

# HOMEBIRTH AOTEAROA

SEPTEMBER 2022

Spring Greetings Home Birthers. Kia ora koutou.

Thanks for inviting us in to your inbox. We come to share, inspire and maybe even empower in some way. How exciting for us to be able to create and birth this newsletter which we hope will become a regular way for us to connect with you all.

Home Birth Aotearoa is the national collective of regional home birth groups throughout Aotearoa. We are a trust made of up to 8 trustees, 2 apprentice trustees and a number of contractors- currently 3. We exist to connect and support whānau who choose homebirth. We aim to get information and positive birth stories out into our community to inform and empower women, birthing people and their families, to encourage and support them with resources, connection and friendship.



Photo- @nz\_birthstories

## Conference and hui

Conference and hui is fast approaching. An opportunity for personal and professional development for consumers, midwives, health professionals and home birth advocates. This year Waikato homebirth Association will be our hosts, on the weekend of October 29 and 30. The theme this year is honoring Te Tiriti in home birth and we know it will be a weekend worth attending. Some of our speakers include Libby Gray, Dr Naomi Simmonds, Dr Ngahua Murphy, not to mention more speakers who are yet to be announced. Absolutely everyone is welcome to attend. We can't wait to see you all there! You can find tickets on Eventbrite- <https://whba.org.nz/conferencehui>

If you are a regional rep, you could also access funds from us for travel to get to and from conf/hui. Please send us an email asap to see if you qualify for this. WHBA are also funding tickets for 10 people who may not be able to attend due to finances. Please get in touch with WHBA directly We are also doing our best to organize accommodation for regional reps. [admin@homebirth.org.nz](mailto:admin@homebirth.org.nz)



Photo- Hannah McMaster

## Home Birth Kits for Māori and Pasifika students and new grad's

In late June HBA was able to offer homebirth kits to 10 Maori and Pasifika student and new grad's. It was so beautiful for us to be able to offer these. We asked that people send in their korero to be eligible. We actually received 15 amazing responses and, with a donation from a Trustee we were able to get kits to each of our students. We currently have just one Trustee who is putting these kits together- she is also a mama and rural midwife herself so if you had received confirmation that you will be receiving one and it hasn't arrived yet then keep an eye out as it will be on its way. To those who have shared with us and that their kit has arrived, we love to see them being utilized and on social media, so thank you.

## Consumer Feedback

There is currently a survey being sent out to families who have birthed in Aotearoa within a certain time period, asking them about their experience birthing within our maternity system. Please take the time to complete it. If you don't receive it, there is still so much you can do to help. From pregnancy through birth and beyond, our midwives hold us through the entire journey. The bond we form with our midwife is so incredibly unique and impossible to replicate. Now, imagine a system where you didn't see that same midwife each visit, where you had absolutely no idea who would be there during your labor to catch your baby, where there was no relationship at all. We KNOW that our midwifery model of care works and is one of the best and most sought after in the world. We KNOW that the continuity of care we are so lucky to receive in Aotearoa results in the best possible outcomes for women, birthing people and their babies. To strip away our current model of care and move to a more NHS style system would be a very dark day for birth here in Aotearoa. If you have had an amazing experience and value your midwife and our model of care then we need to fight and make noise. Share your experience, email your local MP, they need to know how important our midwives and current care model are to NZ.

-The survey is called 'survey of whanau/families experience of the maternity system: Ministry of Health'.

**HBA is constantly on the lookout for home birth hearted stories, photo's experiences and journey's to share within our communities. We keep these on file with your permission and use them on social media on our website and in future publications. Please send us an email or private message on IG or FB and connect with us.**

## Connecting in

The last few years have been particularly hard for everyone in the birthing world, consumers and all midwives alike. In the current climate but also due to the chronic shortage of midwives. There is no hiding that we have definitely seen an uptake of the number of women and birthing people within Aotearoa choosing homebirth and this has proven difficult when there aren't enough midwives to walk alongside each journey. The midwifery shortage has been valid for many years but there is no doubt that we have midwives who are currently unable to work due to the mandates that could be working and helping to fill some gaps. On Sunday the 14th of August, Bobbie-Jane our co-chair and Lala, a trustee both met with a group of midwives who are currently unable to work due to the mandates. We travelled to Tauranga and sat at the incredible Anne Sharplin's home. It was a really beautiful and productive day. We held space and listened and even did some idea sharing and brainstorming on how HBA can better connect in with the communities and groups, often minorities, of women and people it is there to serve. We understand that there is a lot of hurt and grief for a lot of people centered around the mandates and we are doing our best to navigate this with the resources that we have. We would love to hear how you are doing, how you have been affected and how you feel we could be doing better.

