

The journey so far

ANNUAL REPORT

2014 to 2016



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OUR VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

Our vision

Every mother has the care and support she needs to make empowered choices and to have the best birth and early parenting experience possible for herself, her baby and her growing family.

Our mission

To foster healthy families and communities by providing mother-centred support, education and holistic care throughout pregnancy, birth and after the baby comes.

Our values

trust
equity
celebration
respect
connection



WHO WE ARE



Founded in 2014, Birth for HumanKIND is a Melbourne-based, not-for-profit organisation that offers free support and education during pregnancy, birth and early parenting for women in need. Our aim is to improve the health outcomes of women and their families experiencing disadvantage and hardship by offering continuity of care and practical and emotional support during this critical period.

The majority of our clients are women from refugee, asylum seeker or migrant backgrounds, women under the age of 25, women experiencing homelessness and women experiencing, or with a history of, trauma, abuse and/or mental illness.

We work collaboratively with health professionals and community services across Victoria including The Royal Women's Hospital, Sunshine Hospital, The Northern Hospital, Foundation House, Red Cross and Melbourne City Mission.

Our services and programs currently include:

Pregnancy and birth support: one-to-one care for women in need from our volunteer doula team, including prenatal home visits, support during labour and birth, and help at home after the baby comes
An education and peer-support program for young pregnant women, run in partnership with Melbourne City Mission

Access to English language interpreting services, as needed

Referrals to relevant community support services for our clients and their families, as needed

Comprehensive induction training, supervision and ongoing professional development for our volunteer doulas

An annual fully-funded scholarship for a bilingual community member to undertake doula training

Our services demonstrate significant improvements in birth, health and wellbeing outcomes for women who typically experience poorer outcomes. In addition to increasing confidence and support during pregnancy and birth, our services are designed to support women to overcome language and cultural barriers that can cause difficulty navigating the maternal health system, social isolation, low confidence in parenting skills, and risk of perinatal depression.

“I was so scared because I didn't know anything about birth and labour, but after talking to Birth for HumanKIND and hearing more information about pregnancy and birth I feel better and more ready to do it.” - Nala*

**throughout this report, the names of our clients have been changed to honour their privacy and confidentiality.*



A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR

Since our inception and over the past two years, I am energised, in awe of and humbled by what we have achieved as an organisation with an incredible team of people!

Our rapid growth has required innovation, passion and stamina. It has seen us officially registered as a charity, establish our board, expand our staff and volunteer team, and continue to grow our relationships with the major public hospitals and key agencies in Melbourne.

I am proud that we have supported so many women and their families through our programs and I know the difference our support has made to those families' experiences. I have also found time and again that people are genuinely moved by the important services that Birth for HumanKIND provides.

In contemporary Australian birth culture, we are continuing to see a rise in medical interventions, scarce availability of continuity of care models, decreases in health equity, and many women are sharing with us their distressing birth experiences. Our free one-to-one doula support service and young mums education program are proving ever more timely, valuable and in demand.

I would like to acknowledge and thank my fellow board members for their effective leadership and governance of the organisation thus far. Over the past twelve months, the board has been focused on strengthening our operational, financial and risk management systems, overseeing the development and delivery of our core programs, and planning for the ongoing sustainability of the organisation.

My fellow board members and I have deeply appreciated the tireless dedication, passion and skills of Mei Lai Swan, CEO and Founder, and everyone in the staff team whose exceptional work is ensuring strong foundations for Birth for HumanKIND into the future.

I would also like to acknowledge all of our inspiring volunteer doulas who, by providing mother-centred support, education and holistic care during the childbearing year, ensure that Birth for HumanKIND is helping to foster healthy families and communities.

Kirstan Flannery

Chair & Co-Founder

A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO



It is such a privilege to be able to reflect on and share with you the Birth for HumankIND journey so far! We are incredibly proud of the work we do and what we have achieved to date. The results show, and we are sure you would agree, that this work is greatly needed.

In this report you will read about how we began, gain insights into the women and families we support and, of course, see our impact and achievements over the past two years.

Our vision is that every mother has the care and support she needs to make empowered choices and to have the best birth and early parenting experience possible for herself, her baby and her growing family. As such, we are on a mission to provide woman-centred support, education and loving care throughout pregnancy, birth and after the baby comes.

Since we began in early 2014, the core focus of our work has been on developing a free doula support service for the women and families in our community experiencing the greatest vulnerability and disadvantage. The majority of the women that we support are from refugee or asylum seeker backgrounds, are newly arrived migrant women or are under 25 years of age.

We are proud to now have a team of volunteer doulas who have provided professional and individually tailored birth support to 76 women and their families since February 2014, 51 of which were in this last financial year alone. Whilst we started slowly to focus on building the organisation's foundations, we are now receiving up to ten new referrals a month, and have steadily grown our team of volunteer doulas to meet the demand for our services. The feedback we have received from the women we support and their maternal health providers has been overwhelmingly positive.

In the last year alone, we have established a highly skilled board of six directors, registered as a charity, and grown our team from four to nine, with seven paid staff and two volunteers. In addition to our doula support program, our education program is also now up and running, following a highly successful pilot of our young mums education program. We are developing strong partnerships with Melbourne City Mission, The Royal Women's Hospital, Sunshine Hospital, The Northern Hospital and a range of community service organisations to ensure that we can provide the most effective programs possible, with the greatest reach, for women in need.



Another key focus over the last six months has been developing our public communications. For World Doula Week in March, we launched our first community fundraising campaign, raising \$15,000. This marked the beginning of a more concerted engagement with the wider community and will continue to form a core part of what we do: to share our work publicly, provide positive and inspiring birth stories and information, and to inform the broader community about the challenging realities of birth that many women face. We operate within a far from perfect maternal health care system, and we are dedicated to improving it with loving and compassionate care for every woman.

