

# BIRTHINGS

a HOMEBIRTH ACCESS SYDNEY quarterly publication  
[www.homebirthsydney.org.au](http://www.homebirthsydney.org.au)



**homebirthed newborns**

plus all our regular features  
birth notices, letters, your stories and pictures  
the personal is political, media watch  
& updates on our community activities

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

**contributions, photos, correspondence**

Please send to Danielle Townsend at dannit@bigpond.net.au  
Photos and written submissions must be emailed. Prior notice to the Editors of your intention to submit work is not necessary, but can be helpful in planning content.

**deadlines for submissions**

Summer 2009 No 100—1 November 2008  
Autumn 2009 No 101—1 February 2009  
Winter 2009 No 102—1 May 2009  
Spring 2009 No 103—1 August 2009

**back issues**

Back issues of *Birthings* are like hen's teeth! But we will try to accommodate requests. Back issues cost \$7.00 per issue. Postage is \$3.00 per single copy. A price for multiple copies can be arranged. The newsletters are very valuable in that they contain many birth stories and information, plus give an insight into the homebirth movement and HAS activities.

**change of address**

Please notify any change of address to HAS, PO Box 66, Broadway, NSW 2007 or by email to the Memberships Coordinator at ameliaa@iprimus.com.au

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\*Offices marked with an asterisk are listed as official committee members in compliance with the responsibilities of running an incorporated association under the *Associations Incorporation Act 1984*.

**Contributing to Birthings**

The strength of *Birthings* is all the thought-provoking, inspiring and challenging writing from members of our community. To ensure that the magazine is balanced, responsive to our audience's interests and needs, and reflects the priorities of HAS, we have developed a set of contribution guidelines.

We also work with an editorial board, selected by the HAS executive, to reflect the range of people in our community. The founding board members are Maggie Lecky-Thompson, Adrienne Abulhawa, Jo Hunter and the two current editors, Alison Leemen and Danielle Townsend. The role of the editorial board is outlined in the guidelines below.

**Contribution Guidelines**

Here are some guidelines for how to write your story, and what happens once you have submitted it for our consideration.

**WHAT TO SUBMIT** Submissions are sought on the theme of the issue as stated on the back cover of the previous issue. Your response to the theme may be in a range of formats: poetry, opinion, artistic, personal or factual.

We also welcome birth stories from members. Your birth story is a special part of your family's journey and the story of homebirth in Sydney. It is also a great gift to share with other parents, especially those preparing for the birth of their own babies.

Other submissions apart from those outlined above are also very welcome, though we may not always be able to publish them, as we often receive more submissions than we have space to print. We will get back to you as soon as possible with a response and discuss the possibilities. If you have an idea for a submission that you would like to discuss before writing fully, please feel free to send us an email with an outline. We love a good idea!

**STYLE** Your submission should be written in your own style. You do not need to be a professional writer or have a poetic style to give a moving and interesting account of your own experience.

Your submitted writing should be all your own work—you must not borrow or copy words written by someone else, unless they are attributed quotes of a reasonable length.

**LENGTH** Please write your story in the amount of words you think you need. As a guideline, most birth stories work best when they are under 1500 words. Submissions on the theme should be under 2000 words.

We may edit for length and style and so may cut your story to ensure it is appropriate for use in *Birthings*.

**EDITING** Your story will be checked by our team of editors. The intention is to retain your voice, while ensuring that grammar, spelling and other style issues are correct and of a high quality. Your story may also be cut for length (see above).

Your story may not defame any person. If the editorial team is concerned that an issue of defamation may exist, we may decline to publish your work or require the defamatory material to be removed prior to publication.

If any major editing is recommended by our editors, we will contact you for permission and return a copy of the edited material for your approval. If our standard editing procedure is applied, we will not send it for your approval.

**PICTURES** We encourage you to submit some high-resolution digital images with your story, especially with birth stories. We will include as many as we can to illustrate your story.

**TERMS OF USE** Please note that by submitting your story to *Birthings* you warrant that the content is not confidential and that you have the right to offer it for publication.

You also agree that you grant *Birthings* the copyright permission for the purposes of publication in this magazine and on the Homebirth Access Sydney website.

**EDITORIAL BOARD** All stories will be put before the editorial board before publication. The board's duties include:

- reviewing copy to ensure it reflects the priorities of HAS and the interests and needs of its members and the community,
- supporting the editors to make editorial decisions,
- providing a guide for the future direction of the magazine.

**PROCEDURES** Please provide your story as a Microsoft Word or equivalent document attached to an email and sent to Danielle Townsend at dannit@bigpond.net.au.

You will be notified immediately of receipt and contacted before publication. There is often more material than we can publish submitted for each issue of *Birthings*. If your story cannot be published due to space limitations we will contact you. In some cases we will ask your permission to hold a story over for a future issue.

Thank you so much for considering a contribution to *Birthings*. Your experiences and insights are what makes the magazine so rich and interesting, and such a valuable resource for the homebirth community.

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

Honourary Life and Founding Members  
Maggie Lecky-Thompson  
Elaine Odgers Norling  
Honourary Life Members  
Robyn Dempsey, Jo Hunter

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# BIRTHINGS

## homebirthed newborns

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## Contributors

**JENNY CARLETON** is the owner and developer of Natural Parenting in Sydney: a guide to services & products ([www.npsydney.com.au](http://www.npsydney.com.au)), an online directory and information source. She lives in Sydney's inner west with her partner Rod and their beautiful kids Lily (5½) and Saul (18 months). She is passionate about natural birth and contributes to the movement through her role as Advertising Coordinator for Homebirth Access Sydney.

**HEATHER CUSHMAN-DOWDEE** is a Californian artist and creator of the superhero, Hathor the Cow Goddess, who appears at protest marches and stars in her own cartoons, *Hathor the Cow Goddess and the Evolution Revolution*. [www.thecowgoddess.com](http://www.thecowgoddess.com)

**LEIGH HOLMAN** is a SAHM while she studies to be a doula and childbirth educator. She lives with her partner Andrew and to her two mad sons Jack (3½) and Hamish (2) in inner west Sydney. She is passionate about birth and parenting instinctively which is some days is a struggle and other days a delight.

**ALISON LEEMEN** is a mum to Joe (2½) and Wilfred (5 months), an editor of *Birthings* and an active member of the Homebirth Access Sydney committee.

**JASON NELSON** is a dad of two and works in his own business as a mortgage broker. He is a fantastic support to his wife Anne in her choice to have true normal childbirth at home.

**SARAH PEAK** left her job as an account manager for a search engine marketing company to be a stay at home mum which she believes is the best job she has ever done. Sarah lives with her partner Luke and their daughter Madison and their furry first child "Gizmo".

**AMANDA QUINN** is a first time mother to baby Elke and keen promoter of homebirth and attachment parenting.

**SHERYL SIDERY** has been practicing midwifery for 21 years. Sheryl has worked at the Royal Hospital for Women in Sydney since 1989 working in the Birth Centre for 15 of those years. For the past few years her midwifery has centered more on how we mother, focusing on the attachment style of parenting, whilst still combining her homebirth practice with her hospital practice. She is mother to four great kids and one crazy dog.

**DANIELLE TOWNSEND** is the mother of two home-birthed babes: Ellery (5) and Charlie (17 months), the Australian editor of [www.babycenter.com.au](http://www.babycenter.com.au) and an editor of *Birthings*.

**ELIZABETH TREVAN** is an actor, civil celebrant and mother of three, Esther (2) and twins Harvey and Nash (6 months) living in Coogee. She's looking forward to a holiday some time in the next 10 years and a night in the not too distant future of un-interrupted sleep.

*Birthings* is designed by **MELINDA HOLME**

## New and renewed members

*We extend a hearty welcome to the following new and renewed members. We value you and thank you for your continued support.*

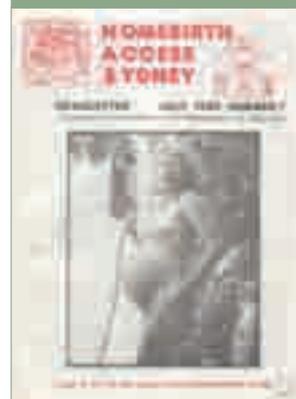
Emily Besser  
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 Virginia Maddox  
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 Nina Taylor and Mark  
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 Alina Gollner & Alex  
 Wendy Holtby & Karen  
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 Meredith McKay  
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 Katherine Louise Myers  
 Daana Seeney  
 Jane Surgenor  
 Sheila Vaughan  
 Lee Liggett  
 Yantra Lindon  
 Kerri Phipps  
 Trish Speers

Front cover



*Harvey and Nash  
 Heffernan*

Back cover



*The cover of our first  
 newsletter*

# editorial



DANIELLE TOWNSEND

**We get a lot of 'reader love' here at the** *Birthings* HQ and I am hoping that you are one of those people who look forward to the magazine and enjoy the read. But we have some challenging news to share with you about the ongoing existence of the magazine.

For the past two years, Kimberly-Clark, through their professional liaison department, has been supporting Homebirth Access Sydney by printing and distributing *Birthings*. A decision has been made to stop supporting all the community organisations for whom they do this, and this means that this will be the last issue of the magazine that they will print for us. This immediately puts in danger the historic 100th issue of the magazine which is due in your letterbox in December.

So this is one of those crossroads that volunteer organisations reach, when we can give up and let the magazine die, or we can put all our resources into finding a solution. We are choosing to fight because we believe the magazine is a vital method of uniting, informing and supporting the homebirth community. It helps us to gain strength and insight and to simply share our stories and celebrate our births.

The Homebirth Access Sydney committee has met and begun a campaign to recruit a new sponsor for the magazine. A sponsor could be an organisation or a person who can help us pay for the magazine to be produced commercially, or who could do some or all of the printing or distribution.

If *Birthings* is important to you, you can do two things to help. You can do a little brainstorming. Do you know anyone or have any business contact who may have a large-scale colour printer in their office, or who feels inclined to support community organisations? If you do, let us know by emailing Alison Leemen at [aleemen@bigpond.net.au](mailto:aleemen@bigpond.net.au) and we will follow up the lead.

Secondly, if you want to ensure that you continue receiving *Birthings* **you need to update us with your email address**, as we may need to resort to emailing some, or all, of the magazine in the future. You can make sure your contact details are up to date by contacting Amelia Allen on [ameliaa@iprimus.com.au](mailto:ameliaa@iprimus.com.au). Send her your full name, postal address and email address to remain on our membership list.

If we are to save the magazine it is going to take the resources of all of our community so if you can help in any way, please let us know. We are going to have to act fast if we are to have a 100th issue of the magazine.

On a more positive note, we have recently held two more of our excellent and popular evening information sessions. In July we had Betty Vella on Expectations of Birth in Bondi Junction and in August a packed session to hear David Vernon on Dads at Birth in Petersham. We are so grateful to both these speakers for spending considerable time preparing for and giving their presentations. For full reports see page 51.

To continue running these evenings next year we are going to need some enthusiastic new organisers with a small amount of time and passion available. We are finding the load a little heavy at the moment and so if you have ideas for speakers and publicity and availability to attend evening meetings every six or twelve weeks it would be great to hear from you!

I would like to foreshadow the theme for the next issue of *Birthings* (thinking optimistically). As I have said, it will be the 100th issue of the magazine and so we're taking the opportunity to look back at the past twenty-five years of homebirth, the magazine and our community.

We expect that there will be lots to ponder, reminisce about, consider, debate and remember at this time and we would love to be able to include as many stories and photos as possible. If you have anything you would like to submit please make contact with us as soon as possible so we can do some planning for the issue. We have limited space so please send us a quick email if you are thinking of submitting before 1 November so that we can hold space for you.

We know there must be some *Birthings* readers who were part of the community at the time of issue one and we would especially love to hear from you.

I hope this issue finds you gaining strength from some warmer days and enjoying the spring blooms. It's always a great time for new babies so happy birthing and I hope you find time to enjoy the read.

Take care

—Danni

# birth announcements



Elizabeth, Damien and Esther are thrilled to welcome

*Harvey Francis Heffernan - 3.96kg*

*Nash William Heffernan - 3.72kg*

Born at 3:12am and 3:41am on 30th December, 2007 at home. Arriving on the Tibetan Rug in the lounge room.

Incredible thanks and love to Akal (midwife), Jerusha (doula), Damien (partner) and Angela (babysitter) for the extraordinary team effort and wonderful atmosphere these two boys were welcomed into. It has been a life-changing experience for all present, a bumpy journey through the health system, followed by a truly beautiful birth.



Claire Hickson and John Broadbent welcome

*Nathanael John Broadbent*

A lotus birth, born peacefully at home in water on Friday 20 June at 5:49am. Weight: 9 lbs. A baby brother for Benjamin.

With much gratitude for the love and wisdom of our midwives Robyn Dempsey and Jane Palmer, and spiritual midwife Jane Hardwicke Collings. Their guidance and support helped Nathanael's birth to be a wonderful, empowering and healing experience.



Josh, Nova, Pepa and Mila Franklin would like to welcome to the world their beautiful daughter

*Lola Bessie*

Lola was caught by Josh at home. She arrived 10 days early, on Saturday the 12th of July, giving Nova the BEST discount she has ever received! Thank you to our midwives Robyn Dempsey and Jane Palmer for the wonderful information, care and support they offered throughout the pregnancy and birth; and to Peter Jackson who helped us face Lola's birth calmly, contributing to our little one's peaceful nature.



Anne Harris, Jason & Isaac Nelson welcome

*Amelia Louise Nelson*

Born at home on 17th July 2008 at 6am weighing 3.65kg

Amelia, born peacefully into the loving arms of her father while Isaac slept quietly upstairs. We welcomed her into our world and our lives as the fullmoon moved to make way for a new dawn. A huge thanks to everyone that has made this possible including all the amazing families who have participated in our food roster for the baby moon and made such a big difference to our lives by providing meals. xxx



Tracy and Cees welcomed our beautiful daughter

*Zoe Elizabeth*

into the world on July 22, 2008.

Weight: 4kg, Head: 35cm, Length: 51cm

After a quick 3 hour labour, Zoe was born into water and into mommy's arms. Proud big brothers Adyn and Jesse were there to welcome her as well.

*Celebrations of love and life*

**WEDDINGS  
NAMINGS  
FUNERALS**

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## coordinator's report



JO TILLY

### Spring is sprung and after the

bitterness of some of the weather this winter, it really feels like a time to celebrate the birth of a new season now that the sun finally has some proper warmth in it. My backyard, which currently houses both chickens and a bunny, has the whole rural spring feel going on at the moment in downtown Marrickville. Spring is also a wonderful time to be reading and thinking about newborns—the human ones as well as the fluffy bunnies and little chickens.

I remember being utterly overwhelmed by the sight of my own first newborn. After the intensity of birth itself—which no amount of reading or video watching is ever really able to convey properly—I suddenly found myself holding a very small person in a very tiny hat for whom I was completely responsible.

In the way of early parenting, that feeling of being utterly overwhelmed continued for months. But the experience of giving birth, without drugs and intervention, gives you a wonderful sense of joy and inner strength with which to negotiate those early months as a new parent.

Like many women of my generation, I hadn't seen or held a newborn since I was a child myself, when my cousins were born. And now I found myself with this small, completely unique person. A person who, while she had been a part of my body for so many months and would continue to depend on my body for every feed, was still so compellingly an individual.

When my son was born five years later, I was not quite as shocked this time to find myself with a real live baby, but I still recall being quite astonished at this little boy with his mop of slicked black hair, who looked nothing like either me or his sister. I quite clearly remember thinking 'who are you and where did you come from?' as he wormed his way up my body for his first feed.

After a decade now as a parent I have found that my surprise at the unique person each of my newborns was, was just the first of many, many times that as a parent I would feel that surprise.

My children continue to make me stop and laugh at the funny things that they say that are so particular to the way they see the world. And of course yell in frustration at their equally idiosyncratic refusal to do what I want them to do. They are such their own little people with their own likes and dislikes and their own way of interacting with the universe.

In her lovely book, *Buddhism for Mothers*, Sarah Naphthali talks about the need to accept our children for who they are and provide them with unconditional love and acceptance—not just when they are lovable but when they are terrible toddlers and tormented teenagers.

Recognising that uniqueness and trying to respond to it everyday with the same wonder and delight as we did when they were newborn is one of the great joys and challenges on the path of parenting.

Good luck with your own joys and challenges this spring,

—Jo

## Letters

Great magazine! I look forward to receiving and reading from cover to cover. I have been looking for inspirational stories of women who birth after 42 weeks. There is not that much out there. Some inspirational stories from women who have successfully birthed after this gestation would be (for me anyway) a great issue to focus on. Hopefully it will help women relax, wait, and trust. — *Linda Kamchevski*

While I've got you, I just want to say again what a wonderful job the team is doing on the newsletter. I think it's so beautifully presented and has such wonderful articles. WELL DONE!  
Take care now — *Robyn Dempsey*

I wanted to say something on the topic of 'homebirthed newborns'. Having a homebirth allowed me to bond very powerfully with Nathanael for two weeks after he was born, as we stayed in our bedroom using Aura-Soma and massage and had time to establish breastfeeding at our own pace (nine days!). Nathanael became very ill with vomiting and not feeding at two weeks old and had to be rushed to The Children's Hospital at Westmead. It took four hours to resuscitate him and he was found to be suffering from Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia (CAH), which goes undetected in two out of every three boys—usually these babies don't survive past the third week. He was in intensive care for 12 days and underwent life-saving, though very invasive tests. I'm so glad that we had our babymoon because it gave him time to experience gentleness in this world, not just the harshness of the hospital system with all the

needles, canulas, drips and monitors. As one of our midwives Robyn said, our babymoon 'bought' us more time with Nathanael. So I am now even more a fan of homebirth for all that it has to offer. — *Claire Hickson*

I am always moved and blessed by the articles and birth stories of our homebirthing community as shared in *Birthings*. This month I even emailed to make sure I hadn't missed the Winter Edition!  
Once received, I read it eagerly—it is the only publication I ever make time to read cover to cover—and was not disappointed. One birth story therein has so profoundly impacted me in its candour, courage and Christian witness that I am compelled to write to publicly thank Ali Maegraith for the impact on my Spirit of her "Birth of Asher Maegraith". I am tempted to say "What an incredibly brave woman to have experienced the loss of a child and to have learned so much, write so positively, and count the experience a blessing!"  
And "What a remarkable husband is Rich in his support of her!"  
And "What incredible depth and insight will this experience give to her work as a doula!"  
But that's not what they would want. That is undermining their testimony. For they shared a supernatural experience. They shared a journey where they were carried by their Lord through the shadows of the valley of death and were given the most incredible privileges along the way. My experiences of losing twins and the death of my father I can too count as profoundly blessed experiences where I had "never

known God's love and purpose in such a real and tangible way".