**We are a creative force. Our mountain is the rise of the woman's belly, swelling with life. The ocean, the tides of labour. Our rivers flow in birth waters, teardrops, blood and milk. Our vessel is the womb. We claim kinship with the Midwife, as she exists in all women. Our ties in the cord bonding us above, below and beside one another. In the making of all Mothers. We are Home Birth Aotearoa.**

@homebirthaotearoa  
admin@homebirth.org.nz  
<https://homebirth.org.nz>

# The Trust



-Photo above Eva Neely.

## Eva Neely

Eva has been within the Home Birth Aotearoa Trust, as a Trustee first, stepping into chair and currently as co-chair. She has decided to step down from HBA altogether this month, allowing another Trustee (soon to be announced) to step into this co-chair role.

Eva has spent a lot of her time over the last few years within the Wellington region growing friendships and supporting other homebirthing hearted families along their journeys.

Eva has sat in our HBA rep position for NZCOM. Attending meetings and giving/sharing her voice on behalf of us. She played a key role in helping to secure our yearly funding from the Ministry of Health which we have now held for a number of years. She has helped to establish new co-chair roles and positions within the Trust as well as help to support other key roles. On top of this she is a Home Birth māmā of 2.

Eva we really appreciate your time and your energy and wish you well within your future endeavors.

Ka Kite

**You may have seen Bobbie-Jane on TVI on the 2nd of August What an amazing opportunity to bring home birth into mainstream media. Hopefully it brought some conversations about place of birth that may not have happened otherwise. We think Bobbie-Jane did such a great job during this first public appearance as our new co-chair.**

## Incoming co-chair Bobbie-Jane

### NGĀI TAHU, TE ATIWA

Ko Oteauheke te maunga  
Ko Awaiti te awa  
Ko Takitimu te waka  
Ko Ōnuku to marae  
Ko Ngāti Irakehu,  
Ko Ngāi Tārewa ngā hapū  
Ko Ngāi Tahu iwi.

Ko Taranaki to maunga  
Ko Waitere te awa  
Ko Tokomaru te waka  
Ko Ōwae te marae  
Ko Manukorihi te hapū  
Ko Te Atiawa te iwi.

Ko Bobbie-Jane Cooke tōku ingoa.

I am the new co-chair and NZCOM rep for Home Birth Aotearoa Trust, administrator and birth pool coordinator for Waikato Home Birth Association and a very busy māmā of 3.

I came into the home birth space after suffering birth trauma that heavily impacted my life. I then went on to have two incredible, empowering and healing homebirths (HBAC- Home Birth After Cesarean). I constantly speak on the impact of birth and consider myself a fierce advocate. I have a big passion for the rights of minorities, home birth and supporting birthing whānau in the community, especially tangata whenua.

I am excited to be co-chairing Home Birth Aotearoa and building connections in my role as NZCOM rep. I hope to serve and represent our home birth community well.

If anyone would ever like to get in touch with me, please feel free to email me at [bobbiejane.homebirth@gmail.com](mailto:bobbiejane.homebirth@gmail.com)

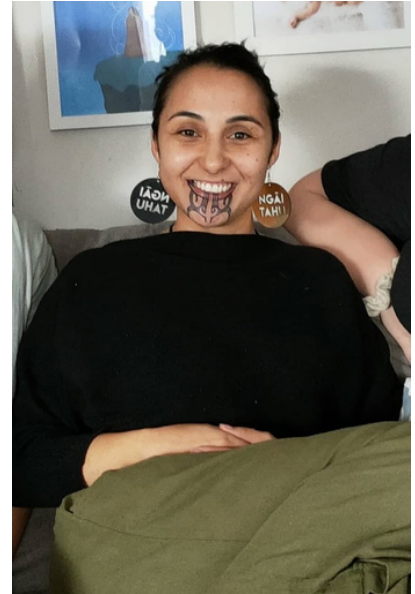


Photo above Bobbie-Jane Cooke.

