

Birththings

Labour of Love

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HOME**BIRTH** NEW SOUTH WALES

www.homebirthnsw.org.au



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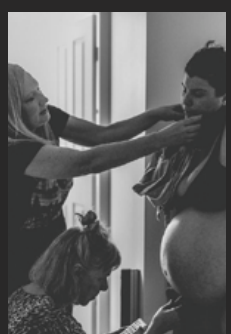
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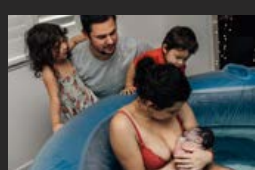


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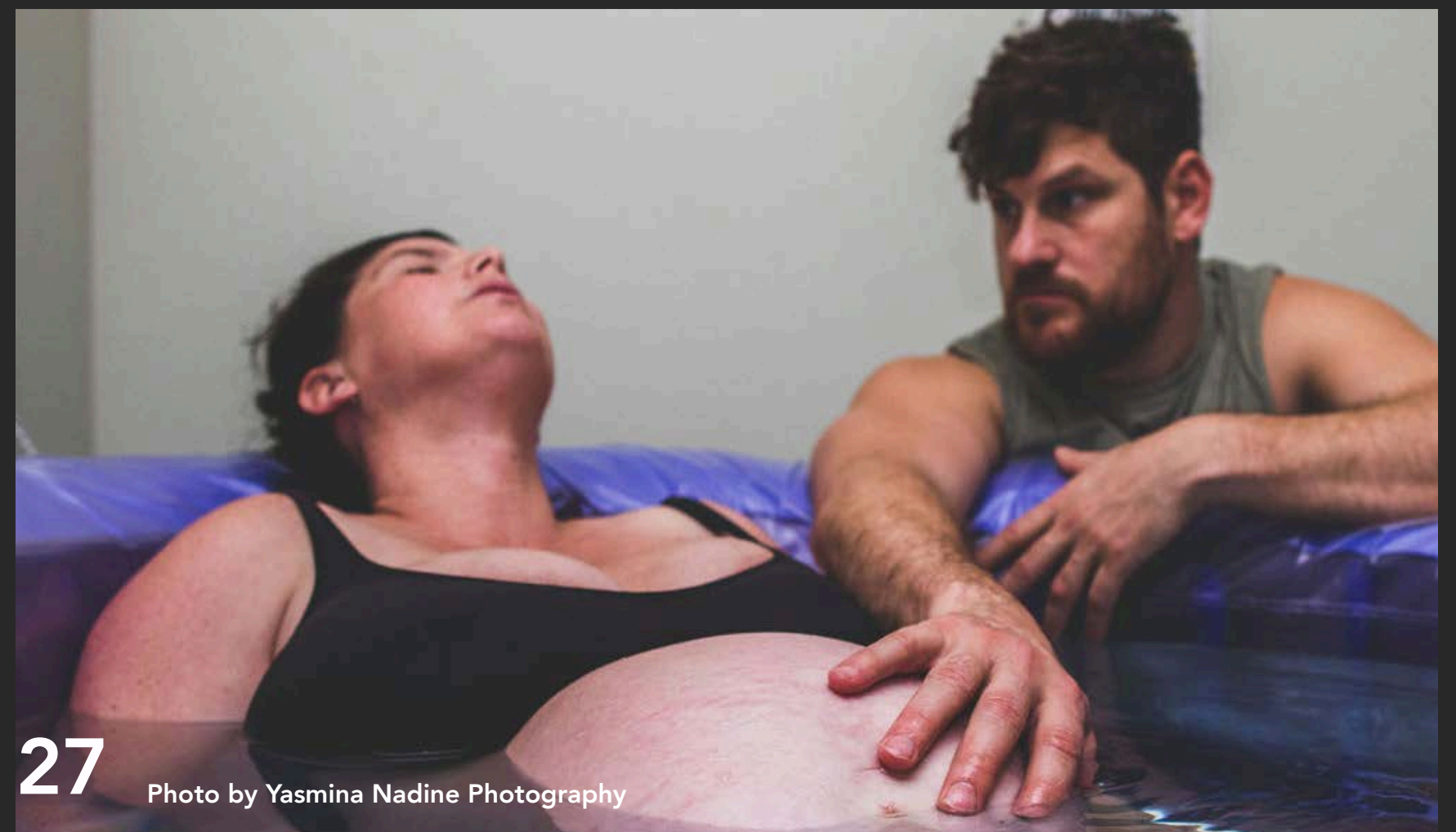
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Share your story with Birthings

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).

Spring 2020 issue is themed *Families at Birth*.

Submission due date: 1st September, 2020

editor@homebirthnsw.org.au

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W

elcome to the 140th issue of Birthings magazine! This issue we'll be exploring the theme *Labour of Love*. A 'labour of love' is a task done for pleasure, not for reward.

In society today, birth is so often framed around being all for the reward(s) at the end: the oxytocin high, the beautiful baby, the feeling of accomplishment and empowerment of giving birth! It's so often thought of as something you just have to go through to get the rewards at the end, and yet some women really do and can take pleasure in the actual experience of giving birth!

Likewise, we often think of work as being done for the reward at the end: the promotion, the pay, the standing or acknowledgement of a job well done. Yet some people actually take pleasure in their work, in knowing they are making a difference, in the experience. For many birthworkers, as you'll see in some of the articles in this issue, the true pleasure of our work comes from the journey, being given the opportunity to experience birth alongside women, to hold space for these women, to document their journeys, to assist them through their pregnancy, to counsel them postnatally.

Fitting with the labour of love theme, this position has been such a beautifully enriching and rewarding one, and one that I have taken so much pleasure in doing. I am so grateful to every woman that has submitted an article, art or poems and to every family that has been willing to share their birth stories with our readers! As Homebirth NSW branches out (we're now state-wide, not just Sydney based!), we've had to shuffle around some of our committee members and welcome new ones (check out the member profiles in this issue to get to know our new committee!). As such, I will be moving out of the editor position and into that of committee President, taking over from Jodie, who has done such an incredible job of bringing HBNSW out of the ashes and reinvigorating our organisation! Thank you, Jodie, for all you've done and the time and heart you've dedicated to this organisation – we are very sad to see you moving on.

I'm so excited to see how our new editorial team directs and creates Birthings magazine, and how much new inspiration will come through it from this change. You'll still hear from me every issue in the President's report, and please do stay in touch!

Many Blessings,

 Aimee

PRESIDENT'S REPORT



Hello! This is my first report in the role of President, and while you all know me from my taking on the editor role for the last couple of years, I'm excited to be greeting you from this role!

This issue is themed 'Labour of love' and I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the incredible amount of work, motivation and dedication that our outgoing president, Jodie Powell, put into Homebirth Access Sydney (now Homebirth New South Wales)! If anything was a labour of love it was definitely her taking the role of President on and really steering our organisation to where we are now – her love for homebirth and for protecting women's access to homebirth shone through constantly! In the time she was president she literally helped resurrect HAS – she got new committee members on board, made some hard calls to cease printing Birthings magazine (I'm hoping we will bring it back!), brought more members in, helped us raise funds, helped organise a rally, was part of the release of multiple issues of Birthings e-magazine, helped improve advocacy in our local areas, supervised multiple research students and projects, got us amongst our tribe at Homebirth Australia conferences, rebranded our organisation and prompted the release of a new website, amongst many other things! In truth, this organisation would not still be standing if not for Jodie, and our committee is so grateful for the time and work she has put in – THANK YOU JODIE!!

Since our last issue we have been busily working away on our website, have amassed a huge group of businesses to provide discounts and products to our members (**join here** if you haven't already!) and have brought a number of new committee members on-board (you'll meet them in the committee member profile section). We've reshuffled the way we're doing things with our membership and have helped launch a **campaign to protect and promote homebirth** - please jump on and spend 2 minutes emailing your local and federal ministers! We have begun discussions with some of the lead maternity organisations in Australia to ensure we are working towards common goals, assisted the creation of the **National Homebirth Register**, created a **local group map** to show all homebirth and positive birth groups in New South Wales and have begun filling the gaps, creating groups where there is currently little support.

With the COVID-19 pandemic we've seen a massive influx of women into homebirth related groups, and hopefully, this will give us the chance to see some big changes happening in this area! These are exciting times for homebirth in Australia and for our organisation. If you'd like to assist us, either by sitting on the committee or helping create local advocacy and/or support groups in your area, please let us know! We are excited to see where this new trajectory takes us.

Stay safe and healthy,

 *Aimee*

Join Us!

For new membership or renewals go to www.homebirthnsw.org.au and click on *membership*



News! News! News! News! News!

COVID-19

The arrival of Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) has been exceptionally difficult on individuals and communities, and particularly difficult for pregnant women and their families. All women and midwives are experiencing changes to the way they are receiving/providing care respectively. At the very least, women's antenatal and postnatal appointments have changed from face-to-face appointments to some involving telehealth. Publicly Funded Homebirth programs have, in some instances, been restricting the number of women that can be accepted into their caseload.

Amongst the chaos, please try not to buy into the alarmist rumours that keep circulating. It is difficult for us to stay up to date with all aspects of maternity care across NSW, so please keep us informed of any changes in your local area by emailing info@homebirthnsw.org.au. Our current information is as follows:

- **Private midwives provide an essential service. In a lockdown scenario, they will**

still be able to provide support to women birthing at home.

- **Most Publicly Funded Homebirth and Midwifery Group Practice programs remain open. However, due to staff shortages restrictions may come into place. Furthermore, hospital based homebirth programs do have to abide by hospital policies, and so the one support person ruling is being enforced through some programs. Contact your midwife for information specific to you.**

- **One support person rulings have been implemented in hospitals Australia wide. While some midwives have visiting rights at certain hospitals and may still be allowed to transfer with the women they support, in other instances private midwives are not being allowed into the hospitals upon transfer – we will continue to campaign about this, but please, contact your local LHD to explain the necessity for midwives to be able to transfer with their women.**

- **Current advice is to keep mums and babies together, regardless of COVID-19 infection, unless the baby needs further**

assistance via special care nursery or neonatal ICU. There is currently no reason for mothers to be separated from their babies.

In order to provide support and improve access to homebirth for Australian women we have released a do-gooder campaign asking for our health minister to immediately action the recommendations put out in the Medicare Benefit Schedule review including:

- **Introduce a Medicare item number for intrapartum medicare rebates**
- **Remove the expectation that midwives have 5000 hours of practice before they can branch into private midwifery practice**
- **Remove the mandatory collaborative agreements that leave many women seeking referrals from GPs only to be refused**

We will continue to push for these changes as time progresses and will keep our membership up to date as changes occur.

DOGGOODER CAMPAIGN



Australian women currently have limited access to pregnancy, birth and postnatal services within their communities, outside the hospital. This is particularly concerning considering the current COVID-19 pandemic, where they must enter a hospital for all of their care putting themselves and their babies at risk. Those models of care that facilitate community midwifery care are either extremely restrictive in locality or the mother's health status, or require large investments of money. The goal of this campaign is to push for ministers to make recommended changes to Medicare and regulatory processes to enable maternity care at home to be more accessible and affordable in Australia. Continuity of community based midwifery care has been recommended in EVERY state and national review into maternity services, and the National Strategic Approach to Maternity Services. This needs to happen, NOW.

Follow this [link](#) to send your own email to your closest MP.

WE ARE ON THE MAP!

If you've not seen them already, please head on over and take a look at the National Homebirth Register and New South Wales based local homebirth group maps! These will help you connect with your community of homebirth families and also provides a really valuable tool to help women trying to find midwives in Australia.

National Homebirth Register

Local groups

Meet our new volunteers



CAIRE
HEENAN

Communications

Hi, I'm Claire! I joined the Homebirth NSW Committee recently in the Communications role. I am a doula working actively with women in the Sydney region, and I myself reside in the Blue Mountains. I love being on the committee as it

provides me with an arena to effectively use my voice to advocate for women to have access to homebirth without financial and political barriers. I have worked as a high school teacher previously, and now facilitate Women's Circles and Goddess Girls circles. In my spare time I am writing songs, playing with my daughter and our dog, and spending time in the bush.



MARINA
TAYLOR-CLIFT

Assistant Editor

Hi! I'm Marina Taylor. I'm a Blue Mountains based doula. I have 3 young children and a love for all things birth and pregnancy.

I am especially passionate for homebirth seeing as I myself was one in the U.S. I'm so excited to join into this community and watch the power of homebirth rise in Australia. I'm looking forward to great things!



ALICIA
BENNETTS

Fundraising

Alicia is a Blue Mountains mother of 4, 2 of which were born gently at home. She dedicates her time to educating her children naturally and her role as a Doula. Her hobbies include painting, drawing and

creating. Family time looks like bushwalks, camping, trips to the zoo, the museum or a farm stay.

She is passionate about empowering families to create a positive birthing environment, as well as offering new families support to soak in their new addition during the early postpartum period.



BONNIE
HOOK

Editor

Bonnie is a woman who has been captivated with pregnancy, labour and birth long before she became a mum to beautiful Ruben in February 2020. She lives in Coogee, as close to the ocean as humanly possible, because it is her happiest place.

Bonnie has travelled extensively, living in developing countries pursuing her passion for exploring and experiencing other cultures with a lens of anthropology. Her passion for empowering women has led her on many exciting endeavours, and she is thrilled to now be in the birthing space contributing to creating a collective series of positive birthing stories.



JESSICA
HODGENS

Group Coordinator Wollongong

Jess has a PhD in Aboriginal history, and works as a researcher, writer and facilitator of sacred women's circles and ceremony. After experiencing her own peaceful and beautiful homebirth with her baby boy Ned

in 2019, her world was forever changed. She realised that birth is the most important feminist issue of our time, and that gentle birth has the capacity to save the earth. Jess established the Wollongong Region Homebirth Group in 2019, and dreams of creating a community and culture where the life-giving and nurturing work of women is honoured and revered, and where babies are treated with love and respect. She is a passionate advocate of gentle parenting, sustainable living and ancestral wisdom. She lives in Thirroul between the beautiful Illawarra escarpment and the sea, where she can frequently be seen wrangling a pram and an armful of books while tripping over a very exuberant border collie named Dug.



KARLEY
HUMPHRIES

Group Coordinator Macarthur

Karley is a homebirth and postpartum doula based in the Macarthur region. She is a Mumma of two Daughters and has a love for house plants, fairy lights and babies being born at home.

Karley has a burning desire to create a local community of like minded birthing Mummas who can support each other. She has recently started up a Homebirth Support Group for Women in the Macarthur Region.

Having experienced her own calm, powerful and sacred homebirth in early 2019, Karley is now on a mission to share the homebirthing love.



AMY INNES

Events

Amy Innes is a health-focused mama of 2 and the founder of the Healthy Happy Life Tribe who is committed to empowering women and their loved ones to live a low-tox healthy happy life. Amy is based in Sydney, Australia

but supports many women globally with their health and wellness as she brings a combination of being a Blue Diamond doTERRA leader, certified health and mindset coach, and essential oil advocate. The skills and qualities that Amy has built allows her to be able to share her knowledge and love of leadership, mindfulness, easy recipes and essential oil tips with a special focus on naturally helping other mama's. She empowers her tribe to live their most fulfilled, happy and healthy life - her passion for natural health is contagious!

Keen to join?

We love our advocacy work here at HBNSW and as we expand we are always looking for new faces to join our team. If you are a birth fanatic, who has a few spare hours a month, then please get in touch! You absolutely do not need to be a homebirthing mama, but birth rights should be a passion of yours.

We are currently looking for a new Graphic Designer to join our team! Just think, you could be creating the next Birthings E-Mag.

