

# BIRTHINGS

# EMPOWERMENT

AUTUMN 2022, ISSUE 144



# COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Aimee Sing  
PRESIDENT  
president@homebirthnsw.org.au

Maddie Kovac  
SECRETARY  
secretary@homebirthnsw.org.au

Claire Heenan  
COMMUNICATIONS  
media@homebirthnsw.org.au

Rebecca Bell  
EVENTS COORDINATOR  
admin@homebirthnsw.org.au

Amy Todd  
MARKETING  
COORDINATOR  
marketing@homebirthnsw.org.au

Jaime Leigh Hawkins  
SOCIAL MEDIA  
media@homebirthnsw.org.au

Ana Luisa Nosseis  
WEBSITE  
admin@homebirthnsw.org.au

Rachel Fowler  
GRAPHIC DESIGNER  
admin@homebirthnsw.org.au

Bonnie Hook  
EDITOR  
editor@homebirthnsw.org.au

Marina Taylor-Clift  
ASSOCIATE EDITOR  
editor@homebirthnsw.org.au

Katie Bullen  
ASSOCIATE EDITOR  
editor@homebirthnsw.org.au

Emma Burke  
MEMBERSHIP &  
MIDWIFE LIAISON  
fundraising@homebirthnsw.org.au

Arthur & Santina  
Sannen  
MERCHANDISING &  
TREASURER  
treasurer@homebirthnsw.org.au

Maggie  
Lecky-Thompson  
Jo Hunter  
Janine O'Brien  
CONTENT CHECKS

Amy Lou  
Jacqueline Cooke  
PROOF - READERS



HOME BIRTH NEW SOUTH WALES



Cover Image  
Mamma: Jess Holliday  
Photographer: [Margan Photography](#)  
Birth: Midwife Kira



Editor's Letter	4
President's Report	5
Latest News	7
Farewell To Some Incredible Committee Members	13
Book Review - Reclaiming Childbirth as a Rite of Passage	27
Birth Announcements	36

## EMPOWERMENT

When Fear Walks Itself Through Your Door	9
Why I Chose A Homebirth At 30 Weeks	19-21
The Makings Of A Homebirther	29-31
Empowering: Words That Got You Through Birth	44

## BIRTH STORIES

The Birth of Tommy - Kate Visser	15-17
The Birth of Benji - Lani Ellard	23-26
The Birth of Flynn - Courtney Blematl	33-35
The Birth of Tyler - Krystan Rosa	37-39
The Birth of Byron - Brooke Blair	41-43
The Birth of Isaac - Abigail Zhao	45-47

# EDITOR'S LETTER

Welcome to your first edition of Birthings for 2022.

We're all collectively holding our breath as we hope that 2022 brings much more positivity, health and physical connection than the previous two years we have all endured. One thing is for certain, and that is that women continued to birth within their power throughout all of the uncertainty outside of their homes. So, it seemed fitting that this issue we focused on Empowering Birth Stories. I know, I know, obviously ALL of your stories are empowering, but it's a lovely reminder regardless! On that note, we'd love to hear of your theme suggestions and ideas so please send us an email or slide into our DMs on [social media](#).

We feature so many wonderful stories throughout our pages this edition and as many gorgeous photos that give me tingles every time, I look at them. There is a fantastic book review from one of our passionate committee members, as well as a few fiery stories of empowered women shunning the fear of birth, either instilled in them by The System or as a natural response to birth, to step into their own power and birth their beautiful babies the way they choose.

Behind the scenes we're so grateful to have had some fantastic women join

our Birthings team who have helped to bring this beautiful magazine to life this month. Please join me in welcoming Amy and Jaime onboard - what a coincidence that your names rhyme! Jaime will be familiar to many of you who have been hanging around on our socials and have been sending in some fantastic and spine-tingling affirmations that got you through your birth.

As with all change comes an opportunity for a fresh approach, something we are excited to let breeze through our magazine pages. As a team we're putting together new ideas and suggestions for what we want to see featured over the next few years. So now, I ask you, reader - what would you like to see when you receive your bi-annual copy of Birthings? What excites and invigorates you? Inspires and intrigues you? This is your magazine, and we'd love to tailor it to exactly your needs.

Drop into my inbox for a chat at any time or say hello and welcome to Jaime on the socials with any suggestions and ideas - she's really friendly (and social, ho ho ho!).

See you in Spring and enjoy your winter hibernation period.

**BONNIE XX**



## HI HOMEBIRTH NSW MEMBERS!

Welcome to the 144<sup>th</sup> issue of Birthings magazine, all about Empowerment! So much has been happening behind the scenes at Homebirth NSW recently with lots of work in the advocacy space (if you haven't already, please do get in touch to see how you might be able to help us with this!), SO MANY new private midwives coming on board (how wonderful for our communities), lots of face to face meetings taking place again and just the general ebbs and flows in the committee.

At the time of writing this we're getting ready for International Day of the Midwife 2022! A HUGE happy IDM to all of those midwives who are providing such incredible support to the women in our communities! Thank you for all you do, for your tireless dedication to women and families and for continuing to be such a welcomed support throughout our pregnancy, birth and postpartum experiences.

We have seen continued growth in the number of women choosing homebirth and also in the number of midwives branching into private practice, meaning that homebirth is finally becoming more accessible for more women and families in New South Wales (YAY!). We are so grateful for so many [incredible private midwives](#) offering their services in our area, and we look forward to this continuing to grow in the future as well.

Our [homebirth groups](#) are meeting regularly again and are thriving! If you aren't sure if there is a group in your area then please reach out, and if there isn't, consider starting one. We can use all the connection, community and support we can get – it truly is such a beautiful thing to create community and be supported by it in your own times of need.

We welcome Amy Todd as our new marketing coordinator and are



considering how we can grow a marketing team to make this role a little more sustainable, and we are so excited to see some more amazing ideas and inspiration emerging in the marketing area already! We also welcome Maddie Kovac as our new secretary, doing an absolutely beautiful job – we are so grateful to have her on board and for her passion and willingness to help out in multiple areas.

So what can you look forward to seeing over the coming months? More of the same! More partnership, more connection, more online events and celebrations. We're connecting in with other state-based homebirth committees to see how our collective voices can make changes in multiple areas, and you can see our focus areas on our [campaigns page](#). I also encourage each and every one of you to get involved in advocacy, whether it be at a local level, state or national. Right now our voices absolutely need to be heard, and if we are to witness an increase in accessibility and affordability of homebirth in NSW (and Australia!) then we are only going to achieve that with lots of people making these small steps together. If you'd like to join us, please email [president@homebirthnsw.org.au](mailto:president@homebirthnsw.org.au) – I look forward to hearing from you soon!

Until then I'm sending you blessings for health, safety, beautiful births and lots of connection and time with those you love most.

AIMEE XX

# PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Bubba  
BUMP

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

 @bubba\_bump



Prepare for postpartum mama  
Beautiful essentials for mama and babe



THE BIG DILEMMA FACING PREGNANT WOMEN DURING COVID

News.com.au | 20 Jan 2022

Some women are opting to homebirth during Covid because of fears their partner will not be present, according to some maternity advocates.

[Read here](#)

HOME BIRTH HOSPITAL PROGRAM DELIVERS BABIES SAFELY AND WITH LESS INTERVENTION, DATA SHOWS

ABC | 16 Nov 2021

If you had told Camilla Kennedy five years ago that she would one day give birth at home, she says she probably would have laughed.

[Read here](#)

'YOU NEED TO BE OPEN TO GOING WITH THE FLOW.'

MamaMia | 3 Nov 2021

What these four women wish they knew before having a homebirth. Every birthing experience is unique and the way you choose (or don't choose) to give birth is highly emotive and personal to you.

[Read here](#)

ASHLEY GRAHAM HAD HOME BIRTHS FOR ALL 3 KIDS: 'I FEEL LIKE THERE'S NOTHING I CAN'T DO'

Showbiz CheatSheet | 6 Feb 2021

Although they're not the norm, many parents-to-be opt to labor and deliver from the comfort of their own homes.

[Read here](#)

# BECOME A HOME BIRTH NSW MEMBER TODAY!

By becoming a member with Homebirth NSW you are helping to promote and protect homebirth services in NSW by supporting our organisation to advocate on your behalf.

As an added bonus you also receive a copy of our beautiful Birthings magazine twice a year, updates on current homebirth happenings via our newsletter and exclusive access to membership benefits, discounts and affiliate links with a number of incredible local and Australian based businesses!

For new membership or renewals visit [homebirthnsw.org.au](http://homebirthnsw.org.au)



HOME BIRTH NEW SOUTH WALES

IMMEDIATE AND LONG TERM SUPPORT  
FOR FLOOD-AFFECTED BIRTHING FAMILIES  
ACROSS THE NORTHERN RIVERS

# PREGNANCY BIRTH & BEYOND OUTREACH HUB

THE RETURNING + PBB MEDIA



Register for support via the WEB: [pbbmedia.org/floodrelief](http://pbbmedia.org/floodrelief) or  
EMAIL: [hello@pbbmedia.org](mailto:hello@pbbmedia.org) | PHONE: 0414773155 + 0405391590

a collaboration between non-profit organisations PBB Media and The Returning

[www.pbbmedia.org](http://www.pbbmedia.org) | [www.thereturning.com.au](http://www.thereturning.com.au)



PBB Media

# WHEN FEAR WALKS ITSELF THROUGH YOUR DOOR

BY ZOE HAACK

Fear is a fascinating phenomenon, showing up in interesting ways. Fear around pregnancy and birth seems a universal experience as we traverse the transition to parenthood. Regardless of if this is your first birth or you are welcoming yet another soul into your ever-expanding family you can be sure that fear is going to come up at some point.

When I look back upon my life and my unique set of experiences,

I can see how fear has served me. Usually at the time it has felt unpleasant and wretched. Yet with hindsight situations that seemed insurmountable weren't and situations that incited little fear at the time probably ought to have seen me step a little lighter than I did.

But here's the problem with fear, sometimes it feels the same as courage or vulnerability. Both courage and vulnerability can

spur you on to face fear, but only if you can decipher the difference between them. When we are vulnerable, fears tend to come up, it's an excellent evolutionary gift. Pregnant people are vulnerable, anyone who has carried a child or witnessed a birthing person throughout pregnancy knows this. But what role does courage play in balancing the scales?

**COURAGE IS DEFINED AS THE ABILITY TO DO SOMETHING THAT FRIGHTENS...**

Hello birth. It's the great unknown, no one can guarantee how it will go and almost everyone is up for sharing their experience with you, unless that experience is at odds with the widely accepted narrative that birth is deeply painful, and that birthing people's bodies are innately flawed. The level of birth trauma we have in our communities is extreme. Our awareness of this, I believe, can help us in uncovering the courage to step forward through fear to experience positive, healing births.

