

# Birth in Brief

The monthly bulletin of Maternity Coalition, Victoria

Issue 3: November 05

## Editorial

This *Birth in Brief* comes to you from England, where we've travelled to celebrate Sam's first birthday: my baby is growing up so fast! So, for this issue I'd like to send out a 'thank you' to midwives in general and specifically to the two who were with us when he was born on a sunny day last November.

## Planned Homebirths in Victoria, 2004

*Andrea Bilcliff*

Information received from the Victorian Perinatal Data Collection Unit reveals that 228 women planned to give birth at home in 2004, 24% more than in the previous year. The actual number of births recorded as planned homebirths was 181, with 47 women giving birth in hospital. Twenty-eight women (12%) transferred to hospital before the onset of labour and 19 women (8%) transferred during labour.

Labour commenced spontaneously in 86% of all the women and the 'normal' vaginal birth rate was 91%, regardless of where the actual birth took place. Two (1%) women had vaginal breech births. The instrumental birth rate was 2% and just 6% of all women planning a homebirth had a caesarean birth.

Once again, Victorian women planning homebirths in the care of midwives have demonstrated excellent outcomes!

(This is a summary of the report to be printed in the December issue of Birth Matters).

## President's Update

*Leslie Arnott*

Last week I was able to meet with the Executive Officer, Erica Myers-Davis, of ABA. Although Erica has unfortunately tendered her resignation and will be leaving the organisation in another week, it was great to establish the link. During the meeting she invited me to a luncheon with her and some other acquaintances, this week. She suggested I attend this luncheon to meet David Wright, CEO of the College of GPs. Had a grand old time with him on Wednesday and will be following up with him to arrange a meeting shortly.

Today I spoke at a NACE workshop. I gave them a synopsis of what MC was doing around the country and also provided them with additional info that they wouldn't normally be privy to. They were very intrigued as to where I obtained my information so I invited them all to join our MCVic yahoo list. We will see in Victoria soon, a number of new recruits on the list and I also encouraged them to be members of MC so that they could benefit from the networking and support.

After that, a quick tram ride took me to the Cochrane Consumer workshop. What a great meeting of minds and exchange of information. I brought up the issue of Cochrane's credibility in terms of information surrounding breech trials and active management of third stage trials. One of their steering committee members commented that Cochrane has a response mechanism on their

website for all those who question their reviews. I commented that it should act more effectively to overwhelming responses by requesting re-trials. They took this on board and agreed that it was something required.

Our discussion also went around the question of 'how can Cochrane reach the end user: the consumer?' Whilst others believed it was through effective dissemination to caregivers, I argued that they simply needed to consult a marketing company. By reaching the end user first, the behaviour of the caregivers, policy makers, governance groups etc. would change. They took this on board also. Although, funding and resources are a major issue here.

Made some great connections with people from Cochrane (some asking me to join Cochrane to assist their consumer arm). Will keep you posted on developments.

## Meeting with MP in Mansfield

*Cathy Fitzgerald*

The meeting was a huge thing for Dave and I to put together as our baby was only a couple of months old and we have just started a new business and extensions on our house. Why do we do these things to ourselves?

After having my first two babies in the hospital system 13 years ago, then experiencing a beautiful birth at home, naturally as birth should be, I felt very strongly about voicing women's rights to choice.

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The journey to Connor's birth was quite intense at times and a massive growing experience for Dave and I and our midwife, as we came up against many 'obstacles' along the way to test our strength, courage and belief in ourselves!

It actually sounded more horrifying hearing from someone else. Anyway there was only one or two dry eyes in the room and the empathy tact (although unintended) got the full attention of our childless polties.

varying ages have contacted me with heartfelt reflections on their own children's birth. Without exception, their wish was to have the opportunity to relive their children's births, but differently. I believe it is every woman's right to birth as they choose. I share my knowledge because it is as empowering as it is healing. The mystery and joy of a home birth can be a choice for all women.



