

Birth in Brief

The monthly bulletin of Maternity Coalition, Victoria

Issue 4: Holiday Issue

December 2005

January 2006

Happy Birth Day

Louise Hartley

Christmas, I often forget, is all about a birth, so I'm delighted that we've managed to get two birth stories in this Birth in Brief. Keep them coming: babies and stories.

For the new year we have a new segment: from the East Gippsland branch of Maternity Coalition a monthly report is being put together by Deborah Morgan. Thanks very much Deborah, it's great to see such a motivated new MC branch.

I should also probably reintroduce myself, seeing as I snuck in as State President (a title that sounds much grander than it is) just before Christmas. I'm mum to one-year-old Sam, who was born at home, and step-mum to Rhys and Caitlin. I've not done anything like this before; probably because I've not cared about anything this much before. I'm involved with MC because I am convinced that birth matters; that a good birth gives you strength; and that a good birth is what every woman has a fundamental right to.

A new year, new members, and a new president: sounds like it's about time for an MC get-together. So Bronwyn Nugent has kindly organised a picnic, this coming Sunday 22nd January. The picnic is to be held at Caulfield Park, Melbourne (Melways 59/D12) at 11am. I hope that lots of you can make it, because I can't wait to meet more smart and informed women and men. See you there!

Stop press!

Royal Women's Hospital

Leslie Arnott

Recent discussions with the Royal Women's Hospital (RWH) this week centred around the expansion and development of the birth centre when the hospital moves to its new site in 2008. The number of births have increased at RWH, creating substantial challenges for all service providers concerned.

Steps towards providing high quality primary maternity care have already been taken and are soon to be implemented far in advance of the hospital's proposed move. RWH is working on decreasing the number of midwives in each of their team models thus enabling women to get to know all their caregivers throughout their pregnancy.

The big news is that one-to-one personal midwifery (caseload) is to be implemented this year. This is a huge step towards providing women with the most appropriate primary maternity care. Implementation of these services has been a slow process, not merely because service providers are reticent to change their practices but because the staff have been run off their feet trying to manage the number of women giving birth at the hospital this year.

A more collegiate approach to service provision has been encouraged although some service providers are slow to follow.

Registrars and midwives are now meeting together during shift changes so that they share information together about the women under their care.

Discussions have continued with appropriate industrial bodies to ensure that the new models of care are supported and upheld.

When the hospital finally moves, every woman will have access to her own large birthing suite equipped with ensuite bath. This is a far cry from the present situation where the birth centre shares one bath between five rooms and where one bath on the labour ward services an entire floor of birthing women! (For more information visit the RWH on: www.rwhp.com.au/CommunityNew)

Whilst all of this information sounds promising it is MC's job to make sure that it comes to fruition. MC plans to work with RWH in order that its vision is indeed realised. It is a mammoth task and one that requires much input and work from all stakeholders, not least of which are consumers. MC is ever cognisant of the present deficit in maternity services, i.e. one-to-one midwifery care. If we can assist RWH in implementing this essential service, we will go a long way to helping a far greater number of women and their families.

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Goodbye Victoria

Kelley Stewart

Well to begin a new journey one must finish the old one.

I began my Maternity Coalition journey at one of my first ABA meetings after returning to my home city Melbourne. I had given birth to my first child whilst on an Air Force posting in Canberra. The hospital birth, postnatal ward and early motherhood was not a great experience for me. I had a private obstetrician and a birth in a private hospital. My labour/birth had three midwives (all strangers) looking after me. My postnatal care had many more midwives than that, and I still left the hospital without establishing good breastfeeding attachment.

I had done the ABA (was NMAA back then) "course" run in the ACT and thought I'd been sold a pack of lies and that breastfeeders were obviously just lucky.... However I then found that support within ABA after the first few weeks which had included a 4 day stay at baby/mum school. That ABA meeting in Melbourne just happened to have a guest speaker: an independently practicing midwife and member of MC. The idea of continuity of care by a known midwife sat with me perfectly although the whole homebirth thing was only something wierdos would consider.

I joined MC and attended Choices for Childbirth meetings. I found them very challenging and really felt like a square peg in a round

hole. Most people attending were couples and certainly not mainstream (or at least that was my perception). Nonetheless I soaked up the info like a sponge and asked (too?) many questions. By the end of my pregnancy I had a birth pool set up in my front room for a planned homebirth. The labour went along swimmingly in fact a little too quickly as I birthed Ryan into the water before the midwife arrived!

Prior to and during my 3rd pregnancy last year I became much more involved with MC as a consumer—particularly regarding the closure to the maternity wards in Williamstown and Seymour. I also planned my third pregnancy to be a homebirth last year. This time the midwives made it, but the hubby missed it!

Although Williamstown hospital still has its maternity ward closed, Western Health is moving forward (albeit very slowly!) in introducing caseload midwifery programs. Williamstown may still one day be a satellite unit/stand-alone birthing centre. But not while I'm still a local.

My move back to Canberra is good for my family and career. I expect to shake up the maternity system there too if I can, as I have been a disappointed consumer of that system. I will stay a member of the MCVic list just to see what everyone's up to down here (should you allow me to remain...). I hope to continue my journey with MC in Canberra in mid-2006.

Tiana's Birth Story

Leanne Darvill

My daughter Tiana was born on Friday 14th October at 7.04pm. Tiana entered this world in the most amazing way, bottom first, to my surprise and all the other midwives at the Geelong Family Birthing Unit. Tiana was an undiagnosed breech and I birthed her naturally with no complications and a physiological third stage.

