



Book Reviews

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Our Water Baby by Amy McLean

The Good Birth Company 2006
ISBN-10: 0955453607 ISBN-13: 978-0-9554536-0-1
£9.99

Reviewed by
Vicki Williams
AIMS Journal Editor

image of Our Water Baby

[Find this book on Amazon](#)

We really liked this book. With four huge fans of Hello Baby I thought reviewing this one might be a tough call.

Although aimed at pre-schoolers, actually this book has a much wider appeal, and all four of my four children, aged between 2 and 9, enjoyed it at their own level.

This book has a familiar, cozy feel, and handles the birth of a sibling in a calm and sensitive way. The normality of having a baby in a pool in the kitchen isn't even questioned. The whole book is related to Oliver, the big brother, and his involvement in the pregnancy and birth.

We wanted to read the book again and again, and already it is showing all the classic signs of a favourite book, with battered corners and well thumbed pages.

Timescales and growing up are also carefully woven into the story and there are numerous opportunities to spark sensitive discussion about babies and changing family dynamics.

Midwife Sarah keeps a watchful eye without interfering, grandparents come to support, and the whole book treats birth as a wonderful, normal family process where everyone is enjoying themselves and

celebrating the arrival of the newest family member.

Beautiful illustrations increase the impact and there is much to talk about in every picture. My children are already talking about the sort of bir ths they think everyone should have, and are suggesting a sibling so that they can watch 'just like Oliver'.

A great new baby book, highly recommended.

Having a Great Birth in Australia, edited by David Vernon

Australian College of Midwives

ISBN-10 0-9751674-3-X

Reviewed by

Adela Stockton

Doula, childbirth homeopath and former midwife

Mother and writer on childbirth issues

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Image of Having a Great Birth in Australia

This inspiring collection of women's stories about birth is remarkable in several ways. Without exception, every account is a positive one: from the gentle home birth to the physiological birth after previous caesareans, from the vaginal breech birth to the vaginal birth of twins, from the birth that heals previous sexual abuse, to the miscarriage and even to the baby who is stillborn. It is clear from reading these tales that the reason for such positive experiences is greatly down to the one-to-one midwifery support that all of these women received. Furthermore, the book is edited by a man: David Vernon claims that 'A great birth is every woman's birthright' and who believes (with reference to midwifery practice) that 'with the right assistance (a great birth) can be achieved by every woman...!'.

Having a Great Birth in Australia consists of personal accounts written by nineteen mothers and one couple living and working in Australia, relating their journeys through pregnancy, birth and early days with their new baby. Some couples start off by choosing private obstetrician care, assuming it to be the best but soon finding that their appointments are late, short and lacking in human contact. Some choose hospital antenatal care and soon find that they never see the same midwife twice, feeling as if they are on a conveyor belt. All end up finding their way to acquiring one-to-one midwifery care, either from a State-employed midwife practising within a birth centre or Community midwifery programme, or from a self-employed midwife practising within the client's home or in hospital. It is the time spent with their chosen midwife, nurturing a relationship of trust, respect and understanding during these women's pregnancies, that appears to make the ultimate difference to all the parents-to-be involved and in all but one case, supports a gentle birth outcome rather than one involving medical intervention.

Although State provided one-to-one midwifery care is not yet on offer to all women in Australia on a local basis, in her Foreword to this book, Dr Sally Tracy assures us that its availability is spreading rapidly. Whichever way the midwife is employed however, these stories clearly illustrate how having access to one midwife through pregnancy and birth and first postnatal days gives a woman and her partner plenty of time to share their hopes and fears along the way and also allows the midwife to gain a real understanding of how she can best support her client(s). Dr Tracy highlights recent research suggesting that women giving birth in birth centres in Australia are between 95% and 99% less likely to have an instrumental or caesarean birth. Judging by the tone of Vernon's contributors' voices, this also means empowered mothers, healthy babies, happy fathers, siblings and, I imagine, midwives too!

My only sadness from reading this book is that the choice of a similar system of women-focused maternity care with its encouraging results is not more available worldwide. While a woman in the UK can choose to employ an independent midwife from whom she will receive one-to-one physical as well as emotional and spiritual support, she must pay a fee for this service. Within the NHS, team midwifery and midwifery caseload systems offer the nearest equivalents, where available, but they cannot guarantee that a woman will have established a relationship with the midwife who eventually attends her during her labour and birth. On an encouraging note however, a group of parents and midwives have recently established the One Mother, One Midwife campaign in support of one-to-one midwifery with a view to promoting change within UK maternity services (see www.onemotheronemidwife.org.uk).

Despite rather lacking in both cultural and socioeconomic diversity, from the point of view of its 'good (yet realistic) birth' stories, Having a Great Birth in Australia offers pregnant women and their partners a proactive approach to childbirth. It may also serve to prompt discussion amongst parents-to-be towards the value of procuring one-to-one support for themselves from a known birth attendant well before their baby is due to be born.