I praise God for blessing Asher's most perfect parents with the miracle of his perfect life, and for giving Ali the gift, grace, and guts to share her story. This little miracle certainly has impacted eternity. And count mine as one more life Asher's has impacted so deeply.  
I praise God for the Maegraith family, and pray Asher's legacy may be for them to remain truly "happy and blessed" in the comfort and strength of our almighty God, until they see their beautiful boy again in heaven. And I pray that others may be moved by their story and their faith, and want what they've got—a hope and assurance only possible through a personal relationship with their Lord Jesus Christ. — *Jodie Dearsley*

I'm writing to tell you how the excitement builds up when the latest issue of *Birthings* arrives. The magazine seems to take on a new dimension with each new issue. Having colour in some of the images gives them new life and colour-coding the back-page calendar makes it easier to sort out the days to keep free for HAS events. It is also gratifying to see the mix of thought-provoking

articles such as "Fear" tucked in with the beautiful birth stories.

It was particularly timely to raise the homebirth funding issue again by printing highlights from the "State Sponsored Homebirth in Australia" paper delivered by Roz Donnellan-Fernandez at the HBA Conference last year. It is timely to raise some of the issues from this paper again while there seems to be some Government interest in the Medicare for Midwives issue. I hope that reading Roz's article will fuel the fire again in those who were passionate enough to raise these issues with their local Federal Politicians earlier this year. For new HAS members it is time to introduce yourself to your local Federal Politician so please make an appointment and make yourself known. Don't forget to take your copy of *Birthings* with you for all the advisory staff to read. Make sure the point is made that ALL Australian women should have the homebirth choice compliments of the Government. And to the wonderful editors and the HAS newsletter committee, keep up the great work with *Birthings*—It's a winner! — *Jan Robinson*



# homebirthed newborns

ALISON LEEEMEN

It's hard to contemplate newborn behaviour when you're occupied with the immediate prevention of a housefire. My toddler hadn't intended to create a housefire, and hasn't succeeded (yet), but in the moment when he said, "I'll just put that there" and I glanced up from changing wet cot sheets to see the lit candle teetering on our woollen bed blanket, a housefire seemed a real and present danger. Why was there a fragrant candle lit and in reach of my toddler? In order to counteract the smell of the toilet water he'd just liberally scattered across the bathroom floor with the toilet brush, of course. (And I'd put it out of reach, but his climbing skills have really come a long way recently.) Why was there toilet water scattered across the bathroom floor? Because the toddler had grown bored watching me fish the gooey saffron clumps of infant poo from the baby bath, and had to entertain himself somehow. (Said infant watched happily, semi-naked, from his rocker chair while I scooped and wiped, and, behind my back, his big brother rained toilet water down upon him and the tiles.) Why was there infant poo slowly dissolving in the baby bath? Because that's the baby's favourite place for depositing it, of course. (Our version of elimination communication: "Ready for your bath, Wilfie?" "Sure, Mama. Ooh, that's nice, and here's a little something for you.")

It was one of those afternoons when you've barely extracted yourself from one minor disaster before you turn around just in time to see the next one in progress. Lurching from baby poo to septic-drowned tiles to saturated cot sheets to incendiary bedding, and trying, futilely, to stay calm—or at least, not to lose my voice, because all my limbs were fully employed and yet I was still not able to reign in the cascading catastrophes—I thought: newborn needs? Who would know? With a two year old in the house, making space for the newborn to assert her personality or establish his patterns and needs is a whole other escapade.

I'm fortunate in two ways, though: first, I participated in a recent flurry of birthing activity in my social circles, both among my fellow homebirthers and friends who I know through my 'former life' as a lawyer. The differences between the way homebirthers tend to approach the newborn days and the way 'the rest of the world' does are obvious.

For example, take the quiz, using some real-life quotes, and see if you can guess which camp the speakers are from: (a) "I think I'll put him on the Gina Ford routine"; (b) "I wake up and I'm never sure which

bed I'm in or who I'm cuddling now"; (c) "My breastmilk is so hopeless by the end of the day that I give him the bottle right afterwards and he sleeps right through. Well, I have to get up and put the dummy in every 45 minutes from about 2am, but I don't have to feed him"; (d) "I just wouldn't do that to my washing machine"; and (e) "I can't wear her in a sling because I'm not supposed to lift heavy weights after the caesarean". Okay, the last one's a dead giveaway, but you answered 'homebirther' to (b) and 'hospital birther' to the others for full marks, right? Unfortunately for society's babies and mothers, Australia's mainstream still hasn't embraced attachment parenting, exclusive breastfeeding, breastfeeding on demand, family sleeping arrangements, baby wearing, cloth nappies or elimination communication, though these things are the norm among our community.

Secondly, I'm fortunate in having some excellent articles remind me why our homebirthed newborns are special. Leigh Holman swam against the tide by feeding her first son right through her second pregnancy and continuing to tandem feed long afterwards; less than half of Australian women are breastfeeding at all by six months. Jenny Carleton disposed of her pram and embarked on a sling exploration with her second child, accumulating a stash that would be the envy of many a baby-wearer and an encyclopaedic knowledge to share with us all. Sheryl Sidery warmly and patiently teaches attachment parenting concepts at her weekly mothers' group at Royal Women's Hospital to hordes of women who turn the hallway outside into a parking lot for prams. Danni Townsend cooks for the nation, having supported four homebirthing families (as well as her own) with her spectacular minestrone and bologneses in the past few months. And I wax lyrical on the benefits of staying in bed for as long as possible and making other people do your washing up.

I hope you enjoy it all, and look with renewed fondness upon our community's homebirthed babes, who, with their long breastfeeding insuring them against illness, their strong emotional attachments equipping them to meet the world with compassion, and their nurtured mothers caring for them through these most precious years, are our best hope for more humane and gentle parenting practices in the next generation.



# Tandem feeding

BY LEIGH HOLMAN

*Breastfeeding two children provided so many benefits; to the babies and to mum.*



When I found out I was pregnant with my second child it came as a shock. We had talked about having another child but I had thought that that was years off. For goodness' sake, I hadn't even had a period since the birth of my first child, Jack, only 11 months ago. It certainly wasn't in my plan to have two kids 18 months apart, but nature has a way of deciding these things for you.

It turned out that quite a few women I knew were pregnant at the same time with similar gaps and, as we all discussed what was in store for our growing families, they started talking about weaning. I was speechless. I didn't know

how long I thought I was going to breastfeed, but I knew that Jack was not ready to wean; he was still a baby himself.

As the months passed these women all weaned their children and I started reading about breastfeeding through pregnancy and beyond. I read about my milk drying up, about sore nipples, worries about who gets the colostrum, which child gets what boobs when and all manner of positions.

My milk did dry up almost completely, my nipples got tender and I even started to sometimes dislike feeding but he wasn't ready to stop and neither was I.

*"...I noticed the lack of jealousy that Jack had towards his brother. I felt that because of these tandem feeds and the fact that I was still able to connect with Jack in this way, it made the transition easier..."*

Breastfeeding, as much as being a bond between he and I, was a mothering tool I wasn't ready to do without. At bed time in particular, with a breastfeed and a cuddle, Jack could sleep anywhere, in any bed. I also worried that I could have the same massive oversupply problem that I had when he was born and it seemed a lot easier to continue feeding through my pregnancy rather than dust off my pump and drain my boobs that way.

As my due date got closer I started asking the who, where and how questions and a wise woman said to me whoever wanted a feed got whichever boob was the fullest at the time and all the rest worked itself out. It was the best advice I could have received.

Hamish, our second son, was born at home in the middle of winter and as I put this new child to my breast my midwife said, "you need to remember he isn't a toddler, you will need to let him learn the same way as you did your first".

Over the next 24 hours I remembered how tricky it is to find the rhythm and technique with a newborn. We were struggling: his suck seemed weak and he wasn't taking enough boob into his mouth.

On the second night he was getting very fussy. I knew he was trying but I attached him over and over and it always hurt. After what felt like a million attempts, I decided to just let him go. I gritted my teeth and let him get what milk he could. I thought that if he could just spend some time sucking, he would get the hang of it. After 20 minutes he fell off the boob, full, despite his bad attachment.

My poor nipple was blistered and sore but I let Jack have that boob. He was able to take it back past his hard palate quickly and Hamish could have the other side.

It was risky, but Hamish did figure it out in that 20 minutes and he fed beautifully from that time on. Jack fed from the sore boob and he was so happy about all the extra milk that he took my direction to be gentle and emptied it. Jack fed off the sore boob for a week, a few times a day until it healed and once it was better I started swapping them both around. (I didn't want a lopsided chest.)

In those first weeks feeding two at the same time was a godsend during witching hour, or when my husband was out and they both needed comfort, but I was never able to find a position that worked well for all of us, so I did it rarely. I was starting to feel drained from all the feeds so I gently encouraged Jack to only have two feeds a day.

When we were six months into our tandem feeding journey, I noticed the lack of jealousy that Jack had towards his brother. I felt that because of these tandem feeds and the fact that I was still able to connect with Jack in this way, it made the transition easier. One of my most beautiful memories is having them both in my lap feeding when Hamish was a week or so old and watching Jack reach over to lovingly stroke his brother. I watched that and I knew we would be ok.

Jack ended up self-weaning a month or so after his third birthday. I had tandem fed them for 18 months. Hamish, who is not quite two, is still feeding well. I don't know if tandem feeding helped, but other than that first nipple damage, I didn't ever have any more problems: no engorgement or supply issues, no mastitis or nipple tenderness. Looking back, choosing to tandem feed was the best thing I could have done for my babies and myself. ●

# Wrapped in the hormone of love

BY JENNY CARLETON

*Choosing to carry your baby is about much more than transport.*

Homebirth mothers have the strongest opportunity to bond with their babies. Oxytocin, the 'hormone of love,' brings joy to our parenting journey, during conception, birth, bonding, breastfeeding and beyond. But, as explained by Dr Michel Odent, it is a shy hormone. It will only be released if the conditions are right.

Oxytocin is released most commonly during lovemaking. "Soon after the birth, when the physiological processes are not disturbed, mothers have the capacity to reach a very high peak of oxytocin. This is possible (in a warm place) if the mother, who is still 'on another planet,' is not distracted at all and has nothing else to do except to feel the contact with her baby's skin, to look into her baby's eyes, and to smell her baby's body." (Michel Odent) Such tender touch, holding and eye contact simultaneously floods the baby's body with oxytocin, which they also receive in breast milk. An instantaneous and deep bond is formed between mother and child which can be reinforced throughout the day through breastfeeding and baby wearing. The decision to homebirth increases the likelihood that the full benefits of oxytocin will be experienced.

The mother baby connection continues following birth through baby wearing. "Babies are genetically programmed to want to be close to you, and preferably, in direct physical contact with you for much of the day. Researchers have verified that when they are carried on their parents' bodies for much of the day, babies tend to cry a lot less, seem to enjoy themselves a lot more and are noticeably more peaceful. Babies love quietly watching the world go by while feeling the warmth of your body, your rhythmic breathing and heartbeat right against them." (Robin Grille, *Heart to Heart Parenting*)

I bought my first sling when I was pregnant with my first child. Like many novices I didn't know if it was well designed or how to use it; I didn't know that there were other styles and models available and I didn't know any other baby wearers. After our hospital birth, I tried my newborn in the sling a few times and it failed to make either of us comfortable. Like many others without support, I promptly shelved it. I held my baby in my arms or pushed her in a pram as I struggled with the tasks of newborn baby care. Fortunately, I rediscovered baby wearing when my daughter was 18 months old and wore her until she was four and I was six months pregnant. We loved this time together—her snuggling on my back, falling asleep or chatting about the world around her. I still occasionally wear her today as a leggy five and a half year old (see photo on page 14).

Before my second child was born I gave away my pram, which had been gathering dust, and expanded my stash of slings. I've now got a better understanding of the benefits of baby wearing. I now know that many of my daily struggles could have been lessened or eliminated if I had worn my baby on my body. This applies to newborns, toddlers and preschoolers. See the table on page 15 for a description of life with and without carriers.

## Carrier safety

Interestingly, the baby carriers that are the least safe are the ones that bring the least physical connection between baby and wearer and are the least comfortable. (The closer the child is to the wearer's body, the more comfortable the carrier.) Unfortunately they are also the most accessible.

Some carriers are poorly designed and pose a suffocation risk (eg. 'bag' slings) or overload the child's spine and neck (eg. parachute harness soft structured carriers).

'Parachute harness' soft structured carriers are the easiest of all carriers to use, however they "position the infant upright, with the legs hanging down and the bodyweight supported at the base of the baby's spine (i.e. at the crotch), it puts undue stress on the spine which can adversely affect the development of the spinal curves and, in some cases, cause spondylolisthesis" and/or a whiplash type injury. Some models are designed with back support for the wearer, but still place most of the load on the upper back, which is exactly where you don't want it.



**Unsafe carrier—**  
'Bag' sling  
(© Babywearing Basics)

## Safe carrier features

In her article, "Infant Carriers and Spinal Stress", Rochelle Casses, a chiropractor, notes:

- Before an infant can hold her head on her own, the carrier should support the neck. A sling cradles the infant just like your arms would, unlike [*parachute harness*] vertical carriers which can actually allow a whiplash type injury.
- The carrier should not place the infant's spine in a weight bearing position too early\*. The young baby should be horizontal or inclined, with the spine supported along its length [*or held vertically with correct hip positioning and spinal/head support, as in a wrap*].



Newborns naturally adopt the 'frog leg position', which we copy in upright carriers, positioning the **knees above the bottom**

- When a baby wants to be more upright to see the world around him (usually around age 4 to 5 months), the carrier should allow him to sit cross-legged [or in the 'frog-leg position'], so his weight is dissipated through his legs and hips, as opposed to the style that has the legs hanging down, where the young spine has to bear the entire weight.

\* An infant's spine should only be in a weight bearing position when they can bear their own weight unaided, that is when they can sit on their own. So don't prop your baby up in a pram either!

All good carriers can be used from newborn to preschooler. They can be worn on the front, hip or back and are suitable for a broad range of activities (housework, cooking dinner, shopping, bushwalking etc.). However some carriers are more suitable than others for each activity and age. That's why carrier collections tend to grow!

Different carriers place the weight of the child on different parts of our body—talk to an experienced baby wearer to find out which style is best for you (see 'Baby wearing support' on page 14).

## One-shoulder carriers

One-shoulder carriers cradle small babies in a reclining position (on your front or back) or can be used to hold an older child upright on your front, hip or back.

- Pouch (some brands: Earthsling, Hot Slings, Peanut Shell)
- Ring Sling—unpadded (some brands: Ellaroo, TaylorMade)
- Clip Sling—padded (some brands: Baba Slings, Natures Sway)



**Pouch**  
(no clip or ring)



**Ring Sling**  
showing knees  
above the  
bottom

## Two-shoulder carriers

Two-shoulder carriers hold children in an upright position. As they distribute the weight over two shoulders, they are better suited for carrying for longer periods of time for older babies/toddlers/preschoolers.

- Stretch Wrap 0-6mths, front only (some brands: Hug-A-Bub, Moby)
- Woven Wrap 0-5yrs (some brands: Ellaroo, Storchenwiege)
- Mei Tai (some brands: ABA, Kozy Carrier, CatBird Baby)
- Non-parachute Soft Structured Carriers (some brands: Ergo, Patapum, Pikkilo)



Stretch wrap  
(0-6mths)



Woven wrap  
(0-5yrs)



Mei Tai



Non-parachute  
Soft Structured carriers

## Baby wearing support and choosing a carrier

Despite their flaws, parachute harness carriers are the most popular and readily available, as they are simple to use and inexperienced baby wearers would be unaware of their poor design.

Most safe carriers take time and practice to master. People often abandon them as they find 'my baby didn't like it' or 'it was uncomfortable', but this was simply because they were using it incorrectly or it was not the correct style or size for them. If I had support available at the beginning of my baby wearing journey, it would not have taken me 18 months to get a good carrier that I could use with confidence. I am now surrounded by baby wearers who have helped me to try and then master the more difficult carriers. For this I am grateful, as baby wearing has brought so much joy and intimacy between my kids and I.

My website, *Natural Parenting in Sydney: a guide to services & products*, lists in-real-life and online support groups, carrier suppliers and suppliers of breastfeeding tops (the 'lift the flap style' make breastfeeding in a sling easy).

Please feel free to contact me if you would like to talk through the best carrier for your specific needs or to get advice on the best supplier.

Jenny's Email—visit my website  
[www.npsydney.com.au](http://www.npsydney.com.au)

Jenny's Mobile—0412 970 183 (outside the hours of 12 noon-2:30 pm)

## My experiences of non-baby wearing compared to baby wearing

Activity	Pram or holding (first baby)	Baby wearing (second baby)
Pregnancy		Wore four year old on my back until I was six months pregnant
Birth	Hospital	Home
Breastfeeding	Lengthy feeding sessions on the couch	Lengthy feeding sessions wherever I happen to be (on the train, shopping...) with bub in a pouch sling (as an older baby/toddler I feed in a woven wrap)
Stimulation	Take six week old to the NO WAR rally with 100 000 other concerned citizens, propped up on her dad's shoulder or in a pram	First four weeks of life bub is either in the house or, if out, in a ring sling with the 'tail' covering him
Evenings	Two hours or more of crying; dread dusk as exhausting evening lies ahead	Early evening: Bub asleep in pouch sling whilst family eats dinner together Later: wakes for feed then quiet alert time with dad before going to bed with mum
Cooking	Attempts to butter toast with one hand whilst holding newborn with the other; wait for partner to get home to eat more nourishing meal	Prepare dinner for the family with newborn asleep in a pouch sling (as an older baby/toddler I back wear with a two-shoulder carrier)
Shopping (walking & public transport)	Visit only two local shops with bub in pram before she starts crying, carry her home whilst pushing pram	Go out for hours with bub in a ring sling. Walk, train or bus with shopping in a funky pull along trolley (a two-shoulder carrier is more comfortable for extended wearing with a heavier child)
Errands (in and out of the car)	Get pram in and out of car. Struggle to get bub back in car seat as she feels she is being shunted from place to place	Pop bub in ring sling or pouch (quick & easy). He is happy to hop in and out of car for multiple stops as he is having fun and cuddles in between
Sleep	Put bub to sleep in bed each day as she doesn't sleep easily in the pram and wakes when transferred from the car seat, therefore can't travel far from home	Bub breastfeeds and sleeps in carrier wherever I happen to be—unlimited freedom Newborn in a pouch sling Infant in a ring sling Toddler/preschooler in a woven wrap
Teething/sick days at home	Hold bub in arms whilst struggling to do basic tasks like go to the loo or eat	Wear bub in a ring sling as sick kids can't make up their mind if they want up or down or throw up or nappy change or breastfeed or sleep or...
Hanging out laundry	Hang washing as quickly as possible before bub starts crying in her bouncer nearby	Enjoy the garden whilst hanging washing with bub asleep or awake in a two-shoulder carrier (mei tai or wrap), which allows me to raise my arms above my head (a pouch or ring sling are fine when bub is small/less heavy)
Housework	Get very little done as bub cries in bouncer or toddler wants to be held	Wear bub on back in a two-shoulder carrier and get on with it!

**committee member profile**

*Erika Elliott*



**HAS** I became a member of HAS at the beginning of this year, though through my work, I have been reading Birthings and attending information evenings for much longer than that, so feel like an old HAS-been already. I am also the official librarian of the unofficial HAS library.

**Family** I live in Lilyfield with my son Gus who is turning five in the spring. I am still in denial about him venturing out into the big world of 'big school' five days a week next year, and feel that I am going to be suffering the first pangs of the empty nest syndrome...sounds like a good time to have another baby!