I am currently completing my third year of the bachelor of midwifery and ironically the midwife and student midwife you shared the birthing experience with me are also both bachelor of midwifery trained.

I feel so proud that I birthed her naturally and it was so beautiful as the majority of the labour occurred at home only arriving at the hospital within half an hour of her birth. During this time my waters broke, Tiana started coming out breech and an obstetrician stood back and allowed the midwife and student midwife to give my baby to me. All this done in the standing position. I couldn't move. There was no possible way I could have gotten on a bed. I knew I had to focus and breath this baby's head out.

At that moment I was so happy I had done a serious of relaxation and breathing techniques during my pregnancy as I relied on what I'd learnt about my breath to take over. My natural instinct was to stand up, I didn't want to sit, go on all fours or any thing else except stand, squat and breathe.

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I reflect on the experience and I get all warm and fuzzy, it wasn't the birthing experience I had envisaged but it was the most appropriate way for me to birth my breech baby girl.

Sophia's Birth Story

Deborah Morgan

We welcomed our little daughter Sophia Anna into this world on Saturday the 17th of September 2005 at 3.48am.

Sophia is my second daughter, my first to be born at home. My first daughter was born at the Moorabbin Birth Centre sixteen years ago.

I gave birth to Sophia after six hours of labour, standing up against the birth pool. She was well caught by one of my wonderful midwives who passed her straight to me, there is nothing like the smell and feel a freshly born baby.

It was a beautiful birth and I got my wish of snuggling up with my wonderful partner Pete and Sophia in my own bed just hours after her birth. A huge thank you to all the people who made my birth at home in my town of Bruthen possible.



Tiana



Sophia

Breastfeeding: Making a Difference

The Australian Breastfeeding Association presents "Breastfeeding: Making a Difference" in 2006. Speakers include Elizabeth Pantley (USA), Dr Alison Barrett (NZ) and Catherine Watson Genna (USA). For full programs and faculty, please go to www.lrc.asn.au.

The seminars will be held in Canberra (evening) Feb 9th; Brisbane March 2nd; Sydney March 3rd; Melbourne March 4th; Adelaide March 6th; Perth March 7th. Cost: \$145 (135 lrc/aba subscribers), Earlybird \$135/125, LRC/ABA subscribers.

To register online go to www.breastfeeding.asn.au

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East Gippsland Maternity Coalition.

Deborah Morgan

It's been just over 12 months since a group of women passionate about birthing got together in East Gippsland and formed a local branch of the Maternity Coalition.

As one of the members of EGMC I will be writing a monthly column so we can keep everyone in touch with what is happening in our area.

Planning for 2006

Our December meeting's focus was on group planning for 2006.

Like most groups, we have found what we would like to see change – but it's hard when there are few people and lots of different things that need to be done. We all offered three things we wanted to see for birthing women in East Gippsland. The aim was to find three projects for the group to focus on for the next year.

There are a number of ideas, all wonderful, so we have decided to meet in January to discuss project ideas further. The two most popular are: Midwifery Model of Care and Labour Pools, one for a local hospital and a portable one for hire.

Midwifery Model of Care

The current situation is that women are provided care from a local GP with visiting rights to our local hospital in Bairnsdale. Only 'low risk' women are allowed to birth locally, women considered 'high risk' must go to Sale. Our local caesarean and other intervention rates are very high. Bairnsdale hospital has been discussing the possibility of team

or caseload midwifery for a number of months. It has been hinted that they might start offering this care option around March 2006, We are crossing our fingers, waiting for more news.

Labour Pools

Bairnsdale hospital has two birthing rooms, sharing one bathroom with only a shower and toilet. There is a normal size bath available, but it is not in the birthing section of the hospital and as it is of normal size it is not suitable for labouring women. We would like to work with Bairnsdale Hospital to create the option of a labour pool for local women.

We would also like to have a portable labour pool available. Currently women wishing to use a labour pool for a home-birth need to hire one from Melbourne, a four hour drive away. Not a simple option. We hope to beg, borrow or find a labour pool or the money to buy one.

Other stuff!

Our Birth Support Group

Every Wednesday 1pm to 2.30pm the East Gippsland Birth Support Group meets at the Bruthen Community Health Project Building. This has given women a chance to talk, exchange info, books & clothes. During 2005 we had topic discussions on matters such as VBAC and home-birth on the third Wednesday of every month. This gave us a chance for a press release in the local paper and reach women out in our community. The sessions were well attended, some women travelling long distances to attend.

In December we started the CS & VBAC Support Group, This is planned for the first Wednesday of every month. We are discussing the possibility of this being a 'mobile' support group travelling between Bairnsdale, Bruthen and Lakes Entrance. This option will be talked about at our January meeting.

EGMC goes online

In the last month we have also started the *egbirthsupport* yahoo group.

We hope that this will improve communications and encourage more people to become involved in local and national issues. People wishing to keep informed of East Gippsland issues or would like to add their wisdom to discussions please let us know and we will add you to our list.

Help for local mums

Our pilot project offering post-natal support in the way of meals and home-help for new mums is still trialling different methods to find out which way is the most successful. The hope is to help create better community support and networks as most of the new mums in our region are isolated not just from services but from family and friends as well. The funding winds up in March, we will be discussing in January the option of getting funding to continue it.

Well that's it from East Gippsland—speak to you all next month.

Contact Deborah on 0403 782 436 or norquesta@yahoo.com.

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