Feel free to shoot us an email.
admin@homebirthnsw.org.au

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HOMEBIRTH IN THE MEDIA

By Aimee Sing

[Midwives and doctors push for Medicare rebate for home births](#)

15th August, 2019

SMH

[Home births 'safe option' for low-risk women, major study authors say](#)

30th October, 2019

SMH

[Calls for greater access to homebirths](#)

30th October, 2019

ABC

[CDC says out-of-hospital births on the rise; Chattanooga moms say more midwives are needed](#)

10th December, 2019

New Channel 9

[Model Ashley Graham boasts about her natural home birth: "I did it naturally and I felt everything"](#)

5th February, 2020

Now to love

[Pregnant Women Turn to Home Births to Escape Virus](#)

16th March, 2020

The Daily Beast

[Keep calm, you will be okay: Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) while pregnant or giving birth](#)

17th March, 2020

All4Maternity

[Scared mums-to-be pushing to avoid overstretched virus hospitals](#)

18th March, 2020

Gold Coast Bulletin

[Pregnant women are opting for home births as hospitals prepare for coronavirus](#)

20th March, 2020

Washington Post

[During coronavirus hospital surge, a midwife recommends home birth](#)

22nd March, 2020

The Conversation

[Tip from an Expert: Choose Home Birth During a Coronavirus Hospital Surge](#)

25th March, 2020

National Interest

['Keep myself, my baby safe': Home birth inquiries surge amid COVID-19 crisis](#)

25th March, 2020

SMH

[Pregnant in a pandemic: how will coronavirus affect me and my baby?](#)

26th March, 2020

The Guardian

[Concerns coronavirus fears could lead to rise in women free-birthing](#)

Essential Baby

AYURVEDA FOR NEWBORN MOTHERS

By Daniela Escobar

Photo courtesy of Lora @rnr Creative

Birth is the labour of unconditional love. It is a transformative experience for both mother and baby. It is a time when mum has to go deep into her instincts and bring her baby into the world. It is the experience of a Goddess warrior.

After birth, the mother is in a very vulnerable state. Mum's psycho-physiological state is as delicate as her newborn. In Ayurvedic medicine, it is explained that after childbirth the mother's physiology is going through a natural reset process to embody her ideal health for the years to come. It is a time where she needs proper support for her healing and rejuvenation to take place.

Ayurveda is the ancient, holistic science of life that has more than 5,000 years of existence. It is known as the sister science of Yoga. Yoga is the path towards self-realization and Ayurveda being the path of health and well-being. Together, these sciences can bring so much love and harmony into one's life.

According to the Ayurvedic medical texts by the sage Shushrut, women are in an exceptional window for the first 42 days after childbirth (extended by ten days to 14 days if there was surgery).

This window, also called the "Sacred Window," is a time where the mother's nervous system is like a flower; very delicate and sensitive to the environment. The sacred window is the time for the newborn mother to be nourished and nurtured so she can offer the most exceptional ability to love and serve her baby. It is a time for extended bonding with the baby and deep rest and rejuvenation.

Why 40 days?

"The first 40 days will impact the next 40 years to come"

Ayurveda explains that it takes around 40 days for the essence of food to become Ojas (the juncture between consciousness and matter which is enlivening and regenerative), and for all of the seven

tissues to be rebuilt properly (plasma, blood, muscle, fat, bone, marrow, reproductive).

After childbirth, this is the time for the mother to rebuild her tissues and establish health and well-being for the 40 years to come.

What is mum's Dharma?

Dharma is one's purpose in this life; one's mission.

The dharma of the mother is to go through labour to bring her baby into this world. After labour, it is mum's dharma to nourish, protect, and love her baby.

So in Ayurveda, there is this special window that has the intention to nurture mum so she can be there for her baby and serve him in abundance of love.

What is happening during the "Sacred Window"?

During this time, mum's digestive fire is very depleted, creating difficulty in digesting food, life, and emotions.

During and after childbirth, mum's body is experiencing different sensations such as pain, inflammation, and abdominal space. From the Ayurvedic perspective, these all increase the ether and air elements within the body and mind, which can lead to mum feeling unsupported, bloated, empty, anxious, and with loss of appetite.

What is happening with the hormones during this time?

Right after birth, mum is filled with oxytocin and her heart with love. She is naturally radiating a divine glow. But around the 3rd day postpartum, when the hormones drop and the milk comes, mum can start to feel overwhelmed, tired, and anxious.

During this time, proper postpartum care is essential for the mother to have appropriate support and loving care.

What are some of the practices to nourish mum?



Abhyanga: Warm oil massage over the body

- Belly binding
- Ayurvedic Herbs to enhance the healing process
- Warm and nourishing foods
- Rest
- Warm Showers
- Sitz Bath
- And much love and care

What is the benefit of Abhyanga and belly binding?

Oiling the body in Ayurveda is called snehan. In Sanskrit, the word snehan means oil as well as love. It is the practice of loving our bodies and falling back in love with the God of our hearts.

"This is a clear message of love, honor, and appreciation for your body" - Myrica Morningstar

After childbirth, vata dosha (ether and air elements) is aggravated, and it needs genuine care and attention for the mama to have balanced health and to be able to recover and cultivate her strength back.

The oil recommended for the mother is black sesame or bala thailam (medicated oil) to help the nourishing, cleansing, and healing process for the mother.

Belly binding is an ancient practice for postpartum mothers. It gives the newborn mother a feeling of groundedness and helps the organs come back into their proper place. Ideally, belly binding is practiced from the first day of delivery. For caesarean birth it is essential to wait so that the scar heals appropriately (4 to 5 weeks).

What is the postpartum diet?

Ayurveda has specific guidelines on mothers' postnatal diets. The food for the first three days should be peya (soupy rice) with panchakola (medicated) ghee and plenty of iron-rich sugar, low salt, and digestive spices.

This food will allow mum's digestive fire to rest and reset. It will also give mum time to digest everything that happened and for her heart to fully connect with her baby.

Ayurveda recommends slowly increasing the thickness of the food and gradually adding some cooked veggies, as well as some legumes like mung beans or red lentils.

Ayurveda also recommends that the newborn mother must have warm spiced milk at night, which will help with the quality and quantity of breastmilk.

For more information on Ayurvedic postpartum recipes check Out, "Healing recipes to Nourish the Newborn Mother," at www.soma-shakti.com.au.

Mama's spice milk recipe:

Bring milk to a boil three times if you have the time with spices (cardamom, clove, black pepper, saffron, black cardamom and fennel; limit cinnamon until mother's bleeding is under control), iron-rich sugar and a teaspoon of ghee (you can use oat milk instead of cow's milk).

Final Words

Food is one of the essential factors for mum to heal appropriately and for her milk supply to be consistent. A proper diet will also protect mothers from anxiety or postnatal depression.

Currently, one in every seven women who give birth in Australia experiences postnatal depression. This a significant amount of newborn mothers that are having difficulty in connecting with their babies and with themselves.

A newborn mother needs to have proper support around her. I truly believe that planning a postpartum program is as important as a birth plan. If you are a pregnant mama, take your time to

connect with different doulas and find the right postnatal care for you.

I'm here to be of service and hope this article was helpful for you.

Daniela Escobar is a dedicated and devoted practitioner of Ayurvedic Medicine and a Yoga Educator. She specialises in Women's Health, Postpartum Care, and Autism in children. She offers her services in Bondi - Sydney, and online. For more information visit her website.

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Labour of Love



*300,000 women will give birth with you today
A thousand generations before you have all done it the same way
You will open up your cervix like a summer rose in bloom
A million female souls and goddesses will fill your birthing room
Helping you to bring to earth your long awaited babe
So surrender to the tightenings that engulf you like a wave
Don't let your head be full with thought of any kind
Your inner strength will carry you if you just empty your mind
Your body knows exactly what it is designed to do
So trust, relax and surrender to the labour of love in you*

By Virginia Maddock

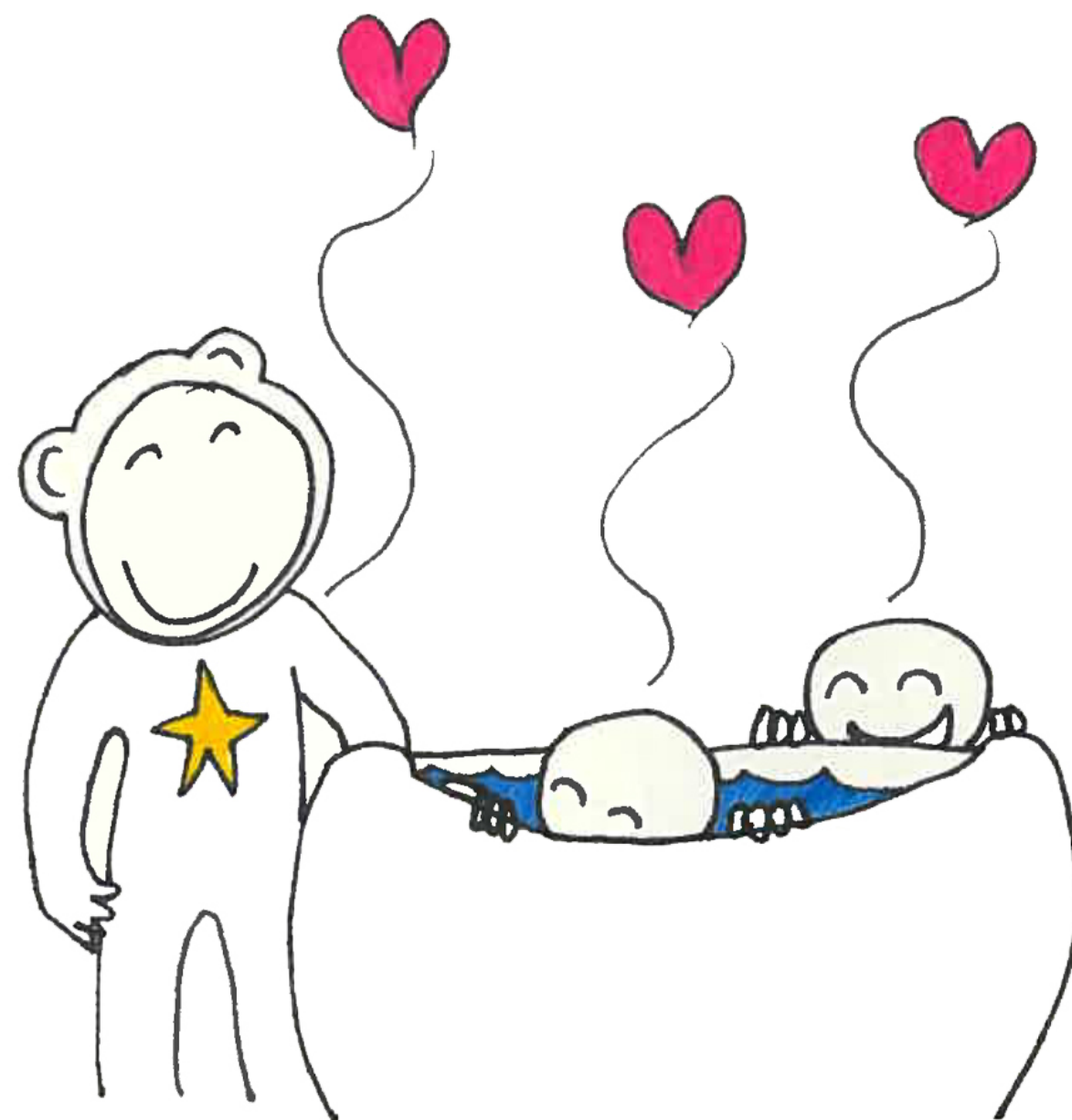


Daisy knows the calling,
a deep knowing from long ago
it may be the OXYTOCIN
but Daisy knows, it is true love why women chose to
birth at home
and why midwives truly love their vocation.
LET LOVE IN.

Labour of Love



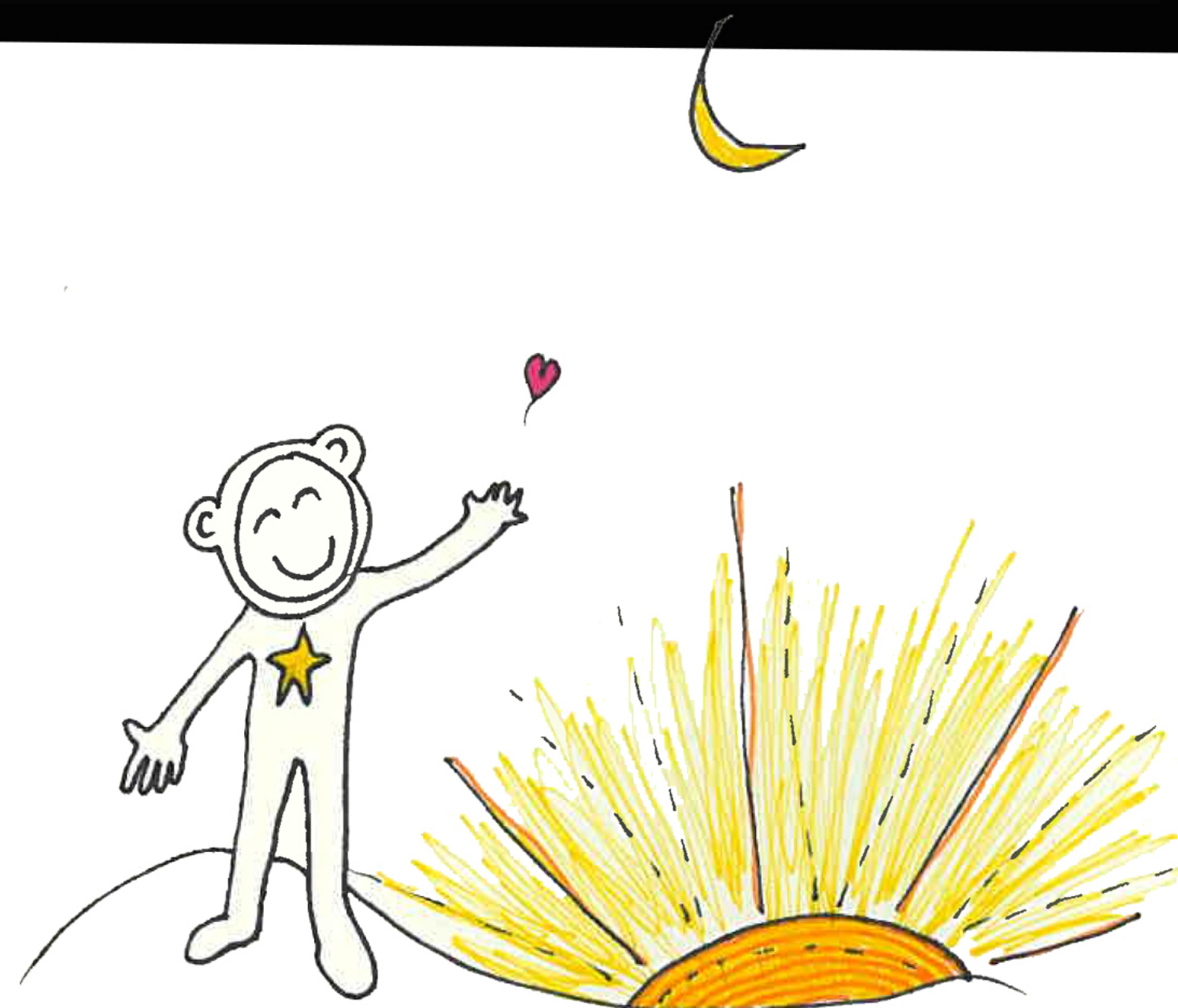
T'WAS THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT WHEN
THE MIDWIFE HEARS THE CALL...