## Kirsty Wilkinson

Kirsty has decided to step down from the Trust after becoming involved in 2018. She has been an active Trustee for those four years and has made her decision to step down for a number of reasons. This year Kirsty has been focusing on healing and recovery from cancer. She is positively looking forward and is excited to focus on other projects within the birthing world. Kirsty also feels she would like to make some room in the Trust for fresh blood to come through and plans to kick back at this coming hui and enjoy it as a midwife.

Throughout the last 4 years on the Trust, Kirsty has enjoyed the connections with homebirthing whānau up and down the Motu. Hui and conferences have always been her highlights and being a part of those gatherings has always sparked so much joy for her.

Kirsty, we have and will continue to miss your presence at our meetings and in our chats. We are excited to watch you flourish within your new projects.

-Photo to the left is Kirsty Wilkinson



**Vivienne Oliver joined our Trust in 2019 and has been a Trustee and contractor throughout this time. Viv has been an integral part of developing our new website which is currently being created and in upgrading our rack cards etc. as well as designing and creating a new project due to be birthed soon. Viv has recently stepped down as Trustee. You will be missed Viv.**

## Regional groups

### Wellington

FB page- Wellington Home Birth Association  
FB group- Wellington Home Birth Community  
[whbaweb@gmail.com](mailto:whbaweb@gmail.com)  
<http://wellingtonhomebirth.weebly.com/>

WHBA has been quiet since lockdown but are currently looking for a suitable time/date for their AGM so they are able to get things up and running again. Library books and dvd's are able to be borrowed. We also hire birth pools and califont's so please get in touch to organize.

@homebirthaotearoa

admin@homebirth.orgnz

<https://homebirth.orgnz>

### Taupo

FB page- Taupo Home Birth  
FB group- Taupo Home Birth Community  
[taupo.homebirth@gmail.com](mailto:taupo.homebirth@gmail.com)

Taupo home birth group currently is quiet but has birth pool hire available. Please email or send us a message on Facebook to get in touch.

### Selwyn

FB page- Te Whare Tangata Home Birth Selwyn  
IG- @homebirthselwyn

We have recently created this home birth group, a resource and connection point for birthing people planning a homebirth or wanting to support birthing families in Selwyn and neighbouring areas. The space has been created by midwife and HBA Trustee Ali Woodhouse in 2022. We have birth pool and califont hire.

### Auckland

FB- Auckland home birth community  
FB Group- AHBC Closed Group (Auckland HomeBirth Community)  
<https://ahba.org.nz>

AHBA is surviving. Currently, and for quite a while the group has been run by just one amazing person. At this time there are no face to face meetings but support is being given online through the fb group. The website is still up and running. We still have birth pool hire which actually needs expanding as the pools are often completely hired out with a backup list to. We are still supporting midwives however we can. On the admin side of things we are currently in conversation about moving from an Incorporated Trust to a Charitable Trust.



## Golden Bay

FB- Birth Wisdom- Empowered and home birth Golden Bay  
 birthwisdomgb@gmail.com

We meet once a month in one another's homes. We share cups of tea, some kai and hold an informal circle for whomever needs to share. This can sometimes be a birth story or just a check in about where we are at in our motherhood/parenthood journeys. We have an awesome library of pregnancy, birth and parenting books that our members can borrow from, thanks to donations of books from our community. We also have 2 birth pools and kits that can be hired. Our local midwives are incredibly supportive of homebirth, as it equates to about 50% of the births in our area. They often refer mama to us for pool hire and connection with the group. We keep things really simple. Very little money or advertising involved, just word of mouth and a monthly email invite. It's small, special, strong and ticks along, providing connection and information to those that need/want it. A sustainable model for a small town home birth community.

## South Canterbury

FB group- South Canterbury Homebirth Support Group

We are currently meeting once a month at various venues and having an average of 7 or so families each time. It has been an exciting time with several homebirths in the past few months! We don't currently have any hire services as we are fairly busy in our personal lives, but the support group each month is encouraging.