**Life prior to birthing** Until I became a Mum, which is my most treasured jewel in the crown, I studied and worked in both the arts and healing circles, lived abroad for a number of years and enjoyed being busy and active in a way that you can only be prior to having children. I did a BA in photography and then studied naturopathy and massage, opening a massage business in Bondi a mere three months before conceiving Gus...tragic timing for the business, great timing for a pregnancy!

**Life with a family** Life with a family is one big juggle no matter how small it is, but I fall into bed each night grateful for the opportunity to be able to juggle. I work independently as a doula and calmbirth educator and am able to marry up the photographic experience and massage knowledge into the package that I offer. Sometimes getting called out to a birth in the wee hours can prove a bit tricky with a little one at home, but when I stopped breastfeeding it seemed to get a bit easier and the gods do tend to bless me with a bit of good timing.

**Why birth at home** As 99% of the births I attend are in a hospital or birth centre setting, I say "Why not birth at home?". I see too many women come too close to being bullied or convinced to do something that they would not normally choose to do in birth, just because they are on someone else's clock and having to deal with someone else's agenda. I believe that women should be able to birth in their own way, in their own space and in their own time so that their baby has a gentle and grounded beginning and the family has a more confident and connected story to share.

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## heart to heart

POETRY AND ARTWORK



### *An Ode to Sleep*

The warm cave of our bed  
 Lying between my two hearts  
 Chest to chest to back  
 I slumber lightly  
 Aware of each breath on my neck  
 Each sigh in my ears  
 And each body that rhythmically turns  
 Searching for me or each other  
 In every touched out moment  
 I will remember my cave  
 And the peace found within  
 I will remember the feel  
 Of those searching hands  
 Even in slumber I am loved  
 I am needed I am comfort  
 I am their hearts too

**LEIGH HOLMAN**

*Birthings is joyfully calling for submissions from you, our readers, for this exciting section. It's about your experience and perspectives, in words and/or artwork, in your own unique way (there is no such thing as perfection, we're looking for connection!) Contact Amelia at [ameliaa@iprimus.com.au](mailto:ameliaa@iprimus.com.au)*

# BabyMoon

BY ALISON LEEMEN

*Close the door, turn off the phone and snuggle down for all the joys of a babymoon.*

Ah, babymoon... The very word is a lullaby, conjuring up those lush, hazy days of early parenthood, still wrapped in the euphoric cocoon of birth hormones, loved up and blissed out, sliding between night and day without even knowing what day it is, breastfeeding and cooing at your newborn and cuddling up in bed with your partner, joining your new baby in that spectrum of half-wakefulness.

Babymoon is to family life as honeymoon is to married life (or so I'm told). It's your chance, after the big event to escape everyday obligations and interactions and spend time together as a unit, the better to know and love one other. Sheila Kitzinger is said to have coined the term 'babymoon' in her 1996 book, *Year After Childbirth* when she wrote, "the transition to fatherhood is easier when a man can take time off to be with his partner and baby in what I call a 'Babymoon'. A couple lay in food and other necessities, lock the door and go to bed with their baby for a few days."

But watch out! If you're locked inside spending nothing but time together, nobody can *sell* you anything. So, before you can say "Ah, babymoon" the term is being co-opted by the travel industry to try to sell pregnant women and their partners pre-baby vacations—a last shot at expensive consumption of adult luxury goods like flights, hotels and spa treatments before embarking on the icky business of actually raising the child (and all the consequent commercial opportunities of that period). Take the holiday if you want (goodness knows, I'd be the last person to stand between a fellow human being and a good vacation) but don't be fooled—a babymoon without your baby is like a honeymoon without your honey.

Despite Mother Sheila's reservation of "a few days" for the babymoon, I like to think it lasts a "moon", or a month, in somewhat altered form. You may not have the pantry or deep freeze to sustain the locked door policy that long, but you can certainly clear your diary, switch on the answering machine and let everyone but the select few wait until the baby's first month is calmly and lovingly passed before introducing her to the thronging, kissing, cheek-pinching masses.

It's harder to become hermits for a month with the birth of second or subsequent children, as little toddler Athena or pre-schooler Zen will want to keep up their play dates and kiddy yoga classes, but you can still send out the 'don't call us, we'll call you' message with your initial e-announcement and make a concerted effort to stay in for the first few days. Food and housework support can also protect your babymoon from being whittled away with daily chores.



## Our Babymoons

We luxuriated in the most blissful month of our lives after our firstborn arrived. My partner took four weeks off work, and we encased ourselves in the oxytocin love-bubble. We very occasionally admitted our parents, siblings and three or four friends during that period, but told the rest of the world we'd introduce our baby to them later, and at five weeks we had a morning tea party with forty or fifty friends in a single baby-viewing session.

Second-time around we let the world in a little more and babymooned in a more social, community-supported way. Again, we only saw immediate family and close friends in the week after the birth, but by day seven we were off to my toddler's gymnastics class with the baby in a sling and started making play-dates soon after. My partner's work intruded a lot more into the post-natal period this time, too. However, a homebirth-mum friend organised a month-long food roster for my family, so I had friends and family dropping by daily with sensational meals and nurturing company, which meant I could spend time and energy with my toddler as well as my newborn, but still have great meals at the end of the day (not achievable otherwise). As well as recovering physically much faster as a result of being so well fed, I felt so *looked after* by my community of women. Being mothered a little definitely enabled me to better mother the two in my nest.

## Why Babymoon?

**BOND WITH YOUR BABY** You've just performed the most significant act you'll ever do: given birth to new life. Now you're about to enter into one of the most significant relationships of your life: parenting. The early moments and days of the baby's life are monumentally significant to that relationship, for all of you. Each day rolls into the next, the quality of the first days affecting how your first week goes, which has a lot to do with how the first month passes, which has a very real impact on how you feel about the first three months (the 'fourth trimester'), which will really set the tone for the first year. Etcetera. Those first days really matter. Parents, especially the first time, need to learn how to respond to their baby, and understand, on a deep level, that they are responsible for the child. Homebirthers are miles ahead on this score already, since they've taken responsibility for their own care and birth by deciding to stay home, and they're tucked up with their newborn in their own home with nobody else around within hours of becoming parents. The baby needs the full attention of its parents, lots of skin to skin contact and eye-gazing. It doesn't need to be passed around competing aunties seeing who can get the longest cuddle before the baby panics and cries for mama. And as Sheila points out, babymoons enable new fathers time and space to adjust to their new role, too, rather than making cuppas for drop-ins or fielding calls from work.

**AVOID FOREIGN GERMS** There's such a thing as 'family germs' and the baby will have acquired a degree of your own immunity to those bugs in your home—another advantage of birthing at home. Each well-meaning visitor will bring her own germs into your home and your baby's vicinity, challenging baby's immune system response. If you do open your home to visitors in those early weeks, make sure they wash their hands before coming near the baby.

**CONSOLIDATE YOUR RELATIONSHIP** Especially for homebirthers, the partner is likely to have been intimately involved in the birth, and the oxytocin love bubble that holds your family space now is prime time for you to be open, loving and intimate in caring for one another as a family.

**GET SOME REST** Newborns don't sleep according to visiting hours timetables, and therefore nor do you. Closing off your home for a while stops the doorbell ringing and enables you all to get some rest. Mothers need to physically recuperate from the birth, and spend much of the night tending to the baby, so you need to sleep when baby does during the day.

## How to Babymoon

**ESTABLISH SOME BOUNDARIES** Tell people beforehand that you intend to have a babymoon after the birth. If you explain the benefits, and be clear about the boundary, your wishes will be respected.

Tell them again when the baby arrives, in your announcement email or text. If your parents are calling the extended family, have them pass on the message to any relatives likely to drop around unannounced.

**PUT A SIGN ON THE DOOR** "Shhh! We're sleeping! Don't ring this doorbell or knock on this door." Leave a note telling couriers to leave parcels at the post office or in a special hiding spot. You can even leave a notepad there for messages.

**PUT A MESSAGE ON YOUR ANSWERING MACHINE** "Thanks for your call, the baby was born on [date] and we're all well. We're having a quiet babymoon and we'll look forward to catching up with you in a few weeks time."

**AND ENJOY THE LOVE NEST** Have a friend organise a food roster (see article on page 24), so you don't have to shop for groceries, spend time cooking or eat take-out. If you really want the first few days in lockdown, have the freezer stocked with pre-made nourishing dinners and start the meal deliveries a few days after the birth.

Although you don't want older children to feel left out or ignored, arranging a friend or relative with whom they're close to give them some attention and help them burn some energy—out of the house or in the backyard—will support you in bonding with the new baby and getting some rest.

**WEAR YOUR PYJAMAS; STAY IN BED.** Those who do come around will be reminded—as will you!—that you are resting and caring for yourself and your baby, not entertaining and making cups of tea.

**LIVE WITH A BIT MORE MESS THAN USUAL** Invite your family and friends to do your washing up and laundry. Some people ask for a donation of housework instead of a gift.

# Healthy attachments

BY SHERYL SIDERY

*This article is adapted from a paper given by the author to the Midwives Academy & Retreat on Sunday 27 July 2008*

*Nature made our babies easy to love.  
A gentle birth and a quiet babymoon gives  
nature the room to work its wonders.*

The past few generations of children in the western world have been generally raised with the expectation that they become totally self reliant and independent, rather than with the hope or intention that they have the capacity to form close, loving, intimate relationships with others. In this article I will explore how a different style of parenting (to the western population) has emerged.

I have been fortunate throughout the over 20 years of my midwifery career to have cared for hundreds of women who choose homebirth whilst continuing my clinical practice in the hospital setting. Throughout this time I have become increasingly aware that there is a marked difference between homebirth families and the rest of the birthing population. The philosophy of birth stands out as being an obvious difference, however it is the way that families who choose homebirth parent their children that is so strikingly different. Is this because the mother birthed at home or is it that her beliefs of parenting differ right from the outset, which included homebirth?

Caring for families with their subsequent births, sometimes having attending the births of all four children in the one family, also provided me with the opportunity to witness these homebirth babies as they grow, on the whole, into confident empathic children. To witness a three year old emerge from sleep to see her mother in strong labour in the family lounge room and simply sit with her and stroke her mother's arm lovingly is a testament to the profound ability to be compassionate.

This phenomenon prompted me to explore what these differences are and to ask what newborn babies and their mothers really need in the period after birth.

First, I believe it is important to try to understand how the newborn brain is at birth. Newborns have changed very little in evolutionary terms since we emerged as a separate species when

we became upright. As our pelvic shape altered to allow us to stand on two feet, and our brains grew larger from using our hands more, babies needed to be born much earlier to be able to fit through this new shaped pelvis with their now large head. This means that our babies are born very prematurely: probably about nine months prematurely. Today our newborns have the least developed brain of all mammals, with only about 25% of the neo cortex (our rational higher brain) being functional at birth, compared to about 45% for other primates. We share, however, all the attributes of our ever present reptilian and mammalian brains. This means that, from birth, babies are functioning from their lower primitive brain not their rational, reflective part as this is almost entirely underdeveloped. This explains the rage, fear and separation distress that babies express right from birth. It is this primitive alert system that ensures babies have their needs met, as they are entirely dependant for their very survival. Having an awareness of this may make it easier to care for your baby: knowing that your baby has no cognitive thought process or ability to self reflect for a long time helps us to not assume adult behaviours, thoughts or feelings onto our babies. Of course this early birth puts a lot of pressure on the people caring for this vulnerable dependant person.

As their carer, you are programmed to respond to your newborn's cry. Believe in the language of your babies' cries. It is a signal designed for the survival of the baby and the development of the parents. Responding sensitively (most of the time) builds trust. Babies cry to communicate, not manipulate. In the first few days and weeks of the newborn's life, mothers often find it difficult to switch off at all from the sounds her newborn makes enough for her to sleep. Her brain is programmed to be alert to her babies' sounds and after weeks and months her higher brain is able to determine which sounds need to be responded to and when. I'm not sure this ever changes no matter how old your children are! This however is much easier to do if the baby is near to you most of the time; hence co-sleeping and baby wearing are common parenting styles for homebirthing women. By wearing and sleeping near to your baby, you are promoting healthy neurological brain development. Maximum contact with the mother ensures strong neurological scaffolding, as babies are ill-equipped to effectively meet their own emotional needs. Without the stimulation from maternal-infant contact and interactions—including nighttime sensory exchanges—neonatal brain cells are potentially lost. I find it interesting that in the western world,

*“Evolution put in place mechanisms to ensure parents rapidly attach to their newborn to guarantee their very survival.”*



#### Further Reading

*Sleeping with your Baby*, James McKenna

*Why Love Matters*, Sue Gerhardt

*Science of Parenting*, Margot Sunderland

*Baby on Board*, Howard Chilton

*Helping your Baby to Sleep*, Anni Gethin and Beth Macgregor

where we are often provided with a 'choice' of where baby might sleep, we are still encouraging separate sleep behaviours. Because despite the fact that the past five generations or so of babies have been forced to sleep alone with the objective of creating 'good sleepers', what do we have? Five generations of poor sleepers.

The babies' higher brain will develop to become the control centre for the more primitive parts of the brain. This brain hardwiring and trimming off of the higher brain happens entirely outside the womb. In fact our babies' social capacities are really mostly potential, not actual at birth. There is nothing automatic about this development; instead it is entirely experience dependant. (No pressure!) Of course this is good from an evolutionary perspective: to ensure that each human can be moulded to the environmental niche in which she finds herself.

Nature was not so foolish as to deliver (at home) these premature infants into the hands of their parents without making sure there was a good reception waiting for them. Evolution put in place mechanisms to ensure parents rapidly attach to their newborn to guarantee their very survival.

Babies are born particularly attractive to look at. Well, ok, maybe not in the first few days but as each week progresses they become more and more pleasurable to their parents eye.

Babies are born with excellent vision to scan their parents' faces and will prefer to stare at a human face more than anything else. This entices us to want to look at them even more.

Their hearing is finely tuned and babies prefer a higher pitched voice, which explains why adults instinctively speak in a high voice when talking to a baby. This may be a result of babies being used to the mother's voice whilst in the womb.

Breastfeeding enhances this attachment by producing powerful love hormones which makes us feel relaxed and loving toward our baby.

From birth as parents we are programmed to want to spend hours each day staring at our newborn, watching each and every facial expression. This imprinting is essential for mother and baby. Babies also smell delicious so we are drawn to want to breathe them in to us.

For a mother to experience that deep sense of loving attachment, it is helpful if she feels safe and nurtured to provide an opportunity for her to lie about and baby gaze.

She needs to consider having someone with her in those few days and weeks to enable her to enjoy that period we call the babymoon. In essence she needs to be 'mothered' to be able to be free to learn to mother. This does not mean just for baby number one either as each newborn deserves and needs this 'love fest' as much as his or her siblings.

One of my favourite catch phrases is, 'It's far easier to care for a newborn if you love them!'

So what is healthy attachment?

There are many ways to describe this bond. Put simply I believe it requires parents to be able to open their minds and hearts to the individual needs of their baby. It involves being responsive to enable your baby to feel trust that their needs will be met. (Really not much different to any relationship we would hope for ourselves.) Sometimes this is difficult: be mindful that, providing your intention is sincere, babies will forgive those less than perfect moments, due to their flexible plastic brains. It is how we are most of the time that is important. Being attached also allows for separateness. When 'tuned in' one can parent without being intrusive and be respectful of when your baby is happy to be alone.

To enable this wiring of the adult brain, babies need positive, responsive, attentive parenting from a consistent nurturer. Everything your baby experiences with you as a parent will forge connections between the cells of the higher brain. The human brain is designed to wire up to adapt to any particular environment in which it finds itself. This adaptability works for or against the well being of the child. With emotionally responsive parenting, vital connections will form in the baby's brain, enabling him to cope with stress in later life, to form fulfilling relationships, manage anger well, be kind and compassionate, have will and motivation to follow their dreams and aspirations, experience deep calm and to love intimately and in peace.

We now know that a baby's emotional needs are just as important as her nutritional needs. Whilst whiling away the hours gazing into your babies eyes you can declare to anyone that asks what you've been up to all day: "Oh we've been growing our frontal lobe, thanks" (p.s. can you do the dishes please?).

There is something simple and life-affirming in the attachment message—that the only thing your baby really needs in order to thrive emotionally is your emotional availability and responsiveness—most of the time, not all of the time!

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# STAY IN TOUCH

*Our calendar  
is packed—  
how's yours?*

It's not too late to stay in touch with your homebirth community in 2008. This year we'll be sending one email to members each month, to let you know what's coming up in your area, as there are always events happening at short notice, and it's a handy reminder of what's in the *Birthings* Calendar.

Please take a moment to send us your details—not just email, we're spring-cleaning our memberships database, too. It's especially important if you've moved house, because we get returned mail from current members. Even if you don't want to receive emails, please update your other details with us so we can check you off our list.

**SEND TO:** [ameliaa@iprimus.com.au](mailto:ameliaa@iprimus.com.au)

**SUBJECT LINE:** *Update me*

**INCLUDE:**

- » *Full Name*
- » *Current Postal Address*
- » *Residential Address if different (so we can send you emails on activities specific to your area)*
- » *Phone numbers (marked work, home or mobile as appropriate)*
- » *Email addresses*
- » *Can you volunteer help? What kind? (Small roles available, eg "put me on an email list to help out staffing occasional HAS stalls at festivals and events" or "I could assist organise events but not be the main committee Events coordinator" or "I'm prepared to be on a meals support roster for families in my area who've just had a homebirth")*



## DOULA TRAINING

Do you have an interest in pregnancy, babies, women's health and supporting women during the most amazing experience of their life? Then this course is for you!

This is the only doula training course offered by a Midwife, with over 30 yrs experience. Trainee doulas will come to births with Susan – this invaluable training is unique to *Birth Right*.

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**Cost:** *\$2000 (inclusive)*

**SPECIAL OFFER:** *If you have a friend who is interested, books and pays at the same time, then you will receive your course for ½ price. Limited spaces available.*

**For more information and bookings contact:**

[www.birthright.com.au](http://www.birthright.com.au) e: [susan@birthright.com.au](mailto:susan@birthright.com.au) p: 0419 606 171

# The tastiest gift you can't buy

DANIELLE TOWNSEND

*At last! The perfect gift for every newborn (and family).*

**In the last few months our neighbours could be forgiven** for thinking we had started a catering business. On Monday we loaded a bolognese into the pram and walked it down the street; last week David was rolling out homemade pizzas for three families at lunchtime; a couple of weeks ago it was soup by the vat.

But it's no catering business. It's simply that there have been so many new babies amongst our community and their parents and siblings all needed feeding!

I am talking about the best gift you can give new parents. No, not a soft handknit blanket (though that would be pretty nice). No, not a Brainy Babies DVD. Not even a battery-operated nappy wipes warmer. It's a home-cooked meal straight from your kitchen and made to their specifications...no meat, extra cheese, no dairy or no wheat and lots of love.

Of course there is nothing new about taking around a casserole to a friend in need but the exercise takes on a level of organizational excellence when you have a food roster in place.

Here's how it works:

When people ask you what you would like as a gift ask them if they would like to go on your food roster. They can specify days that suit or number of meals they can manage. Usually a couple of meals per person is enough.

