

Michelle's Homebirths



Imogen

Prior to coming to Australia, we had had two beautiful girls, Maisy and Zara. Like many others in the UK, we had elected to birth in the hospital. 6 weeks after touching down in Perth from the UK to start our new life I found out I was pregnant!! I googled and found Community Midwifery WA and spoke to midwife Ruth. The website at that stage did not have much in-depth of information about birth choices nor about how the CMP worked. Ruth talked me through my options – private hospital, public labour ward, the Birthing Suite which is nicer, however there are four midwives and you may not know who you will get, and then - homebirth.

At the time I thought I had plenty of time to think this through. The girl I was living with at the time asked me "a homebirth - are you mental?" I met my midwife Dorine who came to my house – it was so wonderfully convenient given that I had two small children. Dorine booked me in to KEMH and I had my scan which was quite a palaver but there were no costs for me for scans or other standard diagnostic tests. As new arrivals in the country with limited income we were quite relieved.

All the build up to the birth was wonderful with the support and empowerment I received from my midwife. Four weeks before the birth I still thought that I might be able to have gas and air in a home birth. Dorine advised me that it was not the case, and I had to really commit to homebirth!! "I can do this" I thought to myself.

On the morning of the birth I awoke and thought "yes these are contractions". I phoned Dorine at 2.30 in the am, and she arrived about 3. A birthing pool had been provided for me although I had thought to use it after the birth. In the event I just had a shower, and left the birthing pool pristine and new in its wrapping! My waters broke at about 4.10 at around the same time the backup midwife arrived. Imogen was born at 4.50. It was so much easier to birth at home, with the two older girls blissfully unaware and undisturbed, asleep in their beds.

After we had Imogen my husband turned to Dorine and said "This has been the best experience!" He talked about our two previous hospital births when he had had to go back in the wee small hours after the baby was born to pick up older siblings. He loved it that homebirth meant all the stress of travelling and leaving home in stages of labour were totally removed. He hated to leave me to go home after the baby had been born, but this time he was able to stay.

Poppy's Birth

Imogen was 15 months old when I found out I was pregnant, although I had not had a period since having Imogen - Imogen had just self-weaned around this time. I had to have a 6 week scan to get an estimated due date, so had to go to the GP to get the referral which seemed such a waste of time and money, and so inconvenient! Bloods were done as well which I had to pay for, because if I was over 6 weeks I needed the 12 weeks bloods taken as well. The tests confirmed that I was 6 weeks pregnant. I then phone Ruth at Community Midwifery WA and the EDD was April. I asked to have Dorine as well and it looked like there would be plenty of time to put in my order for a midwife!

I had to go back to the GP for a 12 week scan, and at 12 weeks I needed the bloods redone. As well as antenatal testing, they undertook autoimmune testing as well. When I did not hear back from them re: the blood tests I rang Ruth and she

suggested getting in contact with KEMH. I rang them and they did not have the medical records, but they had the results which did not make sense to them. I then received a call from the GP regarding my autoimmune tests where the readings appeared to be higher than they should. I was asked to return for bloods to clarify what the issue was. I phoned the hospital after 4 weeks and the nurse phoned me back – my notes and my results were not together so there were difficulties in communicating the results. I was then advised that I had lupus!!! I returned to the doctors and asked why I had not been informed of the results and to let them know I had been advised that I had lupus. I was then advised that I did not have lupus, and should not have been advised that I had! We had had to pay all the costs for the 12 weeks because we had had the 6 weeks scan early so had to pay \$180 for the privilege!

That scare aside, Dorine was booked in as my midwife, with Michelle as my backup midwife. I saw Michelle for the first two visits while Dorine was on holiday. The 19 week scan was all good (yet another referral from the GP required!!). At 33 weeks I felt quite rough and Dorine came to visit – I felt quite fluey and unwell and went to KEMH with Dorine while I got checked over. It was so wonderful to have this support from my midwife, and I was checked over and all was well. I was there from 8 until 12 and Dorine stayed with me the whole time. Julian was able to look after the girls while we were gone. That is a gold standard service! She phoned me again that afternoon, and later in the week, I felt so well supported.

On Birth Day I called Dorine about 11.30. Dorine had a student midwife Kerryn working with her. Kerryn lived just around the corner and I phoned her too so she knew to come quickly, as she had missed the other 2 home births! Kerryn arrived at 12 and organised me a hot water bottle for the small of my back. Dorine arrived at 12.15 and then, once Dorine was there I felt I could really relax and concentrate! I lay down and Dorine checked me and the baby, and all was well. A friend arrived to sit with Imogen who was awake and Julian came in to hold my hand. Dorine was so quiet and calm in her attendance and told me she would just sit and wait for me to birth my baby. It was a lovely, quick birth, Poppy was born at 1.13 and cried as soon as she came out. I said "she's tiny Dorine!" - and she has remained so petite and gorgeous. The placenta was birthed 30 minutes later, and Poppy was feeding within 10 minutes of being born. Julian cut the cord again, as he had with Imogen.

I emerged from my shower and then Zara came in to meet her new sister – Maisy had slept through the entire thing. The first they knew of a baby being born was Poppy's cry – they had had no idea anything was afoot.

The student midwife couldn't get over the surprise of witnessing such a straightforward delivery, with only a water bottle for pain management. She asked me in some surprise if the water bottle was enough. I told her it was, and she countered in astonishment, "you didn't even say ow!"