-add-in-name-and-location-ready-set-chaos-a8149491.html)

**A midwife who champions home  
births is facing jail in Hungary**

12th January 2018

**The Pool**

[https://www.the-pool.com/health/  
wombs-etc/2018/2/Rebecca-Schiller-  
on-Agnes-Gereb-maternity-rights-jail-  
time](https://www.the-pool.com/health/wombs-etc/2018/2/Rebecca-Schiller-on-Agnes-Gereb-maternity-rights-jail-time)

**NEWS WATCH: Hungary Jails  
Home Birth Advocate Dr. Geréb**

12th January, 2018

**BosNewsLife**

[http://www.bosnewslife.com/38269-  
news-watch-hungary-jails-home-birth-  
advocate-dr-gereb](http://www.bosnewslife.com/38269-news-watch-hungary-jails-home-birth-advocate-dr-gereb)

**Kylie Jenner Wants A Home Birth**

January 18th 2018

**X17**

<https://tr.im/1hZ8v>

**Special delivery: Du Quoin woman  
gives birth at home**

19th January 2018

**DuQuoin Call**

[http://www.duquoin.com/  
news/20180119/special-delivery-du-  
quin-woman-gives-birth-at-home](http://www.duquoin.com/news/20180119/special-delivery-du-quin-woman-gives-birth-at-home)

**Finding certified midwife remains  
difficult process in Kentucky**

22nd January 2018

**The Richmond Register**

[http://www.richmondregister.com/  
kentucky/news/finding-certified-  
midwife-remains-difficult-process-in-  
kentucky/article\\_5e720b36-c124-5bad-  
bf13-66f7dd587733.html](http://www.richmondregister.com/kentucky/news/finding-certified-midwife-remains-difficult-process-in-kentucky/article_5e720b36-c124-5bad-bf13-66f7dd587733.html)

**With strong midwife community,  
some locals opt for home birth**

January 24 2018

**whatsupweekly**

[http://whatsuppub.com/  
article\\_7a144752-012e-11e8-ba90-  
b3c88ae39623.html](http://whatsuppub.com/article_7a144752-012e-11e8-ba90-b3c88ae39623.html)

**Will Jinger Duggar Have A Home  
Birth Like Her Sisters Or Will She  
Continue To 'Rebel?'**

25th January 2018

**Inquisitr**

[https://www.inquisitr.com/4755127/  
will-jinger-duggar-have-a-home-birth-  
like-her-sisters-or-will-she-continue-to-  
rebel/](https://www.inquisitr.com/4755127/will-jinger-duggar-have-a-home-birth-like-her-sisters-or-will-she-continue-to-rebel/)

**Midwife shortage hits home**

28th January 2018

**Sunraysia**

[http://www.sunraysiadaily.com.au/  
story/5192548/midwife-shortage-hits-  
home/](http://www.sunraysiadaily.com.au/story/5192548/midwife-shortage-hits-home/)

**ICM and FIGO joint statement:  
Supporting Dr. Agnes Geréb,  
Hungarian midwife and obstetrician  
application for clemency**

30th January 2018

**International Confederation of  
Midwives**

[https://internationalmidwives.org/  
news/?nid=455](https://internationalmidwives.org/news/?nid=455)

**Breathtaking En Caul Twin Home  
Birth Caught on Camera**

January 2018

**FitPregnancy**

[https://www.fitpregnancy.com/  
pregnancy/labor-delivery/breathtaking-  
en-caul-twin-home-birth-caught-  
camera?utm\\_campaign=ftp\\_  
trueanthem\\_evergreen&utm\\_  
content=5a42b15504d3015c294d3711](https://www.fitpregnancy.com/pregnancy/labor-delivery/breathtaking-en-caul-twin-home-birth-caught-camera?utm_campaign=ftp_trueanthem_evergreen&utm_content=5a42b15504d3015c294d3711)

**More regional women choosing home  
births and free birthing over hospital  
deliveries**

10th March 2018

**ABC News**

[www.mobile.abc.net.au/news/2018-  
03-10/midwives-say-more-regional-  
women-opting-for-home-births/952747  
4?pfmredir=sm&sf184140590=1](http://www.mobile.abc.net.au/news/2018-03-10/midwives-say-more-regional-women-opting-for-home-births/9527474?pfmredir=sm&sf184140590=1)

**Photographer captures mum's shock  
after welcoming 11 pound baby in  
home birth**

9th March 2018

**Nine.com.au**

[https://honey.nine.com.  
au/2018/03/09/11/26/11-pound-baby-  
home-birth?ocid=Social-TODAY](https://honey.nine.com.au/2018/03/09/11/26/11-pound-baby-home-birth?ocid=Social-TODAY)

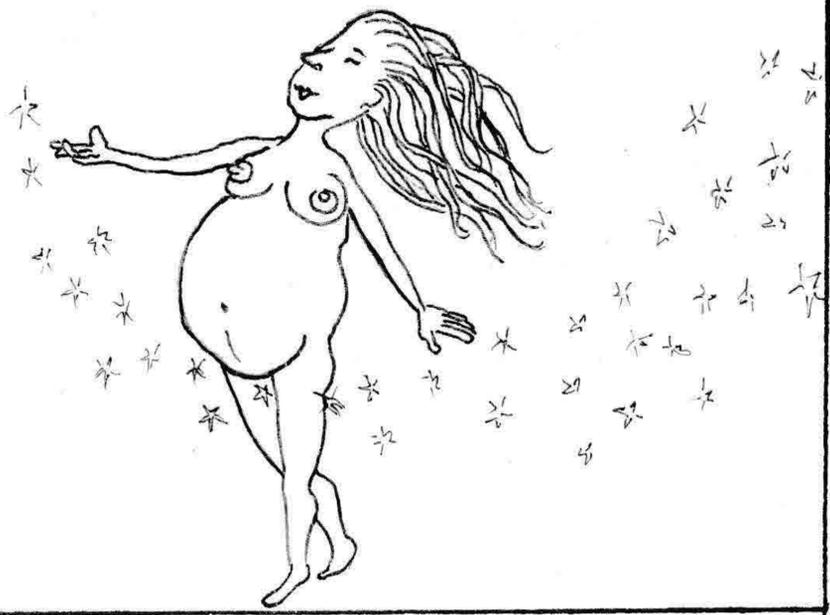
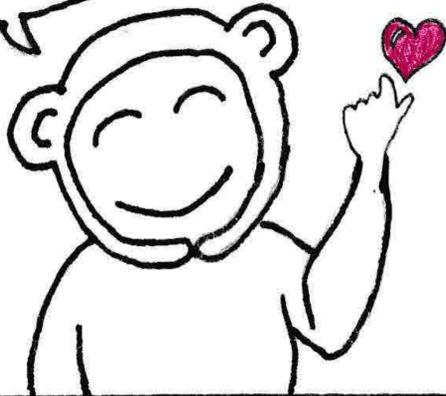
**A Country Practice: the mobile  
midwife helping isolated women have  
their babies at home**

11th March 2018

**Landline – ABC News**

[http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-03-  
11/a-country-practice:-the-mobile-  
midwife-helping/9537130](http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-03-11/a-country-practice:-the-mobile-midwife-helping/9537130)

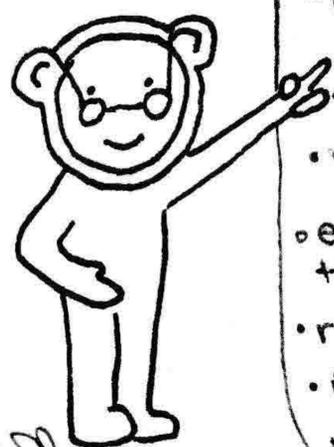
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# OXYTOCIN

FACTS ABOUT OXYTOCIN (+ BIRTH)

- it helps turn off fear
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- promotes attachment (bonding + love)
- eases stress
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- improves social skills
- fosters generosity



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- ↓ bonding

\* Dr Moberg: "The Hormone of love" (2013)



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# The birth of Audrey The Great!