## Nelson/Tasman

@lunabloomnz  
 @kindred\_studio\_nelson

Choice Baby Meetings happen every last Tuesday of the month close to Nelson CBD at Kindred studio Nelson. Choice baby stands for including everyone regardless of their choices and birth preferences. It is a voluntary run event and it is FREE of charge. Our aim is to strengthen our community and to bring like minded parents together. We like to pick an interesting topic or invite a guest speaker so people know what services are available within our region.

## Waikato

FB- Waikato Home Birth Association  
 IG- @waikatohomebirth  
 www.whba.org.nz

Waikato Home Birth Association currently is very busy organizing and planning for this years conference and hui which will be held in October. We are selling tickets via Eventbrite and you can find this link via our social media pages.

At the moment we have multiple birth pools available for hire. We also have tens machines, and a double breast pump for hire. You can access these via our website or send us a message and we can help you.

We provide pepi packs to local whanau. Our most frequent sale via our website is our pool liners.

Our committee aims to meet monthly but usually these ends up being bi-monthly and its the same for our home birth whanau morning, coffee group.

## Canterbury

FB page- Home Birth Canterbury  
 FB group- Home Birth Canterbury Community  
 IG- @homebirthcanterbury  
 www.canterburyhomebirth.org.nz/  
 info@canterburyhomebirth.org.nz

We meet once a month on the first Monday of the month. We have seen an increase in new women and birthing people attending our catch ups and it has been great to see their partners attend as well. We are currently planning a quiz night and some content for social media for upcoming home birth awareness week. We are also organizing a weekend casual catch up in a bid to reach more people. HBC rep's will be attending the HBA conf/hui in October. We have 2 birth pools to hire and have recently purchased a califont to hire also. We provide hampers to midwives who are members with us and we currently have some amazing local companies who kindly donate their products for this. The hampers are then given to new mama after their pepi enter the world in a home birth setting.

## No local group in your region or town? Try starting your own?

Some groups are just a few likeminded parents or midwives who get together now and then, whereas some are more structured and boast larger numbers. If you are eager to facilitate some gatherings in your area you might begin by- Contacting us. We can offer you support, advertise for you and help to give you some tips and ideas on getting started. Make a post in our HBA group to connect with others in your region. Once you are established you can even apply to HBA for grants to get a lending library or birth pool hire up and running or even to host a special event. Not to mention gain funding as your regions rep to attend our annual hui and bi-annual conference.

## DID WE MISS YOUR REGION? LET US KNOW.

## Birth in the Heart of my Home

I was three days overdue when I felt the first contractions, a bit like period pain, coming and going. My partner and I had decided on a homebirth and had hired a birth pool from our regional group. There was no rush to go anywhere or do anything. Friends visited, prepared dinner for us and I spent the evening, the night and the whole next day resting between contractions and gathering as much sleep as I could. My midwife visited me in the evening and at my request found me at 6cm dilated. Labor became more intense now and I decided to have a shower, letting the warm water wash away my pain. My partner and a friend of the family filled the pool with hot water and I dived in, not feeling any more pain at all. Relaxing... so relaxing that the midwife had to ask me to leave the pool- somehow I had to get this baby out. I walked through my flowering garden, the middle of spring, stopping every few minutes for my next contraction.

My fondest memories, feeling so relaxed and relieved to be home, looking at my flowers, feeling the grass and soaking in the fresh air. The evening passed, our friend left and at this point the contractions got serious. Now even the pool didn't help so I walked in circles around it, holding on to the dinner table for sensations. My waters intact, I started to feel a strong urge to push yet it wasn't quite time. I decided on another check and whilst I was lying down a few things happened very fast. My waters broke and my cervix fully opened. This sent my baby's head rushing down into my birth canal. Before this point I had thought that my contractions were strong, but now they were so intense they brought me to my knees, literally. got back into the pool where the rewarding part began. I began to push and with every contraction I felt coming, I did my best and pushed as hard as my body told me to.