IT IS ANOTHER NIGHT PASSES BEFORE
THE BABY ARRIVES... GENTLE, LOVING
and PEACEFUL BY THE HEARTH 'AT HOME



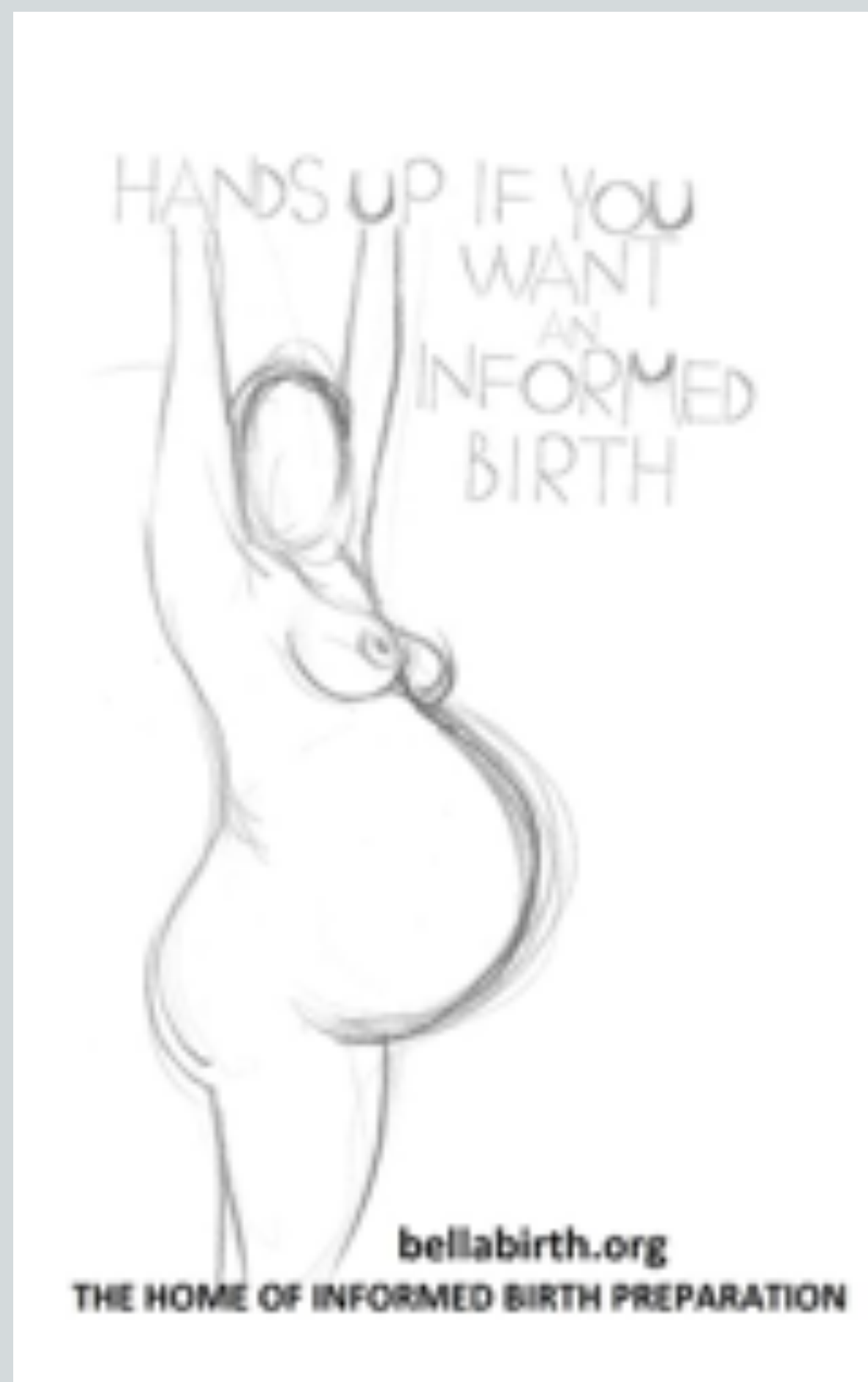
WHILST THE NEW ARRIVAL SETTLES IN
THE MIDWIFE CLEANS UP AND MAKES
SOME TEA.



AND AS THE SUN RISES, THE MIDWIFE
HONOURS THE BIRTH IN HER OWN QUIET WAY.

Labour of Love

By Catherine Bell



*I'm the custodian of some powerful knowing,
But like seeds, it won't grow without sowing,
Knowledge shared is a gift
For it gives us all a lift
And gets the power flowing.*

*The Birth Map evolved in my heart
Four births of my own at its start
It is ready now for sharing
With those who are daring
To take their birth power to an art.*

*There is no one way, no 'fits all'
And we really shouldn't be passing the ball,
Don't leave it to luck
or your birth might suck
The Birth Map protects from a fall.*

I am Catherine Bell, the Birth Cartographer. Quietly, over the last 8 years, The Birth Map has been evolving in my care. I am still pinching myself that I have been chosen to be the custodian of this powerful tool. I am confident that The Birth Map is the solution to Australia's maternity problem, which stems from the medicalisation of pregnancy and birth.

The Birth Map is the result of Informed Birth Preparation. It is a powerful document that works like a 'choose your own adventure,' where the birthing woman is the author. It is the advance care directive of birth. It benefits women, their partners and their care providers.

Women are asked to provide informed consent during pregnancy and in birth for various medical interventions. The problem with this is that not enough time or information is given to fulfil the informed component. Usually a 'need to know (NOW)' approach is taken. This is stressful and not conducive to making decisions, let alone informed ones. Coercion is a problem, as insurance-driven policies put pressure on care providers to direct birth towards medically 'controlled' options.

It is not just the mother and her birth partner that benefit from Informed Birth Preparation (Birth Cartography), care Providers benefit too. An informed, supported and confident client is more likely to have a calm, straight forward birth. The Birth Map, created through the Informed Birth Preparation process, provides the framework from which to work, giving the care provider confidence that the client has been truly informed. The Care Provider is an active participant in the process, encouraging questions and answering them as best they can. The final document is a summary of the discussions had, and a record of informed decisions.

The first, rudimentary versions of The Birth Map began to appear in 2011. More and more questions were added to the birth plan template, more details included and more alternatives explored. With each birth I attended, and each of my own pregnancies and births, with input from my doula and mothering networks, the process adapted. No longer a 'birth plan template', I saw before me the Birth Map. There were no 'tick boxes', and no one way.

What became really obvious was it was the questions that mattered; knowing what to ask, and being able to ask well in advance, means freedom to explore the options. Understanding the various pathways and how they intertwine means the power to make Informed Decisions. I could no longer manage with a self-print and bind making of the guide. I was limited to Australian audiences but there was also demand from overseas, so I made an ebook version. This was a great step and I learned a lot! Over the last two years the book started to take the form you see today.

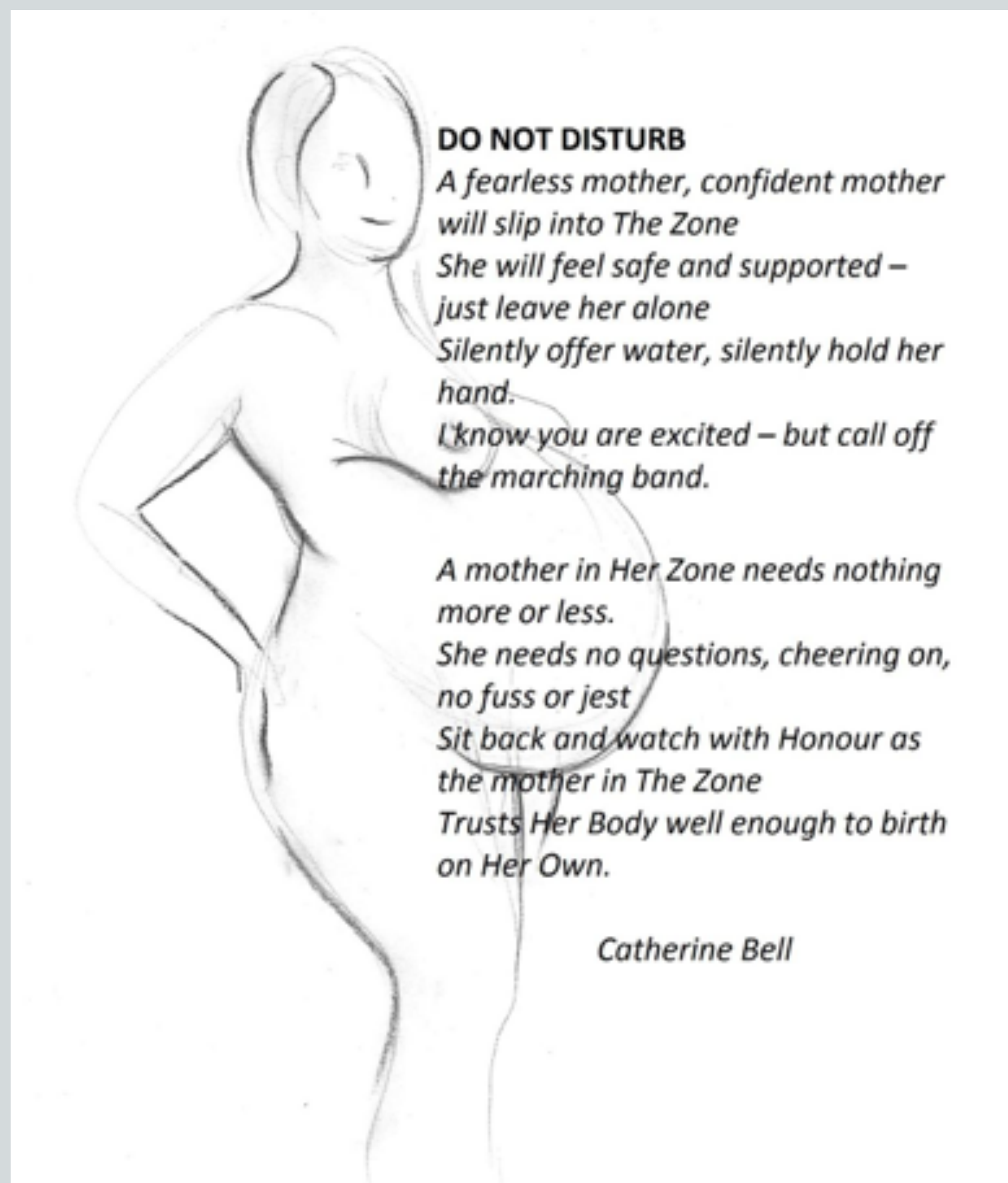
The book has been designed to be written in, make notes, add affirmations, decorate, journal in and there are pages dedicated to Your Birth Story. The first section gives the insights, the foundations for understanding the maternity system and your options within it. Section Two provides the questions, taking you through each pathway (fast birth, expected and contingency). This is where the personal Birth Map is developed.

The advanced care directive approach creates an 'if this, then that' series of decisions to be used by your birth team and care providers during your labour. It is your birth, your way, no matter what! The third section takes you beyond the birth, giving a reality check and helping to set up a support network for the early days of parenting. It covers preparing for siblings, 'what is normal' and breastfeeding. An appendix gives you a glossary of medical terms, a list of recommended reading and resources for special circumstances. More than 'just another birthing book,' The Birth Map is linked to the free member's area on <https://www.bellabirth.org/> which is a portal of resources and a hub of support.

The awesome pregnant woman which features throughout the book is particularly dear to me; it is a life drawing sketch by one of my oldest friends, Emma Lewin. When I was first seeking my cover artwork I wanted something different. It was very important to me that any images depicting women included a head; so many pregnancy images focus on the belly and hands, often with the head cut off! I also did not want a photograph, because my book is for all women – not just the woman depicted. When I asked Emma if she might be able to sketch a pregnant woman for me she sent me what she felt were scraps of paper with scribbles on them. These images were among them and as soon as I saw her I knew I had found my cover! She is magnificent, she is bold and she is confident. So much so that I was banned, repeatedly, from Facebook (you won't find me there anymore). Was it that I was showing women as something other than for the male gaze? So I created the (also awesome) 'censored' word map cover – this is the cover you can read in public and safely share on social media (please do!).

That a drawn nipple and a powerful stance in a sketched woman was not up to facebook community standards resolved me to continue this journey. The printed contents of each book, if you look closely, feature her nipple as the dot points. This Labour of Love taught me that The Birth Map matters, not just because we need a woman-led way to communicate informed decisions for pregnancy and birth, but because birth is a feminist issue.

I'd like to close with a poem from the book.



DO NOT DISTURB

*A fearless mother, confident mother
will slip into The Zone*

*She will feel safe and supported –
just leave her alone*

*Silently offer water, silently hold her
hand.*

*I know you are excited – but call off
the marching band.*

*A mother in Her Zone needs nothing
more or less.*

*She needs no questions, cheering on,
no fuss or jest*

*Sit back and watch with Honour as
the mother in The Zone*

*Trusts Her Body well enough to birth
on Her Own.*

Catherine Bell



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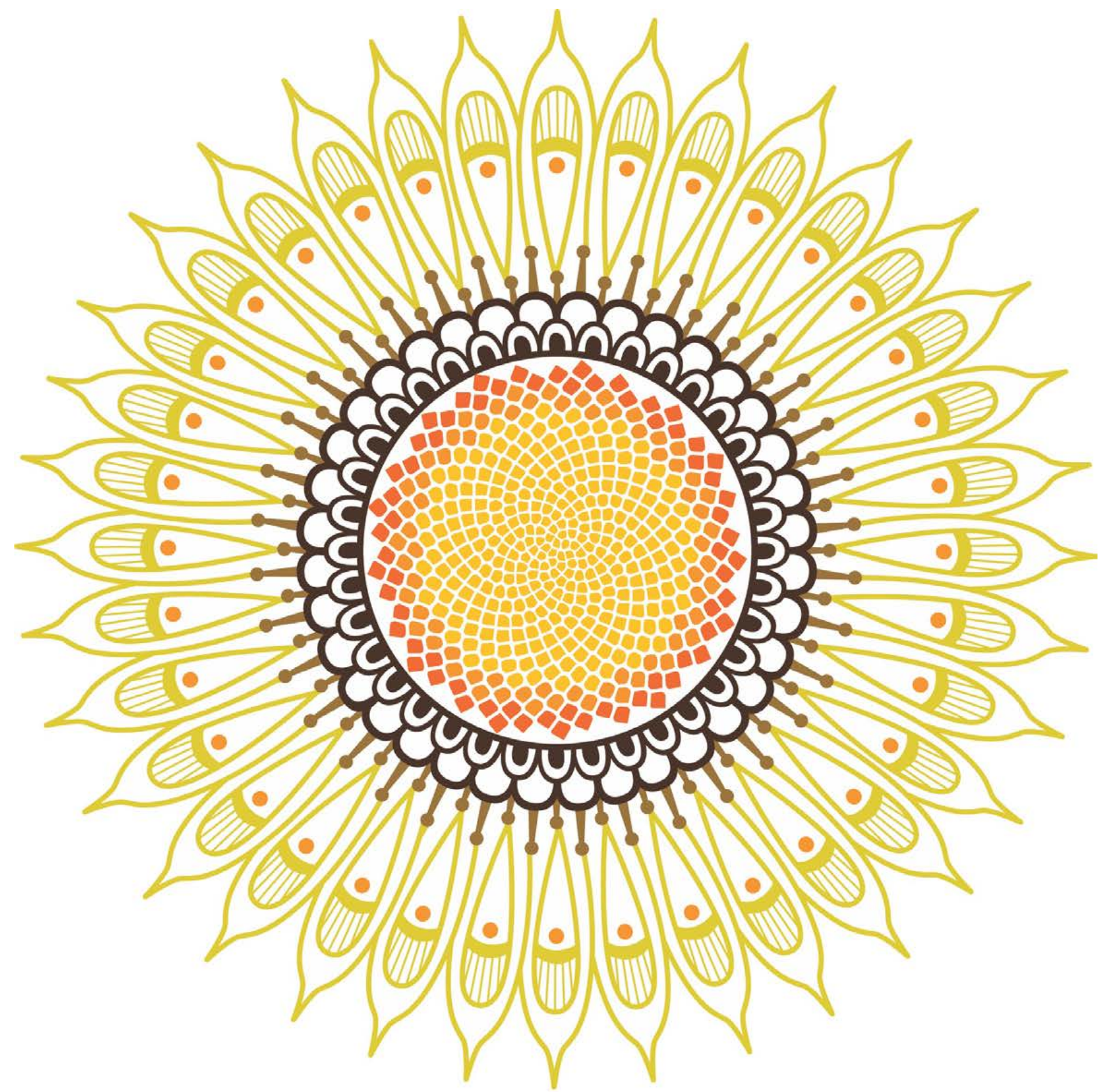
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THE SCIENCE OF LOVE

By Kristin Fildes

Photos courtesy of Charles Darwin University

These recent despatches from scientists and academics at the forefront of pregnancy, birth and baby study look at love and the baby brain, and the amazing impact of improved maternal care on preterm birth in Indigenous communities.