By Caryn Cridland Menage

Photos courtesy of Lucretia McCarthy and James Menage

Little Auds changed my life. Her birth healed me in every way – physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. I planned a homebirth with our first daughter, Madeleine in 2014. A beautiful, peaceful entry into the world is a gift I deeply desired to give to all our children. After eight days at home without sleep and in some strange sort of early labour, I finally gave in and went to hospital. Mads was 42+1 weeks when she was born. I ended up as ‘the cascade of intervention’ pin-up girl, despite fighting every intervention as much as I possibly could in my broken, exhausted state. I literally felt like a wounded animal being shot at with each new intervention. My posterior little lady was cut out of me at 5.07am on 16 December, 2014. This birth broke me in every way. It stole so much from me and my family, most of all a beautiful transition into motherhood, which I had longed and waited for my whole life. The only thing that saved me, and for which I am eternally grateful (aside from my gorgeous daughter being ‘healthy’ and ‘alive’, as people love to remind you once you’ve suffered birth trauma), is that my daughter and I began the closest and most beautiful relationship I had ever had. Her dear little sunny soul and wild spirit saved me from the darkness that could have

engulfed me after the trauma. For my second pregnancy I did everything I possibly could to ensure the best possible chance of giving birth at home – physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually. Little Auds was due on the 22nd of December, two years and six days after Madeleine arrived. On Christmas Day we had a lovely day with my parents, sister, brother and family. I was, however, feeling very full and ready for birth. My discomfort led to us leaving earlier than usual, around 7pm. I thought I had had too many treats when I got home, and I vomited, and went to bed around 9pm. About 1am I woke up contracting; I didn’t think much of it and decided to sleep some more. I went back to bed until about 2.30am; by this time the contractions had started to get more intense and closer together, so I woke my husband and told him we were on. He didn’t believe me after our previous experience. I was convinced and told him we needed to tidy the house ready for the birth. He agreed and we got to work. I stopped every 10-15 minutes and had a contraction, holding the kitchen bench or dining table. These contractions were easily managed mainly by myself, and I really enjoyed them. I remember the soft lighting around our house, and the peaceful, relaxing music playing. It was surreal,

cleaning and tidying the house at this strange hour. I felt so present and aware of each and every moment. As the contractions got more intense we got the birth ball out; I swayed my hips and did some yoga. I felt so powerful and so excited. My husband started blowing up the birth pool. We were keen to call Jo, but didn’t want to disturb her too early on Boxing Day morning. Around 6am I got into the bath. Madeleine joined me around 6.30am and kept asking what I was doing and whether I was ok. I still hadn’t decided whether I was going to have her present at the birth. I wanted her to be there to heal some of her own experience, but I was still unsure of what was going to happen. In the end my husband called my mum, and she came and took Madeleine to play with her cousins. We contacted Jo Hunter, our midwife, around 7.15am. Jo asked James to fill the birth pool. I moved into the shower and was there for what seemed like an hour. There was so much steam coming out of the bathroom that the smoke alarms started going off throughout the house. Jo arrived around 8.15am to see the steam and hear the alarms. All the windows and doors were open. Gosh it was really happening. We moved into the lounge when the pool was ready; I enjoyed the

water, I had always dreamed of having a water birth. In the pool I felt more present and aware than ever before, but at the same time I felt a million miles away in 'labour land' as I now know it. I could hear noises in the street, Jo and James talking, Lucretia our doula arriving, glasses of water being filled up, coconuts being opened. But at the same time it felt very primal

- it was just me, our baby and mother nature.

I didn't realise that I was in established labour so I kept asking Jo what was happening, thinking it could have been the beginning of another eight days. She told me to see if I could feel our baby's head. It was so liberating to actually feel what was going on rather than be told. Up until that moment I had no idea that things were progressing so well; we were doing it! I then went back to labour land for a while.

The next time I felt for our baby, there was only about two thirds of my finger to the baby's head. What a joy to feel our baby moving closer and closer, into my arms. More contractions and I felt again; it was definitely only half a finger now. I could not believe that I was really in labour. Mother Nature had taken over and my body was working perfectly. I still didn't realise how close I was to having my baby at this stage.

I remember struggling to get fully comfortable in the pool while contracting. I didn't

feel I could get the right position for me and our baby and I wasn't sure why. Jo suggested we go to the toilet for a few contractions. I thought, 'This is a bit weird, but

let's mix it up.' I sat on the toilet and remember feeling uncomfortable and wanting to

get off. I was glad when Jo said we could leave the toilet. On the way out of the bathroom I felt a huge contraction. I lunged forward to the fire place to lean my forehead against the mantle and press my thumb into my third eye to calm and relax my body. I remember my husband kissing my shoulders, back and face a lot during the labour and this was such a gentle and soothing distraction. I felt comfortable standing by the fireplace and didn't want to move. The contractions seemed to get

stronger and more intense while standing there so we stayed.

Around this time Jo started telling me to say, "Ha, ha, ha," as I was crowning. I still had no idea we were progressing so well but kept saying it anyway. I asked my husband to stand on my feet as I was going onto my tippy toes each time I had a contraction. They were really intense by now, and I was feeling a stretch. I still had no idea how close I was.

Suddenly Jo told me to put my hand down and I felt a squiggly little head in between my legs. It was incredible. I then knew we were very close. I kept going with my "Ha, ha, ha's" and breathing and pressing into my third eye. It was intense, immense and magnificent. Jo then told me to push with the next contraction; I couldn't believe

I had got to 'that bit'. Amazing! I breathed, and pushed, and visualised. With the next contraction our little baby was born in one breath, one contraction, one push – head, shoulders and body. All at once our baby slid out. I caught our baby and Jo supported underneath.

I was in disbelief. I knew what was going on but I had been a million miles away. Suddenly I was back in the room, holding my baby. I screamed with ecstasy. I had birthed a beautiful baby standing by the fireplace in our home, just as I had wanted more than anything. Jo and Lu asked if we had a boy or girl and I thought, 'Oh yeah, who is this little person?' My husband and I looked down and saw a tiny vagina. I was overjoyed and screamed in even higher pitched ecstasy. I really wanted a baby sister for Madeleine, I couldn't believe she came to us.

Our beautiful little Audrey Elizabeth (named after my grandmother, and also Jo's middle name!) was born peacefully at home at 12.10pm, weighing 3.49kgs and measuring 54 centimetres. Audrey and I had lovely skin-to-skin cuddles and she fed quickly and easily. Once she settled in her big sister, and now best friend (most of the time!), came with my mum to meet her. The rest of the family came later that day, and revelled in our little lady's arrival. This was the best day of my life. I have never felt so strong, so present, so empowered and so unstoppable. I would give birth (like that!) every day for the rest of my life if I could!

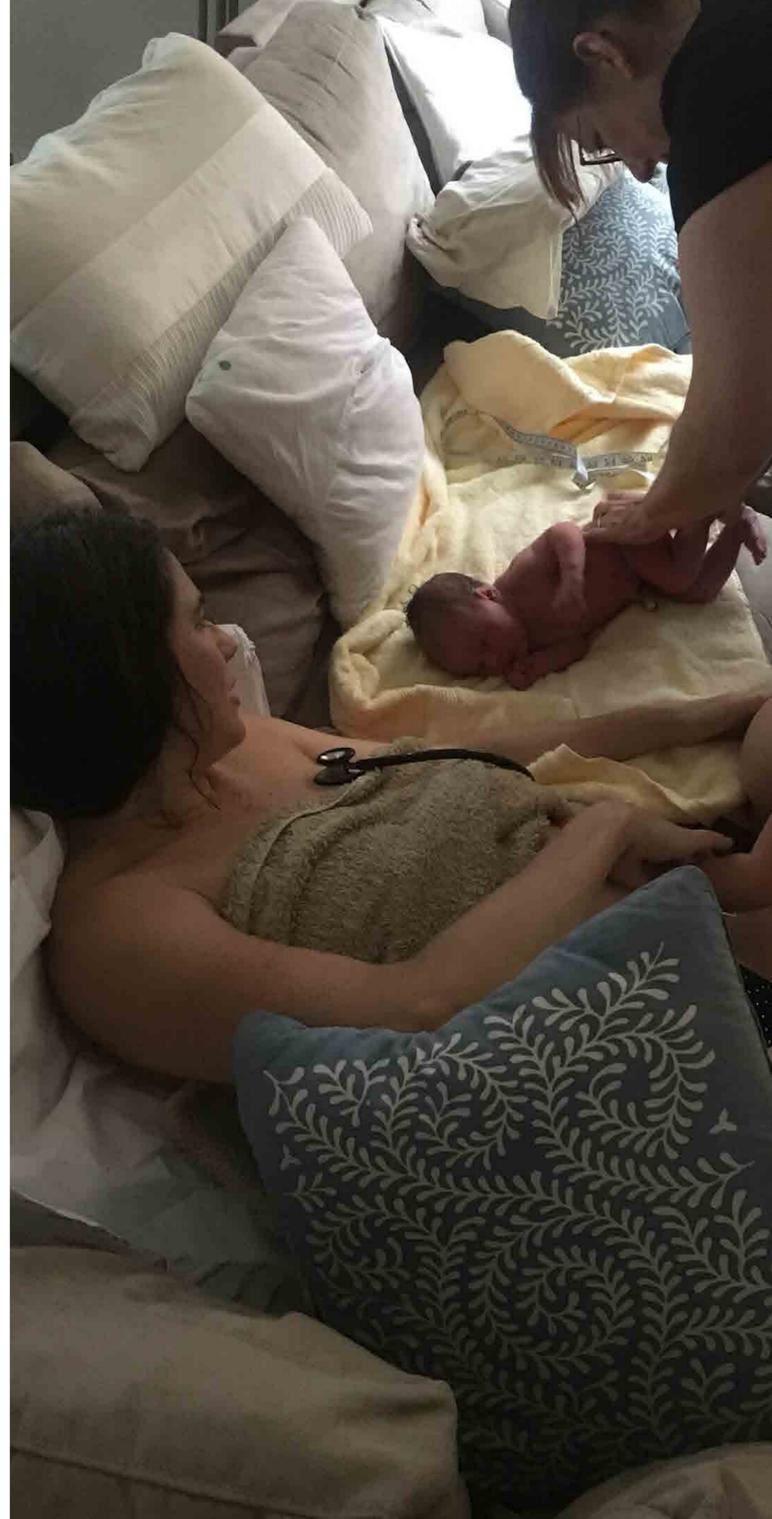
Jo Hunter, my midwife, is nothing short of an angel, doing some of the most important work on the planet – empowering powerful women to birth beautiful little souls in the way nature intended. She, Lucretia and my husband, James, provided me a beautiful safe haven and gave me the greatest gift; to experience what my body was perfectly designed to do: give life to my babies. Life would have been completely different for me and my whole family had we not been gifted this incredible, healing experience of womanhood.