We know that each person's experience of fear is unique, after all, we all carry with us a different blueprint for how to manage stress and perceived threats. Is



it any wonder that fear comes up around the monumental shift that is the right of passage from maiden to Mother? Independent person to parent? Of course not. Let's acknowledge that and resource ourselves accordingly to overcome the debilitating and paralysing fear that surrounds birth.

Our son Wahri was born as the sun rose in our tiny home overlooking the rugged yet picturesque landscape of Dundee beach in the Northern Territory. A planned freebirth. His birth was intense, transformative, and free of fear. Our journey to a fear free freebirth began long before labour. We embarked on a conscious conception journey seeking to welcome a soul into our family as nature intended. For us this meant free

of augmentation and unnecessary observation. We researched and resourced ourselves and approached fears that came up as important signposts.

When you travel on unfamiliar roads you tend to rely upon the signage to get to your destination. I recall feeling off kilter one morning a few weeks prior to Wahri's arrival. I was unsettled. By the time we had made the drive to town I realised why; bub had spun around and was head up. I felt fear enter my body, I felt a wave of nervous energy wash over my body, and it took me a moment to regain regulation. This was feedback, a signpost. Our baby was communicating with me. We knew I was running out of room, my belly was a bag full of arms and legs.

This was exactly why we had a team of people around us, this was why we had invested in birth education and a team of allied health professionals. Our baby being head up was just another variation of normal and once I had overcome the initial fear, I was able to draw upon courage and trust in my body and our baby. He turned head down later that day and engaged, ready for his arrival.

On the evening before Wahri was born fear once again visited. This time it walked itself into our home on two legs. Throughout my pregnancy we invested an enormous amount of energy and resources into transforming a 40-foot shipping container into a tiny home. Picture me, 38 weeks pregnant, painting skirting boards and window frames. Nesting looks a little different when you are building a home alongside growing a tiny person in your womb.

On the day before Wahri's birth my mucus plug came away and early labour began. The excitement was palpable, our long-awaited baby was coming. Shortly before dinner some unannounced visitors dropped in and were eager to see the container now that it was complete. I remember my husband intuitively leading the conversation when he sensed surges were coming. We had no intention of announcing that I was indeed in labour, when you are free birthing in the bush you tend to keep your circle small around the finer details. The reality is fear around childbirth runs deep in our communities.

As we entered our home and welcomed our visitors through the threshold it was clear that



fear had joined us. I paused a moment and considered how I felt about the well-meaning but deeply fearful questions and statements that were being thrown around.

**I FELT FINE, IT WAS AS IF MY SOUL AND MY PSYCHE WAS IMMUNE TO IT.**

*Yes, we did live two hours from the hospital.*

*Yes, I had dropped, thanks for noticing.*

*Yes, my belly was rather large, our son was 4.5kg of divine being at birth.*

*No, I was not 'worried' about how I would 'cope' with labour.*

*No, I was not able to confirm that there weren't two babies. I'd not had any ultrasounds. I was fairly confident that there was one baby, I'd been mapping his position and was deeply attuned to him.*

**NO, I WAS NOT FEARFUL,**



**I WAS FERVENT!**

I smiled with the knowledge that I'd been gifted one last opportunity to look fear in the face, literally, prior to the birth of Wahri Jay. If you are pregnant or supporting birthing people, I encourage you to allow fear to be there. Lean into it, look for what it

has to show you and thank it for keeping you safe. The only way to go beyond fear is through, it's kind of like the 'bear hunt' yeah. You can't go over it, you can't go under it.... You are going to have to go through it.

I am here to tell you that there's great beauty beyond fear.

Child activist, Writer, Motherhood Mentor

Activism in the name of childhood is me advocating for the daily practice of deep attunement and an increased capacity to extend autonomy and freedom to our world's most precious resource, the small people I see a world where childhood is valued, respected and above all, honoured in ways that ensure our kids grow up knowing their innate wisdom.

My first book 'You Already Knew' (due for release in mid 2022) invites you to reconnect to your youthful self to bring forth the wisdom you were born with.

I understand the intricacies of family life and draw upon my professional background and lived experiences to tune you into you, turning chaos into calm. Your way of looking at things will be forever changed as a result of this journey, for together we will uncover your intuitive flow.

Are you ready to reconnect to you AND gift your children with the blueprint for a connected life? If partnering with a passionate protector of a child's right to freedom speaks to your soul please reach out, I'd be honoured to support you.

To connect with me jump over to [@zoe.haack.childactivist](https://www.instagram.com/zoe.haack.childactivist) on Instagram or search Zoe Haack – Child Activist on Facebook.

Photographer: Brendan Haack



## PREPARES YOU EMOTIONALLY, MENTALLY AND PHYSICALLY FOR BIRTH

Calmbirth® is Australia's most highly acclaimed, recommended, TRUSTED and scientifically proven childbirth education program in Australia. Calmbirth® was the first childbirth education program in Australia to recognise the interrelationship between the mind and body connection in birth – the connection and power between a woman's emotional state and the way her body responds in birth. Calmbirth® uses this mind-body connection to assist couples to replace the fear, stress and anxiety about giving birth with the knowledge and skills to birth their baby calmly, fearlessly, safely and confidently.

**“A woman will birth best when she feels SAFE, UNDISTURBED and RESPECTED. Calmbirth's goal is to educate and improve the birthing outcomes for all women and their families, not just physically, but emotionally as well,” says Owner and Director, Karen McClay.**

- Calmbirth® provides you with all the knowledge, confidence and tools you need to have a positive birth experience.
- To work together and feel supported by your partner to birth your child in any birth situation. Calmbirth® teaches your partner how to support you emotionally, and how to be your 'guardian of space' during pregnancy, labour and birth.
- Calmbirth® empowers you to make informed decisions with your caregivers about birth choices.
- Calmbirth® helps you feel safe, calm and confident to birth your baby irrespective of how you birth.
- Calmbirth® teaches you about the prenatal bonding, the importance of skin to skin and postnatal bonding, self care and ways to nourish the new mother, and awakens you to the concept of conscious parenting.
- Calmbirth® teaches you how to nurture your connection to your unborn child and 'plants the seed' for ways to strengthen that connection in your transition into parenthood.
- Calmbirth® teaches you self empowerment – how to be an active participant in your birth and gives your birth support partners the tools to support you. It teaches you how to access your inner resources and gives you the confidence to use them to assist you in pregnancy, labour and birth – embracing birth as a natural part of life.

The Calmbirth® program is suitable for first time or subsequent births; for couples who've had a challenging birth experience and would like their other birth experience to be different; as well as for couples who know they'll be having a caesarean. Calmbirth® embraces and accepts all pregnant couples regardless of their age, culture, socio-economic or sexual orientation.

## ACCREDITED CALMBIRTH EDUCATORS

The Calmbirth® organisation has built its reputation over the years by the credibility of its Calmbirth Educators which are ALL trained birth professionals. Calmbirth has been the first to create and consolidate strong partnerships with private and public maternity hospitals in Australia, in successfully incorporating the Calmbirth® program into their antenatal structure. Calmbirth® has close to 100 registered Calmbirth® educators throughout Australia, New Zealand and France.



**Contact: [lizuliana@calmbirth.com.au](mailto:lizuliana@calmbirth.com.au)**



## FAREWELL INCREDIBLE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The past few months have seen some incredible shifts in our committee.

As always, making way for beautiful new committee members means we have said goodbye to some pretty incredible people.

A HUGE thank you to Josi Jentsch, our previous Vice President and Marketing Coordinator, who has been such an incredible wealth of inspiration, ideas and motivation in our committee. Thank you, Josi, for your constant willingness to help in all the places and do all the things in our wonderful organisation. You are one of the main reasons that our organisation is currently in a pretty excellent financial situation and have contributed so many ideas, so much inspiration and so much passion to our organisation and the homebirth community in general. We are so sad to see you go, but know that wherever you are you'll be doing great things.

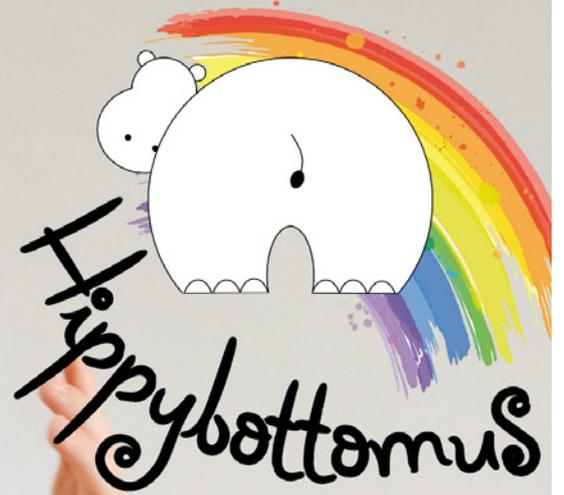
Our wonderful advocacy coordinator, Kristyn Begnell, is focusing on coordinating Homebirth Australia and despite continuing to liaise with HBNSW, is no longer a part of our committee. Kristyn is still doing lots of incredible work liaising with MPs, meeting with local hospital Nursing Unit Managers

and just generally continuing to keep the conversations going in this space. Thank you, Kristyn, for your tireless dedication and devotion to improving access to and affordability of homebirth in NSW (and Australia). We're going to miss your input at our meetings but also know you aren't too far away.

And finally, Kathryn Bell, our beautiful secretary – thank you for being a long time member of the committee, for your continued support and contributions, and ability to keep us on track. Thank you Kath for all of the work you put in behind the scenes, for keeping our meetings to the agenda, diligently maintaining the minutes, reminding us of the various bits and pieces we needed to follow up on and all the while supervising our interns. So much incredible research has come from the work you've put in and we are so grateful for you. We miss you already but know you'll be having such a wonderful trip with your family!

If you feel you would like to be a part of an incredible team of inspired, motivated and determined homebirth advocates, email [president@homebirthnsw.org.au!](mailto:president@homebirthnsw.org.au) We would love to hear from you and see how you might be able to help us achieve our mission of improving access to, and affordability of, homebirth in NSW and Australia.





