

Birth in Brief

The monthly bulletin of Maternity Coalition, Victoria

Issue 5
February 06

At long last, the Summer Picnic is happening

After a couple of false starts, due to the unseasonably hot weather in January, we've fixed a date for summer picnic, which is Sunday **5th March, 2006** at Caulfield Park.

We will meet at Caulfield Park at 11am for a picnic lunch. Bring your own food and drinks.

Please RSVP to Bronwyn at bronwyn@babaroo.com or nugent_mbj@hotmail.com or 0410 392 539.

MC Vic Branch Meetings

MC Branch meetings for the rest of 2006 will take place on the following Saturdays from 1.00 to 3.00pm:

11th March
20th May
19th August
18th November

Please make a note in your diaries. The meetings will be kept strictly to two hours.

The meetings are usually held at Leslie's house (8 Monash Avenue, Balwyn), but this is subject to change depending on who is attending and where they are coming from.

More details will be posted before each meeting on the MCVic Yahoo list. Or contact me on louise.hartley@gmail.com.

Meeting with Eastern Health

Louise Hartley

Leslie and I met with the CEO of Eastern Health, Tracey Batten, at the William Angliss hospital. Also at meeting were the Angliss's Meredith Spencer, the new DoN, and Penny Newsome, the General Manager.

The aim of our meeting was ostensibly to introduce Maternity Coalition to Dr Batten, who has recently assumed the position of CEO. We already have good working relationships with several of the Victorian Health boards at the CEO level and it is enormously advantageous for our goals to be able to call upon the CEO to drive change in the maternity services that their health board provides.

We also took the opportunity to raise some more specific points about the maternity services offered by Eastern Health. Recent feedback to Maternity Coalition has been providing a general picture of a medically-dominated maternity service provision across the Eastern Health Board.

At the Angliss Hospital we are aware that women attempting VBACs were until recently permitted to use the birth centre facilities, but a new rule means that they can only birth in the labour ward. We were seeking an explanation of how and why this decision was made. We were also hoping to open a dialogue about re-establishing caseload midwifery at the Angliss: this ran for a while, funded by a specific grant, but when the money ran out the

program ended. We would like to see the Angliss making an active attempt to re-establish caseload midwifery.

Our meeting was unfortunately badly timed as Meredith Spencer was in her first week at the Angliss and, as she admitted, had not yet learnt the ropes. But, on the other hand, it was good timing, as a new start is a chance to forge new working relationships and Meredith seemed open to engaging with us in the future. Unfortunately we were not able to get an explanation about the VBAC decision or anything approaching a commitment to consider caseload midwifery from either Tracey Batten or Penny Newsome. We hope, however, that the meeting has at least brought these issues to their attention.

At the Birralee Birth Centre Box Hill hospital runs an extremely popular caseload midwifery program called the Know Your Midwife (KYM) program. So popular is the KYM that they established a waiting list and currently 80% of the women on the list do not make it into the program, not surprising when there are only four midwives in the program.

There can be no arguing with the success of the KYM: it has improved clinical outcomes over the normal Birralee modes of care at a lower cost per birth. We feel that it should be logical for Box Hill hospital to want to expand such a program when there is such overwhelming consumer demand. We were seeking to find out Dr

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Batten's position with regards to expanding the KYM program.

As there were no Box Hill personnel at the meeting we weren't really able to address this question, as Dr Batten was not aware of any issues with the KYM program. But we are going to try to set up a meeting at Box Hill as soon as possible to speak with the General Manager and DoN there about the KYM. Watch this space!

All in all, this meeting was an introduction and a beginning and we're a long way from any results. We hope to be able to forge a good working relationship with Tracey Batten, in particular we hope to inform her about issues in the maternity services provided by Eastern Health that might otherwise escape her notice: i.e. we will continue to the push for the consumers' voice to be heard.

A request from me: If you live in the Angliss catchment area or work there, could you please get in touch with me on louise.hartley@gmail.com. It will be very helpful to me to have views from local women when I meet with Eastern Health again.

Irving Buzzard Midwifery Prize

Louise Noorbergen who is a midwife at the Angliss hospital Birth Centre and a Maternity Coalition member and supporter of birth reform has been awarded the Irving Buzzard Midwifery Prize for her outstanding altruistic contribution to midwifery.

Following the Boxing Day tsunami in 2004, Louise spent a month as a volunteer midwife and nurse in a rural province of Aceh. Louise is planning a self-funded return visit to Aceh.

The Irving Buzzard Midwifery Prize is awarded each year, and is managed by Australian Nursing Federation (ANF). Maternity Coalition works with the ANF and Australian College of Midwives in selecting the recipient of the prize.

East Gippsland Branch Report

Deborah Morgan

January EGMC meeting discussed which goals and ideas we wanted to make a priority for 2006. Midwifery-led Care and a labour pool were in the top three.

After further brainstorming we decided that the third was to set up a second Birth Support Group and to extend our Post-natal Support Project to both BSG locations, Bruthen and Lakes Entrance

Midwifery-led Care.

Last month I reported that Bairnsdale Hospital is considering the introduction of case-load midwifery. We have decided to 'wait and see' until we have our next meeting on the 24th of February which will be focusing on Midwifery-led Care. We will keep you all posted.

Labour Pool

A local midwife is having a portable labour pool built. She will have this available to her clients soon. When the pool is completed EGMC will have a look at it with

the possibility of ordering a second one.

To encourage the possibility of labour pools being used in local hospitals we decided to order a portable, pump-up tub, designed for one-off use.

We felt that since it held a smaller amount of water than other designs, is ready for use within a half hour, lightweight and easy to carry that we could get around most of the issues being raised about the use of a portable labour pool at our local hospital.

The pool will arrive sometime in March and if we are happy with it we will apply for funding to order more so that local women will have the opportunity to purchase them locally and a chance of using water during labour.

If everyone is wondering why I am only referring to them as labour pools it is because it has been made clear that currently no births will be allowed to occur in water, so we are all (I have the most trouble) trying to only to refer to them as labour pools so nobody gets frightened that we might be trying to encourage women to have their babies underwater.

Birth Support Groups and Post-natal Support Project.

For over a year now the Bruthen Birth Support Group has been having a weekly gathering at our local community health building. Every Wednesday women have been dropping in to talk about pregnancy, birthing, mothering,

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partners, all sorts of women's business.

Out of this group friendships have formed, women have had a chance to be heard, share their experiences and their knowledge. Books and maternity clothes have been available and have been well utilised.

Ellie, a local mum of three will be facilitating the Bruthen group in 2006.

Since the Bruthen group has been such a success, Gabe, another member of our team, is going to set up and facilitate a second BSG in Lakes Entrance.

The Lakes Entrance Neighbourhood House has shown keen interest in having the group there, even offering their phone number as a contact point and to publicise the 'new' group through their newsletter which goes out to all the relevant groups and community services in the area.

The Post Natal Support Project has been successfully piloted in Metung. Local businesses and individuals have offered meals and other home support when notified of new mothers in the area.

After the success of the initial pilot project, Ellie and Gabe will establish further pilot projects in

Bruthen and Lakes Entrance. They will be sending out letters requesting support from local businesses, groups and individuals. Our group is asking for meals and general support for families with newborns. The funding for this project runs out in March. We will be discussing soon about the future of the Post Natal Support Project.

News Flash

The Lakes BSG is going to be launched soon, Gabe is hoping, all going well that Monday the 20th of Feb should be the first one. We will keep you all posted via MCVic.

Don't forget the Summer Picnic...

5th March 2006, 11am,

Caulfield Park, BYO food and drink.

See you there!