**Caryn, James, Madeleine, Audrey and Noah, the girls half-brother, live in the Blue Mountains, NSW. Caryn has been a stay at home mum since having Madeleine, while running the company she founded, Mindful Mediation**

(<http://www.mindfulmediation.com.au/>). Her immense passion for motherhood and parenting, as well as birth, has led to her founding PachaMamma

(<https://www.pachamamma.com/>). PachaMamma is focused on supporting mothers

on their motherhood journey to ensure they can be the best mothers they possibly can be. The signature training includes two online courses: one a self-care program for mothers, and the other focused on raising extraordinary children - physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually - with leading-edge and scientifically validated practices and approaches.





# The birth of Elias

By Martina Dezani

Photos courtesy of Julio Precioso

**S**o my lovely midwife, Sheryl Sidery, thinks I should write and share my birth and post birth experience. After a year of writing and umming and ahing over sharing, today on Elias' first birthday it feels right to share our journey with you all.

I am nervous to share something so special to me. It's like it's almost too good I don't want anyone in on my little secret, but at the same time I want to scream it out to the whole world. We so often hear the scary stories about birth, but what about the rest of us? After the birth of Elias, I often felt like I couldn't share how AMAZING I felt, how MAGICAL my birth had been and how GREAT I found spending 24/7 with my tiny little man after birth. I felt I couldn't share because it might hurt mums who did have difficulties and less pleasant births. But, in the last year I have grown in leaps and bounds! My friend calls it the 'goddess superhighway', and I have learnt that I can share my truth and my reality without feeling guilty for the joy in my life. If you didn't have a positive or ideal birth, I hear you; your story needs to be shared too. But this is MY story, OUR story.

11.11 was our due date, my special number. After wanting a baby for so many years the little signs like this one made me sure I

knew this was the right time. My pregnancy was spent working, travelling around Europe and fearlessly peeling layer upon layer of myself apart and undone as new and many old lessons showed themselves. The super highway had begun and I felt myself grow and expand to make way for a new life growing inside of me.

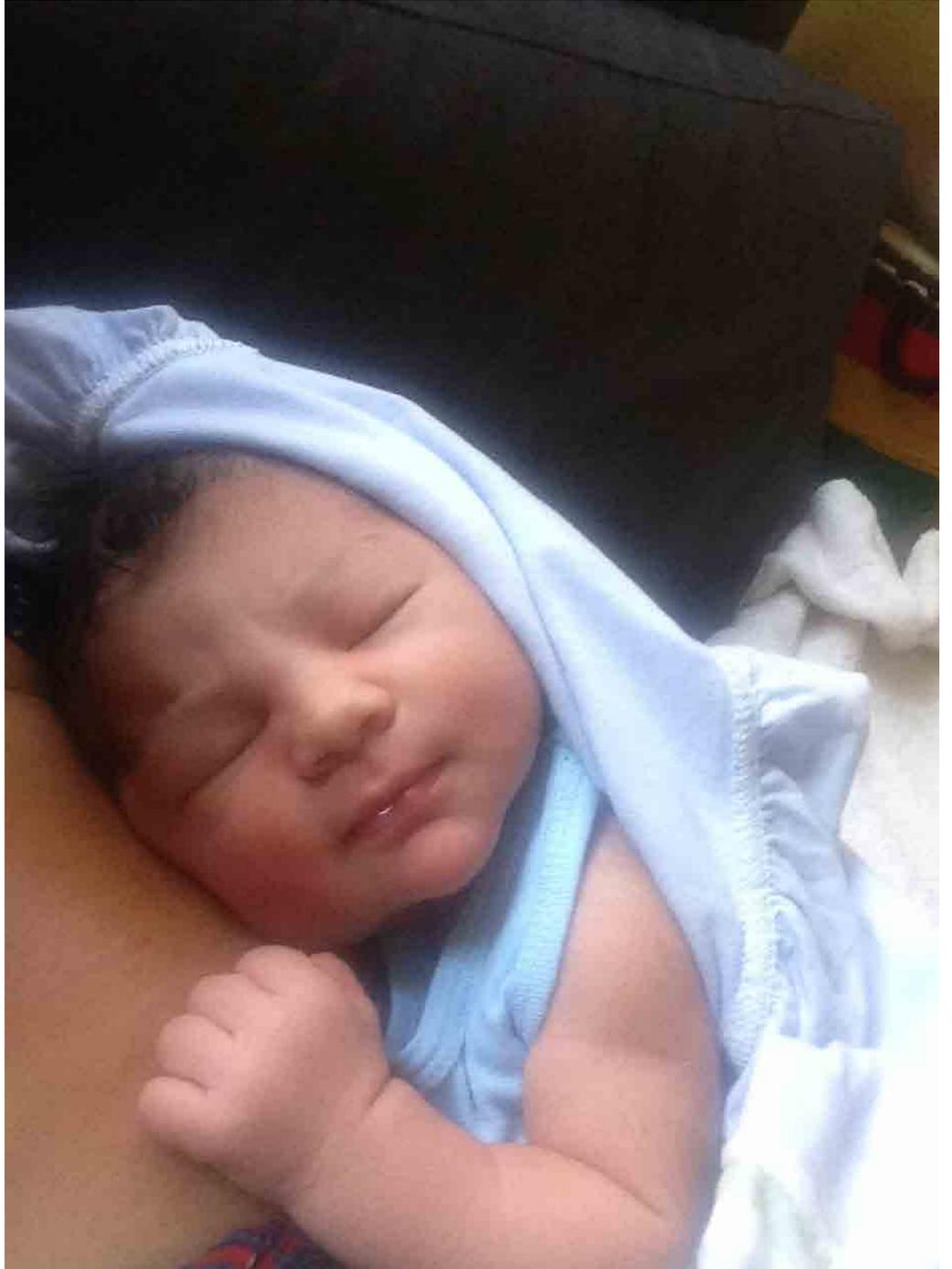
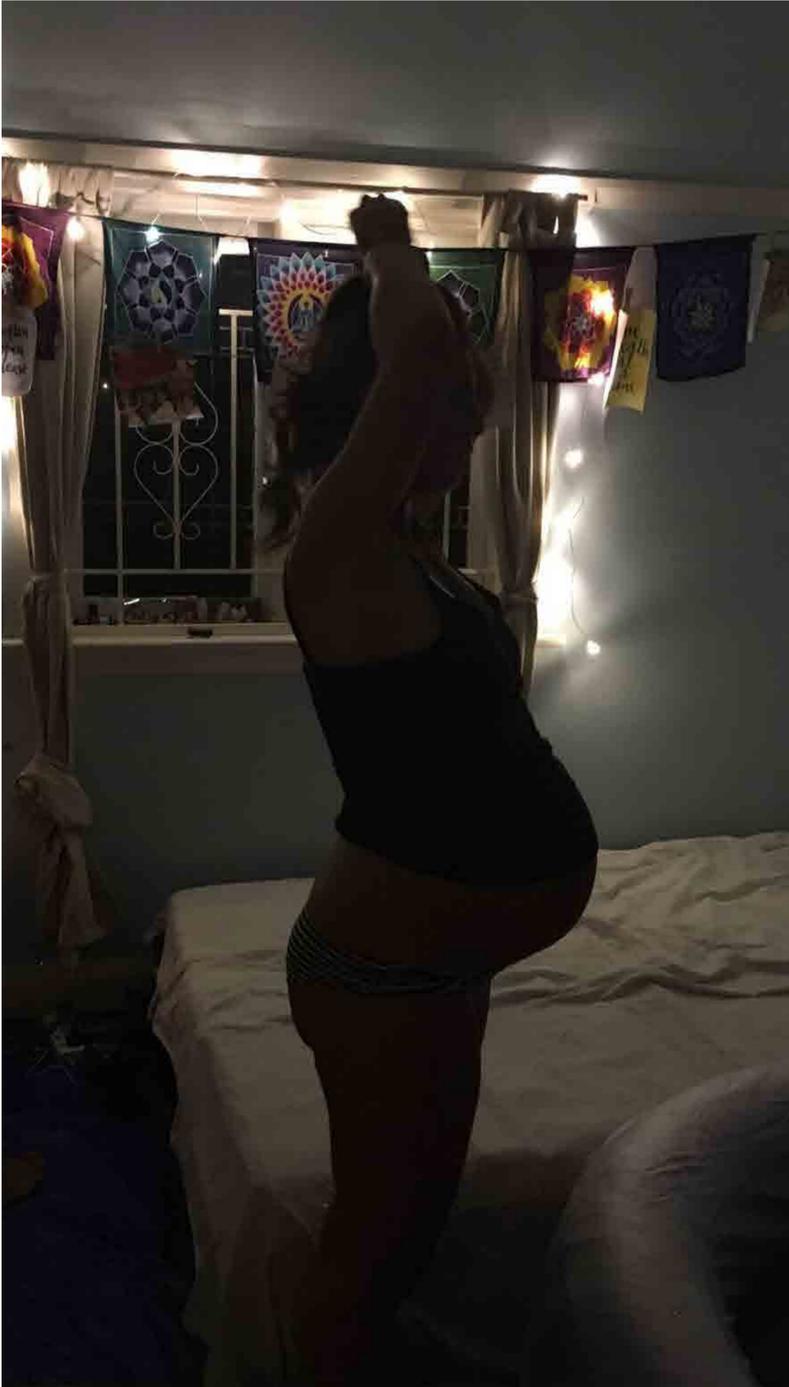
Someone recently called it 'brain washing', and I guess in some ways it is. My amazing midwife, the most loving, gentle, knowledgeable woman I have met, slowly and without me even really realising it at the time, talked to me about birth, breastfeeding and parenting throughout my pregnancy. OF COURSE you'll be able to breastfeed, why wouldn't you be able to? OF COURSE your birth will be amazing, why would it be anything less? OF COURSE your baby will sleep right next to you, where else would you want baby to be?