## Stay Dry Natural Nappies

- ✓ Award winning nappies
- ✓ Fit from newborn to toddler
- ✓ Funky prints and colours
- ✓ Easy to use and wash
- ✓ Natural bamboo



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

BY KATE VISSER

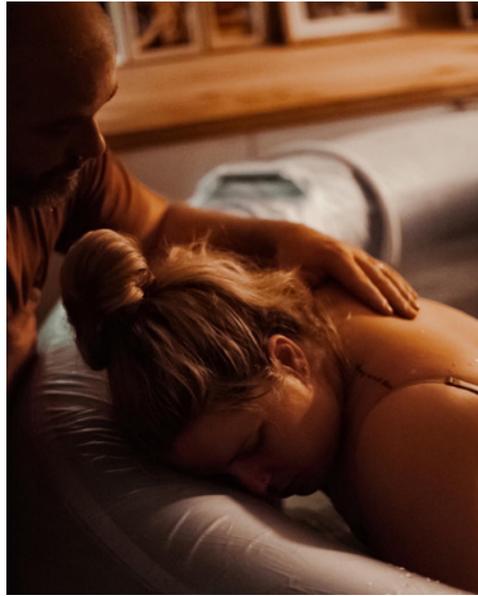
Birth doesn't occur in a bubble and a birth story happens in such a complex context. For me, 2021 had been enormously complex with a poor health diagnosis, and this was our second rainbow baby. The context in which we carry and birth our babies truly matters, sometimes beyond comprehension.

My guess date came and I was forced into that uncomfortable place of trusting my baby, and allowing them to teach me what I needed to be taught. My lesson was patience at this point, which grew into power. I laid down to breastfeed my second daughter to sleep, it was 8pm, and then it started - the first real waves. It was another 2 days before I'd meet our son-shine thanks to another posterior baby giving me a long early labour. The next evening I tried to feed my daughter to sleep again, but it was different this time. Breastfeeding suddenly brought on the most intense tightenings. I was able to breathe through the first two before tapping out of bedtime.



There is so much joy when you finally get to labour. It's when you get to see the face of the littlest love you've created, and would move heaven and earth for, but are yet to see face to face or hold in your arms. At 12:30am I called my midwife Helen. I knew I'd gone from a place of being able to breathe through

my tightenings to now vocalising. A promising place. Soon after Helen's arrival, I phoned the rest of my birth team. I'd previously only laboured with my husband and midwife present, so it was always going to be different having a bigger team. I invited each of these women into my space, knowing they trusted me and they trusted birth.



Labour felt like a birthday party with people arriving and chatting in between tightenings. I felt the shift of baby descending around 3:30am. It didn't feel like it would be long before I'd get to hold him, so with that, we woke up my eldest daughter (3.5 years old) to join us. But that's not what happened. I needed to be completely unravelled, dismantled, almost shattered by birth. My baby needed to cut through and separate every single piece of my being before I could be put back together again.

Once in the bath I examined myself. I found a cervical lip, something I am not fearful of and know is a frequent occurrence. I worked to push it away with my fingers, and while I could, my contractions were simply not strong enough to. My midwife suggested sitting on the toilet. I did everything in my power to avoid sitting on the 'dilation station' because there was no

# THE BIRTH OF TOMMY

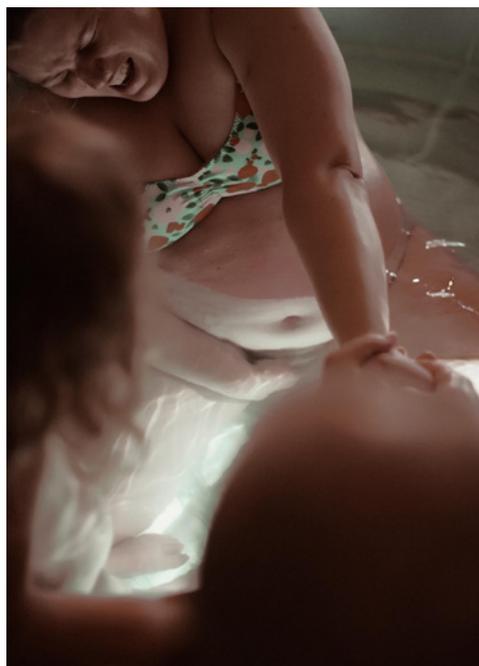


way I was sitting on the damn toilet unless I was desperate, because I found contractions unbearable there. I got desperate though and my unravelling truly began. The clenching, the roaring, the anger, the sailor swearing, the truly primal birthing woman emerged with a force. She meant business and she was here to stay. I couldn't do this. The intensity, too much. Out of desperation I tried to squat with contractions. It didn't seem to matter how many times I heard "You can do this Kate", all I could yell was "I can't f\*\*\*ing do this!!". Transition is that penultimate moment, the cliff face where you decide to succumb to the pain and pressure of birth, or choose the power. In all my generous donations to the swear jar, I knew that it was only me that could travail this next bit. I was in pieces and birth needed to shatter me some more. It was hours of me working through what was an entirely normal process. This was labour. Labour is gritty and messy work. Our system works to cover it up, clean it up and quieten the work of labouring women. That's not an option with homebirth.

I knew something wasn't right. I locked eyes with my midwife and said "I can't f\*\*\*ing do this anymore! Help me!" and begged for her to break my waters. I needed to birth this baby of mine. I jumped back in the bath with confidence that the end was near, only to find the

cervical lip was still there, only firmer and more swollen. Screw birth, screw my body, screw all of this shit. All that flashed before my eyes was needing to transfer to hospital. My eldest daughter was in the pool, covering her ears because mama was being loud, but watching me intently. Watching birth unfold. Watching power.

In that moment I truly surrendered to my body. I let my breath exit my flailing lips as I felt his head descend, forcing my cervix to soften and slip away. The relief that he was shifting was immense. I knew in mere moments that he'd be here. Each push required gut wrenching exertion and force. His head, slowly emerging, but causing a new sensation for me - the ring of fire, having not experienced it with my daughters. I thought "Maybe he is really big?". Little did I know I had just birthed a 38cm head in a transverse position (facing the inside of my right thigh). With a short breather I tried to birth his body. When I didn't feel his shoulder release spontaneously I yelled for help. I was still fearful that he'd be big, that I'd have a shoulder dystocia. I've never held fear around birth. I've been able to switch my 'midwife hat' off, but I'm reminded that the context that we conceive and carry our babies in has enormous power.





I'd carried subtle fear for months and it was playing out at our concert. Fortunately with gentle traction he came and the sheer relief of holding my son-shine in that moment was incredible. All I could do was look at my daughter and repeat the words we said after watching every birthing video in preparation for this day "Yay mummy did it".

It was not the birth I anticipated. I didn't anticipate much knowing the wildcard nature of birth, but this was so far beyond that. A week after birth I turned to my husband and said "I feel like a total bad arse". 2021 has been an enormous year, and this birth broke me and rebuilt me. I know now

that this birth needed to teach me to have faith in my body, when it feels like it's failed in other ways this year, it never failed to grow, nurture and bring forth our baby. It reminded me how fruitless fear is. It taught me how sensationally strong I am. It allowed me to share physiological birth at home with my daughters, my mum and my friends. It felt like there was such a gift in this birth for everyone. Not a neatly packaged one, but a scrunched up, raw, animalistic parcel that was as perfect as it needed to be. It was the perfect birth, not because of what happened, but because it taught me what it needed to so that I could bring forth our son. It taught me power.



I am a wife and mother to three living on the NSW Central Coast. I am a registered midwife and IBCLC, serving women in the same season of life that I find myself in. I am fortunate to have worked in a variety of models of care, innately trusting birth but not yet having the privilege of attending a homebirth myself. I believe that there is a lesson in everything that we experience, and nothing more powerful than in birth. For years I have said that third births are teachers, and this birth was an opportunity for me to travail and experience this for myself.

Photographer: [Kassie Callaghan from Milk & Poppy](#)



## Lovingly created to gently soothe, calm & safely nourish precious new skin.

Bubba Organics is the earth's favourite little baby care co. creating pure & natural baby care essentials that mums can trust & babies love.

-  Premium 100% natural ingredients
-  Ethical, sustainable & eco-friendly
-  No water, synthetics or hidden nasties
-  Multi-award winning brand
-  Certified Cruelty Free
-  Australian Allergy Certified



Visit [bubbaorganics.com.au](https://bubbaorganics.com.au) to enjoy 20% off using code: newbub20

# WHY I CHOSE A HOMEBIRTH AT 30 WEEKS

BY JESS HOLLIDAY

Early on in my pregnancy I was made to do a gestational diabetes (GD) test because of my weight. I was told I was on the cusp of gestational diabetes, needed management through diet and further testing as my pregnancy progressed. I spent the first trimester of my pregnancy extremely sick. Salad and anything green made me feel ill and the GD diet ruled out breads/carbs which my body craved. I lost weight very suddenly and the doctors at the clinic said “great work”. Even though I felt so ill, all they could do was congratulate me on my weight loss. Later in my pregnancy I took a fasting blood test, I was told I do not have GD, hallelujah! This pattern continued throughout the pregnancy. More blood tests and no indication of GD.

The antenatal clinic at my local hospital was providing my care through obstetricians. I requested to see some midwives and was told no, they are unable to care for me because I am ‘high risk’. I was deemed high risk because of my body mass index (BMI) and a blood clot gene I carried. I was also told I couldn’t use a birth pool because of my BMI. Things really kicked off at 20 weeks - I was so excited to go into the antenatal clinic and get the results of the scan we had had that week, but I was also frustrated to meet with yet another obstetrician (I had realised you never really see the same person twice). This obstetrician was convinced I’d developed gestational diabetes and decided I should plan my induction for when I was 38 weeks pregnant, even after I

explained that I really wanted to aim for a physiological birth. I said that I’d read about the cascade of interventions so I’d prefer to try avoid that (she then told me the cascade of intervention doesn’t exist, I didn’t realise it was debated). I kept asking for the reason for an induction when we didn’t know how things would progress and she was insistent that my body would be incapable, “if I could book everyone’s induction/caesarean in early I would, it’s much safer”. I politely disagreed through exhausted, hormonal tears and we left. The following day I saw an advertisement for a birth documentary that was showing at my local cinema - “Birth Time”. I thought it looked interesting so I bought a ticket for my mum and I.





At this point I was also attending prenatal yoga which began with a women's circle where we discussed our pregnancy and any thoughts or feelings we were having. That week I broke down in class. I felt it was so unfair. The teacher, Briony Goodsell (@Thenestingplace), was also a local doula and asked me to chat after class if I wanted to. It was the most refreshing conversation I had had in regards to my pregnancy. She reminded me of my intuition and that if things weren't feeling right there was probably a reason. She reminded me how powerful women are and that I can advocate for myself. I don't need to ask permission. It made me feel so empowered. I decided to throw myself into research about BMI in pregnancy, induction, and my blood clot gene (heterozygous prothrombin mutation). I discovered Sara Wickham and Rachel Reed. I started listening to The Midwives Cauldron podcast and reading a few books and articles/blogs online. Then I saw Birth Time.