Ask a friend with a capacity for scheduling to email all these friends as your baby's birth approaches, letting them know that they are organising a roster of friends to cook for your family after the baby is born. You will need to tell them if you prefer specific foods, or of any allergies or food you don't eat.

When the baby is born, the food roster starts up. Your organised friend makes a list of dates and places your kindest, dearest, most loyal friends beside each day, or every second day if you would prefer.

Very soon—just like magic—the meals start appearing on your front door step. Ideally they just keep coming until your babymoon (see article page18) is over or you run out of freezer space!

At this point I can see that you're dreaming about someone cooking for your family every night for a month and wondering if it's time to have another baby...

But I can tell you from my experience on the rosterside of the agreement that the love does not all go one way. I have found cooking for our friends with new babies a very gratifying process. If you believe in the concept of karma, I think I have definitely received my karmic-return in this lifetime.

Regularly little text messages like "you rock my tasty little world" and "those pizzas were incredible" arrive on my phone these days. I have been greeted at front doors with, "I am soooooo glad to see you" as I hand over the dinner. Boxes of chocolates and afternoon tea invitations have arrived out of the blue. And as I sit down to dinner with my family, I know that somewhere else another family is able to do the same without stress, panic, a dash to the shops or a takeaway menu. It makes me feel happy.

Actually I have become a little addicted to the idea and after a friend recently offered my family one of her incredible home-made pasta sheet lasagnes as a birthday present, I have decided that I will do the same. It was the best birthday present she could have offered. Dinner made, at home, no washing up, all expenses paid and low carbon emissions to boot!

So...if you're pregnant, photocopy this story and hand it to a dear friend when they ask if you need anything for the baby. If having another baby seems an extreme way to get 30 meals, try offering a meal to a friend for a great feeling of well-being and community. It's almost as good!

“...I have been greeted at front doors with, “I am sooooo glad to see you” as I hand over the dinner...”

## Food roster tips for the cooks

**START WITH THE BASICS** What does the family usually eat? Do they have any allergies, likes and dislikes?

**FREEZER OR NOT?** Is there a chance that they may want to freeze some or all of your meal? Often a casserole or soup will provide enough for leftovers so maybe you want to think about what would work to pop in the freezer for another day.

**COOKING FOR KIDS** While it's tempting to do a delicious curry or spicy tagine, if the family on your food roster has small children you may need to make a meal that's kid-friendly. Especially if the mum is doing dinner for the kids before her partner arrives home from work, something that the kids will devour is a life-saver. Pasta sauces, quiches, chicken or tuna bakes, filo pastry parcels, pizzas and kid-friendly casseroles are usually safe bets.

**BREASTFEEDING MUMS** There are many people who believe that some foods should be avoided by breastfeeding mums because they can pass through the breastmilk and can cause gas or discomfort in the newborn. It might be worth enquiring whether the breastfeeding mum would like to avoid beans, chilli, cabbage, cauliflower and other foods.

**STRENGTH BUILDING FOODS** One of the main attractions of the babymoon period and the attendant food roster is that it gives a woman time to rest, bond, work on producing beautiful breastmilk and regain her strength after the colossal effort of birthing a baby. Some foods are just made for giving long-lasting energy and fortification. Think lamb shanks, osso buco, bean stews, chicken soup, rice congee with seaweeds, spinach soup, and frittata.

The best possible start for you and your baby...

## Gentle Birth, Gentle Mothering



The wisdom and science of gentle choices in pregnancy, birth, and parenting

By **Dr Sarah J Buckley**  
With foreword by **Tori May Gaskin**

Discover how a gentle birth gives you and your baby the best possible start to life.

Learn the benefits of instinctive and gentle mothering.

This collection by Dr Sarah J Buckley includes her superb research on cesarean birth, ultrasound, epidural, and third stage of labour, and Sarah's own stories of birth and mothering, including raising babies without nappies, and gentle discipline.

**Essential reading for gentle mothers everywhere**

"Sarah Buckley creatively integrates mind/body wisdom with the latest scientific research to provide women with the essential tools they need to make conscious choices throughout their pregnancy and birth." **Deepak Chopra** Author, *Peace is the Way*

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[www.sarahjbuckley.com](http://www.sarahjbuckley.com)  
and good bookstores  
\$36.95

## Homebirth Access Sydney Needs You

HAS is dedicated to supporting women in their right to birth how and where they choose and for providing information and a support network for those mothers seeking to birth at home.

HAS is staffed by volunteers, and we are always looking for help. So if you would like to get involved in any capacity, we would love to hear from you.

**Currently we could really use several Community Meetings Organisers, a Sponsorship Manager, contributors to and a designer of our Homebirth Booklet, an Auditor/Accountant, and help with a big membership database clean-up project. Even if all you have time for is a dozen phone calls, we would love your help!**

Please contact any member of the HAS Committee, listed on the inside front cover.

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# Member services

- HAS merchandise
- subscribe to *BIRTHINGS*
- submit your baby's birth notice

## membership

Homebirth Access Sydney is the only group of its kind in Sydney. It fills an extremely important function in providing a centrally organised group of caring people, gathering information and making it available to everyone who is interested in childbirth alternatives and the myriad related issues.

PLEASE SUPPORT THIS VITAL WORK BY SUBSCRIBING TO *BIRTHINGS*

- **3 year membership:** \$90
- **1 year membership:** \$40
- **Midwives subscribing clients:** \$15 per client

Membership entitles you to receive *Birthings* four times a year and satisfaction in knowing that your money is being used to keep the group alive in order to make it easier for families to birth at home.

Please send your completed form to:  
**HAS, PO BOX 66, BROADWAY NSW 2007**

NAME	
ADDRESS	
TELEPHONE	
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OCCUPATION	
CAN YOU VOLUNTEER HELP? (eg typing, fundraising, emailing, events, organising)	

*Please tick:*

New member

Renewal

*Please Enclose:*

\$90 for 3 year membership

\$40 for new membership (1 year)

\$40 for renewal membership (1 year)

\$15 for midwife client membership (1 year)

Include a stamped, self-addressed envelope if receipt is required.

**Enquiries: ameliaa@iprimus.com.au**

## birth notice form



**For inclusion in *BIRTHINGS* the magazine of Homebirth Access Sydney**

Please complete only details you wish to be published

**Parents name(s)**

.....

.....

**Siblings name(s)**

.....

.....

**Baby's name(s)**

.....

.....

**Date of Birth**

.....

**Place of Birth**

.....

*Tick where appropriate*

Girl                       Labour Ward

Boy                          Water birth

Birth Centre              VBAC

**Additional message to be printed, eg midwife, support people, details of birth, weight, length etc**

.....

.....

.....

.....

**Please return to your midwife, forward to HAS, PO Box 66, Broadway, NSW 2007, or email details and a photo to dannit@bigpond.net.au**

## gift ideas



### HOME BIRTH OWN BIRTH CALICO BAG

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### HOME BIRTH OWN BIRTH BUMPER STICKER

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### 'TODAY' MAGNET

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### 'KNOWLEDGE' MAGNET

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# books & DVDs



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### BORN AT HOME BABY T-SHIRT

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 Sizes 00, 0 and 2  
 100% cotton t-shirt, round neck, short sleeves  
 002BT \$16.50



### SUPERFISH BABY T-SHIRT

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 Sizes 00, 0 and 2  
 100% cotton t-shirt, round neck, short sleeves  
 003BT \$16.50



### BORN AT HOME BABY T-SHIRT

Purple with white print  
 Sizes 00, 0 and 2  
 100% cotton t-shirt, round neck, short sleeves  
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**SPECIAL**

### BETTER BIRTH Lareen Newman & Heather Hancock

Many women believe that birth is painful and something to be endured. They tell of horror stories in hospital, of last-minute surgical intervention and alienation from their own bodies. 'Better Birth' helps you to prepare for a birth that is intuitive and spontaneous. Armed with the right information, every mother-to-be has the chance to give birth where she remains in control and at the centre. Aust 2007  
 019BK ~~\$29.95~~ **\$20.00**



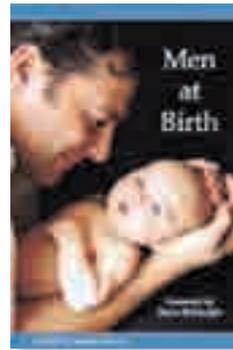
### MY BROTHER JIMI JAZZ Chrissy Butler

A beautifully illustrated children's book, written from the perspective of a young girl about the homebirth of her brother Jimi Jazz. This book embraces natural active homebirth, breastfeeding, co-sleeping, cloth nappies and siblings at birth. Aust 2006.  
 013BK \$20.00



### SIBLINGS AT BIRTH DVD Jo Hunter

This DVD shows 3 homebirths in water and short interviews with the attending children. It shows the wonder and joy of childbirth through children's eyes and shows how birth is seen as a normal and natural part of everyday life. Aust  
 016DV \$35.00



### MEN AT BIRTH David Vernon

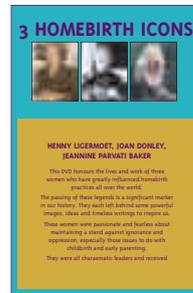
Each of the 30 stories was specifically written for this book. They are often funny, sometimes sad, but all will be of interest to men entering the childbirth and parenting journey. Aust 2006  
 011BK \$29.95



**NEW**

### TEN MOONS Jane Hardwicke Collings

A unique guide to pregnancy and birth. This book offers practical tools and suggestions to help women reconnect with the spiritual side of birth. The spiritual journey of pregnancy and natural childbirth are acknowledged in relationship to the earth's natural rhythms. Subjects covered include, letting go of fear, connecting with the baby inside you, yoga and meditation.  
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### 3 HOME BIRTH ICONS DVD Maggie Lecky Thompson

Honours the lives and work of Henny Ligermoet, Joan Donley and Jeannine Parvati Baker, who were passionate and fearless about maintaining a stand against ignorance and oppression regarding childbirth and early parenting. Aust  
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### HAVING A GREAT BIRTH IN AUSTRALIA David Vernon

This is a collection of candid stories from 20 Australian women who have recently given birth. These stories tell, with honesty and insight, about the challenges and joys of childbirth. Each of these women discovered the value of being able to make informed decisions about their maternity care and with the right care, had positive and empowering birth experiences. Aust 2005  
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### BIRTHING AFFIRMATIONS POSTER

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Baby Born at Home		White		16.50	
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Adult Home Birth Own Birth <b>SPECIAL</b>		Purple		<b>15.00</b>	
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Bumper Sticker I Give Birth and I Vote		White		3.50	
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<i>Having a Great Birth in Australia</i> , edited by David Vernon				24.95	
<i>Men at Birth</i> , edited by David Vernon				29.95	
<i>Better Birth</i> by Lareen Newman & Heather Hancock <b>SPECIAL</b>				<b>20.00</b>	
<i>Ten Moons</i> by Jane Hardwicke Collings				25.00	
<i>My Brother Jimi Jazz</i> , by Chrissy Butler				20.00	
<i>Siblings at Birth</i> DVD				35.00	
<i>3 Homebirth Icons</i> DVD				20.00	
Birthing Affirmations Poster Laminated A3				10.00	
				Sub Total for Items Above	
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## birth stories

# Madison's birth story

BY SARAH PEAK

*A loving support team provided the confidence for Sarah to birth with strength.*

### **My partner, Luke, and I hadn't been**

planning on getting pregnant so it was quite a shock to find out that I was already eight weeks along. I always knew that I wanted a natural birth and, having attended my sister's homebirths, I felt even more compelled to deliver the way my body was designed to. However, I wasn't sure whether I was confident enough to have my first child at home. So I planned on delivering in a birth centre.

However as soon as I started researching birth centres I knew that it wouldn't be an option for me, as I am too overweight to meet their Body Mass Index criteria. This was quite upsetting for me as I was in perfect health otherwise.

I really dislike hospitals and believe it is a place for sick people, not a place to have a baby, so this is how we came to make the decision to have a homebirth, as there really was no other option that I felt comfortable with.

My partner was very supportive and so was my family as they had previously experienced the wonders of my sister's homebirths. My partner's family was supportive, however they

were quite uneasy with the idea to start with. My mother is a midwife and lactation consultant and my sisters are both nurses and I planned on having them all attend the birth. I contacted Robyn, the midwife who attended my sister's homebirth, and made an appointment.

Our visits with Robyn throughout my pregnancy were wonderful and really made me feel comfortable in the decision to have a homebirth as she made me and my partner feel so relaxed and confident that we could do this. My friends who had hospital births often complained of having to wait ages to see their midwife or obstetrician and their meetings only lasted on average 10-15 minutes. Every appointment with our midwife was at least an hour and sometimes even two or more. Not only did we get the usual check up but got to discuss how the pregnancy was progressing in detail and what to expect for the birth and impending parenthood etc. Plus my midwife had an extensive library of books and DVDs that we borrowed from each visit. My weight was never an issue and I was made to feel comfortable and confident that my body could birth my baby.



As my due date was approaching, I was a little apprehensive about whether I could actually go through with the homebirth as my fear of the pain was getting stronger. This was quite a challenge for me and something I really wanted to overcome as previously, throughout my life, if things got too tough I would walk away or give in. I didn't want to give in this time.

My due date came and went with nothing more than the odd Braxton Hicks. My mother, who lives five hours away from me, had come to stay for the birth and every morning that I woke up I was disappointed that my baby had failed to make an appearance during the previous night. My mum only had two weeks holidays so we were quickly running out of time. I tried everything to try and induce labour naturally—nipple stimulation, sex, chilli, roast dinners, walking, acupuncture, homeopathic remedies, cervical sweeps and Chinese medicine—but my baby didn't want to budge, even though I tried to convince her that she would have more room on the outside!

Twelve days after my due date, I woke up at 5am and after returning to bed from another

trip to the toilet, realized that I was having a contraction. As I lay in bed, I realized that they were much stronger than the Braxton Hicks I had felt previously and were coming every 10 minutes. I told Luke what was happening and told him to go to work and I would keep him posted throughout the day.

At about 9am, I went downstairs and informed mum that I was having contractions and so we decided to go and do some shopping to try and get things moving along. By early evening the contractions were still about 10 minutes apart but had become pretty intense.

At about 9pm, we decided that we should try to get some sleep. I tried for about an hour to rest, however it was impossible, as I had to get out of bed every 10 minutes to rock my body with the contractions. I always thought that the rocking looked silly but it was really the only thing that got me through the contractions. I left Luke to sleep and went downstairs to Mum, who couldn't sleep either. We spent the rest of the night and early morning on the lounges under blankets getting up each time I had a contraction and trying to sleep in between.

At about 3am, Mum was asleep and the contractions were about seven minutes apart and much more painful, so I went and had a shower for about an hour. The hot water felt amazing and really helped with relieving the pain.

At 4:30am the contractions suddenly became two to three minutes apart. We woke up Luke and called my midwife and sister to let them know that things were really happening now. Robyn told us to set up the pool as this takes some time.

Everyone arrived and got busy making a beautiful birth space in the lounge room. Aromatherapy oils burned and Enya played softly in the background as the sun started to rise. I continued to labour and moved from the toilet, birth pool, mattress and shower trying to find comfort. My wonderful support people massaged my back during each contraction and kept me hydrated. It was so lovely to watch them comfortable in my home, making lunch and chatting. You could feel a constant buzz of excitement »



that made my labour more enjoyable.

By 1pm, I asked Robyn to do an internal and check how far along I was as I was getting very tired and finding it hard to deal with the pain. I was very disappointed to hear that I was only 4 cm as I wanted it to be over so that I could meet my baby.

Over the next couple of hours, things became very intense and the pain was at its most extreme. I really had to concentrate on breathing and found that making really loud primal noises and the occasional "Help me" were getting me through. This is the point where I realized that no other woman can really explain how intense contractions are; you just have to experience it for yourself.

I really had to rely on my support people, in particular my mother, to get me through the next couple of hours. I really wanted to

pack it all in but they were there to keep me strong and remind me of what I really wanted—to have my baby at home naturally.

At around 3pm I started to grunt during contractions whilst on the toilet and it was suggested that I move back to the birth pool.

I could float easily whilst in the pool and this seemed to help with the contractions that were now coming on top of each other. Suddenly it was time to push. I was pleasantly surprised how easy this was as I was really scared during my pregnancy of the head crowning.

On the 7th of May 2008 at 3:45pm after only a few pushes, Madison Ava Riina Harris was born in water in my lounge room. I still can't find words to explain the feelings as I lifted her up between my legs and out of water where she took her first breath without any cries. She looked straight at me whilst I cried my eyes out and listened to

all the family around me crying with joy.

Her daddy hopped in the pool with us and this is where we stayed for about half an hour where her cord was cut by her daddy, where she initiated her first breastfeed and I delivered the placenta whilst we bonded as a new family.

I got out of the pool and on to a mattress in the lounge room, where both Madison and I were checked thoroughly. After a quick shower, I returned to the mattress to share our new little girl with the rest of my family who came to visit. It was so lovely to be at home in familiar surroundings where we all ate dinner together.

It has been six weeks since I gave birth to Madison and I haven't come down from my blissful high and I doubt I ever will. ●



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Susan Ross, the founder of *Birth Right*, is a Midwife, Doula, Childbirth Educator, Mother, Trainer and author of the book 'Birth Right'

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**Created & written by**  
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**JANE HARDWICKE COLLINGS**

# The Birth Stories for Esther, Harvey and Nash

BY ELIZABETH TREVAN

*A homebirth was the only way for Esther's baby brothers to have the same gentle birth that she experienced.*

## Birth One—at a Birth Centre

It was a warm winter's Saturday, I was 9 days 'overdue' and recovering from counselling a distressed bride on the phone. I am a Marriage Celebrant and apart from an impending birth I had the crazy situation of a wedding to conduct in a weeks' time. I was booked into the Birth Centre at my local hospital and they had scheduled me in for an induction in two days time. The Bride was in floods of tears with pre-wedding nerves, a celebrant that still had a baby inside, a dress that didn't fit and a bad weather report. To avoid the possible carnage of an induction I had decided to take matters into my own hands and after some long walks and a trip to the acupuncturist, pre-labour was under way. I give great thanks to a fellow celebrant and homebirthing mother, Kath, who in the midst of organising the up-coming birthdays of her two daughters (both born on the 5th June) was holding my spirits up with lots of encouraging words on the phone.

I gave my partner, Damien, a leave-pass to play cricket with his team and get his mind away from the pre-birth atmosphere, which was pretty high-tension by this point. He did us proud with an 85 not out and six catches. One of my best friends Jerusha was our doula and she had been lining

him up with instructions, as when it came to the birth we had decided we would like it to be just the two of us and a midwife. Jerusha had been invaluable with on-going support and loads of information. I felt we had covered huge ground and as knowledge is power, I felt very empowered about my choices.

The Sunday passed with a steady increase of contractions and after 48 hours of pre-labour they finally started to get noticeably longer and stronger. Being our first birth and not being sure how exactly contractions ran we went to the hospital like a lot of newbies, too early. I was only one cm dilated. One of the attending midwives who would be on shift the next morning had professed that she looked forward to meeting our baby tomorrow when she came as it would have arrived by then. These were encouraging words. Fortunately we live two minutes from the hospital so it was not a problem to turn around and come home—plus Manly was playing league that night and Damien was happy to be home again and massaging my back during contractions whilst he watched his beloved team.