I now see it had started there - that confidence, that knowledge, that support and that TRUST in me to KNOW what to do and to listen to my instincts. Every birthing woman deserves to feel this supported and trusted leading up to birth and in labour (Sheryl would probably give me more credit in this process than I am, but we'll get to that). My already longing desire and strong

urge to become a mother was coming to life and everything I felt and believed was being confirmed in the books and words I were drawn too. Old friends were blurred out and new friends became clearer; in fact, everything became clearer.

11.11 came and I quite literally called my baby to me. I ran a bath, put my hands on my tummy (yes, I even have a selfie of this moment) and told my baby that today was our special day and I was ready if he or she was. Within minutes of hopping out of the water my first surge came and I knew it was it. I was filled with joy and so much excitement; no anxiety, no worries and no fear. I spent the next few hours between the bathroom, outside in the moonlight and in the dark living room. I wanted to be in nature, in the dark, left alone. The birthing goddess in me was in full swing as the surges came on very strong and close together from the very beginning. I felt lots of pressure on my lower back. I found comfort in heat packs, pressure and breathing. My midwife arrived around midnight and I felt myself let go completely, my last and only words: "Thank god you're here," with a smile and still no fear.

I hopped into the water of the birth pool and I drifted away. What felt like an hour or



two was actually many more, but it didn't matter, I had work to do. Physically, my body was working with my baby to be birthed. Internally, I was fighting a battle of self-love and acceptance, of old stories that needed an extra push out the door and most importantly, I had to let go of 'myself', or at least who I thought I was, and become a mother. I literally remember the moment, in my 'other world state', where I was faced with the decision to leave myself behind. It was harder than I had thought and I struggled here; I was scared, but I did it. I surrendered and I was determined. I am crying happy tears as I remember this moment. What a blessing.

I awoke at around 6am and saw trickles of dew on the windows, there had been a massive storm and I'd missed it. How could it be morning, wasn't it 12pm last I checked? I stupidly asked the time and transition kicked in. Now here's the thing: on the outside I was saying, "I can't do this anymore, I'm tired," but on the inside I knew what this meant. I had read this in the books and I knew I was SO close to meeting my baby. Next minute, my body pushed. Our bodies are so amazing; it literally did everything on its own, I wasn't doing a thing. There I had my first check, and my midwife told me if I could breathe 'over' the body pushing, it would give time to open a little more and it would be better. I did, and that was by far the hardest of all;

going against what my body was naturally doing and telling me. I yelled my baby out so loudly the whole street knew I birthed my baby that night. I was surprised at the sound of my own voice, how loud I was, how I could roar with so much passion. I had never allowed myself to be heard like that before. I pushed for about 20 minutes as he slowly came out and in and out and in until, with one big push, he came out in one go. I pulled my baby out of the water and held him in my arms right onto my chest. From that moment on my world would never be the same again. I became a mother and I met my beautiful son Elias.

I am in awe of our power and strength as women. Those that have birthed before me, and those that protect, savour and keep this birth RIGHT as ours to own and experience. I am forever grateful to my midwife for holding me, not only throughout our birth, but almost more importantly throughout my pregnancy and beyond. That support and trust is priceless.

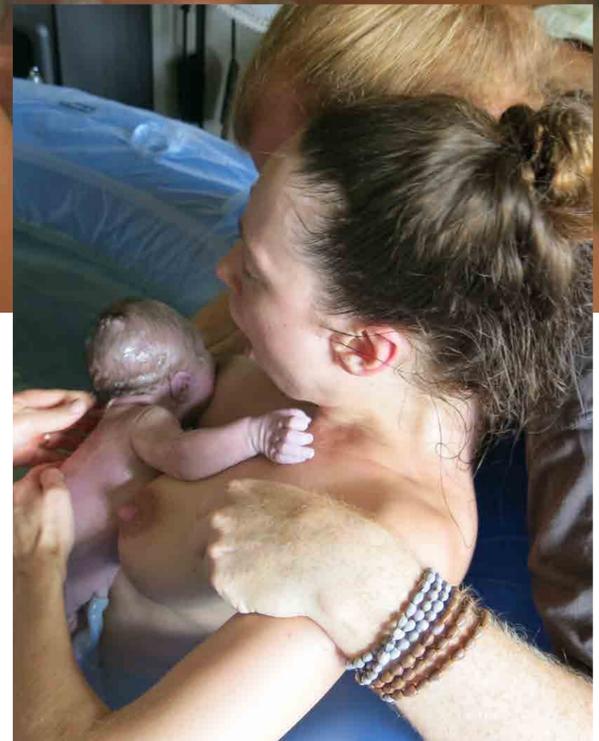
We must trust ourselves to be exactly who we need to be for our baby. Our baby chooses us so carefully and with so much unconditional trust; to make the right choices so they grow and thrive in our womb, to be born into this world peacefully and the choices that go with that, and then to guide them as young babies in the transition into this world. We owe them that

unconditional trust too.

Everyone has asked me if I feel emotional Elias is turning one, but the truth is I don't. I have been able to be so present with him from the moment he was born I have not missed a thing or regretted a moment. Yes, the house wasn't always clean and a meal on the table, but now a year later none of that matters anyway. It's just simply life happening before my eyes.

Happy birth day to our gorgeous son Elias, and happy birthing day to me!!