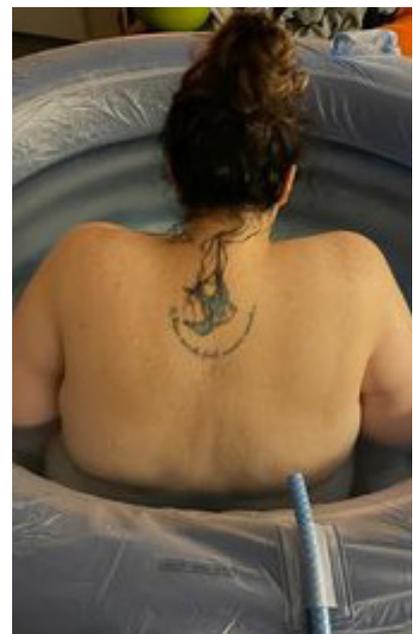
Birth Time showed me that all the feelings I'd experienced were part of a system failure. The

documentary showed what we can do about this system failure. One woman - one midwife. This is exactly what I had wanted when I got pregnant. I just cried and cried, mostly happy tears. I left feeling buzzed but also sad that I had not known about this when I initially got pregnant. I felt it was too late to change my care and had no idea how but I felt more confident in being able to advocate for myself. Especially with this new found knowledge under my belt!

In addition to a Calmbirth class, my husband Joe and I also signed up to an antenatal birth class through, "Illawarra Birth Classes". We were asked about our pregnancy... I couldn't talk about my experience without getting choked up. The teachers suggested a local private midwife who had availability. I figured we could at least have a chat, as I was now 30 weeks pregnant. I emailed Kira Waetford and we set up a meeting. I told her all the reasons I was high risk and had been 'risked out' of having the birth I originally wanted (support from a known midwife and the option of a water

birth). Kira agreed with me that I was a healthy person and she was happy to take me on as a patient. I had the opportunity to have the water birth of my dreams! To say I was happy was an understatement. Birth classes in Berry with Regina Power were amazing. They supported the research I had been doing and aligned with the readings from Kira. I was reassured that I had made the right decision.

When my husband and I met with Kira at home over a cup of tea I immediately felt at ease and I knew I was making the right decision for my birth. Admittedly, the cost was slightly prohibitive but as Kira could schedule the appointments at my house around my work schedule, I wouldn't need to take time off, so in the end it nearly worked out. Kira, Joe and I sat and discussed the treatment I received at the hospital so far, I told her the things I had been told and the resulting worry that was now instilled in me. Kira talked these issues out with me and recommended some further research to read so I could see that the things the OB at the hospital were telling me were



not exclusively evidence based. I was grateful and felt respected in every decision I made with Kira. Rather than being told, I was guided, advised, and most importantly, given options.

I got to 37 weeks with no problems arising. I had a 37 week scan booked from previously when I was in the hospital's care. I decided to attend as I loved seeing the baby so I thought why not. I was told I had low fluid and to please come back next week. The following week my fluids were slightly up but still



considered "low". They went and got the cardiotocography (CTG) machine and again everything was fine. They encouraged me to book another scan or consider induction ASAP. I said I didn't want to be induced so I agreed for another scan. The hospital advice was that there was nothing I could do but monitor it. Kira was amazing and showed me some research about keeping my own fluids up, which was working and additionally, I felt fine.

On the Friday before I delivered, my last scan showed that my fluid was lower than previously.

I went straight to hospital and had the CTG monitoring, and again, everything was fine with the baby's movements and heart rate. When I spoke to the obstetrician she was very keen on me coming in for an induction. She said it was urgent but then couldn't, "book me in" until Monday (so how urgent was it really!?). Kira assured me that I would be OK to go ahead and go back in to do more CTG but there was no need to induce straight away. I told the obstetrician this, who was pretty annoyed and she told me about how dangerous a homebirth



would be and that my baby would need constant monitoring during birth because my low fluid would mean that the baby could suffocate in my womb. Again Kira assured me this isn't true and that she would be monitoring the baby throughout my birth. I felt empowered by all the research Kira had suggested I read and through all our conversations at my weekly appointments with her, I felt strong to say to this obstetrician, that I didn't think she was treating me fairly and I will not be booking my induction in.

With that, I left the hospital.

I ended up having my baby boy at home on my bedroom floor after labouring for 10 hours in and out of the birth pool in my living room. The whole time, although scared and in pain, I knew that I was safe and supported. It was just my midwife Kira and my husband Joe until my baby boy, Lawson, made his way into the world. It wasn't an easy pain free relaxing/calm birth but it was my home birth and looking back 10 months on, it was the perfect portal to take me from maiden to mother.



I live on the south coast of NSW with my husband, Joe and son, Lawson in Wollongong (Dharwal land). I have worked in the early childhood sector and been around children and birthing people for a long time so have always had a passion for all things birth and babies. As a family we spend our time going to local cafes, swims at the beach and walks around Mt Kembla.

Photographer:  
[Margan Photography](#)



WWW.DRAMYNORMAN.COM.AU

**DR AMY NORMAN**

B.Sc Chiro, M. Chiropractic, PAQNA

**0407 992 199**

Suite 254, Level 5, Building 2  
7-11 The Avenue, HURSTVILLE NSW 2220

## PROVIDING SUPPORT FOR PREGNANCY AND BEYOND!

PREGNANCY CARE

PAEDIATRIC CARE

AQUANATAL CLASSES

POSTPARTUM SUPPORT

SRC RECOVERY GARMENTS

DRY NEEDLING



### PREGNANCY CARE

Pregnancy Care comprises of a variety of safe treatment to suit you and your needs! Let's make your pregnancy enjoyable and get you ready for birth and beyond!

Care can include: soft tissue work, gentle Chiropractic care, taping, dry needling, promoting ideal baby positioning, stretching, ergonomic advice and education.



### PAEDIATRIC CARE

Paediatric Care comprises of orthopedic assessment, treatment and/or referral for :

- Hip Dysplasia (Clicky hips)
- Torticollis (Stiff neck)
- Plagiocephaly (Flat spots of the head)
- Issues with feeding and settling
- Issues with developmental milestones

Treatment is always very gentle!



### AQUANATAL®

Aquanatal is pregnancy and postnatal safe exercise in the water!

Pregnancy Chiropractor Dr Amy Norman will be in the water with you providing a tailored and pregnancy orientated exercise program. Located at Kirrawee.

Components include, postural awareness, pelvic floor exercises, cardio, strength and conditioning, breath awareness, relaxation and education!



Fast claims... on the spot

All Private Health Funds Accepted  
Eftpos Facilities Available

## LET'S BE SOCIAL!



@DRAMYNORMAN  
@DYNAMICAQUANATAL



@DrAmyNormanChiropractor



BY LANI ELLARD

The week leading up to Benji's birth I became more impatient and ready to meet my baby. Every day I visualised labouring, going through the waves of contractions and then giving birth to my baby. On the day before he was born, I attempted to have a nap but was exceptionally restless. Up until then I was quite patient and never really felt the need to rush things. After lots of tossing and turning, I got out of bed to go outside but felt a huge gush of warm fluid come out. I walked to the toilet covered in fluid and yelled out to Michael that my waters had broken. I saw it was clear and called Jo to tell her what had happened. Michael was so excited, he began to rush around the house, tidying up and organising things. However, I told him to calm down as it could take a day or two for things to happen as at that point, I wasn't feeling anything.

I carried on as I normally would, playing with Indy, bouncing on my birth ball but also super excited. I put Indy to bed at around 8:30pm and that's when I felt my first definite contraction, mild but definitely no denying what it was. About 10:30pm we went to bed and up until this time I had only had 2 or 3 mild contractions. However, once in bed I thought to time them on an app, "for fun". From 1am they were coming every 15 minutes consistently but still



very mild. By that time Indy had come into our bed and kicked Michael into her bed. As I lay with Indy, I had a moment thinking how this would be the last time it was just her and I and that the next night in bed we would have another little human with us. At 4am I went out to the lounge room; I ate and watched a bit of a movie. I also took 5ml of Blissful Herbs birth boost tincture, thinking that it might help progress things along with the idea in my mind that I would be labouring well into the afternoon. After 10 minutes I felt uncomfortable and just needed to be back in bed in the warm darkness. The contractions were consistently every 15 minutes but varied in length, some only 30 seconds some almost 2 minutes. I was able to breathe and keep my body relaxed through them. I had little naps in between them and just kept calm and laid on my side with deep restful breathing.

At 6:30am Indy and Michael woke up and I let Michael know what had happened through the night and told him we will be meeting our baby today! Contractions began coming every 10 minutes and increased in strength. Michael began organising things including breakfast. God love him, he made us all pancakes with ice cream and berries, but I could not stomach it. After a few contractions on the toilet Michael came in and saw that labour was progressing quicker than we both expected. I called my mum and she arrived about 7:30am, followed by our birth photographer. I called Jo and told her about my night and how the contractions were, she gave me the option to wait 30 minutes to see if things continued to progress or for her to come over now. I didn't want her over too prematurely, so I decided to wait. It was about this time I put on the TENS machine leaning over the birth ball. I started to vocalise and make low long throaty moans through contractions which felt so right and calming. I called Jo at around 8ish and said that she definitely should make her way over as things were most certainly

# THE BIRTH OF BENJI



not fizzling out. My second midwife and friend Lu was also on her way. During that time before my midwives arrived, I had my mum, Michael and Indy all supporting me. Mum talked to me during contractions, reminding me to breathe and encouraging me. Indy was amazing and was helping both Michael and my mum with me and the set up. She would rub my back, telling me that she loved me and taking turns with mum to hold a cold washer on my forehead. Just after 8am I moved into the lounge room where the birth pool had been set up. I had my TENS machine on and was continuing with low long sounds through contractions. I felt very comfortable on the birth ball and stayed here for a while.

My second midwife Lu arrived around

9am and seeing her was so comforting. Not only to have a familiar face but also to know that she was such a kind and supportive part of my birth team, who was truly there for me and my baby. Lu did a quick check of baby and everything sounded great. Michael had been filling the pool and it was ready to go once Lu arrived and I asked if I should hop in thinking that it may be too early. I almost didn't want to hop in because the TENS machine was helping me so much in contractions but once in, I instantly softened throughout my whole being. One of my birth affirmations was to "surrender" which I really felt I did. Again, once in the pool I felt most comfortable leaning forward and over something. Indy hopped in straight away as well, she actually was ready to get in even before it had finished filling.