About midnight we went back to the Birth Centre again, arriving just after two other mothers who were 3 cm and 5 cm dilated. Being the last to arrive



and 4 cm we were run a bath and left to continue to labour by ourselves. This was fine with us. I climbed into the warm bath and found my most comfortable position on all fours for contractions whilst Damien hit my pelvic pressure points.

Not long after 3am I wanted to push and with no midwife in sight and the delivery suite midwife only turning up every now and then, I held the baby in until assistance arrived. Having helped with the birthing of the other two babies, to our relief, the midwife turned up about 20 minutes later, ready to help with my labour, only to find she could see the head and raced to grab her gear.

Still in the bath, I moved to my desired squatting position and began to push. I remembered my friend, Kath, telling me about the burning feeling as the head came out and it felt real and exciting to know we were nearly there. Then after some encouraging words the baby came out into the water. She was brought straight up into my arms. I turned and lay back in the bath with these two wide eyes staring out at me alert and aware, taking it all in. We had a girl and named her Esther after my grandmother. She was born on June the 5th at 4:01am weighing 3.75 kg.

## Birth Two—Twins

I figured I was pregnant one morning when hit with a sudden nausea and instant craving for food. I had to eat something IMMEDIATELY and as we were driving I reached for Esther's snack bag and ate everything in it. A trip to the GP confirmed the home pregnancy test but the symptoms weren't quite right so she sent me for a date scan. Lying back on the table for the scan I got the shock of my life when each movement of the scanner picked a little body. There were somehow two in there and I was already 10 weeks pregnant!!

Excited about being able to repeat my positive experience of the Birth Centre I called to make an appointment. I was shocked and amazed to be rejected because, in carrying twins, I was suddenly regarded as 'High Risk'. I couldn't believe it! Someone as healthy as me, who had a good track record, was a risk? All tests were showing completely normal and I'd never felt less risky in my life!

So reluctantly I was booked into the Hospital Clinic and a journey of disappointment, rejection and frustration followed. I was informed that shared care with my GP was not acceptable and a Normal Vaginal Birth (NVB) without intervention was not an option in the hospital system. In my striving to have a NVB without intervention, obstetricians in

several clinics told me of all the many things that can go wrong, endless horror stories and a barrage of tragic statistics. One obstetrician recommended a caesarean at 34 weeks, others 36 to 38 weeks or induction at 38 weeks. Epidurals, foetal monitoring, the list went on and the treatment was negative. Not once was there any encouragement for an expectant mother of twins—just a constant resistance to letting a woman's body give it a go naturally.

I started to look outside the hospital to search for more positive approach. Although I was keen to have a homebirth to avoid all the intervention and reap the benefits, my partner Damien understandably was a bit apprehensive given the lack of insurance, so we decided to go the hospital path, but on our terms. Talking with independent midwives, a midwife consultant and homebirthing mothers and hearing inspirational stories gave me hope. There were also many frustrated tears and constant consultation with my beautiful doula Jerusha. Our information gathering continued. I spoke with one mother who had homebirthed her twins at full term in the water at home. Another who had run the gauntlet by labouring at home to the very last minute with her doula present and getting to the hospital fully dilated, so they had no time for interventions. This seemed like a very good strategy, but for additional support we decided to »



also include a midwife in the team. Damien and Jerusha would act as 'security' for the babies and my body and our midwife would be there for a nod and a wink when we needed it. We would all be across the birth plan and anticipate any interventions and try to avoid them.

Operating against us as well was the due date, New Years Eve. So many obstetricians and independent midwives were away on holidays or not taking any bookings at that time. After many calls we were blessed with finding an incredible independent midwife, Akal, who immediately put us at ease and became a sensible sounding board and a champion of our cause.

From week 12 to week 29 with my support team I battled against the hospital system and obstetricians at every monthly check-up. All my results were completely normal but their horror stories persisted. Eventually, after being moved through several clinics, all refused to handle my case. Then finally I received a call from a wonderful Clinical Midwife Consultant (CMC) who had found my file on her desk and recognised and supported what I was trying to achieve—a natural vaginal birth. She then referred me to the clinic of a female obstetrician who was happy to support a NVB—this was ironically in the High Risk Department of

the hospital. I had several monthly checks with her and all was progressing normally. Unfortunately, however she left for holidays overseas just three weeks before my due date.

At 38 weeks, I had my weekly check in the clinic. The babies were in good positions and all was progressing normally. The CMC later called to say that she felt bad that we had been left without an obstetrician we could put a face to so she organised a meeting for that afternoon.

A terrible meeting ensued with a very senior obstetrician. All available monitoring had continued to show the pregnancy to be uncomplicated at this stage and from my position all I wanted was to be allowed to have a NVB with the support of a skilled medical team available in case something went wrong.

On expressing my desire to the obstetrician to have no intervention immediately upon hospital arrival, I was told that if I was his wife, he would make me have an epidural, followed by "I've been delivering babies for 20 years and you haven't". (Interestingly our independent midwife who was offering emotional support had been delivering babies, including many sets of twins, for over 30 years, both here and overseas.)

At 38 weeks + 3 days, I was being attacked with total disdain because my babies were still in utero 10 days before my due date. From the beginning, having done my research and with everything progressing normally, reaching my due date had been my goal as it would maximise the benefits pre- and post-birth for my babies.

The obstetrician then told me that I was being "incredibly selfish and putting my babies' lives at risk".

My confidence was knocked. I knew now that regardless of the normality of the pregnancy and my knowledge and acceptance of the small risk, my preference for a NVB without intervention was totally abhorred by the system and the clinicians operating within it. I felt rejected, dejected and very depressed. How would I recover from this in time for a positive birthing experience?

In order to make it happen I visualised the safest place to birth. It was on my Tibetan Rug in the lounge room. The carpet had been made by the hands of women in a rug factory I had found by chance in Shigatse, Tibet and I had carried it on my shoulders whilst trekking down the treacherous border crossing between Tibet and Nepal. Jerusha and I joked that I should roll it up and take it into the hospital delivery suite. We laughed as we



imagined the looks on the faces of the staff and what would be going through their minds as we rolled it out to give birth.

On the day before the due date I walked to the next suburb for a few errands and some reflexology. I bought a beautiful scented candle, for the client meetings I have at home and some incense. I felt strongly the need to spiritually cleanse the apartment in preparation for these new spirits who would enter our home. I wanted them to feel welcome and loved.

I lit the incense and walked around the apartment clockwise. My doula had told me babies often turn clockwise and I wanted the second baby to feel the strength to turn and make the best movements to come out freely. I asked all the darkness and negativity to leave and welcomed in white and golden light. In reality I knew nothing of what I was doing, I was making it up, but it felt right and gave me strength that there would be other forces taking care of me in my special moment.

Damien cooked a beautiful meal for Jerusha and I. I went to bed and about midnight started to get a few pains. By 12:30am, I thought I should share this with Damien, who was at the computer. I told him not to get too excited it was probably just

pre-labour and I went back to bed. Given that my pre-labour had been so long with Esther there was no need to panic, but it was exciting to know that something was finally happening and the twins would be with us soon. Damien came in about half an hour later and could see I was having another contraction, so I asked him to start to time them and we decided to call Jerusha, our doula. As soon as she arrived I had one giant contraction followed moments later by another. She immediately told us to call our midwife as we would need her here soon and we certainly wanted her reassurance and presence before heading off into the hostile environment of the hospital delivery suite.

At 1:30am, we phoned our midwife to come and also my friend, Angela, to babysit Esther. The contractions were coming quite strongly and I had already thrown-up Damien's beautiful dinner which caused a few chuckles about the quality of the meal. We then thought it might be a little more soothing to get under the water in the shower, but as soon as I got in I felt the incredible pressure and desire to push. The midwife hadn't had time to reach our home and we didn't want to make a move without her approval so I went to my Tibetan rug on the lounge room floor and with head down I stuck my bum in the air.

At about 2:30am, our midwife walked in to this picture and obviously wondered how it had gotten to this. The labour had progressed so fast and we were all caught by surprise. She examined me and said "either call an ambulance or you're having them here". I knew immediately what I wanted and with Damien's confirmation it was action stations. There was the odd joke about tearing up the sheets, but I was only laughing on the inside as the contractions had me bellowing deep and long. Jerusha and Angela ran to our midwife's car to grab her gear, Esther's plastic play mat was placed over the rug and the girls efficiently gathered whatever else we needed.

I give great thanks to our midwife who, with her ease and reassurance, allowed all the team to be calm in the face of this unexpected turn. Our babysitter Angela was stoically boiling instruments on the stove in her moo-cow pyjamas, still in shock at what was happening. Our doula was there with her joyous spirit and encouraging words and Damien patiently knelt beside me, still massaging me in the contractions and ready to catch the babies—'in the slips' in cricketing terms.

Whilst on all fours and with the pressure of the contractions allowing me to push, the membranes »



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---

Women travel new territory with each pregnancy, learning from their previous pregnancies and births and about themselves as Mothers. Birth is a rite of passage each time as we become the perfect mother for our growing family.

We shall sit on cushions in a circle, pregnant women, mothers and midwives. We shall use ritual, voice and art to compliment information sharing that will help us understand why we think and act the way we do. We will look deeply at the sexuality and spirituality of pregnancy, birth and mothering. We will learn meditation, tools for labour and beautiful rituals to perform to honour pregnancy, birth and mothering. We shall explore the inner journey of pregnancy and come to know ourselves more fully through this process, preparing for our potential birth and mothering from our most in-tune and empowered centre. We will invoke the ancient Goddesses our Foremothers did, for their guidance, nurturance, protection and support. We will do what women have been doing together longer than we haven't – sit together in support of each other sharing our innate wisdom focussing on the beauty and strength of Mother.

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of the first baby swelled and burst. I felt an incredible release at this moment and knew that it wasn't far to go. The baby was teasing us as the head moved in and out but finally and beautifully unassisted, at 3:12am, Harvey Francis arrived weighing 3.96 kg. Both his hands were up around his face, probably why he had been taking a while. He was moved into my arms and nursed until the contractions came again and I then passed him into the lap of his father.

I started to push the next baby but he seemed to be taking his time. In between contractions, I would look at Damien and Harvey in his lap, cord still connected. Our midwife wondered what the hold-up was with the second baby and, on inspection, discovered his arm beside his head. With the next two contractions she instructed me to push while the arm was held so the head could move past. This done, I moved into my favoured squatting position and with the assistance of gravity and supported in the arms of my doula, at 3:41am, Nash William arrived weighing 3.74 kg. Once he was safely in my arms Damien returned

Harvey to me. What a feeling of triumph. Both my babies in my arms. Hooray!! And a home birth—a dream come true!

Joyfully, because we were home, there was no abrasive fluorescent lighting; no cast of thousands; no removal of the babies from our arms; no immediate clamping and cutting of the cords—the two cords were not touched until the single shared placenta delivered and ceased pulsating.

Three little words that mean so much. Three little words that change everything.

Born at home.

Later, when the early morning light was pouring into the lounge room, I took a look around to assess how everything could look the same as the day before, but everything had changed. Under the circumstances I'd expected the place to be in total disarray. I was amazed that despite the size of the babies there had been no real blood loss. And so quickly everything in the room was back in place. Jerusha and Angela had efficiently collected and washed everything that had been used and it was already neatly hanging on the line.

Then I noticed that my new scented candle was burning and remembered during the birth looking up at its golden light and thinking one of the girls must have lit it. I mentioned it was still burning and Damien said that he had been the one to light it when I'd come out to him at 12:30am, he'd lit it thinking there would be a long night of labour ahead. I smiled, loving the fact it had been Damien.

So in the end, surrounded by a wonderful team, I unexpectedly had the gentle birth at home that I was endeavouring to have in hospital—without the battle or the emotional distress. Whilst understanding and accepting that there was a small risk, I was one of the over 95% of the Monochorionic Diamniotic pregnancies (twins that share one placenta with two amniotic sacs) that remained uncomplicated through to a natural and normal vaginal birth demonstrating (contrary to most medical recommendations) that successful outcomes are possible and probable.

As a result, my children and I continue to reap the considerable benefits. ●



## birth stories

# My unexpected birth journey

BY AMANDA QUINN

*A hospital journey brings some grief and an opportunity for healing.*

In February I gave birth to my first child, a beautiful baby girl we named Elke. We had a powerful birth journey that didn't go as expected. I felt drawn to write to HAS and share our story with other homebirthers, particularly for other women who have also had to transfer to hospital, a world far from a planned homebirth.

On a sunny Tuesday afternoon, February 19th, labour began. I felt much excitement. After all the months of carrying my baby, the day had finally arrived where I would meet him or her, and being my first experience of labour and birth, there was the excitement of knowing I was now beginning a journey I'd never experienced.

I surrendered completely and had total faith and trust in my power to open and stretch to bring our baby through. By Tuesday night things had heated right up and my partner called our midwife and doula to let them know things had progressed along and I was ready for them to come.

The sensations were intense, I focused on my breathing and moved about the different positions. We all thought the babe would come by the morning, so when the sun came up and the day continued to pass, I knew birthing was going to be a longer journey than imagined, but that we were fine. I felt safe in our home supported by an amazing birthing team and between my cats, Enya CD and lots (!) of massage I could work with the strong sensations of my body opening and stretching to bring our baby through.

On the second night, when I was in the bath, the unexpected happened. The baby did a full 180 degree turn! My stomach had a big dip in it and the baby's knees could be seen from the front. The sensations got stronger, but I knew that posterior babies were born at home all the time, so continued to go along working hard.

On the third morning, still no baby! By this point I was wondering when she'd decide to finally come out!

I worked hard through more intense contractions, pushing until my midwife and partner could see the tip of our baby's head, but the baby wouldn't come down any further. After more pushing, opening, stretching I decided to get the midwife to do an internal to see what was going on. Yep, I was fully dilated, as I knew, but the baby's head had gone transverse so was in a funny position. This is what was causing the baby to not travel down any further.

We decided that we'd done all we could do at home and that I'd need to transfer to our local small hospital for a ventouse to turn the baby's head.

As any birther could imagine, to leave the place you've been birthing—your home, your sanctuary—is a huge deal, particularly when you are that close to giving birth. So we made the trip in the car to the hospital. I was in between major contractions but we all said it would be fine if the baby came on the way there, then we could just turn around and go home (if only!).



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Hospital—the environment changed sharply once inside those doors. Things were very different. First a monitor was strapped across my belly, a machine to one side of the monitor told the midwives and doctor what was going on. They could have asked me!

Next my legs had to be in the stirrups so the doctor could use the ventouse to turn my baby.

This experience alone puts a woman in a very vulnerable position in a place she's unfamiliar with. No longer in her home, surrounded by strangers, her legs up to each side and a male doctor about to do an internal to see where the baby is positioned (even though I had my independent midwife with me who informed them of why we'd transferred).

The ventouse was used to move my baby's head. I was told that if this didn't work then I'd need a C-section! You can imagine even in my labour-induced, off-with-the-fairies state of mind I knew what this meant. Push, push hard and get my baby out quick! To cut a long story short, my baby came out vaginally with the assistance of ventouse. I still birthed drug-free but the final birth was far from my planned gentle welcoming homebirth.

Once my darling daughter came out I was filled with the most love I've ever felt in my heart, but even that was cut short as then I was told the cord would need to be cut as she was too blue and needed oxygen. So I only had moments of skin-to-skin, the first suckle at my breast didn't happen until hours later as my baby lay in an oxygen tent. I couldn't even

hold her in that time, only touch her through the oxygen tent and once I finally got her to my breast I was determined to get out of that place as soon as possible. But this was not to be. Things went further pear-shaped as I now know seems common for hospital transfers and I didn't return home until one week later.

After many tears, my baby had to transfer to a larger hospital and have an ambulance ride. To say the least—dramas.

Our daughter is now four and a half months old and a happy girl who enjoys feeding from the breast whenever she likes, co-sleeping, sling time and all the warmth and gentleness attachment parenting brings. Now in my gentle mothering of our child I hope that her dramatic first taste of life may heal. For any woman who questions whether homebirth is worth it, I can say from my experience that it is safe. I am so glad we chose homebirth for I know had my labour been at hospital to start with they wouldn't have allowed me to labour for three days, even though at home, my baby's heart rate stayed consistent and she showed no signs of stress until the ventouse was used to turn her in hospital. I wouldn't have had the same powerful experience of opening and stretching my body up for my baby in my own time. I wouldn't have the memories or the special time my partner, doula and midwife shared with me here at home.

It's my beautiful memories from the power of all the work I did at home that make grieving the loss of a gentle birth for my baby a little

easier as I believe that experience at home is part of her journey too. The warmth, the celebration of birthing, as was the gentle journey I gave her through pregnancy having no tests, no ultrasounds throughout pregnancy, trusting myself and our baby.

The healing journey for every homebirther who transfers is a big one. I guess the question becomes how can we make peace with our birthing journey when the final outcome is far from what we expected. How can we take a gift from our grief, and how can we honour ourselves and see ourselves in the light that every woman who births deserves to see herself—as a birthing goddess.

I think just like birth it is about time, surrendering and being gentle with ourselves. Like birth, grief has no clocks telling it when it's time to stop and start; it simply is and we need to breathe with our grief just as we breathed so powerfully in our birth. ●



*If you have books on babies, birth or pregnancy that you would like to donate to a worthy cause, we would love to hear from you.*

*HAS is reinvigorating our library to create a great resource for newly pregnant members, or old hands wanting a refresher.*

*The library will be part of our service to members, so any books that you think would be useful to someone else, we would gladly accept. You may have some of the classics, some new books you are ready to pass on, or childrens' books that feature homebirth.*

*We can arrange collection, so just send Danni Townsend an email at [dannit@bigpond.net.au](mailto:dannit@bigpond.net.au) and share around the knowledge!*

## **Wanted:** **your birth books**

*birth stories*

# Amelia's birth story

BY JASON NELSON

*A dad's story of catching his  
daughter with confidence.*

Wednesday night was like any other night. Anne kept saying that the baby would come on the full moon, which was Friday, so the immediate thought of the baby coming overnight was not really on my radar.

At 2:30 Thursday morning I got the wake up to get the 'Birth Nest' ready. We had a trial run of setting up the birth nest about a week ago (so perhaps in my mind it was another trial run!). Anne seemed so relaxed, joking, eating bananas and talking about 'thinking' the baby was on its way that I still didn't really think that the baby would arrive in the morning.

Once the nest was set up and Anne had food and water, there was not a lot for me to do. The contractions seemed mild (from Anne's reactions to them) so it was decided that I would lay down on the birth nest mattress, perhaps get some sleep and build up my strength for the maybe upcoming labour/birth.

After a while, perhaps 5:00am, I heard the familiar determined breathing through contractions (familiar from Isaac's birth) and this was my first thought that this could be really happening. At 5:10, I made my first and last mistake. I told Anne it was 5:10 and that perhaps I should call Jan (our midwife) and Jen (our doula). Our birth plan highlighted the fact that we should not talk about the time, talk about how long between contractions etc. After copping a 'gentle reminder' for saying the time, Anne set herself the task of focusing on the birth (so that Isaac wouldn't be awake when the baby arrived). I set myself the task of not talking anymore.