Martina is a single mum in a happy, coparenting arrangement with Elias' father, Julio Precioso. She has just completed a degree in psychology and criminology at UNSW, but her true passion and calling has come with the birth of Elias. Martina now feels drawn to helping women feel safe, educated, knowledgeable and empowered through birth and parenting, and hopes that by sharing her story she can inspire women to trust themselves in birth and beyond. Martina hopes to continue to ride the waves and lessons of motherhood and hopefully complete some study in breastfeeding and health in the future.



# The birth of *Mira*

By Lucinda Finnigan

Photos courtesy of Belinda Sharrock and Juliana Brennan

Our daughter Mira was born at 39 weeks and two days. During my last week of pregnancy I had been getting prodromal labour signs on and off, so we were expecting her to trigger her birth into the world at any moment. We had met our two homebirth midwives at around three and a half months into the pregnancy, so we were able to form a good relationship with the two of them. Both midwives had around 24 years experience in midwifery and a motherly presence, which made us feel very comforted.

On the 10th January I decided to meet my fiancé after work for dinner in the city because I was feeling a bit pent up at home. I had been waiting for Mira's birth and hoping it would be soon as being nine months pregnant was beginning to be challenging! After getting home that night I woke up at midnight with period-like cramps, which slowly progressed into mild contractions. I stayed in bed for three hours practicing my breathing techniques until I felt too uncomfortable to lie there. At 4:30am I got up and had something to eat while the pain wasn't too bad.

I fed our dog and had a shower in preparation. Then at 6am my fiancé woke up for work but soon halted that process once I told him I thought I may have been going into labour.

At 8am, after calling our first midwife, we went for a walk as she suggested to see if the contractions eased off or increased. We walked along the track we usually took our dog for a walk along, and what normally took us 15 minutes ended up taking us an hour due to 1-2 minutely contractions. When we finally got home things really started going! We put on the 'Lion King' to help distract me from the contractions, but I didn't see a single scene of the movie. I was up on my hands and knees on the couch every 1-2 minutes with contractions as this was the only position that I was comfortable in.

Our midwife arrived and assessed me around 10am. She had 3 women go into labour that day (lucky they work in teams!). My labour seemed to be progressing quickly so she did a vaginal examination to see if she was right and both my fiancé and I were shocked to be told that I was 7-8cm dilated already! I thought she would tell me I was about 2-3cm dilated. Both my mother and grandmother had had quick labours, so perhaps I inherited this from them. At this point the birth pool began to be set up by my fiancé, but he had a hard time doing so as I called him back to hold me every contraction; his touch was the reassurance that I needed to get through each contraction. I felt like the contractions

were so close together and said a few times that I'd just like a small break from them! Once the pool was set up I was so glad to get in as my hands and knees were shaking from the effort to hold myself up through every contraction. The birth pool had been a last minute decision for me; I'm not a water person so I wasn't sure if I'd like it. However, I can safely say that without the pool my birth experience would have been very different. The water really helped me cope with the pain and gave me the buoyancy that I needed to take the pressure off my joints. The warm water was soothing and I could hold onto the side of the pool for support.

My second midwife then arrived and she poured warm water down my back and used pressure points in my upper glutes for pain management (it worked well). My fiancé held my hand and recited my affirmations to me the whole time, giving me lots of encouragement. By this point I was howling, the sound release helped me to get out the pain, as I'm naturally a very vocal person. My midwives were very encouraging. I was able to say, "Labour shouldn't be so painful and women are mad for doing it again and again" (it's funny how quickly you change your mind though)! My midwife then said, "The pain needs to be this strong to get your baby out." She also

suggested I imagine my vagina as a birth canal to help me overcome my fears of my vagina being so stretched and having my baby's head descending down into it. I found this a huge comfort.

I was so focused on my breathing and getting Mira born that I didn't have the energy for speech really. I went into myself to concentrate on getting through each contraction and collapsed on the side of the pool in between contractions. Not once did I ever think I'd like pain relief. I knew thousands of women had given birth before me and my body was capable of this; we were designed to give birth. I didn't want myself, or my baby, to have drugs in our body or to start a cascade of interventions.

Up until now I was still on all fours, but my midwife said I needed to change positions to get things moving along again. I was very reluctant because earlier on lying on my back to get the vaginal examination was uncomfortable (we had to time it in between contractions, like all my toilet trips). However, I did change to sitting on the stool with my legs apart. I was ready to get Mira out! As soon as I did this my mucous plug came out.

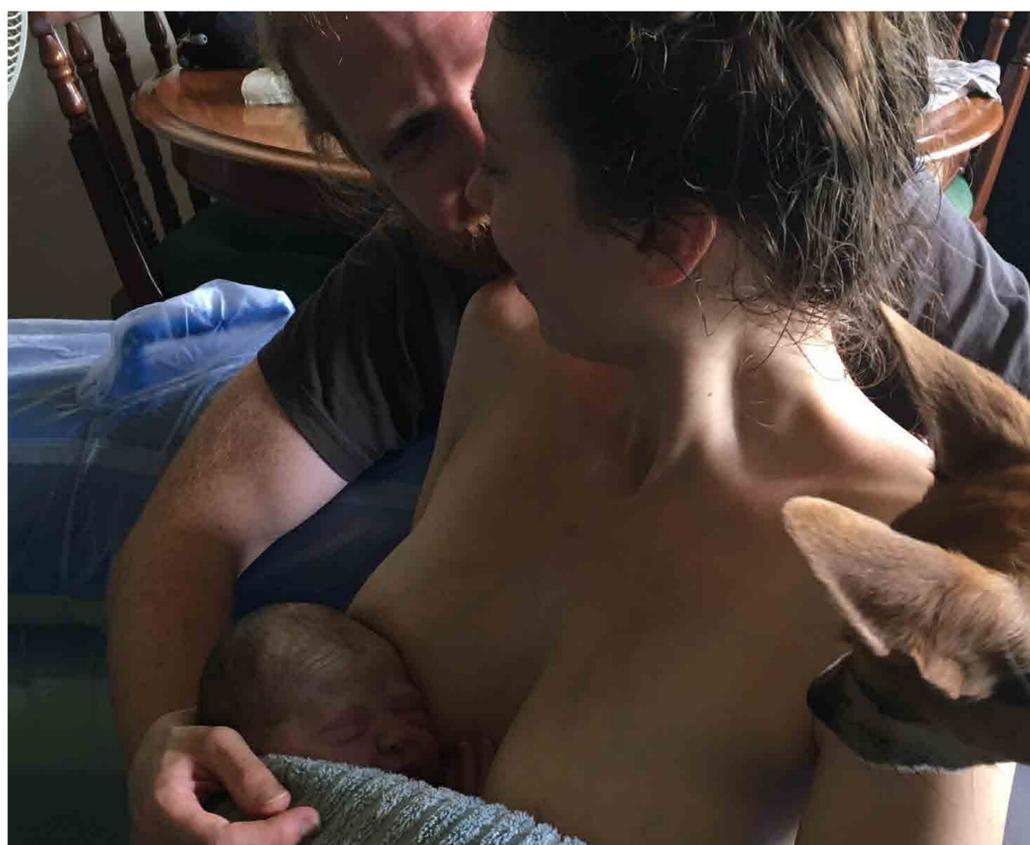
When Mira's head started descending the pain changed for me and I had a renewed vigour. I knew that I was on the home run and that I could do this. It was a different sensation than before, so it was a welcome change. I was shocked by the intensity of the bearing down sensation. My body could not do anything other than push! At one point I looked down and saw Mira's head half way out and I thought, "Wow, the water is really making my vagina look like it's bulging out." I was later told that it wasn't the water distorting the image, of course. At this point my second support, my oldest friend, arrived after a three hour drive. She heard my howling as a contraction came and paused at the door (I was told later on) until it passed before she came in, gave me a quick kiss and took my other hand. Around 20 minutes before the birth my waters broke and it felt great, like a release. I remember looking down and seeing this bubble pop into the water of the pool.

After a gentle tug on the shoulder from my midwife Mira slid out and was born with her arm reaching up to me at 2:20pm. When she was placed in my arms I felt so overwhelmed by joy; it is honestly the most intense feeling of joy that I have ever experienced. That moment will be forever imprinted in my mind. We hadn't known her sex, so after the shock and surges of emotion calmed I looked down to see that we had a little daughter. Before I birthed the placenta we decided that her name would be Mira.