Love and the baby brain

It's common sense that loving our babies is important, but did you know it makes their brains grow? A seminal study in 2016 by Robert Winson and Rebecca Chicot showed that children who experience neglect, parental inconsistency and a lack of love in infancy suffer reduced brain growth, with long-term impacts on mental health.

Now, a study with Romanian orphans has shown that early deprivation has had significant effects into adulthood, despite many years of intervention throughout later childhood, teenage years and adulthood.

Led by Edmund Sonuga-Barke, Professor of Developmental Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience, King's College London, the study took brain scans of adults who had experienced severe deprivation during infancy in Romanian orphanages but had subsequently been adopted by British families and followed them in a longitudinal study for more than 20 years. The scans showed reduced brain volumes as well as specific impacts on three brain areas – the medial prefrontal, inferior frontal and inferior temporal areas. These deficits were associated with lower intelligence quotients as well as a significant increase in mental health problems including ADHD. The study found that neuroplasticity – the brain's incredible

ability to compensate for damage – was not enough to overcome the challenges presented by an early lack of love and care.

Authors of both studies concluded that supporting babies and their parents or caregivers in the first two years of life should be a critical aim of public health services. Another reason (as if we needed one) to give our babies extra snuggles.

Winson and Chicot's paper, The importance of early bonding on the long-term mental health and resilience of children, was published in the London Journal of Primary Care in 2016.

Professor Sonuga-Barke's paper, Early childhood deprivation is associated with alterations in adult brain structure despite subsequent environmental enrichment, was published in January 2020 in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

Continuity of care reducing preterm birth in Indigenous communities

Preterm birth rates among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are much higher than the general population, contributing to the 240% gap in child mortality rates between Indigenous and non-Indigenous children, most of which occur in the first year of life. So preventing preterm birth in these populations could make a huge and much needed difference. A study from Brisbane has reported a halving of preterm birth rates in a new pregnancy service for Indigenous women, run and led by Indigenous people. The program connects pregnant women with a team of clinicians and community members who provide emotional, physical and

clinical support through pregnancy and birth and into the postnatal period.

The research team was led by Professor Sue Kildea of Charles Darwin University (previously Mater and University of Queensland). The program redesigned maternity services to increase continuity of care for Indigenous women from early pregnancy, through an enhanced Midwifery Group Practice program. The program aimed to redirect the maternity journey away from the hospital system, giving control back to the Indigenous community. Resources were delivered through a partnership between the Institute For Urban Indigenous Health, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Health Service and the Mater Hospital. The program also looked at ways to grow the Indigenous midwife workforce – there are currently fewer than 250 Indigenous midwives working in Australia. Non-Indigenous midwives were supported with additional new resources from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community controlled health organisations to help bridge cultural gaps and provide richer and more sensitive care to Indigenous women.

The program halved the rate of preterm births, reducing this to the rate of the general community. The team is now looking at ways to increase the scope and reach of the program to provide this fantastic outcome to more Indigenous communities.

Professor Kildea's paper, Reducing preterm birth amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies: A prospective cohort study, Brisbane, Australia was published in EClinical Medicine, Vol. 12, July 2019.



THE BIRTH OF

Frankie Dessi Morgan

By Janine O'Brien

Photos by Nadine Fragosa and Rebecca Lawrence

Frankie's pregnancy was just as much planned as it was a surprise. We had been trying to conceive for 2 years and lost a pregnancy a year before. The moment I surrendered to the thought of Craig and I possibly not conceiving, Frankie blessed us while we were on our amazing holiday at Turon Gates on my birthday. However, we did not discover her pregnancy until Easter Day. I immediately called Jo Hunter, a midwife I had dreamed of having from the moment I met her at one of Jane Hardwick-Collings workshops. She was happy to take me on, however she was going away for the end of my pregnancy and planned to be back approximately a week before my due date. My husband Craig knew that my dream was to birth at home and he supported me and we moved into a place that I felt more comfortable to birth in and have my 28 day lay in for.

I had dreams of a wonderful pregnancy full of beautiful hormones, me glowing like a goddess! My two previous pregnancies had been 22 and 27 years earlier and my body certainly reminded me of this. I was challenged with hyperemesis the entire pregnancy, PUPP from 17 weeks, an early bleed, a low lying placenta, influenza for 4

weeks, torn intercostals, a hip that gave me grief to walk and another bleed at 33+5 weeks which started the contractions that continued until my labour! "Braxton Hicks" everyone kept telling me! No, these brought me to my knees and usually had a pattern of turning up from 1pm every day until I went to bed around 8:30pm. We decided to engage a doula, the hilarious Nads; it was one of her pep talks that actually helped me to realise that I had to just surrender to them as fighting them was not helping. I then decided that it was good practice for labour as I couldn't get away from myself now and I wouldn't be able to then, either! So I welcomed them into my day. I also welcomed a fierce group of powerhouse women in my Blessingway that was held for me when 36 weeks pregnant by the beautiful Marie. This day was one of the most heartfelt, intense days I've ever had; the love and strength of the women whom I sat in circle with that day reminded me of the true divine feminine.

I believe strongly in affirmations and had some big demons to work through



in my mind on most days, so I hung up some wonderful cards in my room from one of my previous clients, Sara, who owns Best Birth Co. I practiced my calmbirth relaxation responses every night, knowing we were not attending the course until 38 weeks due to needing to be completely off call from the women in my care. Craig and I attended the calmbirth course which was fantastic; I really felt that he needed to do this to feel ready and prepared for our homebirth. At lunch on the last day of the course we were driving to the pond and an all mighty wave of uterine activity brought so much bowel pressure and a strong sensation that made me feel we were having her right then. "Not now baby, not at the pond in Bowral!" We headed back to the course; I was having waves whilst on all fours on the



my space, completely undisturbed and respected by Nadine and Craig.

Nads asked if I could put a finger inside at this point but I didn't want to, the intensity was fierce! I instinctively moved

from on all

birth ball. The beautiful Karen Jackson rubbed my back and gently whispered, "You can go to my place if you like," we decided to head home just in case.

On Tuesday night I asked Craig to pump up the pool. On Wednesday I woke up and realised I felt amazing; no rib or hip pain! I was hungry and the waves for the first time in weeks seemed to have disappeared. I was so excited and could now easily see myself getting to 42 weeks with enjoyment and comfort. I shared a post online telling my baby that I was ready and knew she would come in her own perfect time; I surrendered. I had so much energy, I cleaned the entire 3 stories of our house. That night I found out my midwife Jo had returned from Perth and I sent her a GIF of a happy dance. I asked Craig to put everyone's numbers in his phone and off to bed I went.

At 6:30am on the 12th December, 2019 I woke to a tremendous sensation in my cervix that threw me out of bed and onto my feet. I raced into the bathroom, had an almighty wave on the toilet and immediately had to get into the shower. This had happened before on the many nights/mornings I had contractions in the past, though this time I had bright red, bloody show. Craig came in and I said, "I think it's happening." He was dressed for work and I asked him to stay at home for now. The sensations were intense, so the shower was a great place to be. I asked Craig to get out the mat and bean bag and texted Nads to give her the heads up; she said, "Let's see what the daylight brings."

When I got out of the shower Craig put on my TENS which was incredible. I was down on all fours when a few drops of blood kept coming and a big burst of something clear! Now, you would think being a midwife I would know if this was my membranes breaking, but I was still

uncertain and probably a little in labour land or denial. I texted Jo and Nads to suggest maybe my waters had broken. Nads called me and I remember her saying, "Just enjoy it, Janine;" This I held onto throughout the next part of my labour, grabbing a few laughs with Craig at how I looked like Stevie Wonder when I would flick my head from side to side through each wave. Jo was going to head to a visit further up in the mountains and I called her and said she should go to that, then dropped the phone roaring out to Craig, whom was boiling pots and filling the pool as we had run out of hot water. Unbeknown to me, Jo and Nads had made a consecutive decision to come as I still thought it was too early. To be honest I had always had a fear of everyone sitting around waiting for me. Craig texted my other support crew, my daughters Brooke and Nims, my best friend Zoe and my birth photographer Bec to attend. I lit my mother candle and I began playing some music and our wedding playlist.

Before I knew it, I heard Nads voice and with that reassurance that if she's here I must be in labour I tore off my TENS and said I'm getting into the pool and demanded the music be turned off. The heat, the weightlessness, the protection, the pressure; wow! Immediately I began to roar with so much strength and power; she was coming! It was completely uncontrollable. It was like I was watching someone else's birth from above, though the sensations were all mine. I couldn't open my eyes, I needed to go deep down beneath the waves that were smashing into the next with no or little breaks. The power of my uterus was overwhelming; I remember saying, "She's coming!" Nads and Craig were amazing, reminding me to breathe and keep it low, however it was so challenging as the power of my fetal ejection was so strong making it nearly impossible to catch a breath. I was given sips of water and a cold washer to my face which was like heaven. I felt held in

fours to squatting as my baby's head was coming quickly and I needed to remind her we were doing this together, but she needed to slow down. It was at this point I needed to bring in my affirmation: "My pelvis opens easily and I am huge!" This was important to me as being an older mother, I feared that my body wouldn't work anymore. I was determined to stay intact. "Slow down baby," roared from my mouth. The burn came as quickly as the pressure did. I held my vulva with my hand with all my might to hold her back from flying out with each wave, telling her, "Slowly baby, slowly!" I remember Craig's support from behind and kissing my neck so gently and tenderly. I was in a trance, an ecstatic state of being between worlds. "I am huge, I am huge," I managed to say between waves as the burn became stronger and stronger. Nads asked if I could feel her and yes, there was her head, right at the opening of my vulva. I could feel the excitement that is so often felt around this time in the birth space when a baby is on view. Another few more strong waves and she was almost here. Nads said, "One more wave and Jo will be here." Dexter began to bark which I knew meant Jo had arrived. My baby's head was almost crowning and in walked Jo with that reassuring, "Good job darling girl," wipe of my forehead. Her head was born; the release of that pressure and burning. I waited for the next wave and reached down and brought my daughter up into my arms, just as I had visualised.

My baby was in my arms! "You were in so much of a hurry," I met her with. You're here, we did it. She was covered in so much vernix! Like most waterbirth babies she was 'uncurling' as Hannah Dahlen would say. I was gently blowing on her face. Jo lent in with, "She has good tone love." I was still determined for her to snatch that first breath so I gently gave her a few kisses, a little rub and a, "You're so cute!"



born and I thank you for working with me to slow things down at the end. You are so loved by so many. Welcome Earthside my little Archer. Now begins our fourth trimester.

With that, a big "Hello," she cried out; what a precious voice. Dexter jumped up to greet his sister. I cried out, "I can't believe this is happening to me!" I turned to Craig and said, "Baby look, I can't believe I did it! We waited for Jo, didn't we? You've been trying to come for weeks; look at all your vernix!" We jumped out of the pool and onto the mat and beanbag. A few strong waves and I asked Craig to get me a heat pack and whilst he was down stairs I jumped onto all fours, resting Frankie on the floor in front of me, and birthed my placenta! Craig is not a fan of the placenta so I feel this was subconsciously my way of feeling safe and not freaking him out. Not long

after, Frankie attached to my breast and began her first feed. My best friend Zoe turned up and then Bec, then Brooke and in followed Niomie and my mum. We were tucked up into bed and couldn't be happier of how things unfolded.

Craig, my husband, I will never forget how you made me feel during the birth of our daughter Frankie Dessi Morgan. You held my space without question, doubt or fear and just in complete love and patience, and I will forever be grateful.

Frankie meaning "Free One", you worked with me beautifully. Your Sagittarius trait for freedom explains your urgency to be

Janine is a daughter, a wife and mother to two beautiful young women and a brand new baby girl, Frankie. She is a midwife practicing as a sole midwife with the Soul Midwives to provide true continuity of women centred care to women and their families in Sydney and surrounds.



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LOVE AT WORK

Written by Kristin Fildes

Photos courtesy of Idlewild Creative, Nat Brockman Photography, Jess Worrall Photography

Too few of us get to combine our passions with our working lives. When your passion is pregnancy and birth it can seem difficult to see a way to make a living in this highly specialised and medicalised field. Yet these three women found three very different and unique paths to make their dreams a reality.

The community builder

Peta Arthurson is the owner of Beaches Baby, a community hub and retail space for parents and babies on Sydney's Northern Beaches. Peta's journey took a winding and convoluted path from Australia to New York and back again, and through engineering, pet services, lactation consulting and doula work, before her passion for building communities around new mothers led her to open the doors to Beaches Baby in 2019. Peta lives in Freshwater on Sydney's Northern beaches with husband Shane, 3 year old Matilda, seven month old Angus, dog Giphy, and fish Emma and Simon (named after The Wiggles!).

As a kid, I always thought I would be a nurse. I was a St John Ambulance volunteer for years, but I lacked the focus when I was starting my career to follow it through. Instead I started off as a receptionist in an engineering company. I found that with my Type A,

hyper-organised personality, events and planning was a perfect match, so I took on more of that to become an event management specialist. I then jumped off the corporate ladder to open a Doggy Day Care that I ran for two years, which gave me my love of small business and working within a community. Life took another turn when my then-boyfriend and I suddenly won the Green Card Lottery, planned a wedding in three months and moved to New York. I worked in a 'Mad Men' style advertising agency for a few months before realising that that life wasn't for me any more, and I stopped working to focus on my first pregnancy with Matilda, who was born in Manhattan.

Matilda's birth was an intense, lengthy hospital induction process, and had I not had my doula by my side I think I would have been a lot more stressed out. Whilst my recovery was extremely difficult, my breastfeeding journey was amazing, and the two experiences planted the seeds for where I am today.

While we were still in the US I discovered a course to become a CLEC – Certified Lactation Educator Counsellor, and it was the first course I've ever dedicated myself to and completed with a passion! After we moved back to Australia I studied to become a Certified Doula through the

Australian Doula College.

After completing my studies I found myself still somewhat isolated from other mums. Not having had a mother's group here, and attending classes where the mums didn't actually talk to each other, was so disappointing. I felt a drive to have my own business once again, and from there Beaches Baby was born. It wasn't an easy journey – we were trying for baby number two and doing rounds of IVF, but I didn't want to put this business idea on hold, so I started just casually looking at commercial real estate opportunities. When the retail spaces at the Harbord Diggers were opening up it was an opportunity too good to pass up! Together with my hubby, and good friend and graphic designer Sally, we put forward a proposal to create a parent and child education and retail space, which was accepted. We then turned around an amazing, fast design and build process and opened Beaches Baby in August. All of this happened while I was pregnant with Angus, who was born in an incredibly healing homebirth in October.

It's been incredibly hard work but the most rewarding professional experience of my life so far. We are still getting the word out there about what we do, which includes Support Groups, Mum's & Bub's Classes, Dad's Club,



and Parenting Workshops, and we are evolving and adding more services all the time.

The best part of it all is meeting mums, talking to them about birth, and either preparing them pre-birth or debriefing with them post-birth. There are so many amazing stories, but there are so many sad stories of mums who felt bullied by the system, misled, mistreated and defeated. Inductions feature in nearly every sad story and it makes me so frustrated and angry when I hear the cascade of intervention story over and over again. We have so far to go and I think there is something bigger coming for me to be able to help these women, I am just not sure what it looks like yet!

At the end of the day this is about love and connection. The Australian attitude of, "She'll be right mate," doesn't serve us well at all as mums and families – we really need that village. The love a parent has for their child is endless, regardless of how they got there. Love is in my amazing staff and teachers who literally will do whatever they can to help anyone who walks in our doors; it's in the pride we have for getting this business off the ground; it's in the products we select, often designed, made or sourced by local mums who we are so proud to support. And it's very much in my husband who has been so incredibly supportive as I have made my way to this point.

To connect with Beaches Baby, please check out the website - <https://www.beachesbaby.com.au/>

The guide

Melissa Ayling left her career as a medical secretary following a devastating miscarriage and subsequent healing hypnobirth. Melissa retrained as a hypnobirthing teacher and doula and now helps women enter their birthing journeys with confidence and calm, teaching face-to-face, online and at Australian and international pregnancy retreats. Melissa shares her home in sunny Geraldton, WA with husband Sam, six year old Jarvis, three year old Lochie and dog Jessy.