I decided it was time to call Jan and Jen as the determined breathing wasn't going away and Anne was in the 'birth position'—on all fours. Jan was on her way. Jen unfortunately was with her son in hospital so wouldn't be able to come.

Shortly after making the calls I sensed that I may have left my run too late on getting the support crew. The contractions now came with a sort of 'birth moan'. I let Jan know that I would leave the front door open as I now 'understood' that the baby was more than likely on its way.

When I got the "the head is crowning", I totally believed Anne this time and knew it wouldn't be long. When I got "the baby's head is crowning/out" with Isaac I didn't really believe Anne. It all happens so fast with minimal fuss. One thing I should explain here is that the room was dark so I couldn't see what was happening. With Isaac it was total darkness,

no candle, nothing. This time I had a couple of tiny tea light candles so, when I did my midwife thing and checked the business end, I could see the head was crowning, so I held it.

From Isaac's birth I also knew that the next contraction would most likely have the whole baby out. When Anne asked what was happening I did the thing all husbands do from time to time: didn't answer. Sure enough the next contraction came and, pop, out came the baby. Anne and I didn't know the baby's sex and wanted to just find out as we looked. However, when I made my perfect catch one hand was on the head, the other hand was between the baby's legs. When catching I got a feeling that we were perhaps dealing with a girl. Anne and I just always thought that we would have boys. I didn't say anything.

Anne wanted a short rest after the baby was out (and who was I to argue) so I just squatted there holding the baby and listened to the first squawk. I was pretty happy to hear that! When Anne was ready, she lay on her back and took the baby from me. Anne just lay there with the baby on her stomach.

Jan arrived and got the brief run down of play and took over 'senior' midwife duties. The baby slowly made its way to Anne's breast for its first nuzzle. It was amazing to watch the baby, which shortly before was inside Anne, have the instinct to crawl to the breast.

Big brother Isaac stirred and I went to get him to show him his new sister. I told him when he was in his cot, so not sure if he understood or not. When he came downstairs, it was all different—a curtain up in the middle of the house and once past that, Mumma on the birth nest holding the little baby.

It was decided that we would take a peep to see if it was a boy or girl (or as we probably thought—to confirm it was a boy. Surprise, surprise, it was a girl. Poor thing got called 'he' or 'it' for a while.

It was decided to cut the cord now as it had stopped pulsing some time ago. Anne and Jan then focused on getting the placenta out. I just stood there holding our baby.

As we chose boy and girl names for the months prior to the birth, we came up with many girls names. I think it was always easier to come up with girl names as we never really thought we would have one. When we did, we almost had to start again on names. In the meantime it would be 'bubba'. ●

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## Thank you

*Homebirth Access Sydney warmly thanks*

- those **midwives** who continue to support HAS by kindly giving each of their clients a year's subscription to *Birthings* magazine
- **Kimberly-Clark** for printing and posting out *Birthings*, saving us lots of money, time and work
- our **contributors** for taking the time to share their wonderful birth stories, professional insights and beautiful photographs
- our generous designer, **Melinda Holme** who does all the layout and design work in her own time without charge
- **Marlowe Richards**, who beautifully designed our new publicity postcard
- **Lucy Perry**, who generously donated a box of birth books to kickstart the HAS library
- and the following **websites**, which provide us with community listings free of charge (visit their websites to view our listings)  
Birth | [www.birth.com.au](http://www.birth.com.au)  
Natural Parenting | [www.naturalparenting.com.au](http://www.naturalparenting.com.au)  
BabyCenter | [www.babycenter.com.au](http://www.babycenter.com.au)  
Essential Baby | [www.ebdirectory.com.au](http://www.ebdirectory.com.au)  
Totoodles | [www.totoodles.com.au](http://www.totoodles.com.au)  
Natural Parenting in Sydney | [www.npsydney.com.au](http://www.npsydney.com.au)

## the birth album

Share your birth experiences with pregnant women to help promote homebirth.

Stories and images of birth are powerful ways to communicate an experience that almost defies description. For first-time pregnant women, they are an eye-opener and perhaps the first 'real' insight into what birth might be like for them.

Gayle Enkelmann is compiling an album that will contain photographs, stories and newspaper clippings for people to flip through. The album will float around our community to pass on our experiences to those who can benefit from them—for example, at the HAS stall at expos or conferences. What a great way to see your photos and story beautifully presented.

Gayle is a homebirth mother to eight children. She is donating her time, album materials and including her own stories. You just need to print a few favourite photographs and/or prepare a story. Gayle can travel to you to help you prepare your pages for the album.

For details, please contact Gayle on 02 9386 4928 or [genkelmann@optusnet.com.au](mailto:genkelmann@optusnet.com.au)

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## book review

REVIEWED BY LEIGH HOLMAN



# Mother Me

BY KATIE BROWN

Katie Brown is a pre- and post-natal yoga and baby yoga teacher, massage therapist for both adults and children and a journalist. She has also released two relaxation CDs and a yoga DVD for pregnant women and also runs Yoga Babes ([www.yogababes.com.au](http://www.yogababes.com.au)). As the mother of three, she is well aware of the struggle a lot of women go through balancing our lives as mothers while keeping some of our own identity.

*Mother Me* is her latest endeavour and it is meant to be used as a tool to help mothers find some balance. She uses her background in yoga and meditation to give you 'fun mum exercises' to guide you. These are a mixture of meditations, massages and yoga routines as well as self talk exercises to give you a greater understanding of what your mind and actions are producing in your life. They are all there to help centre and harmonize six main life areas: yourself, your relationship, your child, your home, your work and finances and your social life.

*Yourself* entails two parts; the emotional you and the physical you, talking about such issues as loss of self, confidence as a new mum, what's happening to your body and the feelings you have about the changes having a baby has brought to your life. The exercises get you to ask yourself some hard questions so that you can see more clearly what your self talk is telling you at this time of such great change.

*Your relationship* focuses on the problems a lot of couples face when moving from being a couple to a family. It talks about the division of labour, communication and of course the big three: work, money and sex. It suggests a few exercises to do with your partner to open the lines of communication and make sure that you are on the same page.

*Your child* brings to light some of the changes both short and long term you can expect as you make the journey as a new mother, what challenges you may have at different stages and some coping strategies for these times. It also talks about routines, breast versus bottle and when or whether to have more children.

*Your home* talks mainly about the struggle we have maintaining our housecleaning ideals, the exercises talk about letting go of your expectations and how to work on keeping your mind tidy within the chaos.

*Your work and finances* is about going back to paid employment. It asks some hard questions as it gets you to look at the when, why and how of work and, most importantly, if your old job doesn't fit well within your new life, it asks you some questions to help you feel clearer about a way forward, whether to move jobs, start your own business or take more time off to be with your children.

*Your social life* gets you to think about the greater circle of people in your life your friends and parents. Most women can relate to the fact that as you become a mother, your relationships with old friends change; at the same time, you have the opportunity to meet new people who travel within the mothering circle. Also, the relationships with your parents and in-laws change. This section includes great exercises in relation to lack of parental support or helping you deal with your in-laws.

Targeted towards a mainstream audience, *Mother Me* has some well thought out and interesting points. The exercises are great ways of looking at yourself and your lifestyle and putting tools in place to help you cope and thrive as a mother.

The more instinctive parents might find some of the stories and ideas a bit mainstream for their liking. The book is dotted with real life stories from other mothers. They talk about all manner of things and highlight examples of what the book is trying to address within that chapter. I found it disconcerting that in the beginning of the book a lot of the stories ended with the women going to their doctors and winding up on anti-depressants. There is also general underlying current that your new baby will get in the way of your life and your relationship with your partner. This means that a proportion of the ideas are about finding ways to distance yourself from your baby to regain some of your own space.

The more mainstream audience might also be distanced by some of the exercises unless they are already involved in yoga and meditation.

*Mother Me* addresses the important issues of balancing self within the all-encompassing job of mother. As we endeavour to be the supermum keeping on top of all things, books like this are helpful in resetting our expectations and reminding us that the real supermums come at all of life's aspects with harmony and balance.

## *the personal is political*

### National Maternity Services Review

In May, Federal Health Minister Nicola Roxon commenced the Maternity Services Review, a review of maternity services across the country, in order to “develop a comprehensive plan for maternity services into the future”. Ms Roxon held meetings with midwives, obstetricians, nurses, GPs, consumers beyondblue, Bonnie Babes, Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Support (SANDS) and Post and Ante Natal Depression Association (PANDA). A representative of Homebirth Access Sydney has been listed as a “stakeholder” in the Maternity Services Review, but as yet, despite follow-up requests for involvement in the Review, HAS has not had any opportunity to make submissions, nor has our representative been consulted, on the review of maternity services. HAS will continue to pursue involvement in the National Maternity Services Review.

### National Primary Health Care Strategy

In June, Minister Roxon further announced the Federal Government’s intention to develop a National Primary Health Care Strategy, a key focus of which is broadening the range of primary health care providers whose services are supported by the Medicare Benefits Schedule, particularly to reward and extend preventative health care. An External Reference Group has been appointed to assist the development of the Government’s strategy, chaired by Dr Tony Hobbs, who is the current Chair of the Australian General Practice Network and a GP Obstetrician at Cootamundra. There are twelve other members of the Reference Group, three of whom are practising GPs and one of whom is Dr Barbara Vernon, Executive Director of the Australian College of Midwives. Work on the strategy is designed to coordinate with other health reform processes such as the National Maternity Services Review.

### HAS National Letter Writing Campaign

Thank you all for your efforts to support HAS’s letter-writing campaign seeking Medicare coverage for homebirth services and governmental support for medical indemnity for midwives. The campaign was timed to impact the development of the new government’s health policy and we have received informal feedback that the ‘Medicare for midwives’ message is getting through in Canberra. We hope that the message will feed into the National Maternity Services Review and the Primary Health Care Strategy, and will maintain contact with the offices of both the Health Minister and the Minister for Women in order to keep up the pressure on this issue.

If you haven’t written in yet, it’s not too late—for details of what we are seeking and a letter template, visit [www.homebirthsydney.org.au](http://www.homebirthsydney.org.au)—and be sure to ask your friends and family to support our campaign, too.

### NSW Maternal and Perinatal Health Priority Taskforce

The NSW Maternal and Perinatal Health Priority Taskforce is developing the NSW Action Plan for Normal Birth which will address the issues associated with the rise in the caesarean section rate. The Action Plan is aimed at reducing the caesarean section rate by enhancing strategies to promote normal birth. Apart from improving the health of women and their babies during pregnancy, birth, and the postnatal period, the Action Plan aims to create better experiences for women using the services. The Taskforce has been working for the past two years to develop and implement a range of primary health models of birthing care for health women with normal pregnancies, including general practitioner-midwife care, midwife-only care, group midwifery care and homebirth.

A consultation paper is also being developed to elicit the views of consumers, maternity service providers, and other stakeholders before the final policy document “A New Direction for NSW Maternity Services – towards 2012” is released later this year. ●

## BIRTH CHOICES INFO NIGHT

Friday 31 October 7-9pm  
Annandale Neighbourhood Centre  
79 Johnston Street, Annandale

**To celebrate Homebirth Awareness Week there will be an evening of stalls, information, advice and services for birth and babies.**

If you are interested in having a table to promote your group, organisation or service please contact Jenny Carleton on [jen@npsydney.com.au](mailto:jen@npsydney.com.au) or 0412 970 183.

# HAS in the community

## Evening Community Meetings Series: Expectations of Birth

On Tuesday 1 July, HAS held an evening community meeting in Bondi Junction. Local midwife Betty Vella led a group of about 15 in a discussion of expectations of birth and their effect on the birth experience. Betty kicked off discussion with the scenario of a homebirth unexpectedly transferring to hospital before turning to other examples of how expectations play into birth outcomes. The broad-ranging discussion also encompassed expectations in other areas like breastfeeding and parenting. Following a sociable tea break, Alison told the story of Wilf's birth, which was one of the birth stories in the last issue of *Birthings*.

## Evening Community Meetings Series: Dads at Birth

Our August 12 community meeting was a special occasion, featuring guest speaker David Vernon, who'd travelled from Canberra to be with us. David is the author of three birth-related books, *Having A Great Birth In Australia*, *Men At Birth* and *With Women*, all of which are available for purchase through HAS.

The meeting, at the Australian Doula College in Petersham, was packed to the rafters, with about 50 people crammed on chairs, cushions and the floor.

Following the tea break, Paul Weaver told the story of Haile's birth from the man's perspective, and the group discussed everything from the man's roles in practically preparing the space to dealing with the neighbours.



## NEXT MEETINGS

**Tuesday 23rd September** - *Homebirth After Caesarean*. LED BY AKAL KHALSA  
7-9pm, Mill Hill Centre, 31-33 Spring Street, Bondi Junction

**Friday 31st October** - *Birth Choices Information Night*.  
7-9pm, Annandale Neighbourhood Centre, 79 Johnston Street, Annandale

## SUTHERLAND SHIRE-ST GEORGE HOME BIRTH GROUP

The Sutherland Shire-St George Homebirth group meets once a month at Gunnamatta Park in Cronulla. **Come and join us from 10am on the third Tuesday of each month.** We usually stay until about noon and sit beneath shade near a playground where the older children can play.

It's very informal: we swap birth stories, share parenting ideas and often seem to give each other good toddler recipes. Call Sally on 0425-751 900 if you're planning to come so we know to wait for you if you're running late. Why not make a day of it and pack your swimmers or at least your beach toys. Cronulla beach, a lovely sheltered swimming spot for little ones, is just a hop, skip and a jump away and is glorious at this time of year. Hope to see you soon...

## Secretary's Report

### SARAH MCLEAN

The HAS committee has had a quiet couple of months with many of our committee members enjoying their babymoos. Congratulations to Anne Harris, our merchandise coordinator, on the birth of her beautiful baby Amelia in July. However, we have still been busy with a number of events and projects in the pipeline.

- HAS now has a public presence on Facebook so you can hook up to the network to keep up with what events are going on. It is also an opportunity to meet and chat with some of the other HAS members as well as general Facebook members interested in homebirth.
- We coordinated two very successful information evenings with Betty Vella presenting 'Expectations of Birth' in Bondi Junction in July and David Vernon presenting 'Dads at Birth' in Petersham in August.
- HAS is supporting Jan Robinson in promoting the Birth Choices evening in Annandale for Homebirth Awareness Week on the Friday 31st October 2008.
- We also had a stand at Homebirth Australia's Midwives Retreat in the Blue Mountains on the 26th July. Thank you Sharon Dollimore for organising that!
- We are also in the planning stages of a Homebirth Booklet that can be sold to members and interested parties outlining most of what you need to know to have a homebirth in Sydney. If anyone has any experience in publishing, photography or design and would be interested in writing or assisting in this project, please contact anyone on the committee for more information.

## ADVERTISEMENT



calmbirth® is a childbirth preparation programme developed by Australian midwife, Peter Jackson, which supports the belief that pregnancy, labour and birth are normal life events. In our modern day life, a vast majority of women do not have the opportunity to support other women in birthing their children as we used to in earlier times. Therefore, birth is a great unknown for many women outside of the stories they are told about birth and the impressions they glean from the media. Needless to say, by the time most women are pregnant, they may feel anxious about giving birth and wonder how they can prepare for a positive birth experience.

The calmbirth® programme was developed to bring women back to a place of balance where they can begin to realize what we used to understand in years past: that women's bodies are marvelously designed to give birth to their babies. The purpose of the programme is to eliminate the fear, anxiety and tension that many women experience and support them towards rediscovering the wonder and joy of birth. calmbirth® recognizes the role of the father or birthing companion as vitally important during this time in a woman and baby's life. Therefore, during the calmbirth® classes, both the mother and her partner

or support person will learn simple techniques of relaxation, breathing and visualization. These skills will be practiced during the pregnancy enabling the couple to stay calm and relaxed during the birthing process. An environment is created in the classes where personal healing can take place, eliminating the fear and anxiety associated with labour and childbirth. Couples are empowered to take control of their own birthing experience as they welcome their babies into the world with a sense of calm, confidence and joy. What better start could a family ask for in the beginning of such an amazing journey.

Loving Birth® was created out of Regina Power's belief that birth can be an empowering and joyful life event for families. As a certified doula, calmbirth® practitioner and Master's level counselor, Regina has felt privileged sharing her knowledge with pregnant couples. Regina's beautiful homebirth experience with her daughter Maia last year further supported her belief that calmbirth® does make a positive difference for women, their partners and most of all for babies who are seeing the world for the first time.

For more information about calmbirth® classes, please visit Regina's website: [www.lovingbirth.com.au](http://www.lovingbirth.com.au) or call: 02 9528 4440.

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# Media Watch

## Big push for midwives to be covered

In the *Northern Star* newspaper, federal Page MP Janelle Saffin was quoted in July as saying she would like to see homebirths and other midwifery services covered by Medicare.

Ms Saffin has made a submission to the Federal Government's maternity services review, announced by the Health Minister Nicola Roxon in May. "We have psychiatrists, dieticians and other ancillary medical services that can be provided through Medicare, and I think it should be extended to include midwives," she is quoted as saying.

The article goes on to describe Saffin's concerns that people may choose to birth without medical assistance because they could not afford a midwife or that people would use their baby bonus for this expense.

She is quoted as saying she believes it should be one of the options available to expectant mothers.

## Midwives' unit has its sights set on funding—Hope for birthing at home

In the *Daily Telegraph's* Central Coast Extra section, Richard Noone reports on a midwife-led service recently opened at Wyong Hospital.

According to the article, the midwife-led service at Wyong will only cater for low-risk births and joins two other similar services in NSW, at Belmont and Ryde hospitals. The Maternity Coalition is quoted as saying that they will use the opening of the service to lobby for publically-funded homebirth services in the area.

The article quotes a spokeswoman for NSW Health Minister Reba Meagher as saying area health services are able to provide public homebirth services if a local need is identified.

## Mums heading for home

In the *Illawarra Mercury* on 13 August the health section did a feature on birth alternatives including homebirths and hypnobirthing.

The journalist, Ilsa Cunningham, interviewed Louise Christensen who had her third baby at home after getting advice and support from the Illawarra Birth Choices group.

Midwife Sheila Vaughan is interviewed and says, "the experience is an empowering one." According to the story Vaughan has worked in the nursing field for the past 30 years, and has been with the publicly-funded St George Hospital home birth program in Sydney for a year. There are plans to replicate this service in the Illawarra at Shellharbour Hospital.

Vaughan is setting up her own independent home birthing practice in the Illawarra.

She is quoted as saying homebirth is a natural alternative for low-risk pregnancies.

The article provides the following statistics for recent homebirths in NSW:

NSW homebirth statistics  
 2001 – 144 (total births 84,379)  
 2002 – 99 (total births 84,587)  
 2003 – 109 (total births 85,032)  
 2004 – 93 (total births 84,288)  
 2005 – 112 (total births 89,140)

Source: *NSW Mothers and Babies Report 2005*, NSW Health Department

## Red tape ties up homebirthing service

In June the *Illawarra Mercury* reported independent midwife Marie Heath's concerns about the stipulations attached to a publicly funded homebirth service mean that few are able to take advantage of it.