I hadn't realized that I would actually need to birth the placenta. I had thought I was done! I birthed the placenta into a container in the toilet shortly after. We then encapsulated it ourselves two days later. I feel incredibly grateful for my birth experience. I was able to birth our daughter without unnecessary medical intervention and in our own home with the support of our very skilled and supportive midwives, with my fiancé, best friend and dog by my side. All of these people made my birth and Mira's entry into the world such a special experience. My birth was a birth, not a medical procedure.

**Lucinda is 27 years old. Her passion and job are one and the same; she is a Chinese Medicine practitioner. Lucinda graduated from her degree four months before her daughter, Mira, was conceived. She had been over to Myanmar, Thailand and Tasmania in those four months to celebrate the end of a long year.**

**It was in Tasmania, at MONA, that she got the phone call to confirm her pregnancy. She had already known that she was pregnant, as her morning (all day) sickness had really kicked in. Lucinda's dream had always been first and foremost to be a mum, so from conception to the birth of her daughter, and having her as a beautiful addition to the family, she has felt like the luckiest woman alive. Lucinda believes pregnancy and birth to be an everyday miracle.**





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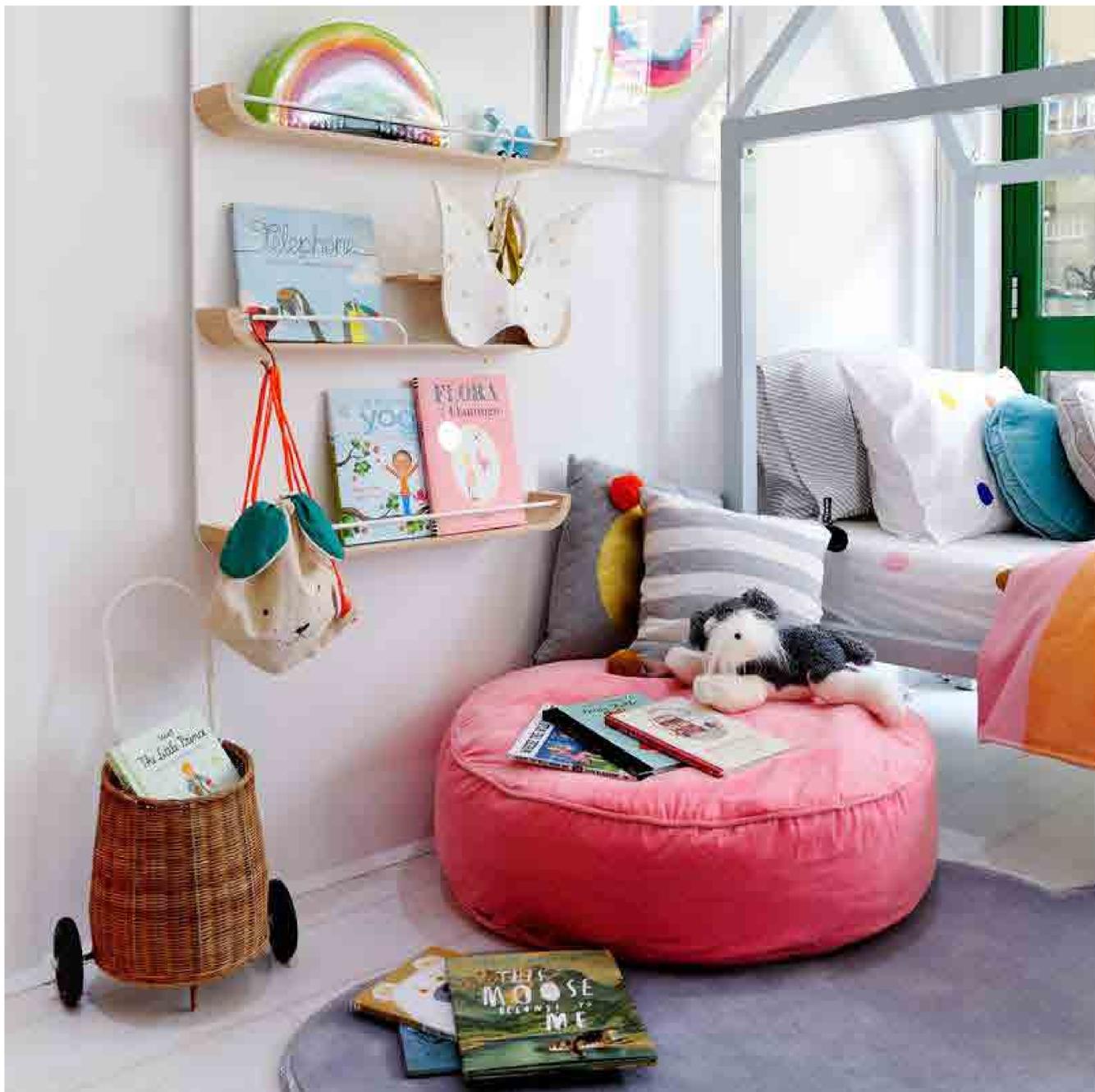
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# LETTERS TO EDITOR:

We've been without a *letters to editor* section for a while now, but we'd love to hear your thoughts, concerns and ideas!

Please send your letters to  
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[www.treeoflifebirthandbeyond.com.au/sacred-birth-journey.html](http://www.treeoflifebirthandbeyond.com.au/sacred-birth-journey.html)

# Podcasts and videos

## PODCASTS

### THE CIRCLE OF BIRTH PODCASTS:

#### REFLECTIONS FROM THE HOME BIRTH AUSTRALIA CONFERENCE 2017 – #HBACON2017

[www.circleofbirth.com/e46-reflections-home-birth-australia-conference-2017-hbacon2017/](http://www.circleofbirth.com/e46-reflections-home-birth-australia-conference-2017-hbacon2017/)

This podcast is a not to be missed snippet of the amazing folk that brought their wisdom to the 32nd Home Birth Conference in Sydney, Australia. It runs through interviews with several inspiring midwives, doulas and women, and enables the sharing of the messages and stories they brought to the conference. Among others, it explores topics such as these women's thoughts on the state of the maternity system in Australia, their feelings around men at birth, how they feel we can best support homebirth in Australia and, most importantly, what they planned to bring back to their community post conference.

#### HOMEBIRTH AND BIRTH YOUR TRUTH – HEAL AND EMPOWER

[www.circleofbirth.com/e15-home-birth-birth-truth-heal-empower/](http://www.circleofbirth.com/e15-home-birth-birth-truth-heal-empower/)

In this podcast, you will hear Angela's story of her home birth with her daughter, her journey into midwifery and how her challenges of serving women vs serving the system brought her to helping others heal their birth. Angela Fitzgerald is a birth spirituality and healing coach, midwife and mother. She helps women heal from birth and birth their truth. She supports the healing of old wounds and the rising and reclaiming of the sacred feminine and masculine through her unique personal coaching programmes and workshops. Angela founded Sacred Woman Gatherings in Sydney in 2006. She lives in the peaceful green hills in northern New South Wales, Australia with her daughter.

#### FREEBIRTH & TAKING FULL RESPONSIBILITY IN YOUR BIRTH – NATALIE MEADE & THE ABC 7.30 REPORT

[www.circleofbirth.com/e47-freebirth-taking-full-responsibility-birth-natalie-meade-abc-7-30-report/](http://www.circleofbirth.com/e47-freebirth-taking-full-responsibility-birth-natalie-meade-abc-7-30-report/)

Natalie Meade speaks about her journey of growth within which she decided to and became a mother. She guides us through her first pregnancy, which resulted in a hospital birth triggering of her past traumas, and then through her journey towards choosing Freebirth. Natalie is a mother of two and the developer of The Hunter Birth Education Centre, an information website offering lists and referral services that actively improve emotional outcomes for mothers, fathers and babies (<http://www.hunterbirtheeducationcentre.com>).

## HEALING HOMEBIRTH VIDEOS

### HOW HOMEBIRTH HEALS WOMEN

#### EVELYN'S BIRTH AND REBIRTH

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=pqu-qNhXKTc&feature=youtu.be&app=desktop](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pqu-qNhXKTc&feature=youtu.be&app=desktop)

This video displays the incredible, healing rebirth of Evelyn. Please read Evelyn's rebirth story written by her mum, Kate Russell, on page 27 of this issue. Images are courtesy of Jen from The Heart of Motherhood (<http://theheartofmotherhood.com.au/>).