I was a medical secretary for almost 11 years. I initially worked for a solo GP who practised out of a beautiful heritage house and I had a beautiful connection with him, his wife and the patients. When he joined a busier practise I went along with him but found it was too busy, not at all homely, and there was hardly any connection with the patients. The reason we were there, to serve the patients, was forgotten a lot of the time. I got stressed and burnt out and went to join another solo GP where I stayed until I had my first child.

During early pregnancy with him I struggled to connect with my baby and felt anything but positive, as I had had a traumatic miscarriage before falling pregnant with him. Through hypnobirthing I learned to lead with my instincts, not my fears, and the tools and techniques brought happiness and confidence back into my pregnancy. Learning about the powerful mind-body connection completely changed not only my birthing experience but my entire life. I couldn't keep the knowledge to myself. I wanted to shout it from the rooftops!

Jarvis's birth helped me to discover more about myself and my super powers! It really was a rite of passage. I had always wanted to have my own business ever since I was a little girl, doing something to help people. During my pregnancy I was studying meditation therapy and holistic counselling, however It wasn't until after the birth of my first baby that I wanted to transition into birth work and realised hypnobirthing was what I really wanted to do. Jarvis was still young and sleeping throughout the day a lot, so I finished my meditation and counselling courses, then studied my hypnobirthing course, all during his naps. I graduated as a Hypnobirthing Australia™ practitioner in 2015.

Having the idea to become a hypnobirthing practitioner was easy. Then finding out how to become certified was easy, and so was the study. But once I was certified and it was time to get my business out there - that has definitely been a winding path! I also got pregnant and had my second baby during that time – and his birth, which took place on the side of the road after we left a bit late to get to hospital, definitely cemented for me the power of hypnobirthing! I found his birth to be a really joyous and empowering experience despite it not going to plan, and that for me is what hypnobirthing is all about.

I read once that if you want to get to know yourself, you get into business, and I have definitely found that to be true! The business side of things has been a bit of a struggle, especially with a young family. However I have chosen to see these struggles as lessons and have done a lot of inner work over the past year, and this has really helped.

Seeing women and their birth partners transform right in front of my eyes is the most rewarding thing about this work. I love seeing women and their partners have "ah-ha!" moments as they are reminded about what exactly is involved in the birth process and how their bodies are designed to give birth. They finish classes feeling excited to give birth and believing in themselves and their innate abilities as women and mothers, while their partners are more confident in their roles and knowing how they can assist the woman.

I also know this work is a gift for the child and the world. The parents' new awareness about themselves, their choices and birth is being passed onto



their baby, and what a beautiful gift that is. Peace on earth really does begin at birth!

The most frustrating challenges are mostly around the mythology our society has about birth. Knowing that women are giving birth in a broken system, and hearing stories about women forced into unnecessary medical interventions breaks my heart. Many people think hypnobirthing is about having a pain-free birth which is ridiculous of course! And I definitely find challenges in running the business around my young family and tend to be hard on myself about that.

I am so grateful for the path that I am on. There have been times that I just wanted to quit, but once I get out of that hole I come out even bigger and better. I have learned so many life lessons from my children and my business. I can't believe how much I have grown and my life has never been better.

To learn more about what services Melissa offers, take a look at her website here - <https://melissaayling.com.au/>

The storyteller

Sophie Walker is the host of the incredibly popular Australian Birth Stories podcast, which has given Australian women an unprecedented voice and platform to talk about their birth experiences. Sophie started Australian Birth Stories in 2017 after the birth of her second child, and now runs the podcast fulltime from her home in Melbourne, which she shares with her husband Jonathan, and three sons, six year old Niko, four year old Louis and one year old Ottie.

I have a Masters in Public Health and worked in cancer research at Peter Mac and the Victorian Cancer Council before

starting the podcast. Although I enjoyed my work, once I started our family the commuting and being away from the kids was challenging. I started the podcast whilst working, and when the show began to bring in its own income I was able to match my part time salary and at that point I was able to resign from my 'day job'. At the time I had no idea it would become so beautifully rewarding, and be able to provide a living as well.

The idea for the podcast came because I had found it difficult to access birth stories from Australian women. After the birth of my first son Niko, I was in shock at how my birth had gone down. I went into my pregnancy and labour thinking I had all the tools and skills and I would have a perfect, natural, intervention free birth in the Mercy Family Birth Centre. My Mum had very quick labours with my sister and me, and I was sure everything was in my favour to have the same. I went in to have a checkup when I was a few days overdue and the midwife checked and said, "You're 4cms dilated! You're going to have this baby this afternoon!" Any midwives reading this, here's a cautionary tale – never predict or tell a mother when her baby will arrive, because she was very wrong!

After 36 hours of labour, an induction to speed up delivery due to 'failure to progress past 5 centimetres dilated,' an epidural, forceps and a postpartum haemorrhage - Niko was delivered blue and unresponsive. After my husband revealed the sex, my mum ran crying out of the room to tell my stepfather in the waiting room, "She's had a boy but he's not breathing!"

Although both Niko and I were fine after his birth, I couldn't quite work out what went wrong. Niko was 4.4 kilograms with a huge head and he just wouldn't come out. What could I have done differently? Did I go into the birth centre too soon? Should I have stayed out of the birth pool until later in labour? Was I weak choosing an epidural? I had SO many questions.

After this experience, I went into my second pregnancy and labour determined to have a much better experience. I booked into the Mercy Birth Centre again and had a lovely team of midwives who supported me the whole way through my pregnancy. I had always been interested in birth and had already watched every episode of One Born Every Minute and Call The Midwife. I began obsessing over birth stories. I found several podcasts of birth stories online and I listened to every episode

I could find. I found comfort in hearing how other women had coped and the decisions they had made in their births.

After an amazing, drug-free, fast delivery of my second son Louis, I felt compelled to start a podcast of Australian birthing experiences. The shows I had been listening to had been mostly American and their healthcare systems were quite different to ours in Australia.

I started the show in May 2017 by recording my own second birth experience, followed by my sister's and some close girlfriend's experiences. I wasn't sure if anyone would listen. I figured worst case scenario my mum would be the only listener and at least my friends would have a nice record of their births as a keepsake.

Now, two and a half years on, the show has had over 2 million downloads and I have a waiting list of more than 900 women wanting to come on the show. Each day I receive letters of thanks from new mothers who have loved listening throughout their pregnancies, and many even say they reflected back on previous episodes recalling what other women had chosen or done when faced with the same challenges in their labour.

It's quite a juggle getting the show up each week with three active little boys at home, but I wouldn't have it any other way. It feels a great honour that the women I interview entrust me to record and document their stories, and I feel very proud to have created a resource for pregnant and new mothers to draw on during their journey into motherhood.

Working from home is very hard going and I often feel like I'm not doing either of my roles well. When I'm working I feel like I should be playing with the kids more, and when I'm playing with the kids I feel like I should be working. Social media means I'm often on my phone replying to questions and promoting and running the show. Finding a quiet hour to record the interviews is also a struggle with three small kids – I often hide in the car to record! It is all worth it though when I get incredible messages from women, which I do every day, thanking me for helping them prepare for their births.

If you'd like to listen to the Australian Birth Stories podcast, please have a look **here**

Every woman deserves continuity of support. Every woman deserves a doula.

If you'd like to inquire about doula support, Closing the Bones, Women's Circles or Mother Blessings, get in touch! I'd love to know how I can support you.

0413 416 210 / @claireheenandoula / www.claireheenandoula.com.au



Claire Heenan Doula

Birth Announcements

Elsie



Elsie Primrose Hill – **17th February, 2020**

Elsie Primrose Hill was born into our family at 2.55am on Monday the 17th of February, 2020. She arrived at home (as planned), after a most beautiful and relaxed 3.5 hour labour, surrounded by the love of her mum, dad, brothers, grandmother and aunty! Weighing 3.1kg and 53cm long. We are all doing well and loving our time together as a family of 5!

Midwife: Melanie Jackson

Birth Photo: Sarah from Life and Lens Photography

Angus



Angus John Arthurson - born in the water at home in Freshwater on the **11th October 2019** under the watchful care of the amazing Sheryl Sidery and our Doula, Charlie Polley.

Fraser



Carly, Ryan and big sister Lilah are delighted to welcome a beautiful boy into our family

Fraser Colby Martin

30th November, 2019 at 5:36am

3480g

A whirlwind home waterbirth

Special thanks to Leanne, Shari and Paula xxx

Florence



Florence was born in our small Bondi Junction home on the evening of **20th September 2019**. Born into mama Isabel's hands in the presence of daddy Jamie, sibling Alfred, doula Nadine and midwife Jo (over the phone). We are deeply in love and so grateful to have Florence in our family. We feel very lucky to have had support for a home birth.

Reece



Reece Edward Pickover - Swam into this world on the **27.08.2019** at 1.30am at 3.9 kg. It was the beautiful home birth we had planned and the one I had dreamed about in our Waverley apartment overlooking the Bronte surf. Supported by 3 amazing midwives, Sheryl Sidery, Nadia & Pia from Randwick woman's hospital and my supportive, loving husband Matt. All while his big brother slept through it all. It was love at first sight.

Eloise



Born: **08/03/2020**

Eloise Grace was born to Azure and Dan, surrounded by playful siblings Mia and Archie, doting midwives Maet and Meg and captured on film by Emma Jean photography on International Women's Day, 8th March, 2020.

Madeline



Proud parents Danny & Nicole, big brother Kai, and our 4 legged friend Scruffy welcomed the arrival of Madeline Skye Joanna Kingkittisack on **25th October 2019**. She was born at home, weighing 3.5kg and 52cm long. We have been blessed!!



THE BIRTH STORY OF *Lincoln John*

By Bel Moore

Photos by Yasmina Nadine Photography

I spent the last few weeks of pregnancy impatiently waiting for my third (and final!) baby boy, trying and testing every natural induction technique and wives tale that I could google. I've never been a patient pregnant person; my partner, Ryan, joked that he would come only when I finally gave up trying to make him. I woke at around 7am on the morning of the 23rd August, 2019, after a night of many wake ups for a toddler who wanted to party. I had a small show and some cramping. I was excited as at 40+ 5, things might be happening and I could put the worry of induction (and any more raspberry leaf tea!) out of my mind.

I jumped in the shower with my two boys (5 and 2) at around 8:30am and had a few stronger tightenings. I excitedly yelled out to Ryan to ring my mum to come get the boys. As we hadn't told my family we were planning a home birth, we decided that if I went into labour during the day, we would call them in super early labour to come pick them up as we didn't want any questioning about our choice to home birth. I texted both my lovely doula and private midwife about what was happening and told them I'd keep them updated. We decided to settle back in bed and

watch a movie and see how things went. Things fizzled completely and Netflix wouldn't load; I became a little disappointed. I texted my doula, Jacki, to let her know nothing was happening and she offered to come over at about 11:30am to help get things going again if I wanted.

Jacki and Ryan held acupressure points on both my shoulders and ankles for 10 mins every 30 minutes while I sat on the fit ball and had a tens machine on my breasts (pads on either side of my nipples) to help stimulate oxytocin release - the lazy version of nipple twiddling. Between the acupressure I moved between swirling my hips in a figure 8 and big sumo squatting. Our spare room had been cleared out and set up for a few weeks but as we hadn't expected a daytime labour or birth, Ryan set about blocking the windows in our birth space with blankets to help darken the room. We had aromatherapy going, a Spotify playlist, lots of fairy lights and affirmations stuck on the walls to help set the mood and create a beautiful birthing space. My lovely photographer had also arrived and began documenting.

By 1pm contractions were coming every 5 minutes and lasting about

one minute. I was able to use my hypnobirthing (affirmations I had listened to every night for weeks in a clary sage and magnesium bath, and surge of the sea before bed each night) to go within myself and breathed through them quite easily. My previous labour was only 2 hours (5.1kg boy in the bath with MGP at hospital) so we decided to call Sheryl, my midwife, and have her come over. My second midwife had about an hour to travel, so she started to make her way as well. We started to fill the bath but decided to wait until Sheryl arrived before hopping in. I ended up not getting in until about 2:30pm. The relief felt from the bath was immense. My team worked together brilliantly to ensure I stayed in the zone. Ryan whispered affirmations in my ear while Jacki trickled cups of water on me, made sure I had a cool washer on my neck and fed me ice chips and Powerade when I needed it. Sheryl listened to the baby's heart rate intermittently and encouraged me that all was well.

I breathed through 3 minutely contractions that were lasting about 40 seconds. I voiced my concerns that they weren't lasting very long but both Sheryl and Jacki assured me that they were coming fast and not to worry





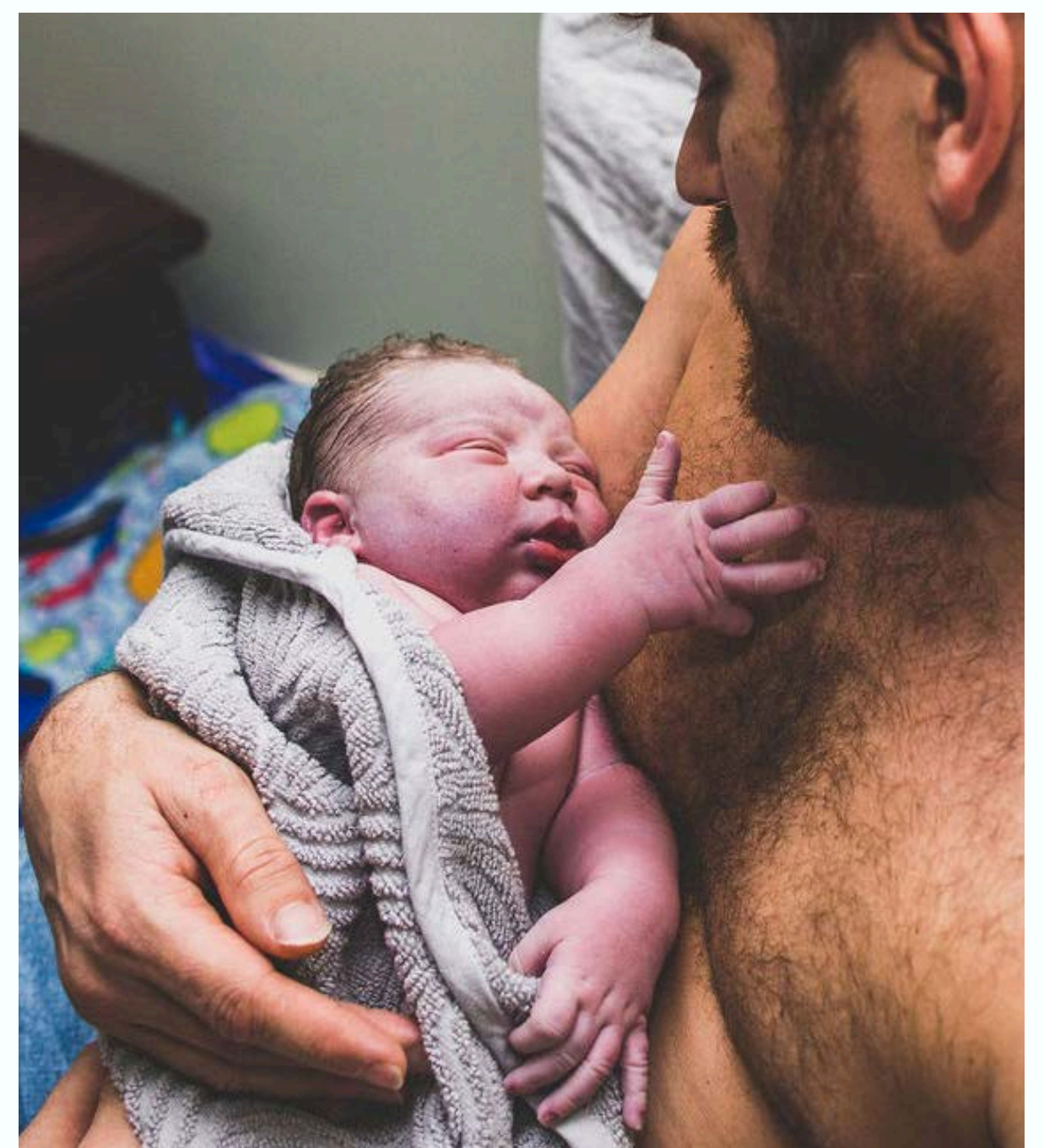
about how long they were. I felt that my labour was being held up by the fact that my waters were still intact; with my last birth they released and things went very quickly. Everyone was pottering around the room but left to give us some space to ramp up the oxytocin levels, so I took the opportunity to have a feel at where things were at; my waters were bulging and released easily (I am a midwife, so felt confident that there was no membranes or cord in the way). The pressure increased and I changed positions a few times in the bath to try to get more comfortable. I felt some involuntary pushing but I felt myself holding back as I was worried about the pain of crowning. I exclaimed to the room, "It is taking too long," obviously in transition.