The article reports that the St George Birthing Centre homebirth program resulted in just 23 at-home deliveries in its first 18 months of operation. Another 17 women who wanted to use the service were transferred to the hospital birthing centre during or before labour.

Illawarra midwife Marie Heath is quoted as saying the cancellation rate of the St George program was too high.

"Publicly funded programs are very strict and often exclude women that would otherwise have been able to achieve a home birth by a private practitioner," she said.

"Why would you be looking at 14 out of 40 being excluded? There's no way my rates would be anything near that."

Health Minister Reba Meagher announced an Illawarra service modelled on St George on the same day midwives learnt the post-natal ward at Shellharbour Hospital was to close.

According to the article, the midwives have yet to receive details of the role they will play in the service, but quotes St George project midwife Shea Caplice saying the program worked best when it was incorporated into the workloads of six midwives, but could operate with four.

Ms Caplice said to the *Illawarra Mercury* that homebirthing "should be" an option for 70

per cent of women, but under the public system many births were classified as high risk and therefore could not occur at home.

Numbers were also down as a result of a lack of trust in the homebirth method, something Ms Caplice hoped would soon be remedied.

Caplice is quoted as saying, "It's relatively new so we don't have the public trust yet, but the evaluation was very positive, the transfers were appropriate and the satisfaction for the women was extremely high."

## Blue Mountains maternity ward closed

Women, children and their families have protested the proposed three month closure of the maternity unit at Blue Mountains, apparently due to severe staff shortages. Little notice was given to women and their families about the closure, while some were not notified at all.

Currently up to 60 women have been left wondering whether they will have to travel much longer distances to Nepean or Lithgow Hospitals which are already understaffed and overcrowded. A local doula, Natalie Dash, said women were "shocked" by the decision and many attended the rally at the hospital on 21 July. "They're incredibly disappointed ... if they wanted to birth in another hospital they would have booked in nine months ago," Ms Dash said.

New South Wales Health Minister Reba Meagher has said that birthing services will be restored within two months. In the meantime, though, the extra travel for pregnant women

may have a huge impact on the birthing mother and baby.

This story was reported widely through radio, television and print media.

### One-to-one midwifery in Qld

Queensland plans to improve its regional maternity services by providing one-to-one midwifery support to pregnant women in a trial in Ipswich, Logan and Charleville hospitals, the *Courier Mail* reported on 4 August. The program aims to reduce the number of women travelling to larger centres for maternity services and provides up to 600 'low-risk' women a year, for four years, with access to the same midwife or team of midwives. Qld Health Minister Stephen Robertson identified key advantages to one-to-one midwifery as including decreased rates of obstetric intervention, operative birth, pharmacological pain relief, post-natal depression and post-birth hospital admissions, and increasing breastfeeding rates. If successful, the trial will be rolled out to other regional centres.

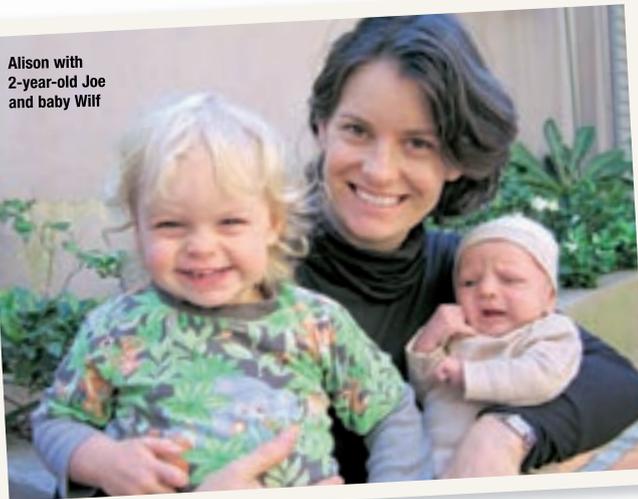
### Noni praises our Maggie

Noni Hazelhurst has named Maggie Lecky-Thompson, Noni's midwife for two homebirths, as one of the most inspiring women she's ever met, in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 9 July. Noni also said that she supports homebirths and breastfeeding for as long as possible, noting "they're two of the most wonderful experiences a woman could ever have." Incidentally, she also disdains high heels.

 your options

# Birth choices

The type of care you want and where and how to have your baby are very personal decisions. Three women share their stories with **Linda Barnier**



Alison with 2-year-old Joe and baby Wilf

### Home birth

Alison, mum to Joe, 2 years, and Wilf, 3 weeks

My two babies were born at home and both were caught by their father. I chose to give birth at home for several reasons. I keenly wanted a natural birth and to feel what it was like to give birth to new life. I also liked the way it valued and included the partner. A home birth also means that older siblings can be present while in their own environment.

The key to preparing for giving birth at home is to hire an independent practising midwife who

is experienced in home births. My midwife attended my home for all visits and came to me for the birth and support following it. Midwives charge about \$4000 for providing all antenatal and postnatal care, as well as attendance at the birth. None of this is covered by Medicare. A few health insurance funds give rebates – mine rebated \$1500 per birth.

You don't need a lot of 'gear' to birth. The midwife has her own kit which includes an oxygen tank, in case the baby needs resuscitation, and a handheld doppler monitor for monitoring the baby's heart rate. If you want a water birth, some midwives provide pools, or you can

### Birth-centre baby

Hannah, mum to Zen, 3 months

I believe that birth is natural and beautiful and I wanted my birth experience to be as non-invasive and organic as possible. Birth centres offer large, cosy rooms with things like a bath, lounge and double bed. It's a home birth away from home with the reassurance that if anything goes wrong, medical attention isn't too far away. They offer full midwifery care, an alternative to epidurals and other drugs, and a very positive 'you can do it' attitude that encourages women to make their own choices.

My birth centre only accepts a limited number of women per month so my name was entered into a ballot through my doctor. We secured our place through second-round offers. After being accepted in the centre I had my check-ups with the midwives there and

buy or hire these, or use a bath. For a 'land birth' you need one or two drop sheets – a few dollars from a hardware store – and old towels and sheets.

You'll need to consider all scenarios in preparing for your home birth.

A small percentage of women having home births transfer to hospital and some people have a back-up booking at their nearest public hospital so they've got basic records like blood type on file.

My first son's birth was a long, challenging labour. At one point I begged to be taken to the hospital and be given an epidural. Fortunately, my midwife and partner knew that's not what I'd wanted and supported me through the final hour of labour to birth naturally in the bathtub.

My second son's birth was much faster and calmer. We had a carer for Joe who made a cake with him while my partner and I worked with the contractions. I called my midwife when things started intensifying, hopped in the bath moments before she arrived and gave birth about an hour later, breathing the baby gently out without pushing. I cuddled up with my family on the sofa for hours afterwards while we all celebrated with tea and cake.

Photography: Hailey Bartholomew. Readers' own

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### Breastfed babies acquire taste for different foods

Breastfeeding may prepare the infant for flavour changes and new experiences when they start to eat solid foods. *New Scientist*

reported on 26 July that a new study into breast milk has shown that different foods eaten by the mother take varying amounts of time to appear.

The study, conducted at the University of Copenhagen in Denmark, asked 18 lactating

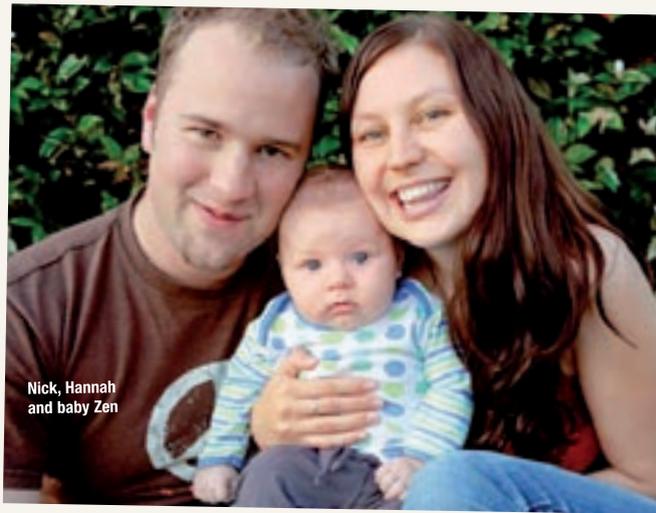
women to provide samples of their breast milk prior to taking capsules of various flavours and then at regular intervals afterwards. The flavours tested were banana, liquorice, caraway seed and menthol. The four flavours took up to eight hours

my husband, Nick, and I attended their antenatal classes. I developed the birth plan with my midwives.

I was encouraged to stay in my own environment for as long as possible, so after 15 hours of labour at home we went in. Through the whole labour I did my own thing. We had music playing and oils burning, and I felt very nurtured and supported. Zen was born into water and then I got out of the bath and held him, uninterrupted, while I birthed the placenta and got stitches.

The midwives encouraged me to have lots of skin-to-skin contact and bonding time so he hardly left my arms for the day I was in hospital. Nick stayed overnight with us in our big double bed, too.

My birth centre is part of a public hospital so my check-ups and stay didn't cost us a thing. All we paid for were the ultrasounds, and we claimed



Nick, Hannah and baby Zen

rebates through Medicare.

Most birth centres are against intervention unless it's needed, so I wouldn't recommend it to women who are keen on having pain-relief drugs. I couldn't be happier with the

way my baby and I met for the first time – in a loving and caring environment that allowed us to enjoy each other and bond in the most secure and intimate way.

“I chose a private hospital because I'm a safety-first girl. I felt more secure in a medical environment where I knew we'd be closely monitored”

### Off to hospital

Josephine, mum to Tobey, 3 years, and Will, 6 weeks

I chose a private hospital for giving birth because I'm a safety-first girl. I felt more secure in a medical environment where I knew we would be closely

monitored and if anything went wrong the best of help would be close by. I also have a low pain threshold and wanted access to an epidural.

As soon as I knew I was pregnant I contacted the private hospital of my choice to book in. I knew the hospital booked out quickly and if I delayed I wouldn't get in. I also contacted my preferred obstetrician for the same reason. My obstetrician charged \$4500 and we got \$3000 back through Medicare. Medicare also reimbursed \$40 for every ultrasound, which cost \$120 each.

The hospital offered a six-week antenatal course but my husband and I didn't sign up as we'd already attended classes for my first

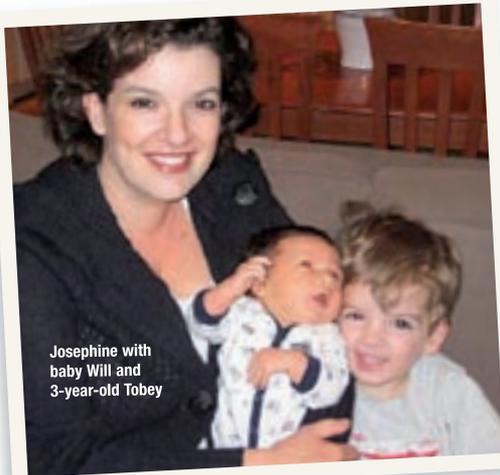
pregnancy. The hospital stay and anaesthetist were covered by our private health insurance so we were only out-of-pocket our health care premium, which was \$200.

When I went into labour I stayed at home for as long as I felt comfortable but called the hospital a few times for advice and support. On my arrival at the delivery suite I was examined by my obstetrician and, as I wanted an epidural, an anaesthetist was called. The epidural was set up and after many hours of pain-free labour – the hospital staff respected and supported my choices and birth plan – my obstetrician appeared and shortly after Will was born. They calmly dealt with the umbilical cord being wrapped around his neck, then the midwife placed him on my chest and my husband cut the cord.

We spent four days in hospital where I had access to lactation consultants, midwives and baby care classes. Five weeks later, even after an episiotomy, my body feels like it has been returned to me from pregnancy.

PP

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Josephine with baby Will and 3-year-old Tobey

to hold her nipple in place whilst feeding her son Sam as a newborn.

Made from polyester quilting with a cotton exterior, the sling attaches to any maternity bra and lifts the breast up for easier breastfeeding and attachment. “This means an easier feed for the baby without the need for the usual supports to keep the breast in place”

This episode aired 30 July on ABC1 and Emma Hollingsworth was judged the winning inventor of the evening.

### Time Magazine explores homebirth

In an article titled ‘Giving Birth at Home’, *Time Magazine* has taken a look at the state of homebirth in the USA. The story reports that homebirth rates are on the rise and attributes the increase to well-educated women wanting to birth naturally.

According to the magazine, homebirths still account for less than 1% of U.S. births, but there's a movement to license more lay midwives to attend home births.

“Concerned by this development, the American Medical Association (AMA) is urging lawmakers to curb the home-birthing movement, including having the licensing of so-called direct-entry midwives—who do not have nursing degrees—overseen by a state medical-practitioner board.”

In the US having a homebirth is considered cheaper than a hospital delivery, the article quoting a fee of between \$1,000 and \$5,000 for midwives.

to disappear from the breast milk, with banana disappearing after one hour and menthol lasting from two to eight hours. The results so far suggest that breastfeeding may give a child a taste for new foods, as they have already been exposed to

different flavours by the foods their mother eats.

### Breastfeeding sling on New Inventors

The ABC TV program *New Inventors* featured a product

called the Breastfeeding Sling to aid mothers with larger breasts to breastfeed more comfortably. The inventor, Emma Hollingsworth, a primary school teacher from Bendigo in Victoria, designed the sling after finding it difficult



## mum's the word

with Antonia Kidman, *New Idea's* parenting expert and mum of four

# Special delivery

Having a natural birth at home can be an empowering experience for a mum-to-be

**W**hen Anne Harris fell pregnant with her first child, she assumed she'd give birth in a hospital. 'I came from a corporate environment where most people would have c-sections and go back to work,' she says.

But as her pregnancy progressed, she found the regular visits to her obstetrician made her doubt and fear the birth process.

'I then opted for a midwife and decided to birth in the hospital birth centre,' Anne explains. 'I found the midwife's explanation of my options and what all the tests were for more comforting. She empowered me.'

### Comforts of home

One month before her baby was due, Anne had a strong feeling against birthing in hospital.

'I wanted complete freedom of choice and an unmedicated normal birth,' she says.

Anne and her husband Jason had done a very extensive antenatal course that focused on active birth. She didn't think birthing in a hospital or a birth centre would support this to the extent she desired.

'I felt that the hospital system wasn't encouraging me to trust my body,' Anne says. 'I had a fear that if I birthed in a hospital my labour would stop. One evening I told my husband I didn't think I'd be able to have our baby in a hospital. He was very supportive.'

So it was decided Anne would have her baby in the familiar and comfortable surroundings of her home.

### Preparing for labour

Now pregnant with her second child, Anne is planning another home birth. An independent midwife is on call for any concerns Anne may have. The midwife will be present for the birth and visit for the next six to 10 days.

'I've always used a lot of alternative therapies and I practice yoga,' Anne says. 'I prepare my mind and body for labour. I'm well informed about the stages of it. You find many people who choose to home birth are very health-conscious, as they take ownership for birthing their child.'

### Birth without fear

Organising a home birth isn't difficult, but Anne says she couldn't do it without the support of an experienced midwife who she trusts completely. Her husband also plays an important part.

'He's very proactive,' she says. 'During Isaac's birth his role was very clear.'

Anne's first labour was a new experience, but she wasn't scared because she was comfortable in her own environment.

'I go into it with a very open mind,' she says.

'I purely believe in my body and the way it can birth.'



## Charlotte leads the way for expectant mothers by opting to give birth at home again

The Welsh newspaper, *The Western Mail* reports that the singer and TV presenter Charlotte Church is choosing to have a second homebirth after her daughter Ruby was born at home last year.

The story says, 'Experts believe the singer and television presenter, who has also become a spokeswoman for breastfeeding, has become a positive role model for young girls.'

'Charlotte's decision to opt for a second home birth comes as the number of home births in parts of Wales has risen to 25%—far exceeding the Welsh Assembly Government's target increase of 10%.'

A friend of Church's is quoted as saying: 'Charlotte chose to have a home birth because she would have more privacy and because she wanted to be in a place she felt comfortable in, with Gavin Henson at her side.'

## Irish waterbirths suspended following baby's death

A baby born into water in an Irish hospital breathed in water and died three days later, in February 2006, according to an inquest completed in June this year.

The Irish Independent reported on 16 June that, following the inquest, waterbirths have been suspended in Irish maternity hospitals and units, with birth pools now available only for pain relief. Irish mothers who want a water birth now must hire their own birthing pool and midwife and birth at home.

## PRE-NATAL SERVICES

## CITY &amp; EAST

**Naomi Abeshouse**

—Acupuncturist

*Acupuncturist, Chinese Herbalist & Doula.*

B Hth Sci, TCM (UTS), Dip TCM (Guangxi, China),  
Post-Grad Cert Jap Ac, Post-Grad Cert Paed TCM,  
BA (UNSW).

Naomi offers a unique blend of Japanese and Chinese acupuncture, and Chinese herbal medicine, providing a comprehensive and gentle therapeutic approach. Specialising in Gynaecology and Obstetrics, Naomi has supported many women through conception, pregnancy, birth and post-natal issues in her busy Woollahra practice. Naomi provides home or hospital visits to women in labour, or those who cannot travel.

**Naomi: 0413 690 861****61 Queen St, Woollahra****naomiabeshouse@optusnet.com.au****Australian Doula College**

Please see our listing on this page under Birth Support Services: Doulas.

**Herbalwell Natural Medicine**

—Herbalist, Nutritionist, Birth Kits

I offer compassionate holistic health care for women and their partners during pregnancy, birth and the post partum period. Herbs and vitamins are powerful natural medicines that combat conditions such as exhaustion, sleep deprivation, food cravings, mood swings and pain. Call me to discuss your needs and to nourish your body through this transformational time. Herbal and Homeopathic Birth Kits also available.

**Su-lin Sze:****0404 411 848 9386 1060****101 Mill Hill Road****Bondi Junction, 2022****www.herbalwell.com.au**

## INNER SYDNEY SUBURBS

**Rebecca Gouldhurst**

—Doula, Naturopath, Counsellor, Pregnancy Masseur and Hypnobirthing

I am a passionate doula practicing from a naturopathic and counselling background. I have been in practice for 14 years. Being a doula allows me to support parents-to-be with my wisdom and experience of the birth process and the know how to create the birth that you want. Birth is a magical time that I am honoured to be part of. I have experience both at home and in hospitals and have different packages to suit all. All enquiries welcome.

**Rebecca Gouldhurst:****93864243 0415304369****counsellor@doula.net.au**

## NORTH SYDNEY AND NORTHERN BEACHES

**All about Birth**

—calmbirth®

calmbirth® is a two day preparation for birth course that is suitable for those planning a homebirth, water birth, active and natural birth. calmbirth® affirms that birth is a normal physiological process, and you will learn skills to use during pregnancy, birth and beyond. Contact Louise for more details and course dates

**Half day birth and parenting program**

A comprehensive course that provides positive information and discussion on labour and birth.

**Louise Luscri: 0808 231 759****info@allaboutbirth.com.au****www.allaboutbirth.com.au**

## ANNANDALE/INNER WEST

**Birthsense**

—Hypnobirthing

Personal and creative birth education, counselling and body centred hypnosis for a positive pregnancy, birth and bonding. Weekend workshops, women's groups also.