Throughout it all I had Michael beside me, with me and in support of me. This time round being in our home, I could definitely tell he was more relaxed, and I felt him to be more involved. Lu asked if I wanted to put my finger inside to see if I could feel my baby. I did and when I felt his head I was in complete shock. I said to Lu “does that mean I’m fully dilated?” Lu laughed and said yes probably, or close to it. By this point the contractions were at full intensity. My low long sounds were mixed in with high sounds, me losing it and a bit of swearing. The pressure and fullness that I felt in my pelvis was so overwhelming. Jo arrived around 9:30am or so and it was around then that I started to feel the urge to push. I began to bear down and could feel him coming down the

canal. I felt his head come down with each push and kept my fingers inside my vagina almost like a reassurance that I was progressing. Soon his head began to birth, I kept my hand on his head and applied a bit of counter-pressure with small little pushes to ensure it birthed slowly. Once his head was birthed, I felt so overwhelmed and wanted all of him out. I couldn’t tell if I had a contraction or not but I continued to bear down and birth his shoulders with Jo’s help and from there I was able to lift him up out of the water and onto my chest at 9:56am.

It was so indescribably euphoric to have him on my chest. The moment I had been dreaming of, to meet my babe earthside. It took him a little bit to cry,



# BIRTH STORIES



I could see him moving and blinking his eyes. However, after a bit he let out a gorgeous little fresh cry. I couldn't wait to see what he was, so we lifted up a leg to see he was a BOY! Once he was earthside we all gathered around and just took all of him in. I stayed in the pool for a while holding, kissing and gazing at him. Indy gave him little kisses and gently stroked his face, already in love with her little brother. Roughly 40

minutes later, I got out of the pool and birthed the placenta which was another birth in itself. We had our first breastfeed instantly, lots of uninterrupted skin to skin and then a couple of hours later completed his checks. By lunchtime we were all sitting around with a cup of tea! It was pure bliss over the next few days in that glorious newborn bubble and as a family of four, the perfect set up for my postpartum.

My name is Lani, and I married my best friend and love of my life Michael and we have grown two beautiful children Indy (4) and Benji (4 months). We live in the Hawkesbury, NSW and love the country life on our property with our veggie gardens and animals. I am also a midwife and love all things pregnancy, birth and postpartum. I can't wait to empower and support women in their perinatal journey, with the newfound inspiration I received from my homebirth, when I return to work.

Photographer: Aly Harrison from Kindled Light Creative

# RECLAIMING CHILDBIRTH AS A RITE OF PASSAGE

BY KATIE BULLEN

Rachel Reed's latest offering brings us yet another easily digestible source of information to serve women and those supporting them to reclaim the childbirth experience. Rachel explores the history of birth practices, current birth culture, routine medicalisation of birth, physiology and unveils the lost wisdom of women's power in childbirth.

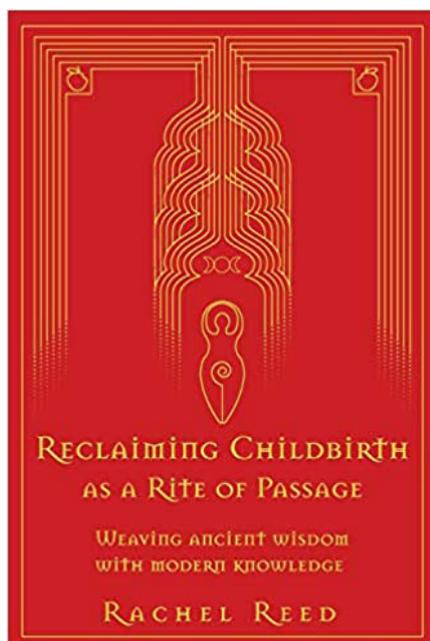
The book is broken into two parts. Part one takes the reader through the evolution of birth practices up until the current day. It is from the foundation of this information that we then examine

the modern day experience of women and explore childbirth as a transformational experience. The story of physiological childbirth is told throughout the chapters of part two using a birth story. This story becomes a refreshing break throughout the book and sets the scene for the content of each chapter. In true Rachel style, each chapter is jam packed with information about birth while not overwhelming the reader. Women's voices are included in the form of quotes demonstrating its connectedness to birthing women and those walking alongside them. These quotes also give the book a personal

feel with their relatable ideas and experiences.

As a self-confessed birth nerd, I was on the edge of my seat, unable to stop turning the pages. The progressing birth story pulled me along quickly through the book. This book is everything I've been wanting to say to every pregnant person in my life about current birth practices and the power of birth to transform. So thank you Rachel, for this delectable red package.

Find now at:  
[booktopia.com.au](http://booktopia.com.au)



# fill your freezer with nourishing postpartum meals made for mums

**newcastle | central coast | sydney & beyond...**



Being a new mum is overwhelming enough, without having to think about WHAT to cook, let alone HOW to nourish yourself to ensure you feel healthy, energised and able to be the mother you want to be.

## **let us nourish you, so you can nurture your baby**

Order one of our thoughtfully curated bundles, or build your own, so that you can fill your freezer with nutritionist prepared, postpartum specific meals that not only bring EASE back to your day, but taste delicious too.

**visit** [www.holismhealth.co](http://www.holismhealth.co)

**select** your meals or bundle

**we cook** so you don't have to

**delivered** to your door each week

All meals arrive frozen and are designed to feed one hungry mumma (and other family members only if she wants to share!). For more information or to place your order visit [www.holismhealth.co](http://www.holismhealth.co)



# THE MAKINGS OF A HOMEBIRTHEE

BY KATELYN COMMERFORD

The story of Stella's journey into the world really begins with her big sister's.

Florence was born via emergency caesarean following a cascade of interventions after an unnecessary and unwanted induction. I started researching VBAC before I'd even left the hospital. After the educational journey I went on, the idea of going to hospital as a healthy woman with a healthy baby to give birth seemed insane and I knew I wanted a HBAC (Homebirth After Caesarean).

The evening of 41 weeks, after five weeks of relatively painless prodromal labour, I had my first painful contraction. Another followed within about five

minutes, and it was on. Over the next few hours, I set up my birth space while bouncing on a ball, TENS machine on and vocalising strongly with the help of my doula.

I laboured about six hours before hitting a wall. My contractions had been feeling good and productive, but a new pain had developed like a thin, tight band pulling from my pelvic bone. I knew instinctively it wasn't an emergency - just a signal that labour wasn't progressing as well as it could. I pushed through, moving from the pool, to the toilet, to the lounge room. I couldn't get relief from the intensity of that band no matter what I tried. After a strong and productive start to labour, I'd felt

sure I'd be having a baby before sunrise, so as I noticed the sky lightening through the curtains, my resolve was faltering.

My midwife arrived around 7am (my doula and photographer had arrived earlier in the night) and the sound of her keys jangling in her hand as she walked up to the front door made my heart swell with relief. She sat quietly next to me, spoke gently and watched me for a while. I decided on a vaginal exam, hoping to discover why I was stagnating. I was dilated to 7cm, but baby was quite high. My midwife kept her hand still while I had a contraction and informed me that I had a huge bag of waters that was going rock solid when I contracted, which was possibly why baby





wasn't able to descend. She also noticed that bub was pushing against the top of my pelvic bone during a contraction, explaining the tight band of pain I'd been experiencing.

I was exhausted, but had a renewed energy with my midwife there and an explanation for how my labour was feeling. We tried a forward leaning inversion, followed by Walcher's position and something to eat and drink before resting a while. I slept as best I could for a couple of hours, and then treated my neighbours to a show as I trudged the hill down our street in a short house dress, TENS machine wires poking out from behind my bum, adult nappy on to catch the bloody show that was still seeping out of me, mooing with each contraction, and doing abdominal lift and tucks with a rebozo with each surge.

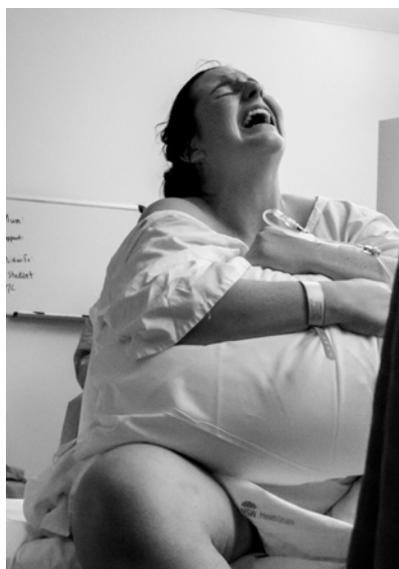
Despite everything, my contractions spaced out further as the day went on. I had a hail mary visit to the chiro in the late afternoon before surrendering to a hospital transfer with contractions now fifteen minutes apart.

We were fortunate to be allowed two support people, I'm not sure

how I would have managed otherwise. Having my midwife felt like having a shield against the system, and we were lucky to be treated with respect and kindness.

When we were taken into our birth suite, I appreciated the hospital midwife's hands-off approach. We requested an artificial rupture of membranes (AROM), which hadn't been safe to do at home but which we hoped would clear the path for my baby's head to descend.

The exam preceding the AROM was awful. The emotional exhaustion was catching me up and I was having to face the reality of the hospital transfer and



all that comes with it. I sobbed my way through the VE, tears running down my face as my dear midwife gripped my hand and held her other hand to my cheek and my husband stroked my hair. The hospital midwife broke the waters and she felt the head descend slightly.

I laboured for another couple of hours: sitting on the bed, standing and leaning on the bed, even in the shower. I was so exhausted that my legs were barely holding me up any more, but my contractions were so intense that I couldn't sit through them. I was losing energy to vocalise, which was the only thing keeping me grounded. As strong as they were, they were still ten minutes apart. At twenty-six hours in, and the prospect of labouring for still many more hours, my desperation was mounting. I knew there was a real chance of a repeat caesarean now, and I asked for an epidural, hoping it would relax my body and allow me rest so that I could still give birth to my baby vaginally. I cried as I told my midwife and husband that I couldn't keep going. I was sad, disappointed, scared and confused. I'd worked so hard for so long with all the confidence





that my body and baby knew what they were doing and I just needed to work with them and power through it. Now, I was unravelling alongside my plan for a natural, peaceful water birth at home.

Within the hour of getting an epidural, we were recommended a repeat caesarean. The doctor was lovely and respectful. After a frank conversation with my midwife discussing the risks, benefits, and the reality of our situation, I knew the right call was to go to surgery.

I watched my delicious, gooey, chunky baby pulled out of my body and flopped straight onto my chest, and I moved her

luscious, twisty cord to joyfully confirm my suspicions that she was a girl. We spent a few nights in hospital before returning home and reuniting with my eldest.