I gave a push and out came his head in one push. I waited for the next contraction, but after 4 minutes, I got back in my midwife brain and started to panic; another contraction wasn't coming and I was worried that he was stuck! My midwife sensed my distress at this and asked me to stand up and lean over the bath, holding onto Ryan for support. I yelled, "GET HIM OUT!" She applied downward pressure while encouraging me to push and out he came at 4.48pm, all 5.5 kg of him!! Sheryl passed him through my legs to me and we cuddled in the water, taking each other in. We waited until the cord had gone white and stopped pulsing before cutting. I birthed the placenta while standing and transferred into the rocking chair where he attached

beautifully to the breast for his first feed. I was intact with only a small graze. After some peanut butter toast we hopped into bed and continued the love fest. His two little brothers came up to meet him later that night and fell in love with their little brother.

I can't thank my beautiful birth team enough for helping me achieve a beautiful home birth. Thank you to Sheryl Sidery; your knowledge, experience and expertise always put me at ease and let me get out of my midwife brain and be a pregnant/birthing woman. Jacki Barker, my lovely friend, you are amazing in every way and I couldn't birth babies without you by my side. Yasmina, I am so glad to have connected with you and to have had you document our birth; your photos are amazing and I love to look back at them. Finally, to my beautiful partner, Ryan: you weren't on board with a home birth to begin with, but you trusted me and let me educate you on the positives and safety of a homebirth, you listened to what I wanted and needed during pregnancy and labour and, as always, you were a great support person, never leaving my side.

Lincoln John Davis 5.5kg, 57cm long, 36.5cm head circumference.



Bel is a midwife, child and family health nurse and lactation consultant (IBCLC) but her favourite role is being a mum to her 3 beautiful boys, Oliver, William and Lincoln. She's passionate about helping others achieve their birthing and breastfeeding goals and is looking forward to watching her boys grow up in their new hometown, exploring on 4 acres.

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BIRTH TIME

The Story so far

By Jersuha Sutton

What made a midwife, an actress, and a doula/birth photographer decide to come together and make a documentary about Australia's maternity system? Good question.

If we skipped to the end of the article the answer would be... care. Three women who knew what the gold standard of care is for pregnant and birthing women... and between them having delivered it (the care, of course, not the babies- they were birthed), having been on the receiving end of it, and in my case, as a doula, having witnessed all of the alternatives.

Rewind to 2008 when Jo Hunter co-organised the Sydney Homebirth Conference and the Australian premiere of the documentary, the Business of Being Born (BoBB). Whilst the BoBB was a game-changer of a film, it was American and therefore a lot of people dismissed it as being irrelevant to us. Creating an Australian birth documentary was an idea and a pipe dream in her head. Fast forward to about 2015 when Jo and I met and became friends, she told me of her idea and showed me a homebirth

film from the 1980's called Labour of Love. The film was funded by the ABC and was a quaint, simple and quite delightful film which followed three homebirth midwives in Sydney and the Blue Mountains. It seemed like such a good resource to share in regards to birth, and particularly homebirth, but as lovely as it was, it was very dated (including lots of lovely pubic hair!). So we started dreaming of the possibility of making Labour of Love II. A current, Australian birth film. We went so far as to get permission from the filmmaker to do this (although she was slightly bemused that we wanted to go to the effort of making a homebirth film - having been there herself and knowing the time, money and effort that goes into such a thing).

We became a little perplexed by how on earth we would go about making a film between the two of us, so the idea remained a dream. Later that year Zoe Naylor booked Jo to be her midwife for the birth of her second baby in 2016. Zoe had birthed her first baby in hospital and this time was looking for care with more depth. A little closer to the birth Zoe also called me - as she had decided she wanted to have her birth filmed. She was germinating an idea about a TV series and wanted to have the footage

available to use for that. The birth team was set.

Zoe's birth of Beau was a magical evening and she was astounded by how different she felt having received true, one to one continuity of midwifery care. In the conversations that followed, Jo showed Zoe The Business of Being Born, and told her of our dream to make an Australian birth documentary. Zoe was in. Together we decided it was time to find out why so many women were coming out of their births traumatised, why birth related PTSD is on the rise, and why we have a postnatal depression epidemic.

At this stage I was in the second trimester of my first pregnancy, so what better trio to start making a documentary - a newborn mother of two, a pregnant woman and one of Australia's busiest homebirth midwives. The urgency was real.

The mission became clear...to ask the question- what would it take for women to emerge from their births physically well and emotionally safe?

I had cameras which were enough to

start filming, so we bought sound and lighting equipment, learnt where the ON buttons were and hit up Hannah Dahlen to be our first interviewee. By this stage I was 35 weeks pregnant and Beau was 4 months old.

Our timing could not have been better... in two weeks time the Normal Labour and Birth Conference was coming to Australia, and Hannah was organising it. Jo and I were to be attending the conference and after her interview Hannah said, "If you're really making this documentary you need to make the most of these people being in the country. I will connect you with anyone you want." We flew into action, Hannah played cupid and we found ourselves for the entirety of the conference in a private room, with the likes of Lesley Page, Sheena Byrom, Soo Downe and Melissa Cheney rotating through to share their expertise.

This was October 2016. One week later I gave birth to my first baby, at home, with Jo as my midwife. Hands down best day of my life.

We had about a 6 week hiatus and from there things snowballed. We were back at it- interviewing whoever we thought could lend their opinion to answer our burning question. We fitted these filming sessions in between birthing women, young families, running businesses, writing a thesis, speaking at conferences and many, many other things. We spoke to the likes of Sarah Buckley, Rachel Reed, Rhea Dempsey, Nicky Leap, Pat Brodie, Andrew Bisits, Andrew Pesce, Kirsten Small, Jane Hardwicke Collings, Sheryl Sidery, Bashi Hazard as well as following several women in their pregnancies and births both at home and in hospital, and interviewing many other women and partners. We travelled with our babies in tow, often with one of Jo's teenage daughters with us to look after the little ones whilst we filmed. We breastfed through interviews, filmed women sitting on their beds with our babies lying asleep next to them, just out of frame, and conducted interviews in Air BNB's after bedtime with the kids asleep in the next room. Again, the urgency was real.

During this whirlwind of interviews, we met Olympian Selina Scoble while in Brisbane. Initially we interviewed her for her story as a 40 year old first time mother with various risk factors, and how she was being treated in the

system. But our relationship with Selina quickly escalated and she became a key member of the Birth Time team. She is our behind the scenes goddess who is constantly tinkering away at all the little unseen things- our emails and website, accounts and merchandise as well as helping to plan and execute our next big moves.

Our filming took us to some incredible places, none more incredible than to Alice Springs in July 2018. By this stage our babies were old enough to be left with their fathers for a few days so we jetted off to Alice with the two co-chairs of the Birthing on Country Project- Mel Briggs and Cherrisse Buzzacott, to film the story of these two women working together, and to visit Cherrisse's home country.

We also started hosting live events, as a way of bringing the birthing community together to boost education, moral, and a sense of togetherness. We have hosted three events to date- Feminism & Human Rights in Childbirth with Hannah Dahlen and Bashi Hazard, An Evening with Rhea Dempsey, and Birthing on Country with a panel of the key players from the project. All of these events are available to watch online through our website.

Early 2019 after over 60 interviews, we decided it was finally time to draw a line under the filming side of our project and start to carve this body of work into something digestible. It was decided that our beautiful friend and honorary sister Ryan Harrison and I would take on the first pass of this mammoth task. Ryan and I spent the next 5 months locked in his studio bachelor pad with his dog, Biscuit and lots of dark chocolate, watching and scribing every single interview, and pulling together themes and threads which ran through 2.5 years of interviews. At times it felt like an insurmountable project, but by the end of the 5 months we had a 1 hour 45 minute film which was so dense with information, it felt like being hit over the head with a baseball bat.

Simultaneously while this was going on, Zoe was on a fast learning track of the executive producers role. She threw herself into learning the ins and outs of the film industry from the angle of funding and government tax offsets- otherwise known as "how the hell you find enough money to finish a film", because post production in films is

the money equivalent of a postpartum hemorrhage. Since then we have agreed on, and then pulled out of a deal with a post production house, and as well as never quite agreed on and consequently pulled out of a distribution deal, all because we weren't feeling respected and listened to, and they wanted more than we were willing to give. We have likened our experience to a birthing woman in the system more than once in this process.

In October last year we revisited the hour forty five baseball bat of a film- Zoe, Jo and I locked ourselves away together for 36 hours and re-edited it to a much more palatable 1 hour 20 feature length documentary.

We call Jo our Captain. Our chief breath taker. Whenever we need direction on something, whenever we need a decision finalised, we turn to her. Her wealth of knowledge having worked as a birth worker, activist and private midwife for over 20 years has been the bedrock of this project. Being held in such high regard in the birth world is what has given us access to the incredible array of people that have come on board our project.

Through Zoe's wizardry on the finance and relationships front we have landed ourselves in the incredible hands of Spectrum Films at Fox Studios for all of our post production, we have original animation and composition created by amazing artists, we have a new distribution deal and our film will be finished next month.

And then comes the slightly heartbreaking part of the story- which someday we are sure will be viewed as simply a bump in the road... we were set to release our film at the end of April, tour the country with screenings and Q&A's in 13 locations, and start the next chapter for what we have planned to change the landscape for birthing women. But alas, the world has ground to a halt. So, like any good midwife would, we sit with what is, not with what we want to be (thank you Jane Hardwicke Collings) and we wait for when this baby of ours is good and ready to be born.

To stay up to date on all things "Birth Time" make sure you head to <https://www.birthtime.world> and sign up to their newsletter, get shopping or make a doantion.

WELCOME

Fraser Colby

By Carly Knight

Photos by Carly, Ryan and Carly's mum



This baby was very much planned and we were very fortunate to fall pregnant immediately. We were thrilled but kept the news to ourselves for a few weeks and it felt lovely to have this little secret for a while. Around 8 weeks we decided to share our news with our 3yo daughter, Lilah, and then let her tell both of our families. Lilah nicknamed the baby "Minka" and that is how we (and all of our friends and family) began referring to the baby.

I felt much more relaxed during this pregnancy and was able to tune out of my midwife brain. I felt comfortable declining a number of the usual tests and was supported in my decisions by our wonderful midwife. During the second trimester we decided to go travelling, so from week 14 to week 20 we were on a road trip along the Queensland coast, in a motorhome that we hired. The holiday was an absolute dream and we treasured the time as a family of 3.

On the evening of November 29th, at 39+6, I was laying in bed waiting for Ryan to watch a documentary before going to sleep. At around 9pm I felt a very strange popping sensation, followed by a warm rush of fluid. I called out to Ryan for a towel ASAP!

Luckily I had put a bluey under my sheets a couple of weeks earlier. I got up and showered, with more fluid rushing out, then I got dressed and settled again. I had a big adrenaline rush and got the shakes - this was it! We let our team know things would likely happen overnight. We rushed around getting the birth space ready; Ryan set up the pool and I hung the fairy lights.

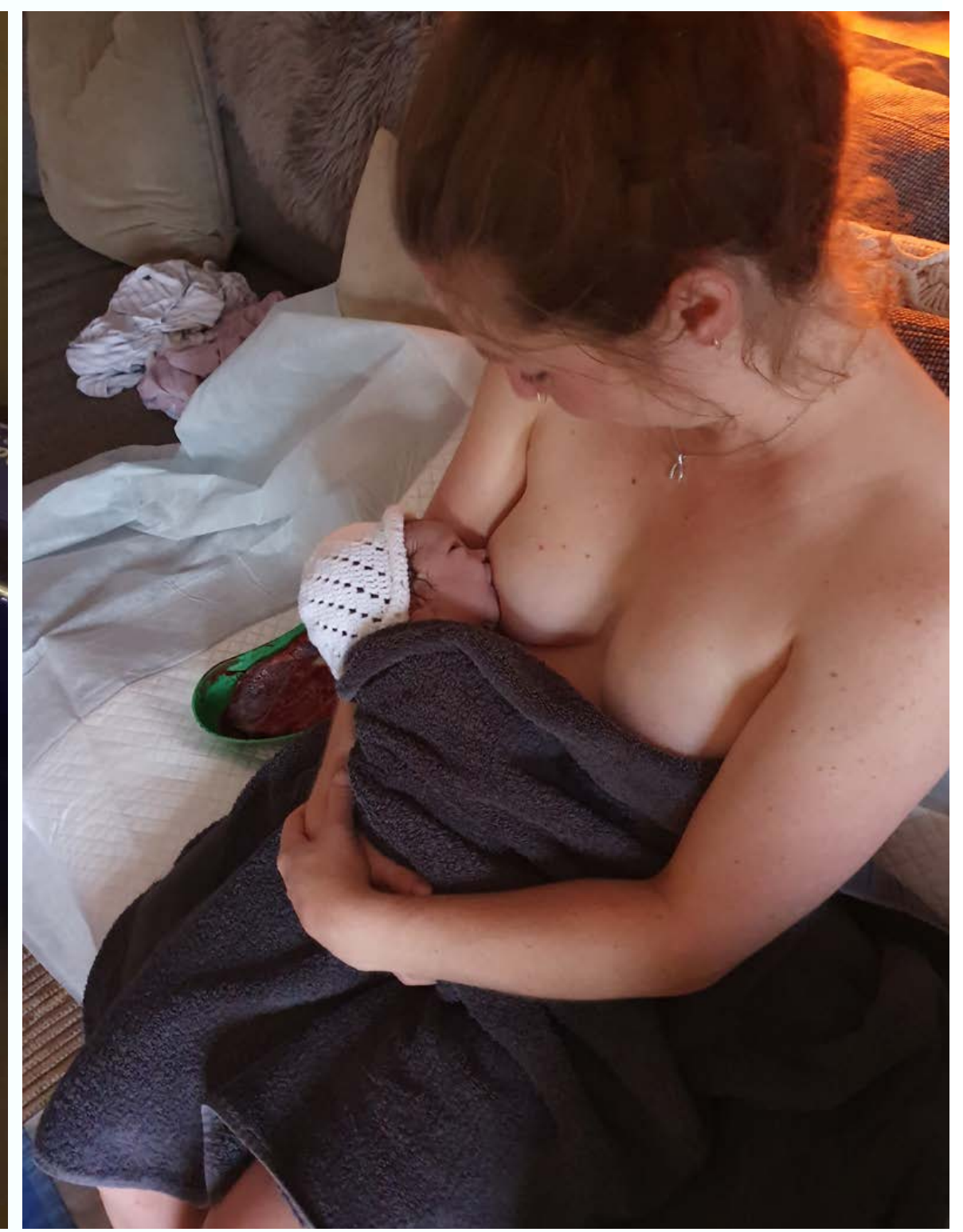
I wasn't feeling any tightenings or contractions but by 10pm I began to feel some mild niggles. I hopped back into bed with a heat pack and decided to watch the documentary anyway because I knew I was too excited to sleep. Ryan applied the TENS pads for me; I didn't need it yet, but I wanted him to get some sleep before I needed him later on. Slowly the pains intensified and I began using the TENS to help me through. I managed to watch the whole documentary and then around midnight I had to get up out of bed because I needed to mobilise.