I worked harder than ever in my life. With the tip of my fingers I reached down and felt my baby, sliding slowly towards my hand, towards this world. And then, all of a sudden, I held my son in my arms- feeling so many emotions! Feeling overwhelmed, very excited and relieved, but I also felt two things new to me. I felt a love stronger than anything I have ever felt up to that point in my life. After the midwives had finished checking over our son and caring for me, long after midnight, we fell asleep in our bed, together. My partner completely exhausted and my son on my chest. I used to walk past the spot where we had placed the pool, in the middle of our living room, and think about how proud I felt, and still feel about the whole experience. I love reflecting back to the night when William was born, exactly where it was most important to us, in the heart of our home.

-By Isabell Meyer.

**Bringing consciousness to the birth space, allows its highest potential to unfold.**

**-@mothers\_circle**



Photo above- Isabell Meyer

# Birth Trauma

## Im Carla Sargent Mother, ex-Midwife, author, educator and founder of Healing Birth.



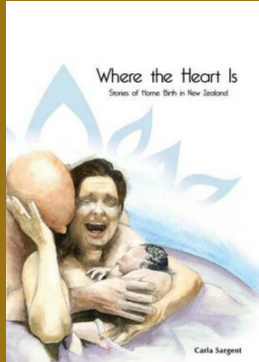
Let me share a little about how I came to work in the field of birth trauma support and education...

The power, mystery, love and rawness surrounding pregnancy and birth have intrigued me since childhood. In 1998 I became New Zealand's youngest graduate from the Direct Entry Midwifery programme, and began work as a midwife in Tauranga. Life as an optimistic and impassioned young midwife was eye-opening for me, to say the least. I became acutely aware that the power and mystery of birth had, for many it seemed, been flipped on its head, with medical minds, hands and machines seeking to control, categorise and sanitise the innately unique and unpredictable experience of birth. Where was the love?, I lamented. What were they doing to these new parents and babes? Despite the birth of my own daughter in 2000 being the loved up, dreamy, miraculous occasion that nature intended, I felt disillusioned, knowing that my experience was depressingly rare.

Fast forward to 2013 (with two more wondrous births in tow - all three of my babies were born at home), I fulfilled my long-held dream of publishing a book of NZ birth stories... not just any stories, but births that were empowering and positive experiences. The stories in *Where the Heart Is: Stories of Home Birth in New Zealand* were intended to inspire and inform readers, encouraging them to apply the not-so-magical ingredients to their own journeys, so that they too could experience joyous birth.

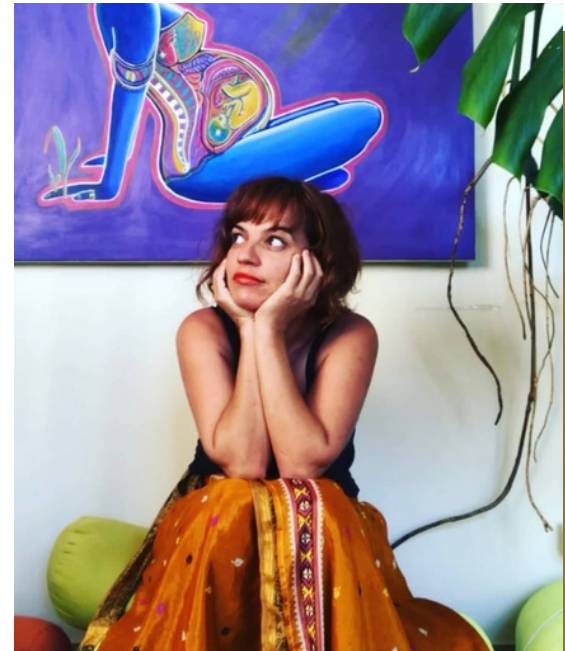
One of the stories in that book, *Rockford's Birth* by Annaleise, tells of the powerfully healing experience that Annaleise had following a previous traumatic cesarean birth. She had talked through her trauma with me and discovered what she needed to give herself the best possible chance of the birth experience she was seeking. Equipped with a renewed respect for her birthing capabilities, a wonderfully supportive midwife and a fierce determination to own her experience, Annaleise absolutely rocked her home birth! For both Annaleise and for me this healing birth journey brought about such profound satisfaction that, in essence, it was the seed for what has now become *Healing Birth*.