I'm not alone in reconciling the complexity of a homebirth transfer and caesarean, and to all of us out there, know this: giving birth to a baby at home is not what makes you a homebirther. Our belief in the rite of passage of birth, and the respect for our right to bodily autonomy and informed decision making are what make us homebirthers. I believed so completely in my ability to have my baby at home, processing the fact that I didn't have been a challenge. One of the hardest parts to accept is that I

I'm a married mum of two beautiful girls, Florence and Stella, living in Western Sydney. I used to be a person who said "I love the idea of a homebirth but it's not for me" until after the birth of my first child when I experienced the maternal health care system and witnessed the way guidelines and policy fly in the face of evidence, and care providers are both inexperienced in assisting with and afraid of physiological birth. My subsequent educational journey has made me an aspiring birth worker and homebirth advocate. I am particularly passionate about supporting women in navigating their next birth after caesarean, and desire for every woman to be empowered with properly informed decision making in their pregnancy, birth, and postpartum. I hope to finish my doula training mid-year, but in the meantime, you can find me at [@thenbacguide](#) on instagram.

Photographer: [Natural Focus Photography](#)

will never know why she didn't descend. While I can speculate until the cows come home, I will never know.

If I had another baby, I'd plan a HBA2C (Homebirth After Two Caesareans). I couldn't walk into a hospital as a healthy woman with a healthy baby to have major abdominal surgery purely because of a couple of scars on my uterus. Plus, I reflect with such fondness on the relationships I developed with my birth team, and the care that they took with my family and me. My eldest still talks about "her friends" and plays midwife with her doctor's kit. These women have left a lasting impression on us, and I will be forever grateful to them for empowering my journey to becoming a parent for the second time.





NATURAL FOCUS  
BIRTH PHOTOGRAPHY

Capturing the moments you never want to forget!

BIRTH PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE  
HAWKESBURY, BLUE MOUNTAINS & SYDNEY



"Beth went above and beyond in her communications, work ethic and professionalism at such a precious and sacred time for me. And oh my gosh her photos are so cherished by me! She captured my primal power in labour and birthing so beautifully. Those memories are a visual reminder for me of a time when I felt at my most powerful ever as a woman."

Claire Heenan, Mother of two in The Blue Mountains

CONTACT BETH TODAY FOR MORE INFORMATION ON OUR BIRTH PACKAGES!  
INFO@NATURALFOCUS.COM.AU | NATURALFOCUS.COM.AU | 0410368860



@NATURALFOCUS\_BIRTHPHOTOGRAPHY



@NATURALFOCUSBIRTHPHOTOGRAPHY

BY COURTNEY BLEMATL

My partner James and I's final night as a family of two we ordered take in and watched a funny movie. I started to feel sensations when we sat down and sneakily started timing them. We went to bed around 10:30pm. I lasted about an hour in our bed and moved to the spare room with my TENS machine and left Jimmy asleep. I started my hypno-breathing as soon as I hopped into bed and curled up in the dark. I had a feeling these were going to stay and realised I wouldn't be pregnant anymore. I mentally started to thank my body for doing an amazing job. "I know you have a job to do and it's okay. Thank you for housing and protecting my baby. It's okay if I yell and scream, just do what you need to do". I was visualising my womb making space for baby and my cervix opening through each sensation. I felt into them and didn't feel any fear.

Around 1am the surges intensified, my body was purging and I started to moan and breathe heavily which woke Jimmy. We sat in the lounge room together, I was confused because I felt pretty good and could talk but I was already 2-3 minutes apart. We sent the times to our birth chat around 3:30am, which included our midwife Chantel and our doula Emma. They both responded quickly and were surprised that they were that close together. Emma decided to get ready and come over.

I hopped in the shower, and after a while I looked up and Emma was sitting there quietly observing and I smiled and said, "heyyyyy, I think I'm in labour but I feel fine", and she explained you can feel really lucid and fine but I was definitely in labour. I stood up and swayed for a bit, but I was getting really hot and felt a bit sick. I sat on the floor and threw up everything I ate for dinner and moved into our spare room where I had set up the birth space with fairy lights and affirmations. I leaned over the bed and with every surge Jimmy and Emma pushed pressure points and massaged my back, which felt amazing.

Emma put on her birth playlist and I was really in it now and had my eyes closed and started moaning and vocalising through each wave. My waters released, which felt weird but good. I asked if they were clear and she said yes. I knew I would be fine, but part of me worried about transferring during the coronavirus hospital restrictions which came into affect that day and I had in my head that if there was meconium that I would have to go. But they were clear and baby was coming at home.

Emma pointed out the red line above my bum to Jimmy and said I was nearly fully dilated. In my head I was like WHAT? How is that possible? I've only been in labour for what felt like a few hours and



# THE BIRTH OF FLYNN



although I was in pain, I kept thinking how much worse does it get because I felt okay. She started filling the pool and my surges got a lot more intense, my volume went up and I yelled into the bed. I felt like I was being so loud but they later told me I wasn't really.

I jumped in the pool and it felt amazing. Jimmy recited affirmation cards to me and Emma dabbed essential oils between my brow. Every now and then I would have a surge that was so intense it frightened me and Emma would bring me back to my breath and ground my energy downwards. I opened my eyes after a time and saw Chantel, Hannah (student midwife) and Mel (second midwife) quietly observing. Chantel suggested I move into different positions. It was so intense now and I felt

like I was yelling and writhing around. I kept saying, "it hurts in my vagina" and Chantel was like, "yeah you are having a baby" haha. I started to feel scared and emotional and said, "I don't like this anymore". It seemed completely rational to me that baby could just stay in there forever and it could all just stop now. I started crying and Jimmy held me and said how amazing I was doing and reassured me that I was okay. I was later told that this was transition.

I got out of the pool and sat on the toilet, it was here that I felt the head start to descend. I couldn't believe how fast it was all happening, it really did feel like the biggest poo you've ever done times 1000. I crouched on the floor and freaked out because it was so hard to stay there and the intensity of the stretching was insane. I clung to Jimmy and made my way back to the bedroom where I lay on my side and pushed against Chantel. Baby's head was descending but after the surge, would retreat back in. I didn't know this happened and I felt like all my efforts kept being wasted. But I was making progress and they showed me photos of the head edging out. After a few more enormous pushes Chantel said, "okay where do you want to have your baby?" and I desperately wanted to go back in the water. I leapt back in the pool and had a pep talk to myself and said, "you just have to do it, you've had enough,





just give the biggest push and get the head down” and in the next push the head came halfway out. Chantel said to slowwwww my breathing so I panted and puffed and breathed out the head. Next push not much happened as the shoulders were coming out together, so with the next push and a little help from Chantel, baby shot out into the water and into Dad’s arms. I flung around and grabbed my baby and brought them up to my chest and started crying, along with everyone else. Jimmy leapt into the water and sat next to me. My first thought was, “wow that is a big baby, how did that come out of me?!?!?!”. Baby did a little cry and was very wide eyed and calm. We looked into each other’s eyes and I couldn’t believe we

were finally meeting for the first time in this lifetime, the feeling was so surreal. Jimmy looked to see the gender and said, “It’s a boy!!!”, I said “omg we have a boy, I knew it was a boy”.

We sat in the water and just stared at him. I felt my placenta detaching and got up out of the bath and onto the spare bed. With a little push it came right out and Chantel plopped it in a bucket and Mel tucked us in and left us in the golden hour with our baby boy. He was so alert and quiet and looking right at us. I looked up at Jimmy and said is his name is Flynn Alexander? And he said yes.



I am a part time student naturopath and now mumma to Flynn. I live in Beverley Park with my partner James. I have rarely been to doctors or hospitals in my adulthood and it felt instinctive and natural to want a homebirth. We were very grateful to have had an amazing birth team, Chantel from Midwife to Mother and Emma Bourke our doula, who supported us. I hope this story can be an inspiration to first time mothers wanting a homebirth and trusting that your body knows exactly what to do.

Photographer: [Emma Bourke Birth](#)

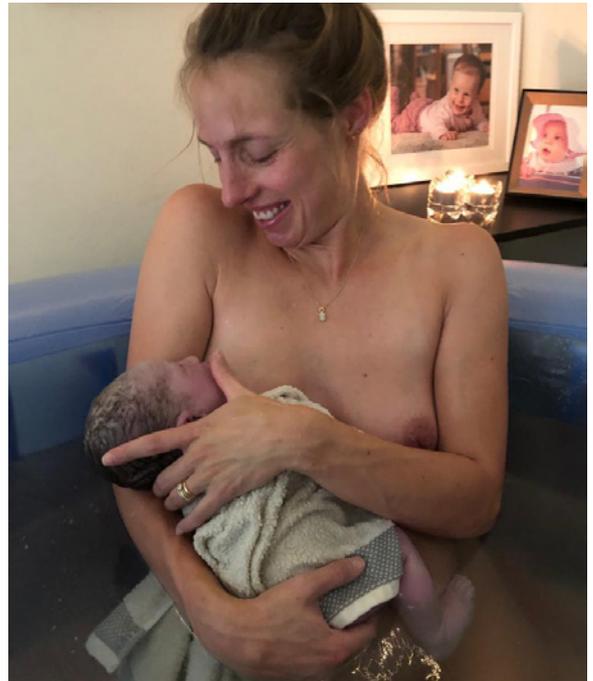
# BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENTS

## MILA - 30 MARCH 2022 -

I decided on a home birth at 38 weeks, the day I was informed that due to covid policy at RNSH, my girls couldn't be there for the birth of their sister. Robyn supported and cared for me in the last few weeks of pregnancy and baby Mila was born in the water at 40 +5 weeks weighing 4.76kg.

The birth went perfectly and was everything I'd envisioned... I'm a big advocate for home birth!

Photograph credit : Robyn Dempsey (Midwife)



## SEASON - 15 FEBRUARY 2022 -

We are happy to share the blissful arrival of the littlest addition to our family Season Gross.

She came earth side into mama's hands surrounded by the love of her parents Erin & Chris, and big brother Dawson at home in the water. Labour began after dinner on Valentines evening, oxytocin and Cupid had this all worked out.

Born at 42 weeks on February 15th 2022 00:10am  
3.755kg | 55cm

We are full of joy with our beautiful blessing.

The gentle, intervention-free welcome to the world we had wished for. Supported by our beautiful private midwives Chantel Letertre & Lucretia McCarthy.

Photograph credit : Nadia - My Sacred birth & beyond



BY KRISTAN ROSA

Birth is the most terrifying, unpredictable, magical, amazing experience that I have ever had.

My first son was born via c-section. My second son was a VBAC in the hospital system and I am still recovering from what I have been through emotionally due to it, and for my third birth, I chose to have another VBAC in the comfort of my own home, surrounded by my children and husband. It was the single most life changing moment that I have ever experienced. I feel like I was born again as a woman, due to the level of admiration it gave me for myself for accomplishing it. Looking back on it even now, I am so endlessly proud of myself, and proud of everyone who helped me get there. All of my births had an element of beauty as they brought me my children, but my homebirth was just something out of this world. This is my story.