#### A HOMEBIRTH AFTER CESAREAN

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e9v7JcSb8tk>

This video displays the beautiful, healing Homebirth After Caesarean (HBAC) of Madeleine, as documented by Georgia Brizuela of Gregarious Peach (<http://gregariouspeach.com/>). Belinda Costello is a mother to four beautiful children, wife to Darren, an emergency nurse and a passionate speaker on women's rights and the importance of mothers in and to our communities. Belinda supports many mothers and families behind the scenes by providing support and admin for Facebook groups including the Homebirth Group Australia and the due-in birth groups that shoot off from this. Belinda spoke at the recent conference, HBACON2017, and is also interviewed within the HBACON2017 podcast linked at the top of this page.

### HEALING HOMEBIRTH VIDEOS AND SOUND RECORDINGS – WHAT OUR COMMUNITY NEEDS TO DO/IS DOING TO HEAL HOMEBIRTH

#### WOMEN, THE SYSTEM AND THE ILLUSION OF CHOICE

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pQGxaOyWJnl&feature=youtu.be>

In an incredible interview with well-known birth gurus, Independent Midwife and University Lecturer Sheryl Sidery, and Midwife and Founder of The Shamanic School of Woman craft Jane Hardwicke Collings, We Birth explores women, birth, the system and the illusion of choice. Jane explains that while the system's focus is upon mortality, we actually need to look at morbidity and how we can address it to reduce these statistics.

Sheryl puts forth the suggestion of women being the ones to demand change and maintains that women in the system have the power to make change, but they need to demand it!

We Birth, spearheaded by experienced midwives and doulas Jen Hazi and Jacki Barker, want to share this information with women everywhere! Whether having babies or acting as Birth Workers, this is such important and powerful information to take on board!

The We Birth course will be offered in small chapters through 2018! Find them at <https://webirth.org/> and <https://www.facebook.com/webirthdoulas/>

#### LANDLINE: BIRTH AT HOME IN RURAL AUSTRALIA

<http://iview.abc.net.au/programs/landline/RA1801Q006S00#pageloaded>

Tapping into the Pilbara's underground water reserves; The midwife helping isolated women deliver their babies at home; Market pressure for elite Australian wool growers to concede to animal welfare demands. #Landline

#### THE MARCH FOR BIRTH RIGHTS – AN EVENT COORDINATED BY MATERNITY CONSUMER NETWORK AND MELBOURNE HOMEBIRTH ASSOCIATION

[www.spreaker.com/user/voiceless/march-for-birth-rights](http://www.spreaker.com/user/voiceless/march-for-birth-rights)

This is a compilation of recordings taken from the March for Birth Rights on March 8 2018 (International women's day). Here is the description of the event from the facebook event page:

"If you're paying attention, you know that birth in Australia is going to hell in a handbasket. Our maternity system is broken, mired in bureaucracy and politics. Women's voices are consistently ignored. Government after government has failed to implement the recommendations of the national maternity plan, and it now languishes on a bureaucrat's desk. Private midwives are being driven out of practice. Birth trauma is rampant and women are dying. Suicide remains the number one killer of women during the perinatal period.

#### ENOUGH.

The Melbourne Homebirth Association and Maternity Consumer Network are organising the March for Birth Rights this International Women's Day. We will be protesting outside Greg Hunt's electoral office in Hastings - a show of force to remind the government that women have been excluded from discussions and decisions about birth policy for too long.

It's time for women's rights, birth rights, human rights, to be front and centre of maternity care in Australia. It's time for those in power to listen to women's voices - nothing about us, without us. It's time for our maternity movement to reclaim the fire we once had."

#### THE SACRED BIRTH SERIES, THE EARTHESSE CO.

<https://www.facebook.com/petak/videos/10155470943448233/?query=sacred%20birth%20jo%20hunterHigh>

Performing Goddess, this is where you soften. The world breathes when you soften. Ya know that? The Earthess is the modern Earth Goddess. The woman who is equal parts 'I'm on a mission, can't stop won't stop' and 'Gimme some cacao & a day amongst the trees.' She's innovative, but ancient. She's driven, but soft. She's a creator, but a nurturer.

She's connected to her work, her body, her Soul, her family, her community, and to Mother Earth. This space = The Earthess Co. Co is standing for collective, community, collaboration, conversation, and ummm coconut oil (because it is life). This space is here to soften you: the powerhouse woman, busy Mum, network marketing professional, thought leader, entrepreneur, author, speaker, creator, athlete. Here, you take off your cape and your shoes and be in your feminine essence. Here you are nourished by a fresh, real, no BS community of sisters. The Earthess Co. is created by Peta Kelly in collaboration with Mother Earth and the badass sisterhood. Each week there will be a new topic to discuss (see below!) Our Earthesses will take turns mentoring the group & we will introduce special guest speakers as we go.

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# Birthings Directory

Autumn 2018

## THEME CONTENT (PODCASTS AND VIDEOS)

**Aly Kranz** - <http://circleofbirth.com/>  
**Angela Fitzgerald** - <http://birthyourtruth.com/>  
**Jen Hazi and Jacki Barker** - <https://webirth.org/>  
**Natalie Meade** - <http://www.hunterbirtheducationcentre.com>

## BIRTH STORIES AND THEME CONTENT

**Caryn Cridland** - <https://www.pachamamma.com/>  
**Erin Quinn** - <https://www.facebook.com/birchtreebirth>  
**Kate Russell** - <http://peacefulparentsconfidentkids.com/>  
**Yumi Takahashi** - [www.dearplastic.com](http://www.dearplastic.com)  
**Zoe Naylor** - <https://www.birthtime.world/>

## BIRTH ART

**Amy Bell** - <https://www.etsy.com/au/shop/AmyBellCartoons>  
**Yumi Takahashi** - [https://www.instagram.com/\\_yumi\\_takahashi\\_/](https://www.instagram.com/_yumi_takahashi_/)

## COMMITTEE MEMBERS

**Aimee Sing** - [editor@homebirthsydney.org.au](mailto:editor@homebirthsydney.org.au)  
**Jodie Powell** - [info@homebirthsydney.org.au](mailto:info@homebirthsydney.org.au)

## PHOTOGRAPHERS, DOULAS AND SUPPORT PEOPLE BEHIND THE CAMERA

**Anna Todd Photography** - <http://www.annatoddphotography.com/>  
**Captured by Carmel** - <https://www.facebook.com/carmeltrickeyphotos/>  
**Georgia Brizuela** - <http://gregariouspeach.com/>  
**Holly Priddis Photography** - <http://www.hollypriddisphotography.com.au/>  
**Jen** - <http://theheartofmotherhood.com.au/>  
**Jerusha Sutton photography** - <http://www.jerusha.com.au/>  
**Juliana Brennan** - <https://www.melbournemidwiferycollective.com/juliana>  
**Lucretia McCarthy** - <http://www.birthinsight.com.au/>  
**Poppy and Brine Photography** - <https://www.poppyandbrine.com>



# MARCH FOR BIRTH RIGHTS

By Grace Sweeney from Melbourne Homebirth Association

As this issue goes to print, the March For Birth Rights rally has just taken place. On International Women's Day, around one hundred mothers, fathers, children and midwives converged on Federal Health Minister Greg Hunt's electoral office in Hastings, to call for a Commonwealth focus on protecting human rights in childbirth and identifying and reducing the causes of birth trauma.

In addition, we called on the Commonwealth to put in place policies that have been proven to support these goals, as part of the new National Maternity Services Plan: the right to access midwifery continuity of care, more transparent maternity data, woman centred funding, and cutting the regulatory red tape currently crippling Australia's midwives in private practice.

The rally was organised by the Melbourne Homebirth Association, and Maternity Consumer Network. On the day we heard from Alecia Staines, Elizabeth Murphy, Julie Bell, Nicole Kearns and Grace

Sweeney, all speaking on the current state of maternity care in Australia, and calling for much needed change.

It is a national disgrace that 1 in 3 mothers suffer from birth trauma as a result of their birth experience, that 1 in 20 suffer from PTSD and that suicide is the leading cause of maternal death in Australia. These statistics are unacceptable, and it is unconscionable that despite the dedicated work of so many, for so long, this message has failed to resonate in the halls of power, women's voices ignored by government after government. And so we march.

The March movement is continuing, and we invite you to add your own #MarchForBirthRights message on social media. Watch this space for more activist action in the near future.

[Editors note: Please see the video recording of parts of this march on page 42 in this issue.]

## MEDIA RELEASE FOR MOTHERS FOR MIDWIVES MARCH ON MAY 5TH 2018

By Virginia Maddock, Homebirth Consortium Australia and Homebirth Access Sydney

With International Midwives Day on May 5th, it is an opportunity for women around Australia to thank the professionals who held their hands during the most important day (or night) of their lives: giving birth to their baby.