I travelled into the stars after this and so the specifics and timings become a little blurry to me. The pains intensified more and I laboured calmly and peacefully in my bedroom. I remember thinking how nice it was

to be labouring in my own home this time (our first homebirth was in an AirBnB). I was upright and mobile and spent time on my knees, on the fitball and standing.

Around 2am the contractions started to become intense and I became vocal to get through them, taking big deep inhalations and moaning through the exhale. I didn't want to call everyone too early so I kept doing this in my bedroom for a while. I called Mum at 3:30am and asked her to come around and hop into bed with Lilah so that I could get Ryan up to help me. She arrived a short while later and I woke Ryan to fill the pool. The contractions intensified even more and I continued moving through them in my bedroom. Once the pool was ready I hopped in and at this point they were so strong that I felt I couldn't cope for much longer. I didn't feel as much relief from the warm water as I had hoped, however it was nice to move without gravity and even float on my tummy with my legs outstretched.

I had about 5 contractions in the pool when I decided to check and see if I could feel my cervix. This was a bad idea! It only felt like 6cm dilated and this worried me because I was beginning to feel like pushing. My



midwife brain kicked in and I began thinking that the baby was posterior and giving me this early urge to push, even though my body wasn't ready yet. In my head I planned my transfer to hospital and epidural so that I could get through the last few hours! I voiced none of this to Ryan (perhaps because I knew deep down that it was irrational) and with the next contraction I felt such an overwhelming urge to push that there was nothing in the world that could have stopped me.

Ryan called Leanne immediately and after another contraction with that overwhelming urge and pressure I told Ryan to text her to hurry - this baby was coming whether they were here or not! I surrendered to these sensations and my body began involuntarily pushing. It was such a different feeling to pushing with Lilah, which had been more of a conscious process. I had absolutely no control over my body this time as it squeezed my baby out and the feeling was so overwhelming that I was roaring and screaming and hanging onto Ryan for dear life!

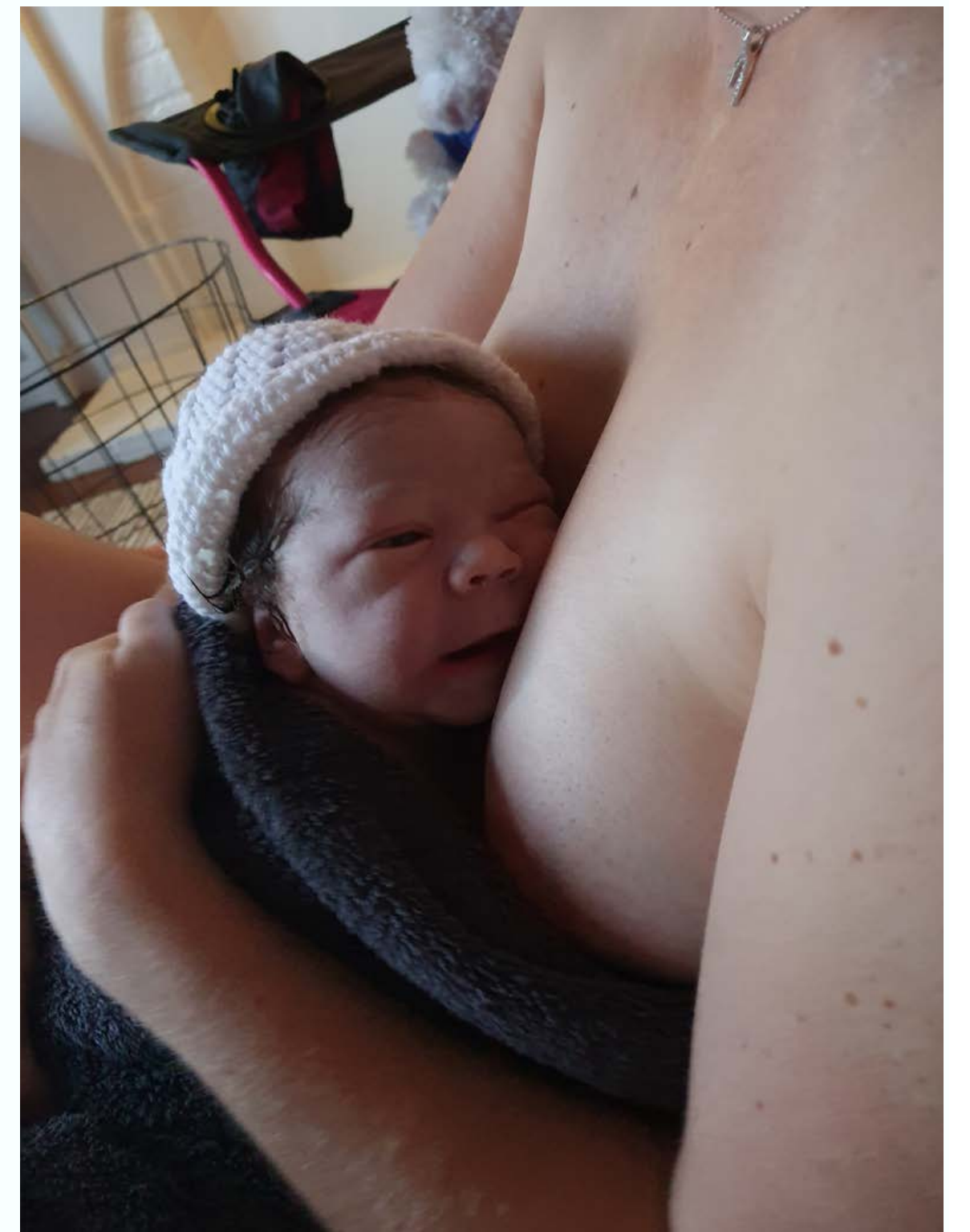
Our midwives arrived at 5:30am and I could feel that there was a significant amount of head on view. With the next contraction my body took over once again and moved my baby's head down so rapidly that I barely had time to catch up with what was happening. I think the head was born with the next contraction and then the body with the following, into Leanne's hands at 5:36am. The cord was around the neck and apparently the baby's hand came out just under its chin. Leanne passed the baby to me, who was a bit floppy at first but cried shortly after.

Ryan went and got Lilah (she had slept through the whole thing) and she came out to meet her baby sibling. She was so excited that she tried to jump into the pool with her pyjamas on! We had originally planned for Lilah to be there for the birth and she had wanted to help 'catch' the baby, but when I was screaming so loudly I had changed my mind, not wanting to frighten her. Ryan helped her into the pool, where she said hello to the

new baby and gave me a cuddle. I asked her if she wanted to check and tell us the sex and she did, so I leaned the baby back and Lilah announced that it was a boy! I couldn't believe it, I was thrilled but shocked as I had been so certain that he was going to be a girl. We cuddled in the pool for a while and I just couldn't stop staring at him. I birthed the placenta next to the pool, then moved to the lounge so I could feed him.

He fed beautifully whilst we chatted about the night's events. Lilah checked out the placenta and Ryan tied the cord so that he and Lilah could cut it together. Leanne weighed him and announced that he was 3480g or 7lb 11oz - smaller than Lilah! Though he was longer and had a bigger head. I showered while Ryan and Lilah had skin to skin cuddles then hopped into bed with Minka and snuggled up for a nap. Lilah went to Mum's so we could rest and Ryan began cleaning up - I think he did 4 loads of washing that day!

We had 6 boy names on our list (and only 1 girl name - go figure) but by dinner time we had decided to name him Fraser Colby - Colby after Ryan's older brother who had passed away. Fraser's birth was so different to Lilah's - much more raw and powerful and called for much more surrender than I'd expected. I feel so grateful to have had another amazing birth and that I have a little boy to love and cherish. I can't wait to watch these two grow together and I feel so privileged to be their Mama.



Carly is a midwife and mama of two beautiful babes and has been very fortunate to have now had two very powerful, life affirming and empowering homebirths. She lives in rural NSW with her partner Ryan and their children Lilah (3 years) and Fraser (2 months). They have had to overcome a number of challenges with accessing private midwifery during both pregnancies, but especially for Fraser's birth since the introduction of the 2 midwife rule. Carly is a big advocate of homebirth and feels that the first birth is the most important to have at home. She really believes in the power of sharing positive birth stories - so here is hers.



LOVE OF A LIFETIME

By Kristin Fildes
 Photos curtesy of Jesrasha Sutton

The lifelong labour of Sheryl Sidery to deliver birth choices to women

Sheryl and the midwives at a major Sydney hospital powered a great leap forward in homebirth accessibility last year when they launched the hospital's publicly-funded homebirth program. A passionate woman-centred midwife for more than three decades, Sheryl has spent her career fighting for better choices for birthing women.

I really didn't want a baby shower. I had been given many hand-me-downs from family and found everything else we needed second hand. We also live in a tiny studio cabin, so I didn't want lots more baby clothes, toys and 'stuff' to have to find a nook or corner for.

When she started working life as a nurse, Sheryl wasn't aware that midwifery was even a job. Her own first birth was the catalyst for her long and outstanding career in midwifery.

"This was 1980, and most births were epidurals, stirrups, episiotomies and forceps," she recalls. "I remember thinking that no one understood what a huge experience birth and mothering was. I felt quite superhuman, but no one in the system was reflecting that back to me. I realised I had found what I was here for – to show women how incredible they are."

Studying midwifery was not an immediate path to nirvana however. As Sheryl moved through her training – then all practical and workplace-based – she was unimpressed with what she saw in hospitals. "Midwives seemed to be little more than obstetric handmaidens – I was really thinking I had made a mistake. Serendipitously, in my last few weeks I met a 'real' midwife and saw my first proper physiological birth. The woman came in and the midwife pushed the bed to one side, laid down a mat and gently encouraged her, saying things like 'listen to your body' while putting pressure on the woman's back. And then the woman knelt down, slipped her knickers off and the baby came out. My brain exploded! That's what I had been looking for."

This introduction led Sheryl to home birth, and she began attending home births as a private midwife in 1987 after completing her apprenticeship with Maggie Lecky-Thompson with her six-month old daughter Abby in a backpack. "Abby came everywhere with me and much to my chagrin, she's now a midwife too! I guess it was inevitable, but it's not an easy life and while it's my absolute passion it's not something I would choose for my kids. Your life isn't really your own, and having to do training in hospitals can be awful –

I find birth suite mostly intolerable. But I guess it's in the Sidery blood and I'm incredibly proud of her."

Sheryl circled back to hospitals in the late 1980s at the freestanding cottage birth centre at the Royal Hospital for Women, then in Paddington, that Sheryl and the team of eight midwives called 'The Cradle of Learning'. In the early 90's Sheryl joined forces with Shea Caplice and Jane Hardwicke Collings to start the first private midwifery practice in Sydney. Shea and Sheryl continued the partnership after Jane moved down south and have enjoyed working together for the nearly 30 years offering women home birth and birth centre. "Freestanding birth centres in public hospitals are the gold standard outside of home birth," she says. "They provide excellent midwife-led care and normal physiological birth, and a great place for new midwives to see what a normal birth is. That's a huge part of the problem you see – midwives just don't see normal birth, they have no idea what normal is. They learn about it at university then come out into to hospital practice and rarely see it.

Separation from hospital is almost essential for normal birth, Sheryl insists.



and never looked back.”

Sheryl describes these years as the most fulfilling of her career. “I also felt nervous because we had lost our professional indemnity insurance for births, which also meant we no longer had visiting rights. But it was the right decision and I did five years of about 40 births a year. You can get a bit burnt out though, being 100% on call. So when a call came out of the blue from the Women’s asking me to set up their home birth program, it was perfect timing.”

In 2005, NSW Health issued a policy directive that all public hospitals should offer home birth as an option to healthy women. While few have taken up the call, Sheryl’s hospital’s program has been successful in the 18 months since it was launched.

“The reason hospitals don’t offer homebirth is simply because the people in charge are not interested,” Sheryl says. “We are fortunate to have the support of obstetrics as well as the Director of Nursing. Interestingly our DoN comes from the UK where home birth is much more normalised so that was a real win for us.”

Practical issues were the least of Sheryl’s concerns in opening home birth up to publicly birthing women. “It really wasn’t difficult to do at all. We had our first home birth six weeks after I started, and we are up to 40 now 20 months later (March 2020). We don’t advertise or promote it as we don’t want to be flooded. One problem is the woman needs to already be allocated to a midwifery group practice (MGP) and that is a bit of a lottery. The midwives involved – there are about 15 of us – wear little badges with ‘ask me about home birth’ on them and that’s how women can make enquiries, once they’re cared for by MGP.

The biggest barrier comes from an unlikely source. “It’s the midwives. It’s opt-in to offer women homebirth and many still don’t want to be involved. They’re not comfortable with homebirth, despite the massive body of evidence that homebirth is safer than hospital birth for healthy women. It’s a real shame but I live in hope that we can gradually change things as progressive young midwives enter the profession and homebirth hopefully becomes more normalised.”

For midwives who have become involved in homebirth having only been in birth suite before, the program is a revelation. “One thing they love is working in pairs, as you have to have two midwives at a

homebirth. Working together in that intimate environment is a completely different paradigm – it’s almost a different job,” Sheryl explains. “They don’t realise how amazingly different it is and when they witness it for the first time it’s really overwhelming and wonderful.”

The biggest outcome for Sheryl is broadening the access to homebirth to women who couldn’t otherwise afford it. “Homebirth is expensive for some families” she laments. “Only women with money can have the best care and that it’s a little elitist. I have done so many freebies over the years. So publicly funded home birth is another choice for women with no discrimination about cost. Unfortunately, unless women are very motivated and educated, they get sucked into the culture that says private obstetrics is ‘best’ because it’s also expensive, but what we know is that model has high levels of unnecessary obstetric interventions that increase maternal and neonatal morbidity.

The new program is personally fulfilling and offers a ray of hope for Sheryl in the industrial birth complex. “I’m enjoying it,” Sheryl says emphatically. “It’s lovely to be working with a group of midwives willing to learn different ways of working. And it’s lovely to be offering it for free. Most of the women who have birthed at home through the program did not really know about homebirth prior to being offered it. There are women who are ideally suited to employing a private midwife and I encourage women to do so.

Ideally, I’d like to see newly graduating midwives come straight into this midwifery model before they get broken by the system and turn into robots topping up epidurals, plugging in the monitors and becoming obstetric nurses”.

Despite an almost full-time load at the hospital, Sheryl still does some private practice. “I keep considering retirement, to be more available to my granddaughters but then a previous client will get pregnant again and really how can I resist? I will probably always find an excuse to do some private births because they’re so rewarding and those women are inspiring and gorgeous to work with. And to be honest private midwifery practice really still is the very best care for women. I would ultimately love that all women had a known midwife – we are a long way from that - and so the work continues.”

“Freestanding birth centres and home birth are the only real options for normal birth,” she says. “As soon as you have birth suite anywhere nearby it affects the atmosphere. Women ask permission for everything – ‘Can I turn the music on? Can I get in the shower?’ and there’s a feeling that the woman isn’t in control of anything. There are people calling out, knocking on the door and interrupting all the time, taking the woman out of her zone. But when you go to her home, or operate within a separate birth centre with motivated women and midwives, it’s completely different. You’re in the woman’s space where she can do her own thing. The idea of ‘delivering’ a baby is so ridiculous. Doctors don’t deliver babies, nor do midwives. Women need love, space and time, and then in almost all cases, the baby just comes out. At the vast majority of births, we are merely supportive observers.”

When the Women’s moved to Randwick and the freestanding birth centre was lost, Sheryl found herself back next to birth suite again, and ultimately quit practicing in-hospital midwifery in hospital for over ten years. “I had my fourth baby and while I was still doing private births, I spent the next 10 years in perinatal mental health. That was often a gruelling job but the hours suited me with young children, and I learned heaps about maternal infant attachment and the importance of those early weeks and months. Finally, once my youngest son was old enough to be left at nights, I went full time into private practice



THE BIRTH STORY OF

Maddie Skye

By Nicole Hendieh

Photos by Jo Junter and Jacqui Wood

On Thursday 24 October 2019, I woke up feeling like today was the day that Maddie would arrive Earthside. I was 41 weeks pregnant. I had had acupuncture done on Tuesday but nothing had happened yet. Today felt like there was more pressure and I had trouble walking. I had an appointment with my chiro that morning. He did some adjustments and pressed on the acupuncture points for labour.