During my second trimester I started to nervously research homebirth and wondered if it was something I could do. I wasn't sure due to having had a c-section before and the birthing centre at the hospital had told me I couldn't even have a water birth. However, I found my beautiful midwife Helen Young, who right from the get go was so supportive and encouraging for my decision to home birth and made me feel so secure and informed in my choice. She came to my house for all my midwife appointments and the level of care she gave me was second to none. If I had any questions, nothing was too silly. I have so much respect for Helen and the amazing work she does to help women bring their babies earthside.

At 38 weeks and 4 days I started my day out with a trip to Costco with my husband and toddler, and it followed

with a midwife appointment in the early afternoon. I expressed to Helen that I was feeling a bit of pressure in my pubic bone region and we didn't think too much of it, and booked another midwife appointment for the following week. I was the exact same gestation as I was when I went into labour with my second son, my first VBAC. However, that hospital birth left me with endless trauma due to not being able to make choices of my own, even to the degree of not being allowed to move from laying on my back when pushing.

At about 9pm on the 6th of December 2021 I was laying with my toddler and putting him to sleep when I felt a sharp and familiar pain, and also some dampness in my underwear. And then another pain. My gut told me it was labour, and even right from the get go it was intense. My initial contractions were 7 minutes apart, and I went to the toilet and checked my underwear to find a small amount of blood, as well as some accumulating in the toilet water. I rang my midwife and let her know about the blood and contractions I was having, but felt weirdly calm as I knew things were okay. At about 9:50pm I got off the phone from my midwife and sat down and watched a movie with my husband. I messaged my doula, Keari Martin and told her I thought I would need her quite soon.

At 11:19pm I rang my midwife back as things were definitely happening, and fast. My contractions were now very regular at 4 minutes apart and they were coming in hard. Both my midwife and doula got ready and left and I asked my husband to put my TENS machine on my back for me, which did relieve a bit of the pain I was experiencing (I can't recommend one enough).

WHEN YOU HAVE A BABY,  
TWO PEOPLE ARE BORN.  
A BABY, AND A MOTHER.

# THE BIRTH OF TYLER



At 11:50pm my 13 month old woke back up, by now my contractions were very intense. I laid with him and put him back to sleep, and I used focusing on his breathing as a method of pain relief which I found to be quite helpful and gave me a real sense of calm to be close to him. While I was laying with him during contractions I could feel my body pushing without me wanting it to, I tried to stop the urge but there was nothing I could do, my body just continued to push. It was such a weird sensation to not have control over.

As soon as I came back out my midwife had arrived. I clung onto her and told her it was a little overwhelming. I went to the back room and sat on the couch with her whilst everyone was setting everything up. I was still having involuntary pushing with each contraction. She told me to



just go with what my body needed to do. I did request a cervical check for my own peace of mind. I wanted to know that things were progressing, and when my midwife said 6-7cm dilated, it gave me motivation to keep going. I knew it was close, and the intensity was getting a lot stronger.

We established that there was no time left to finish setting up the birth pool and I leant over the back of the couch to deal with contractions as I became too uncomfortable laying back. I held onto my husband's upper arms for support and focused on breathing through each contraction knowing it was bringing me closer to my baby. I think at this point I expressed to my doula, Keari and midwife Helen that I was feeling pressure.

I started to feel a dropping sensation, as soon as that happened my body seemed to push harder, and I felt a big bout of pressure. My waters then broke into my midwife's lap and very quickly my sons head was along with it. My midwife told me to breathe through it. I distinctly remember myself pushing once when I felt his shoulders coming (which was basically immediately) and the pressure was intense, so I gave a push.

My son was born at 1am on the 7/12/21 on our back room couch. I birthed silently because I didn't want to wake my 13 month old, and it is one of the proudest moments of my life. I cannot believe what I accomplished in that moment. Birth, something I was frightened of, doubted myself about and was so anxious for, gave me the biggest sense of self-worth I have ever felt. I did it. Without pain medication, without breaking down and losing my cool, without freaking out in transition (which was the part I was most scared about! Looking back, I can barely even pinpoint it.) I had brought my baby earthside with the help of these beautiful women and my husband. And I would do it again in a heartbeat, it was nothing short of a magical experience.



I spent an hour with bubba on my chest before my midwives helped me to have that beautiful first shower post birth. During the golden hour we delayed clamping and cutting baby's cord, and once it was completely white my husband did those honours.

Homebirth is like something I truly could never fully understand the empowerment of until I did it. It is such a beautiful, raw, earth stopping and utterly beautiful experience. I was so determined and dedicated to my birth and so calm despite having been so nervous prior to labour that I couldn't cope with the pain without pain medication. But I was in my own universe and in complete control. I have never been more proud of myself or more in awe of what we can achieve as women and I have a new respect for myself.

My baby is just a relaxed, chilled out

little man and I am so in love and so excited to one day experience this incredible journey again.

I will never have the words to truly thank the women who supported and coached me through this. My beautiful midwife Helen Young, her offsider Marnie and wonderful doula Keari Martin. There is a place in my heart that the three of you will always be a part of for helping me to achieve what I did. I have so much appreciation and admiration for all of you. You all gave me the birth I had always dreamt of, but never thought I could achieve.

To anyone who is on the fence about a homebirth; I can promise you that this experience will change you in the most wonderful of ways and show you strengths within yourself that you didn't realise were there. The journey to motherhood with homebirth is just so natural and perfect.

I am a 29 year old mother of three beautiful boys and live in the Lake Macquarie region of New South Wales. I am currently undergoing a new life venture into newborn and baby photography. I love all things art related, and enjoy time outdoors with my little family. I married my husband Brad in 2018 after bonding and starting a relationship around our mutual love of speedway racing! I became a mum at 22 to my first son, Bentley, after multiple losses. My second son Jaxon was born in 2020, after conceiving via IVF. My third son Tyler, who is my super relaxed homebirth baby, was born in 2021 after a surprise natural conception. I'm an everyday mum who loves spending time with my little family, and am looking forward to hopefully experiencing another pregnancy with a homebirth in the near future.

Photographer: [Keari, Meraki Bumps and Babes](#)



## **Natural Beginnings**

*"Holistic Health, Doula and Placenta Services"*

**Pregnancy Massage**

**Doula Birth Support**

**Placenta Encapsulation**

**Plant Medicine & Nutrition**

**Birth & Family Photography**

**Holistic Pelvic Care™**

**Mizan Therapy**

**Virginia Maddock**

0415 683 074

14 Warrina Rd Caringbah South

NSW 2229

[virginia@naturalbeginnings.com.au](mailto:virginia@naturalbeginnings.com.au)

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

BY BROOKE BLAIR

I woke at midnight with contractions more intense than what I was expecting for 'early labour'. Despite trying to go back to sleep, I couldn't due to the intensity, so instead chose to head downstairs and put my TENS machine on, read my affirmations and bounce on my exercise ball.

The TENS wasn't helping as much as I had hoped, and instead was intensifying my contractions, so I opted for the heat pack and then eventually the bath, which was a huge relief! I spent the next 3 hours in the bath, sleeping between contractions before starting to track them. They were 40-60 seconds long and 3-6 minutes apart.

At 3.30am I sent a message to my midwife Cara McDonald, to let her know where I was at - I was coping but things were progressing quicker than I was prepared for. At 4.30am I woke my husband Adam, who then went downstairs to blow up the birth pool and prepare my birth space while I continued to labour in the shower.

By 7am I was downstairs with my heat pack, exercise ball, dog Simba, and Adam. I would have my heat pack and blanket at the start of a contraction,



remove it midway through and sweat for a few minutes after, then need them all back again. I proceeded to get back into the shower as this was the best pain relief option for me.

An hour passed in what felt like 5 minutes to me, and Adam asked me to get out of the shower and try something else so we could conserve hot water for the pool. 5 minutes later, and about 5 inches of water in the birth pool, we had run out of hot water.

Adam told me later that his first thought was, 'oh god I'm going to have to light a fire in the backyard to boil water', until he went upstairs and noticed that we have a stovetop for that exact reason.

During this time, he had been in contact with our lovely birth photographer Beth, who was helping him know when to contact our midwife. He also asked her to bring her kettle to help us with the water situation.

About half an hour later, Cara rang while I was vocalising in the background during a contraction. Without Adam saying anything she said, 'That answers my question, I'm on my way!'. In this time, I had gotten myself into a child's pose position with my bum high in the air.

By the time Cara arrived, my contractions had slowed to one every 10-15 mins, and I was getting to sleep between them. They allowed me to sleep for a bit over an hour, before Cara came down and gently asked if I wanted to meet the baby today, and if so, it would help if I got up and started moving around to get his head back into my cervix. Reluctantly I got up, and started pacing up and down the stairs, across the backyard, and then would sit through a number of contractions on the toilet.

The whole time I was doing this, Beth and our second midwife Natachza were helping Adam fill the pool with boiling water from the stove, and my dog Simba was following me every step of the way.

# THE BIRTH OF BYRON



Adam was also by my side, allowing me to fall into him and squeeze him during each contraction, and encouraging me every step.

When I was back on the toilet, I had a small bloody show, followed by my mucus plug coming away. I was so excited to pull my mucus plug out and show Adam - it meant things were progressing and I was incredibly happy about that! After a few more contractions on the toilet, I stood up and my waters broke. Another amazing sign that things were going in the right direction! Up until this point, I truly didn't believe that I was going to be having my baby at home.

Adam then came and asked me if I wanted to get in the pool, and so I did, which was a huge relief. Later, Cara and Beth told me they had been



waiting for over an hour for me to get in, but because I didn't believe this was happening, I avoided it!

When in the pool I checked my cervix and believed that I still had cervix in the way of the baby's head. Cara must have known that this may or may not be the case, because during each contraction I had started vocalising a very low sound and pushing. She encouraged me to keep going with my body's urges, and push if I wanted to push. She had the mirror in the pool so Adam could see what was happening while he was in front of me holding my hands, giving me water, and wiping my face with a cold washer. Eventually I said, "he's not coming, my cervix is still in the way; but everyone could see his head moving down in the mirror, so Adam said, "Darl, he's definitely coming, I can see his head - he has your eyes!"

I knew he was joking about the eyes but checked to see if he was right about the head and then I realised that while I thought I was feeling for my cervix, I had been feeling his head the whole time. Throughout this time, I could hear everyone keep mentioning a dragonfly that kept coming into the room and landing on the walls and on Beth. Later when we looked it up, it was a symbol of change and transformation.