From the left: Margaret Hawkes, midwife at the Anglis Family Birthing Centre; Cathy Fitzgerald, proud mum and active supporter of Independent Midwives and home birth; Leslie Arnott; Graeme Stoney, Local Lib MP and proud grandad of Connor Stoney, son of Dave and I born at home in April; Joy Johnston, mentor to many; and Dave Stoney, super-proud dad and huge supporter of MC and all it stands for!

I was absolutely exhausted and very emotional at the time of the meeting (lots of 'stuff' going on with my teenagers too) and as hard as I tried, I couldn't get the words out to fully read my presentation. I felt I was totally baring my soul to these strangers (including a couple of men). I felt naked; I did not expect to be sooooo overwhelmed. But as it turns out, I was sitting next to our DON/CEO of our local hospital and she offered to read it.

I would like to think we are not just preaching to each other and may be able to save some, even just one, other women going through the control/fear based hospital system with unpleasant experiences as a result!

## **Homebirth: A Choice**

**Cathy Fitzgerald**

I have recently experienced a happy and successful home birth. Consequently, many women of

When I reflect on my first pregnancy, I was happy but naive. I believed, when labour starts, simply head to the hospital and they would fix the pain I had heard so much about.

For me, medical procedure and routine resulted in pain, fear, drugs and forceps, after a long drawn out labour with a body that was just not ready.

That was 13 years ago. Now, with a few years of 'life' under my belt, I trust in myself. I choose to do what suits me best. So when a tubal ligation reversal was successful at the age of forty, to say Dave and I were elated, would be an understatement! This time I was going to take full responsibility for myself, the birth and the outcome.

My partner Dave and I began exploring our options. We looked at hospitals, birthing centres, community midwifery program and home birth. We chose home birth. At ten weeks pregnant we met our independent midwife. She was devoted and caring.

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We gained enormous knowledge and understanding of the birth process from her.

An independent midwife is one contracted privately by a woman or couple to meet the mother's specific birthing needs. Independent midwives care for women before and throughout pregnancy, during birth and in the postnatal period. Fears or protocols do not govern them, rather they trust in their instincts and professional abilities. In turn they instil confidence and trust in our abilities as birthing mothers. You can be secure in the knowledge that an independent midwife will not farewell you at the end of a rostered shift. They willingly put their lives on hold for that moment when they get the call "the baby is coming".

Our midwife cared equally about our emotional health as well as my physical health, dealing with issues as they arose. This made a huge difference to the eventual labour

progressing naturally because I felt comfortable, knowledgeable and at ease. It is well known fear and pain can inhibit the normal progress of the birth process.

Once labour started, I was in awe of the power of hormones and endorphins when they are allowed to do their job; when they kicked in they were a far stronger pain killer than I've ever experienced!

Labour progressed smoothly, I felt cloaked in a blanket of warm water, in a small pool in our family room. When second stage arrived I felt my body simply kicked into autopilot and I simply followed its lead. I had not experienced this phenomenon in my previous labours and I marvelled at the power yet calmness in the water; I was so light.

Our midwife quietly encouraged me. There was no hurry. After two hours supported in a warm water pool, our precious baby boy weighing 9lb 14oz gently arrived.

It was the most empowering moment of my life.

Our midwife visited everyday that first week, sometimes several times a day, to help and provide continued support. We had family visit and delight in the new life in their lives. This time spent bonding in our own home is something we will always treasure.

Our midwife had a supportive and tremendously encouraging professional relationship with our doctor. Nevertheless, ultimate responsibility for birth rests with the parents. It is up to the parents to be well informed and choose assistants with the energy and competence to suit them.

Just as it is your choice how you birth your baby it is your midwife or doctor's choice on whether to support your decision. There is a strong common ground between doctors and midwives and that is, they want the best possible outcome for you and your baby.

## NOVEMBER DIARY

	12noon	Goodbye Kelley Lunch	
5 Nov	13.30–15.30	MC Vic Meeting	25 Eley Road, Blackburn South
	16.00	Maternity Coalition AGM	
9 Nov	10.00	Homebirth in the Hills	13 Station Street, Belgrave
12 Nov	9.30–12.30	With Woman Gatherings	Ceres Environmental Park, in the cafe

**Announce your December events here!**

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