**Jackie McFarlane: 9566 1035****jackchip@optusnet.com.au**

## HILLS DISTRICT

**Powerbirth®**

Powerbirth Training Program. Well-being in pregnancy and mind/body preparation for self-reliance and natural childbirth. Prenatal yoga and mind training, relaxation, education, breathing.

*Westmead Private Hospital and Castle Hill*

**Corinne A. Doret: (02) 9654 9903****corinne@hillsyoga.net.au****www.hillsyoga.net.au/powerbirth.php****www.hillsyoga.net.au**

## SUTHERLAND/ST GEORGE

**Transition into Parenthood**

—Calmbirth® preparation course

The calmbirth® course is an amazing course, it imparts the knowledge of birth preparation techniques such as deep relaxation, visualisation, breathing, positive imagery, attitudes/expectancy to achieve a rewarding, easier, more comfortable stress-free birthing experience. Many women who have done the calmbirth® course during their pregnancy are far more likely to have positive feelings about their birthing experience. Their partners and midwives are quite often very impressed with how beautifully they've worked with their body during the labour. Couples often comment upon completion of the course "Everyone should do this course!"

Julie has been trained by Peter Jackson, midwife and calmbirth® founder/trainer [www.calmbirth.com.au](http://www.calmbirth.com.au) at Bowral and is a qualified registered calmbirth® practitioner. Special note: Julie's calmbirth® course is very reasonably priced.

**Julie Clarke:****9544 6441 0401 265 530****www.julieclarke.com.au****for dates and discount****9 Withybrook Place Sylvania****(just 20 mins south of the airport)****julie@julieclarke.com.au****Transition into Parenthood**

—Childbirth and Parenting Preparation

Wonderful, comprehensive courses focused on natural active birth including waterbirth, including practicalities of baby care. Participants receive professionally presented well organised course notes. Very suitable for homebirth, birth centre and delivery suite. Julie has birthed at home and also a birth centre, she has attended many births providing support over the last 20 years, in a variety of settings; homebirth, delivery suite, birth centres, operating theatre.

See Julie's website for more details, birth stories and pictures, information [www.julieclarke.com.au](http://www.julieclarke.com.au)

Julie has a great sense of humour and a very gentle approach, she is supportive and flexible in her teaching approach. Good variety of courses to choose from: 6 wk course 1 night per week or 2 Saturdays condensed or 1 Sunday super condensed. Reasonably priced and discount available.

**Julie Clarke:****9544 6441 0401 265 530****www.julieclarke.com.au for dates and discount****9 Withybrook Place Sylvania (just 20 mins south of the airport)****julie@julieclarke.com.au**

## SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS

**Pregnancy Workshops**

Midwife Jane Hardwicke Collings gives regular workshops—"Pregnancy The Inner Journey"—in the Southern Highlands and in other places by arrangement.

Also starting in Spring 2009 "The School of Shamanic Midwifery"—a women's mysteries school for doulas and midwives

**Jane Hardwicke Collings:****48882002 0408035808****janecollings@bigpond.com****www.moonsong.com.au****www.placentalremedy.com**

BIRTH SUPPORT SERVICES **DOULAS****EASTERN SUBURBS/  
CITY/INNER WEST****Australian Doula College & The  
Centre For Spiritual Birth &  
Development**

The Australian Doula College is an integrated health care centre providing education, support and continuity of care for women during pregnancy childbirth and beyond. Through our network of qualified and experienced educators, doulas and practitioners, we offer a variety of services, treatments and support. As a training facility, we provide the support of a trainee doula for only \$165; qualified doulas range from \$600-\$1500. We look forward to being of service to you in this amazing time of your life. Please visit the website for our full range of services.

**31 Brighton Street  
Petersham NSW 2049  
2 9560 8288 2 9568 3116**  
[www.austriandoulacollege.com.au](http://www.austriandoulacollege.com.au)  
[moreinfo@austriandoulacollege.com.au](mailto:moreinfo@austriandoulacollege.com.au)

**Birthing Rites**

Birthing Rites trains and provides Doulas trained by Marie Burrows, with 32 years experience in the field of childbirth, pregnancy and parenting education and counselling. We provide a referral service for our doulas who have undertaken Australia's longest and most comprehensive doula education course. Trainee doulas also available.

**Marie Burrows: (02) 9387 3615**  
[www.birthingrites.com](http://www.birthingrites.com)  
[birthingrites@zipworld.com.au](mailto:birthingrites@zipworld.com.au)

**Erika Elliott**

I believe every woman and baby deserves to be supported through their journey of labour and birth. Every couple blanketed as they work together during this sacred time. I am a dedicated mother, doula, calmbirth educator, birth photographer and blessingway facilitator. My passion lies in inspiring couples to find their voice and follow their hearts as they bring their babies peacefully into the world. Whatever kind of birth you dream of or have, I will support you through this transformative time.

**Erika Elliott:**  
**9810 3034 0425 217 788**  
[erikaswa@hotmail.com](mailto:erikaswa@hotmail.com)

**HILLS DISTRICT****Adrienne Abulhawa**  
Holistic Birth

Care and support for pregnancy, birth and baby. Homebirths, birth centre or hospital births. Also pre-natal and post-natal care, mother and baby massage, birth preparation, meditation and relaxation, birth planning and breastfeeding support.

**Adrienne: 0416 511 118**  
[adrienne@holisticbirth.com.au](mailto:adrienne@holisticbirth.com.au)  
[www.holisticbirth.com.au](http://www.holisticbirth.com.au)

**We want to list your  
services as a Doula**

*To list on this page, please contact  
the Advertising Coordinator at  
[birthingsadvertising@yahoo.com.au](mailto:birthingsadvertising@yahoo.com.au).*

**HOME BIRTH SUPPORT GROUPS****SYDNEY (HAS)****Evening discussion meetings  
in Sydney**

Public meetings on topics related to homebirth in Bondi Junction and Petersham. Meetings run 7:00 to 9:00pm and feature a guest speaker and theme topic, a birth story and time for tea and socialising. All welcome. Details of upcoming meetings in the Calendar.

**Homebirth Parents' Group**

For HAS members, meeting the 2nd Wednesday of each month at Amelia Allan's house, 5 Warner St, Gladesville. Details of upcoming meetings in the Calendar. Bring a piece of fruit for the children and a little something for our morning tea (if you are empty-handed, still welcome!). Indoor and outdoor play space, plenty of toys. Call Amelia with any questions on 9817 4512 or 0414 895 910.

**NEW SOUTH WALES****Birth Central (Far south coast)**

Cindy (02) 6494 0131  
[www.birthcentral.org.au](http://www.birthcentral.org.au)

**Blue Mountains Homebirth  
Support**

*Gatherings fortnightly on a Tuesday at 10am.*  
Natalie Dash (02) 4757 2080  
[nataliedash@optusnet.com.au](mailto:nataliedash@optusnet.com.au)

**Clarence Valley Birth Support**

Laena Jongen-Morter  
(02) 6649 4271

**Far North Coast NSW**

Jillian Delailie (02) 6689 1641

**Illawarra Homebirth Support**

Karen Sanders (02) 4225 3727

**Mid North Coast Homebirth  
Support Resource & Referral**

Berry Engel-Jones  
(W) 6652 8111 (H) 6655 0707

**Mothers and Midwives of the  
South (Southern Highlands)**

Jane Collings  
(02) 4888 2002 or 0408 035 808  
*We meet every month in the Illawarra area. Contact Jaia on 0431 709978 or [jaia\\_shanti@yahoo.com.au](mailto:jaia_shanti@yahoo.com.au) for more details. Everyone welcome.*

**INTERSTATE & NATIONAL****Homebirth Australia**

Jo Hunter (02) 4751 9840  
[homebirth.australia@bigpond.com](mailto:homebirth.australia@bigpond.com)

**Queensland**

(07) 3839 5883 | email [info@homebirth.org.au](mailto:info@homebirth.org.au)

**Darwin Homebirth Group**

(09) 8985 5871  
[darwin.homebirth@octa4.net.au](mailto:darwin.homebirth@octa4.net.au)

**Homebirth in the Hills  
—Dandenong Ranges**

Melinda Whyman (03) 9754 1347  
[mwhyman@bigpond.net.au](mailto:mwhyman@bigpond.net.au)

**Homebirth on the  
Mornington Peninsula**

Kim (03) 5987 0657

BIRTHING SERVICES **MIDWIVES****Birth With Gentle Choices**

Offering continuity of midwifery care during pregnancy, birth and postnatally. Birth is a natural, and empowering experience that is part of a normal life journey rather than a medical event.

Providing support for women and their families and encouragement to believe in herself and her ability to birth instinctively.

**Betty Vella: 9540 4992**  
(Gymea)

[bpvella@optushome.com.au](mailto:bpvella@optushome.com.au)

**One to One Midwifery Care**

If your expectations are of having a natural birth, less intervention, shared decision making and continuity of care with your own midwife in a safe environment then this service is for you! Women can choose to have their babies at home or in a natural birthing centre. A tailor-made pregnancy plan is offered together with medical liaison if required or requested.

**Jan Robinson: 0418 117 560**  
[midwife@ozemail.com.au](mailto:midwife@ozemail.com.au)  
[www.midwiferyeducation.com.au](http://www.midwiferyeducation.com.au)

**Sydney Homebirth Practice**

Akal Khalsa has been offering her individualised midwifery care to women in Sydney since 1979. She will provide experienced, comprehensive and personalised care throughout your pregnancy, birth and the postnatal period. With Akal as your midwife you will be assured of professional care and full and accurate information throughout this vital time. She is available by phone, 24 hours, 7 days a week. Akal has over 30 years experience as a midwife and childbirth educator and will help you and your partner prepare emotionally, mentally and physically so you can approach the birth of your baby with joy and confidence. She has many years experience with water births, lotus births and vaginal after caesarean births.

**Akal Khalsa: 9660 2127**  
[www.ourmidwife.com.au](http://www.ourmidwife.com.au)

**Birth From Within**

Personal holistic midwifery care during your special time of pregnancy, birth and parenthood. My philosophy is one of nonintervention, working in partnership with you and your family. I live in the Nowra/St Georges Basin area.

**Robyn Borgas: 4443 2509**  
[paul.borgas@bigpond.com](mailto:paul.borgas@bigpond.com)

**New Beginnings Midwifery Practice**

New Beginnings Midwifery Practice offers a personalised approach to pregnancy, birth and beyond. Receive comprehensive prenatal care with your own midwife. New Beginnings can assist you with homebirth, hospital birth or birth centre birth. Extensive postnatal visits. Access to information, resources and a large lending library. Care and support available 24 hours a day.

**Robyn Dempsey: 9888 7829**  
(North Ryde)

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

**Homebirth Midwife**

Pregnancy and birth is a normal, healthy life experience. As natural as it is to conceive your baby in a loving, safe and intimate environment, labouring and birthing at home, in your own relaxed setting, gives you the freedom to follow your body's instinctive knowledge of birthing naturally, without restrictions.

As a Midwife, I have immense passion for my career and gain great professional and personal satisfaction from it. I offer a holistic approach to midwifery care, providing care throughout your pregnancy, labour and birth (a birthing pool is available for water birth) and postnatal care up to 4 weeks after the birth of your baby. All care is provided in your home.

**Jacqui Wood: 0430 109 400**  
(Greater Sydney)  
[midwifejac@hotmail.com](mailto:midwifejac@hotmail.com)

**Wholistic Midwifery**

I take a wholistic approach to pregnancy and birth, as well as to general health. I am a nutritionist and herbalist as well as a midwife, so my service can include these tools in your care. I provide full antenatal and postnatal homebirth care, as well as providing postnatal care for women who have birthed in hospital but return home soon afterwards. I practise in the Southern Highlands area.

**Victoria Kleeberg:**  
**48 615 744 0404 489 484**  
[kleeberg@bigpond.net.au](mailto:kleeberg@bigpond.net.au)

**Pregnancy, Birth & Beyond**

Looking for special care during your pregnancy, birth and as new parents? Receive personalised, professional care by an experienced midwife. Pregnancy, Birth and Beyond supports women and their families birthing at home, birth centre or hospital. Midwifery care helps you avoid unnecessary interventions and to be recognised as the most important member of the birth team. Pregnancy, Birth and Beyond aims to assist families achieve an empowering birth experience. For full details of services please visit our website.

**Jane Palmer: 9873 1750**  
(Dundas Valley)  
[www.pregnancy.com.au](http://www.pregnancy.com.au)

**Birthing Babies**

Birthing Babies is the private midwifery and antenatal education practice offered by midwife Victoria Jones. Victoria is an independently practicing midwife in Port Macquarie, on the mid-north coast of New South Wales. Birthing Babies conducts antenatal education weekends for women who want the latest information and education about pregnancy and birth in a fun, friendly, and supportive workshop format. We also offer birth support for women who plan to birth at home.

**Victoria Jones: 6581 4695**  
(Port Macquarie NSW)  
[www.birthingbabies.com.au](http://www.birthingbabies.com.au)  
[midwife@birthingbabies.com.au](mailto:midwife@birthingbabies.com.au)

**St George Hospital Homebirth Service**

This public health service is available to women in the St George and Sutherland Shire area. Continuity of care is provided by two midwives throughout pregnancy, birth and the postnatal period.

**For further information, call the midwives at the Birth Centre on 9113 3103.**

*Homebirth Access Sydney (Inc)*

*HAS Policy Statement*

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

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

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

MAGAZINE ADVERTISING RATES		
	Single (1 Issue)	Annual (4 issues)
<b>Service Pages</b>		
Doula Listing	n/a	\$25
Services Listing	n/a	\$35
<b>Colour Advertisements</b>		
Business Card Display	\$20	\$70
Quarter Page Display	\$30	\$110
Half Page Display	\$40	\$150
Full Page Display	\$65	\$250
<b>Coming soon: ONLINE ADVERTISING</b>		
For details, please email <a href="mailto:jen@npsydne.com.au">jen@npsydne.com.au</a>		

HAS ABN 75 947 458 113

**HAS MISSION STATEMENT**

Homebirth Access Sydney is a viable and visible organisation working with integrity to support mothers and families' rights to informed and empowered home birth.

YOU ARE WELCOME TO ATTEND

**Homebirth Access Sydney (HAS) Committee Meetings**

10.00am–12.00 noon  
on the last Friday of every month  
At the home of Jo Tilly  
50 Victoria Road, Marrickville

There is an area for children to play while we meet  
Bring a plate or something to nibble

**Please call to confirm meeting as there are sometimes late changes:**

Jo Tilly 9519 8524

**Next meetings: 26 September, 31 October, 28 November**

# calendar



Diaries & pencils at the ready, please. It's time to get involved!

September		November	
Wed 10	<b>Homebirth Parents' Group.</b> 10am-12pm, Amelia Allan's house, 5 Warner St, Gladesville. For details or to confirm, call Amelia: 9817 4512 or 0414 895 910. All welcome.	Sat 1	<b>Birthings Summer submissions deadline.</b> Send your articles, birth stories and photos to Danni Townsend at <a href="mailto:dannit@bigpond.net.au">dannit@bigpond.net.au</a>
Tues 16	<b>Sutherland Shire and St. George Homebirth Group.</b> 10am, Gunnamatta Park, Cronulla. Call Sally on 0425 751 900.	Wed 12	<b>Homebirth Parents' Group.</b> 10am-12pm, Amelia Allan's house, 5 Warner St, Gladesville. For details or to confirm, call Amelia: 9817 4512 or 0414 895 910. All welcome.
Tues 23	<b>Evening discussion meeting, open to the public.</b> 'Homebirth after caesarean?' Led by midwife Jacqui Woods. 7-9pm, Room 2, Mill Hill Centre, 31-33 Spring Street, Bondi Junction. For details, call Alison Leemen on 9665 1670.	Fri 15	<b>Birthings Summer advertising deadline.</b> Contact Jenny Carleton on <a href="mailto:jen@npsydney.com.au">jen@npsydney.com.au</a>
Fri 26	<b>HAS Committee meeting.</b> 10am-12pm, Jo Tilly's house, 50 Victoria Road, Marrickville. Please call Jo to confirm beforehand as there are sometimes late changes: 9519 8524. All welcome.	Tues 28	<b>Sutherland Shire and St. George Homebirth Group.</b> 10am, Gunnamatta Park, Cronulla. Call Sally on 0425 751 900.
<b>October</b>		Fri 31	<b>HAS Committee meeting.</b> 10am-12pm, Jo Tilly's house, 50 Victoria Road, Marrickville. Please call Jo to confirm beforehand as there are sometimes late changes: 9519 8524. All welcome.
Wed 8	<b>Homebirth Parents' Group.</b> 10am-12pm, Amelia Allan's house, 5 Warner St, Gladesville. For details or to confirm, call Amelia: 9817 4512 or 0414 895 910. All welcome.	<b>December</b>	
Tues 21	<b>Sutherland Shire and St. George Homebirth Group.</b> 10am, Gunnamatta Park, Cronulla. Call Sally on 0425 751 900.	Early	<b>Birthings Summer issue in letterboxes</b>
Fri 31	<b>HAS Committee meeting.</b> 10am-12pm, Jo Tilly's house, 50 Victoria Road, Marrickville. Please call Jo to confirm beforehand as there are sometimes late changes: 9519 8524. All welcome.	Wed 10	<b>Homebirth Parents' Group.</b> 10am-12pm, Amelia Allan's house, 5 Warner St, Gladesville. For details or to confirm, call Amelia: 9817 4512 or 0414 895 910. All welcome.
Fri 31	<b>Birth Choices Evening.</b> 7-9pm, 2nd floor, Annandale Community Centre, 79 Johnston Street, Annandale. Call Danni Townsend on 9011 5708. Stalls from lots of groups associated with birth, breastfeeding, babies and women's health. Come and browse...everyone welcome.	Tues 16	<b>Sutherland Shire and St. George Homebirth Group.</b> 10am, Gunnamatta Park, Cronulla. Call Sally on 0425 751 900.
		TBA	<b>HAS Committee Christmas party</b> —volunteer to help and come along!

## Evening Community Meetings Series in 2009.

Our popular evening community meetings will not be run in 2009 unless new volunteers are able to take on the planning, organisation and hosting of these meetings. Our committee members are currently stretched to capacity and beyond. If you are able to take on the meetings, please contact Alison Leemen or Danni Townsend (details inside front cover).



The next issue is our  
**100th**  
the topic is  
**A Birthings Retrospective**

**Please contact the editors if you'd like to discuss writing an article on this theme, so we can plan our content for this special edition.**

As always, we welcome your birth announcements, birth stories, letters and book reviews.

**Reminder**

Update your membership details by email to Amelia Allen at [ameliaa@iprimus.net.au](mailto:ameliaa@iprimus.net.au) to ensure you continue to receive *Birthings*, as we may be switching to electronic format following the withdrawal of our sponsor. And if you know of a potential new sponsor to assist with the printing, mailing or funding of *Birthings*, please contact Alison Leemen at [aleemen@bigpond.net.au](mailto:aleemen@bigpond.net.au).

**BIRTHINGS** is your magazine. **Please contribute!**

Submissions due Saturday 1 November 2008.

EMAIL THE EDITORS AT [DANNIT@BIGPOND.NET.AU](mailto:DANNIT@BIGPOND.NET.AU)