Usually after picking up my 8yr old son Kai from school, we would go see my parents but today I wanted to go straight home. I felt like I was in early labour. We came home, had showers and an early dinner. After that, Kai and I just relaxed together. Danny, my fiance, came home from work at 6:30pm. At about 8pm, I could feel the contractions start again and they were getting stronger. The contractions were about 2-2.5mins apart. Kai and I watched the movie 'The Nut Job'. At 9:30pm, we went upstairs to read stories and he fell asleep.

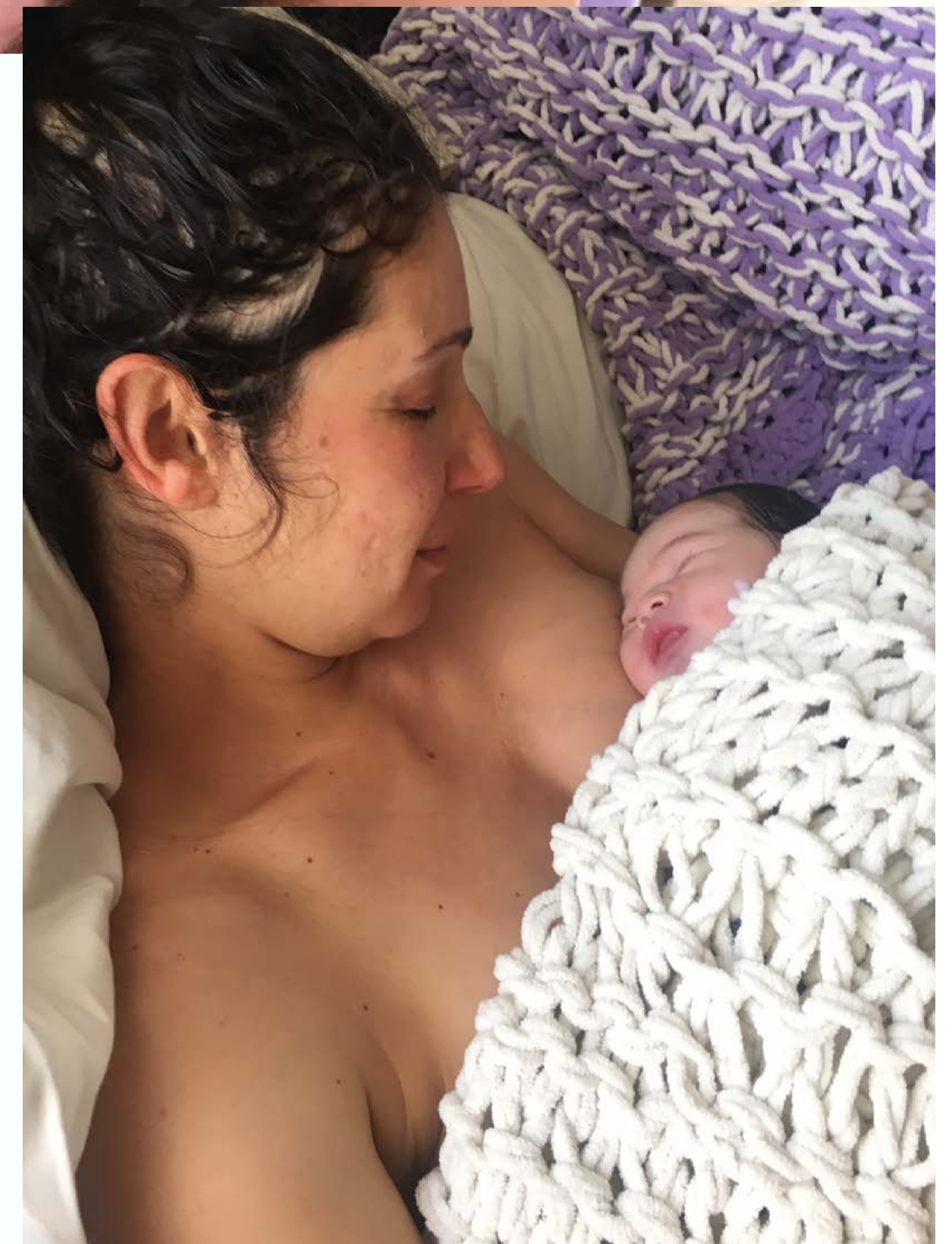
I went back downstairs and Danny and I watched Netflix. I was having contractions but they were still bearable. I didn't think Maddie would arrive soon so we went to bed around

11pm. Danny fell asleep but the contractions increased in intensity and I was getting a bit vocal. I didn't want to wake up Kai or Danny so I went downstairs at 1am.

I sent Jacqui, my midwife, a message at 1:46am saying that my contractions were coming every 2-2.5 mins but they were still bearable. Jacqui asked me if I wanted her to come over but I said not yet. I lay on the couch and tried to breathe through each contraction.

Danny came downstairs about 2:30am. He couldn't sleep so he put on Netflix and we lay on the couch. I was dozing in between each contraction. I was so tired and wanted to sleep but couldn't. Kai was still asleep (I think!) upstairs and I was hoping I wouldn't wake him up.

About 4am, the contractions were getting stronger. At 4:20am, Danny messaged his dad and asked him to come pick up Kai. His dad came over in about 5mins! Danny woke Kai, gave me a cuddle and kiss and left. Danny messaged Jacqui at 4:47am and asked her to come over. She said she would be over in an hour. The contractions increased. I was sitting on the floor, knees on a cushion, leaning on the couch, breathing into the pillow



during each contraction. Danny was amazing and was helping me through each contraction. I had a 'show' so I knew Maddie would be coming soon.

Jacqui arrived at 6am. It was so good to see her. She told Danny to start filling up the birth pool. Jacqui examined me. I was 8cm dilated and Maddie would be coming by 7:45am. I wanted to believe her but wasn't sure. My water hadn't broken yet. I got into the pool and it felt like heaven. The water was amazing and it helped with the contractions. My other midwife, Jo Hunter arrived at 7:30am.

I kept working through each contraction. Jacqui could see Maddie's head but there was the water sack. I went to the bathroom to pee hoping my water would break but it didn't.



I got back in the pool. Jo suggested I put my fingers inside to try and break my water with the next contraction but I wasn't able to do it. I walked around to try and change positions but it didn't help. My water still wouldn't break. Jacqui suggested I go to the bathroom again and with the second contraction on the toilet, I was able to break my water with my fingers. It was clear! What a relief!!!

It was 9am by this time and I thought that Maddie will be coming soon. I got back into the pool and started pushing with each contraction. After half an hour of pushing, Jacqui checked me and said I was still only 8cm dilated!! I had to be 10cm. I was devastated. I felt like I wouldn't be able to do this. I was exhausted but I had to go on.

Jacqui and Jo set up cushions and a sheet on the floor for me to lie down hoping that my body would dilate to 10cm. They helped me out of the pool. Jacqui and Jo went out in our garden and left Danny and me inside. The contractions were really strong. After about 10mins (it felt like an hour!!) I asked Jacqui to check on me but nothing had changed. They listened to Maddie's heartbeat and she was doing well. They left me again but it was really hard being on the floor. I was worried that if I didn't dilate enough that I would have to go to the hospital which is what I didn't want to happen. The contractions were close and very strong. I just wanted it to be over. Danny was an amazing support through it all.

After 14 mins had past (it felt like an hour), I asked them to check on me again. Jo came in and checked Maddie's heartbeat and all was ok. I asked her if I could get back in the pool as I was finding it hard being on the floor. Jo said ok and to try and breathe through

the contractions. The contractions were hard, fast and very intense. I was leaning on Danny who was on the outside of the pool. Thank goodness for Danny.

At 10:30am, Jacqui and Jo came back inside. I was exhausted but was hoping that I was fully dilated. I had to come out of the pool and lie on the floor for Jacqui to examine me properly. I waited for a contraction to pass for me to get out of the pool. Once I got out of the pool, I had to wait for another contraction. It was so intense that I felt like I was going to do a poo in front of everyone. Thank goodness I didn't!!

Jacqui examined me and thankfully I was fully dilated! I was so relieved. Maddie's heartbeat was also strong and good. They helped me up and another contraction started. I pushed really hard, thinking I was going to do a poo in front of everyone but it was Maddie moving down quickly. Her head was coming out and I thought I was going to have her on the floor. I put my hand down in case I had to catch her! Jacqui and Jo both knew that I needed to get into the pool quickly so suddenly both Jacqui and Danny picked me up and threw me into the pool!! It was the funniest thing!!

With the next push, I could feel Maddie's head coming. It was burning a lot but with the next contraction, her head came out. With another contraction, I pushed out my beautiful girl and caught her in my hands. What a blessing!!! I was so relieved and so very happy!! My baby girl had arrived earthside at 10:46am. I put her immediately on my chest. I sat in the pool and savoured the moment. What a journey it had been!!

Jacqui and Jo covered the couch and then helped me up. I sat on the couch with Maddie on my chest still attached. I relaxed and waited for Maddie to receive

all of the cord blood and for the placenta to be delivered. Jo had bought a special placenta bowl that she had been gifted. It was her first time using it. I delivered the placenta naturally. After Maddie had received all of the cord blood, Danny cut the cord and attached the special cord tie we had bought for Maddie from "Kords by Kensa". Danny was then able to hug his baby girl for the first time. What a special moment!!

I was so happy I was able to birth Maddie at home. So grateful to have Jacqui as my midwife and for her support especially when I wanted to give up. Especially grateful to Danny for his love and support. I wouldn't have been able to do it without him!! Kai has a baby sister!! We are so blessed to have them both!!

Nicole Hendieh is a mum to 9 year old Kai and now 5 month old Maddie. I live at Bass Hill, NSW with my kids, fiance Danny, dog Scruffy, and two chickens. I am passionate about health and nutrition, especially when it comes to kids. I am the creator of Alephia Holistic Life Mastery where I work as a Holistic Lifestyle Coach and Functional Diagnostic Nutrition Practitioner. I love to hang out with my family, being in nature, cook yummy foods and crochet.

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THE BIRTH OF

Teddy

By Melanie Podolski
Photos by Adam Podolski

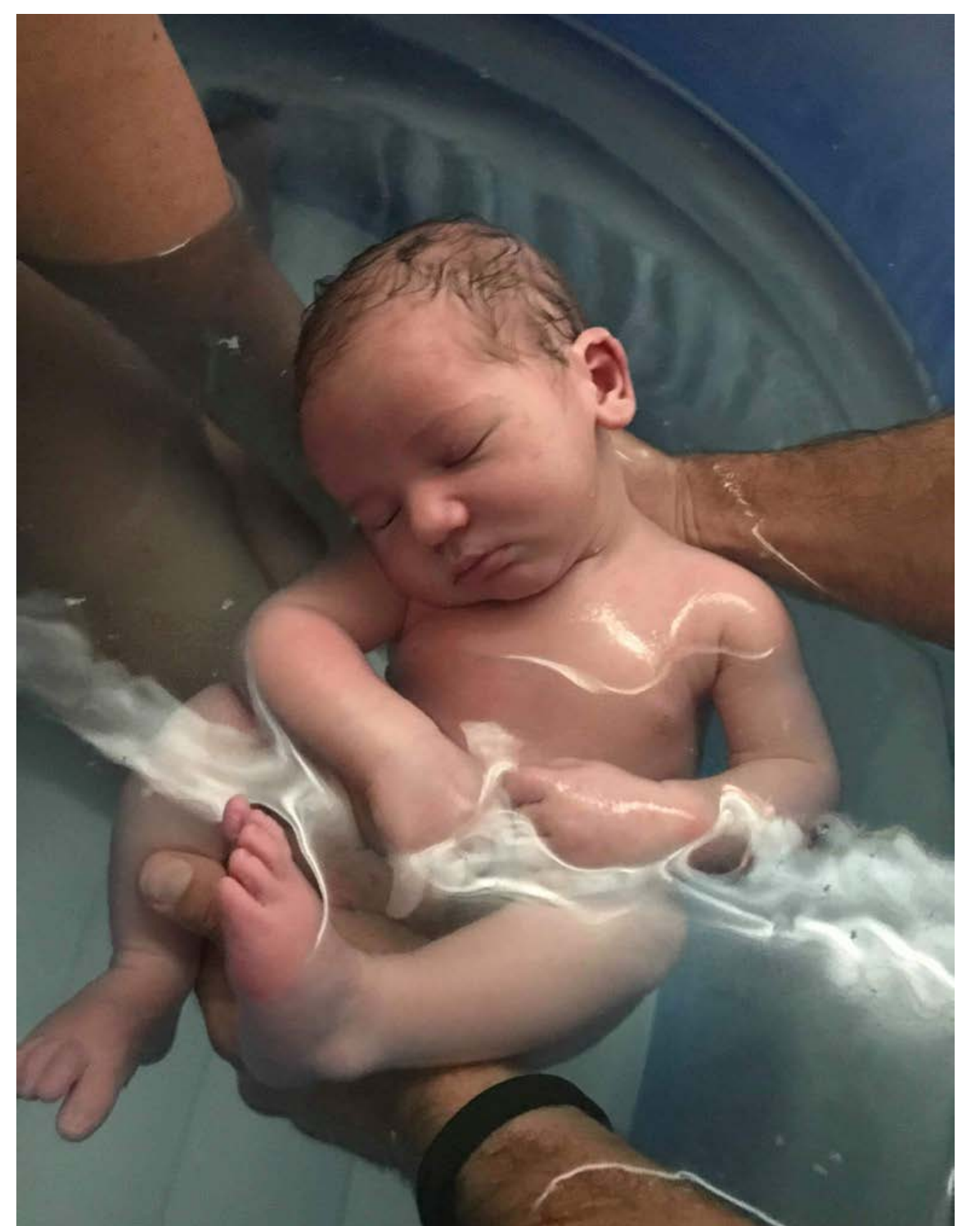
After staying warm and snug in my belly for nearly 43 weeks our baby boy decided to slowly enter our earth; the excitement and anticipation was out of control. When labour finally started I was beyond excited! We laboured together night and day, over and over. Freedom to move and be in the shower are beautiful memories that I will forever cherish. Adam and Jo stayed by my side throughout the night.

Our Teddy was born through my tummy, assisted into the world by my hands and up to my chest. He was born surrounded by love and the best, most incredible support that I could ever have imagined.

My body made, carried and birthed our perfect 4.5kg baby boy. Teddy chose his birthday; he felt the oxytocin surges of labour and was preparing to be born. I am grateful I felt my liquor running down my legs in my own home. I am so happy that I could experience the surge of contractions in my space. None of Teddy's birth story would

have been possible without Jo as our midwife, advocate and friend. Jo, I will never have the words to thank you for your support, trust, empathy, love and strength. You are truly one in a bazillion. Thank you.

Melanie and her husband, Adam, live in the magical Blue Mountains with their four children. Grace is 7, their strong, determined, friendly and thoughtful first baby. Arthur is 5, their spirited, energetic, funny, emotion rich young man. Millicent is 3, their social butterfly; twirling and whirling, empathetic and kind third baby. Teddy is their just turned 1 year old littlest boy, a smiley, laughy, happy, clever baby boy.



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Photo by Emma Jean Photography

THE THEME FOR THE NEXT ISSUE OF BIRTHINGS WILL BE ***FAMILIES AT BIRTH***

Birthings is the NSW homebirth communities magazine and we'd love your contributions!

Birth is such a momentous right of passage and, like all rights of passage, it's sometimes better shared with family! Did you have your family at your birth? If so, what did that look like? What benefits and disadvantages can you see in having your families at birth? Let us know what this looked like for you. Please send us your theme articles, birth announcements and stories with some high resolution photos. Submissions are due by 1st September, 2020 to editor@homebirthnsw.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 HBNSW 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 MEMBERS@HOMEBIRTHNSW.ORG.AU



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