In my *Healing Birth* work, I offer one-to-one support for those seeking to find healing after a traumatic birth experience, as well as 'Planning For a Healing Birth' sessions for those who are pregnant again after a traumatic first birth. As well, I train up others (midwives, doulas, childbirth educators, counsellors... and anyone else who has a passion for learning more) in the art and science of effective birth trauma support. There is a free online course available via my website [www.healingbirth.co.nz/understanding-birth-trauma-basics-course](http://www.healingbirth.co.nz/understanding-birth-trauma-basics-course) which anyone can access, and those who go on to train with me in my *Healing Birth* Practitioner Training programme can become certified *Healing Birth* practitioners.



In October I am launching the *Healing Birth* Podcast, so keep an eye out on my socials (Facebook: [healingbirthwithcarla](https://www.facebook.com/healingbirthwithcarla), and Instagram [@healing.birth](https://www.instagram.com/healing.birth)) or subscribe via my website [www.healingbirth.co.nz](http://www.healingbirth.co.nz) to get updates on the latest *Healing Birth* happenings and offerings. Also, if you are interested in ordering a copy of my book, let me know (DM me via my socials or message me via my website Contacts page). I love my work with a fierce passion and feel so honoured to get to work alongside so many courageous and heart-fuelled women, parents, and birth workers. Get in touch if you're keen to talk more about my mahi - I'd love to hear from you! x Carla

-Photo top left is Carla Sargent and below that shows her book.



*Just Breathe* was originally written in 2019 by Sophia and published by Taupo Home Birth magazine. [www.motherscircle.co.nz](http://www.motherscircle.co.nz)

## Coming Soon-

Homebirth Aotearoa Homebirth Focus Ante natal series- presented by Kristin White of Mama Rise. Kristin will take you on a journey of understanding why homebirth works, why it is safe, what if you need to transfer, everything your midwife brings to your home, breastfeeding, the fourth trimester and so much more. These will be available for all whānau on the HBA website in October, they will be free to view, with the option of koha if you wish to make one. Please keep a lookout for when we launch this video series as our aim is to get this to as many people as possible.

-Photo to the right is Kristin White.



Mama Rise

## Just Breathe

The stress and anxiety women are experiencing during pregnancy has increased significantly due to our fast-paced way of life. The majority of pregnant women continue to work outside of the home until 37 weeks. The increased medicalization of birth drives the stress levels up- constant tests, measuring, monitoring... About 70% of my clients get told that their baby is too big or too small, causing extra tension and worry. Stress changes the way the way our body works. It alters our hormonal balance which can lead to a suppressed immune system. Long term stress raises cortisol levels in the amniotic fluid that baby is growing in. We also know it can increase blood pressure which can create serious health problems during pregnancy. Stress is linked to complications such as preeclampsia, lowered birth weight and premature birth.

Did you know that there are thousands of research papers supporting the biological and psychological benefits of meditation during pregnancy. It is a wonderful tool to learn for labor because it strengthens the mind and increases endorphins, the pain relieving hormones. It is a trustworthy skill set to help you through the challenges of motherhood for years to come! Meditation directly reduces stress by lowering adrenalin and cortisol release and naturally restoring hormonal balance which improves immune function. Sleeping issues are a common issue during pregnancy. Meditation creates higher levels of melatonin in the body- the sleep aid hormone. Melatonin is also an antioxidant and plays a role in immune function. The baby is dependent on the mother's production as the baby's pineal gland which produces the hormone, matures post-birth.

Melatonin sent to baby through the bloodstream (and postnatally through breastfeeding) provides baby with immune enhancement and calming benefits. Increased levels of DHEA, a life enhancing hormone, is another huge benefit of meditation. DHEA helps improve youthfulness and vitality, lowers anxiety and mood swings. A pregnant woman's meditation always has dual benefits. The woman communicates psychologically and energetically, influencing the child to produce healthful neurohormones and neurotransmitters.

- Article and above Photo by Sophia Paskell. Sophia is a mother and doula as well as a former HBA trustee. Sophia's radical and heart centered posts on her IG page- [@mothers\\_circle](https://www.instagram.com/mothers_circle) absolutely give us life! Her birth photography is something to marvel.

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**"The first intervention in birth, that a healthy woman takes is when she walks out the front door of her home"**  
- Dr Michel Odent