I continued pushing in a 'W sit' position to try and open my pelvis as much as possible and would nap after each contraction. At 3.30pm, our girl dog Hazel came downstairs, and Nataschza



said, "Hazel is here, that means the baby is coming soon!". This gave me even more positive energy that I was truly doing this!

I kept pushing and using my hand to feel for the baby's head while also moving my perineum away as much as possible. We spent many contractions with his head slowly stretching my perineum before disappearing back inside my pelvis. Cara encouraged me that he was stretching me beautifully and we were all doing a great job.

I had my small crisis of confidence and said, "he just won't get out!", so Cara asked me if I felt comfortable to change position and perhaps put one leg up into a lunge position. I put my left leg forward and had more contractions and his head, arm and then whole body were born in the one go. It was such a sigh of relief that he was out! I reached down into the water and pulled him up into my chest, with Adam watching the whole

thing from in front. His face makes me cry whenever I think about it - he was so full of joy and pride when he saw our baby. We blew on his face a few times to help bring him to awareness, and at the moment he began to cry, as did Simba - our two boys crying together (we have a beautiful video captured by Beth).

We stayed in the pool for a while until I had a moderate bleed. I got out and had syntocinon to help stop the bleeding and birth the placenta as I had lost some more blood on the move out of the pool. After this we had more skin to skin on the lounge and laughed and cried and cuddled our new baby boy Byron, and felt the most intense love we'd ever felt while Cara checked my perineum and did all of Byron's checks. Nataschza fed me and brought me cups of tea, and Beth captured all the magic on film. Later Cara helped me into the shower and then up into bed, where we all stayed as a new family of 5.

It was truly the best day of our lives and I wouldn't have changed any moment of it!



I am a 27-year-old female who lives in Kurrajong NSW, with my husband Adam, and our two dogs Hazel and Simba. On December 16th 2021, we welcomed our first baby, a boy named Byron, in a water birth at home.

Photographer: [Beth Lindsey at Natural Focus Photography](#)

# EMPOWERING WORDS THAT GOT YOU THROUGH BIRTH.

 karlee3xcell

**My body was made for this**

Reply >

 laurenkaal

**It's just one day (labour)**

Reply >

 caitieprior

**This is all normal**

Reply >

 mollygunstonxo

**You're so close! 😊 (even if they were lying) it made me feel better**

Reply >

 faweea

**"I can do it"  
"Trust over fear"**

Reply >

 esmereldamaude

**Just focus on your OUT breath...(The IN breath will naturally follow)**

Reply >

 sammylee.colvin

**'Every cell in your body knows what to do'**

Reply >

 midwifelani

**Surrender, relax and open**

Reply >

 mandz86

**I can do anything for a minute**

Reply >

 gabriella.thompsn

**I am safe and loved  
My body and baby know what to do  
I welcome my baby**

Reply >

 sarah\_jane\_09

**Your are built for this!**

Reply >

 thentherewerefour

**Its not pain, its just intense**

Reply >

 mischa.anne

**My surges can't be stronger than me because they are me**

Reply >

 mischa.anne

**Every surge brings my baby close to me**

Reply >

 maree.car.xx

**My body was designed to do this**

Reply >

 isabellalawrence\_\_\_

**'You'll meet her soon'**

Reply >

 the\_bec\_cameron

**Eyes closed. Head first. Can't lose**

Reply >

 you\_can\_birth

**I am not afraid**

Reply >

 you\_can\_birth

**Each wave brings you closer to your baby**

Reply >

 lifewithlana\_\_

**I conceived, I carried, I will birth**

Reply >

BY ABIGAIL ZHAO

Our midwife's visits were always such a breath of fresh air with so much faith that this pregnancy would go full-term. This was faith we didn't always have, with our history of repeated miscarriages (and ectopic pregnancy). I had to take progesterone supplements for at least the first trimester and ended up taking them longer for our peace of mind. I am so grateful for getting to experience birth on the other side, not just from the side of being a midwife. Especially in Covid times. I got to avoid the unnecessary routine interventions such as the test for gestational diabetes.

It felt like everything about this pregnancy made us wait as long as possible. This was our rainbow baby after 3 pregnancy losses. We did all our "last" dates and fun outings as was encouraged. My mother-in-law made comments to me throughout the pregnancy of different things I shouldn't do or eat. And even said I should prepare my heart for needing a C-section due to my age. Our former landlady also told me my hips weren't wide enough. So many times, I couldn't believe they were trying to convince me of these things when I am a professional in this field!

Many friends were asking whether I would, "consider getting induced" as we got to 40 weeks and beyond. I regretted telling them and my mother-in-law our actual "due date".

I had always told baby Isaac that he could come any time after 37 weeks. I even tried castor oil once, but it didn't do anything noticeable. Our midwife, Chantel, came up with a plan with us for monitoring since my husband was nervous about us going to 42 weeks. I did ask Chantel to do a "stretch & sweep" if my cervix was favourable, and it was. That was at 41 weeks + 2 days. At 41 weeks + 3 days I went for acupuncture for the second time and asked to really hit the labour spots. The next day I had a bloody show, what I realised later was the mucus plug,

twinges inside "down there", slight pressure on the yoni, and lower back "period" pain!

At 41 + 4 days I had an ultrasound per our plan, and it showed a happy, healthy baby. That day my water broke at 4:40pm and annoyingly kept gushing out. I had thought I prepared plenty of maternity pads and disposable postpartum panties, but I asked Frank to pick up more. He made the quickest trip to the local chemist and bought them on some amazing sale, and back, all by public bus! I wasn't sure I was having contractions but couldn't manage to finish my dinner as hard as I tried.

I checked my cervix in the shower around 7pm, and it was only 2 cm dilated. I made a shorter playlist and sang along to it in the bedroom, declaring by faith a smooth birth, and the blessing from God of a healthy baby this time! By 8:30pm I realised, "those are contractions" with every contraction I felt like I needed to poop. I really didn't want to be labouring through the night for some reason, so I was trying to watch a show and half-napping for a few minutes at a time, in between running to the bathroom to sit on the toilet and "try" unsuccessfully not to push. It just felt better there. As



# THE BIRTH OF ISAAC



it was winter, I was cold and wearing such a thick robe. Every time I went to sit on the toilet because it felt better, I would feel really hot and have to take off the robe. By 12:29am I told Frank I was calling Chantel. I had been texting her, including the latest contraction times from the app. I think she really

wanted to avoid coming too early, and since I hadn't been through it before, I couldn't know whether it was the real deal. My fear was that I would be only 5 or 6 cm dilated when the midwives arrived. It was the longest hour of my life waiting for them to arrive! When she arrived, Chantel confirmed I was fully dilated.

Our plan was a water birth, with the pool already inflated, and all the supplies in a corner of our second bedroom. I'm still so surprised at how Frank and I each coped with labour. He was playing video games half of the time, since his sister had told him once the baby is here there won't be time for that. I was in denial watching my show. I also thought I would be in the shower longer since I really enjoyed hot showers in pregnancy.

I pushed in the bathtub some directed pushing to get head under pubic bone. Even in the moment, part of me felt that directed pushing isn't ideal, while another part of my midwife brain

## There's no birth like a Calmbirth®

To find a Calmbirth® Educator near you and to book a Calmbirth® course go to [calmbirth.com.au](http://calmbirth.com.au) or phone (02) 4871 1806.



Image: Erica Masfingham Photography



remembered births I'd attended where it was just necessary because of the baby's head's position and size. I thought, "I don't care about the birth pool or not using the birth room. I just want this baby out!". My mantra was, "come ON, Isaac!". I was pushing through pain with Chantel making room and lube to get past ischial spines, holding legs up. Pushing in all types of lunge/squat positions, I felt like it wouldn't end.

I was praying for this baby to come out. Frank took some breaks outside the room because my sounds were hard to hear. He was calm and cracking jokes too. I got annoyed by Frank & the back-up midwife trying to find stuff, trying to direct them to where it was all organised.

As I moved to bed, I didn't care about not being in water. I sensed a question about episiotomy (scissors out as motivation). Chantel ignored that question, convinced that I could do it without that. Finally I heard Isaac crying on the way out, though I thought I didn't stop pushing when Chantel said to, and was afraid I tore. Then I still had to push to get his body out. Frank said he saw the head coming out, "like an alien". Isaac came out crying, what a relief! Not registering with me until FINALLY, finally out! The placenta took a long time too. Everything about this journey was so long.

Frank even cut the cord! Then he fell asleep in bed. :) The bagel with cream cheese after the birth tasted the best. I had a small second-degree tear that could heal on its own.

Isaac Easton Zhao was born 26 June 2021, Saturday 3:27am 3.75 kilos/8 lb. 4 oz.! 52.5 cm length. Giant head (measured big even with all the moulding). Isaac means laughter and joy after heartbreak and loss, Easton facing East towards Asia where we hope to return.

I can't believe Isaac is ours, he looks like Frank, his head is chubby, swollen & squished a little like I pictured. I'm SO proud of what I did! I can't believe we grew such a big baby! It wasn't easy.

I feel like a warrior looking at those intense birth pictures from the midwives. Whenever anyone asks about the birth, I say, "it was intense and empowering!". The midwifery care I enjoyed throughout pregnancy, birth, and postpartum definitely empowered me to make the right decisions for myself, my baby, and my family.

I'm an American home birth midwife who's lived in China for 13 years, now temporarily in Australia with my husband Frank who is Australian. I have dreamed of birthing my babies at home for many years, so it was a given to have a home birth. Frank also came around to the idea pretty quickly. I'm getting certified as a doula with DONA International since I can't practice midwifery here without an additional degree. I'm as passionate as ever for women to get the evidence-based, compassionate care and birth choices they want, and I hope I have more empathy now having gone through birth as a birthing mother.

Photographer: Frank (Partner)

BIRTHINGS IS THE HOMEBIRTH NSW  
COMMUNITY MAGAZINE.

THE THEME FOR THE NEXT ISSUE OF  
BIRTHINGS WILL BE

# CEREMONY

WE WOULD LOVE YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS!

We are seeking stories that explore birth tradition and ceremony.

What traditions does your family have?

How do you celebrate and welcome new life?

Please send us your theme articles, birth announcements and stories with high resolution photos.

Submissions are due by 1 September 2022 to [editor@homebirthnsw.org.au](mailto:editor@homebirthnsw.org.au) and should be <1400 words with a <100 word bio and 4-6 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 have recently changed, please send your new email address to:

[members@homebirthnsw.org.au](mailto:members@homebirthnsw.org.au)



HOMEBIRTH NEW SOUTH WALES

[HOMEBIRTHNSW.ORG.AU](http://HOMEBIRTHNSW.ORG.AU)