It is estimated there are over 32,000 registered midwives, with around 28,000 midwives employed by public and private hospitals in Australia. But there is also a seriously shrinking population of midwives who assist women to birth at home. Stats from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare show that in 2014 there were 287 midwives attending homebirths as a primary carer – this not only includes privately practicing midwives, but midwives attending homebirths that are publicly funded by the government through the 14 hospital-led homebirth programs. The latest data shows that in 2015 that number fell to 241. That number has certainly shrunk dramatically since then as regulations have stifled the health professionals who work in private practice, and who home birthing women rely on to maintain safety.

Amantha McGuinness from Homebirth Australia had this to say: "Ever increasing regulation and the relentless vexatious reporting of privately practicing homebirth midwives has led to a decline in the number of independent midwives supporting homebirths, with those remaining in practice often feeling marginalised, unsupported and unable to practice in a way that aligns with the midwifery philosophy of being "with woman". Many women, particularly those in regional and rural areas, are unable to access homebirth at all. And despite all the extra regulation, midwives are still working, and women are still birthing, without intrapartum insurance for Homebirth after nine years of exemption extensions, and with no valid solution in sight. The new requirement for two midwives at homebirth is also impacting on women and their birth options. We have heard reports of women having to scramble in the last weeks of their pregnancy to find a second midwife when their initial arrangement falls through, and others who do not have two midwives supporting homebirth in their area, and who are relocating and having air-bnb births, in order to have a homebirth away from home. Women in many areas of Australia who want a homebirth with a midwife are now faced with the choice to travel

great distances to access midwives, birth in hospital, or birth at home without a midwife at all. This begs the question, are all the regulations actually making birth safer, or are they just reducing and restricting the options of birthing women even further?"

With a decreasing chance of "normal birth" and an increasing caesarean rate in Australian hospitals, the choice to homebirth is not one that is going away. But with less and less homebirth midwives to assist women during the prenatal, birth and postnatal period, there is a danger that these women, many of whom are casualties of an underfunded, understaffed, fragmented and broken hospital system, will choose to birth at home anyway, but without the safety of a midwife in attendance. Indeed freebirth is said to be on the increase...

Professor of Midwifery Hannah Dahlen says "We have undertaken several studies into the issue of freebirth and it appears to be increasing in Australia. Women tell us the main reasons they freebirth is they are unable to find a midwife in their area or can't afford to pay for them. More and more women are fleeing mainstream maternity care after previous traumatic birth experiences. We will continue to see adverse outcomes unless we fix the system and respect women's right to choose their place of birth and care provider."

Jo Hunter, a privately practicing midwife from the Blue Mountains, says she had 14 enquiries for April and had to turn away 10 women as she could only support 4 of them for the month.

Homebirth Consortium Australia [HCA] is a newly formed working group made up of representatives from local homebirth groups around Australia who want to show their support for homebirth midwives and fight for changes to government policies so that midwives can return to working more autonomously and within their full scope of practice to support home birthing families. Virginia Maddock from HCA says that government regulation of midwives directly affects women's choices in how and where women birth, so it is important that consumers get behind midwives

and fight for change.

They are calling on the government to make the following changes...

Come up with a solution to the Professional Indemnity Insurance issue – the exemption for PII for birth, which has been extended 3 times since September 2009, expires on December 31st 2019 and will see homebirth midwifery made illegal after that date. The government should subsidise PII just as they do for Obstetricians.

Remove the requirement for 2 midwives to attend births at home, which was brought in by the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia without appropriate transparency and consultation with consumers or stakeholders, and has led to the demise of midwife assisted homebirth, particularly in rural and regional areas.

Remove the requirement for midwives to collaborate with an Ob or Dr in order for women to access Medicare rebates, a one way power imbalance which is never required in the reverse.

Remove the recent new requirement of all PPMs to undertake an audit. This has been stressful, time consuming and unnecessary when no other group of health professionals in any area have been subjected to this.

Undertake a full inquiry into the increased vexatious reporting of PPMs to AHPRA - almost half of PPMs in Australia have been reported for minor complaints, the vast majority of which were done by hospital staff, not consumers themselves who overwhelmingly report positive experiences with their midwives.

May 5th will see women around Australia participate in the nationwide 'Mothers For Midwives March' to AHPRA offices in every capital city. For details and info please contact: Virginia Maddock, Virginia@naturalbeginnings.com.au or Aimee Sing, editor@homebirthsydney.org.au

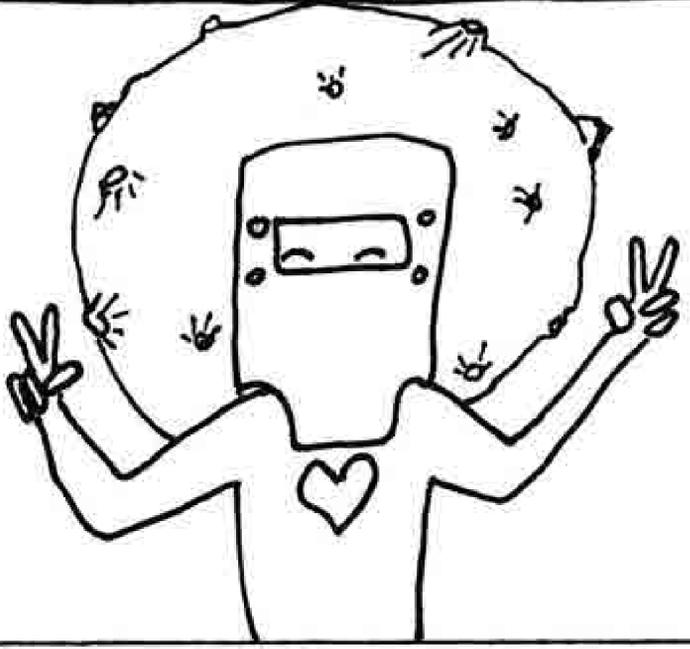
**SIGN THE PETITION**



# MOTHERS FOR MIDWIVES

At 11am on 5th May, International Midwives Day, we march for our midwives! Join us at your local AHPRA at 11am to show your support for our privately practicing midwives. **WE ARE STRONGER TOGETHER.**

Amy Bell's  
daisychain



# THE LONG HISTORY OF OUTLAWING MIDWIVES

\*(Source For Her Own Good: 150 years of experts advice to women)  
Barbara Ehrenreich & Deirdre English



1450 - 1750



Now we control  
"MEDICINE"  
SHUT DOWN THE  
"MIDWIFE PROBLEM"  
\* pp 92-98

1900 - 1930 Campaign to close  
women education centres + promote  
male-only "John Hopkins model" schools



er... nurse...  
wipe my  
forehead

Post  
1950 majority of births in hospital



No insurance  
No registration  
No registration  
= Jail

must be  
lunchtime

2009 - 2019 insurance is the  
new weapon against independant midw.



**DUE TO THE INCREDIBLE NUMBER OF AMAZING ARTICLES  
AND THE ENORMITY OF THIS PARTICULAR TOPIC, THE  
THEME FOR THE NEXT ISSUE OF BIRTHINGS WILL ALSO BE**

# ***HEALING* HOMEBIRTH**

Homebirth has progressively been marginalised and is currently limited to 'lucky' women; those women who are wealthy, fit a particular set of criteria classing them as 'healthy', and happen to be in the same location as a practicing independent midwife or hospital-based homebirth program. Furthermore, women are often criticised for their choice to homebirth and declined referrals to their choice of care provider, while independent midwives are being reported and can face litigation, all for providing the option of homebirth to those women who want it. For this issue, we ask what it is that needs to occur to 'heal' homebirth; to bring homebirth back to being an option for all women, regardless of their location and/or financial situation.

Birthings is the Sydney homebirth communities magazine and we'd love your contributions! Please send us your theme articles, birth announcements and stories with some high resolution photos. Submissions are due by 1st May, 2018 to [editor@homebirthsydney.org.au](mailto:editor@homebirthsydney.org.au) and should be <1400 words with a <100 word bio and some high resolution photos.

**ADDITIONALLY, PLEASE ENSURE THAT YOUR CORRECT EMAIL ADDRESS IS REGISTERED WITH HAS SO YOU CAN RECEIVE MEMBERSHIP EXPIRY REMINDERS, E-NEWSLETTERS AND BIRTHINGS E-MAGAZINE. IF YOU'VE RECENTLY CHANGED, PLEASE SEND YOUR NEW EMAIL ADDRESS TO [MEMBER@HOMEBIRTHSYDNEY.ORG.AU](mailto:MEMBER@HOMEBIRTHSYDNEY.ORG.AU)**