This next year for Birth for HumanKIND will be about further growing our community of supporters and volunteers, refining and continuing to develop

our doula support and education programs and consolidating the strong foundations that we've already built. It's been a period of rapid and exciting growth, and we have every intention of going from strength to strength. Our goals are to have over 40 volunteer doulas supporting 80 women and families in the coming year, to run a quarterly education program for young mums, and to pilot a new workshop on navigating the maternal health system for women from refugee and migrant backgrounds. We are currently in the process of designing a new website with an information and community hub, profiles of our volunteer doulas and birth stories from the women we work with. We are also building our research and advocacy foundations with the support of key advisers and researchers in the field.

We want to thank each and every person who has offered their dedication and support to our work, in so many ways. I feel very privileged and grateful to be able to do this work, and to see women, babies and families supported through the crucial and precious time of pregnancy and birth, so that our children and our communities can grow strong and thrive. On behalf of myself and the team at Birth for HumanKIND, I hope you will be inspired, informed, and impassioned to support us, in whatever way you can, to make this vision possible.

Mei Lai Swan

CEO and Founder



Two of our fabulous volunteer doulas, Claire and Dionne, with our CEO and Founder Mei Lai

THE STORY OF BIRTH FOR HUMANKIND



In late 2012, at a prenatal yoga teacher training, our CEO and Founder Mei Lai met Amanda Styles, the young women's social worker at The Royal Women's Hospital. Having almost completed her doula training, Mei Lai offered to volunteer her time as a doula to support young women who might be in need of that extra support a doula can provide. Amanda referred Carly Lord, a strong, intelligent and brave young woman of 19. Her mother had passed away shortly before she fell pregnant, she had only recently moved to Victoria and she was in a new relationship.

Carly embraced the additional support that Mei Lai offered, and gave birth to a beautiful baby boy at The Royal Women's Hospital with Mei Lai and her partner by her side. It was such an enriching experience for both Carly and Mei Lai, that it seemed obvious to them that a service like this needed to be available on a broader scale.

“I would love for every young woman [like Carly] to know that unconditional support and guidance is available for the incredible and life-changing event of having a baby. We hear time and time again how having a doula helps women feel more confident, more informed and more empowered during pregnancy, birth and the early moments of being a new mum.

You don't have to do it alone.”

- Mei Lai Swan, CEO and Founder

Following a buzzing 'expression of interest' meeting at the The Royal Women's Hospital, Birth for HumanKIND started in earnest as a small team of four operating

from Mei Lai's lounge room. In just a couple of years, we have become a fully fledged charity with a dedicated core team of nine, 30 volunteer doulas, a committed and 'hands-on' board, as well as a growing community of people like you who are passionate about promoting better birth outcomes and supporting women in need. It's been an adventurous and deeply satisfying journey of growth, inspiration, commitment and celebration.

“Mei Lai gave me the confidence to push through the hardest parts of pregnancy and birth. I didn't have my mum to provide the guidance, support and knowledge that comes from experiencing birth, and Mei Lai helped to meet that need.” - Carly Lord

A special mention is needed for Kirstan Flannery, who dedicated herself wholeheartedly to setting up and co-managing the organisation with Mei Lai. She has recently stepped back from management and into the position of Chair of the Board. She continues to support birthing women as one of our most experienced volunteer doulas, and also co-facilitates our young mums education program.

Another heartwarming stand-out moment from the journey so far was inviting Carly, that first young mum Mei Lai supported, and the woman who inspired the creation of Birth for HumanKIND, to step into the fold as a board director. Not only is she a passionate board member (and our youngest!), she has also been instrumental in setting up and co-facilitating our young mums education program. Our team has a real family kind of feel and we are blessed to have such a strong shared vision to work towards.



WHO DO WE SUPPORT?



Our free doula and education support services are available to any pregnant woman who is experiencing economic disadvantage and meets at least one of the following criteria:

- Under 25 years of age
- From a refugee, asylum seeker or new migrant background
- At risk of experiencing perinatal depression
- Is experiencing, or has a history of, mental illness, substance misuse, trauma and/or abuse
- Experiencing homelessness
- Of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent
- Lacking a birth support person

“I had to go for an operation [caesarean section]. She [my doula] was there at 6am. One of my twins was only 1.8kg so she helped a lot. She really gave me time, she encouraged me and I wasn't afraid. I didn't know anything. Thank you so much for your help.”

- Cindy about our volunteer doula Ingrid*

“Having a doula was great emotional support. It helped me to have a safe labour. It gave me strength against all things during the labour. I felt lonely 'cause I had no one. She gave me support. The doula was the best support during my hard time.”

- Zohreh about our volunteer doula Susan*

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE JOURNEY SO FAR 2014 - 2016



We have supported 76 women and their families from 29 different countries through our doula support program



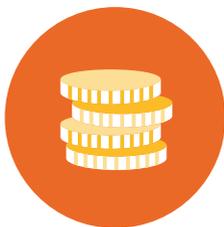
We have received referrals from over 25 different agencies across Victoria



We have grown our core team to 9 including 7 paid staff and 2 volunteers, 6 volunteer board members and 30 volunteer doulas



We have cultivated an engaged online community of more than 1500 and growing



We raised \$15,000 during our first community fundraising campaign for World Doula Week!

CLIENT PROFILES

While names and specific details have been changed to honour confidentiality, these profiles are based on actual clients that Birth for HumanKIND has supported over the past two years through our free doula support and education programs.



KATE*, 22 was one of the first women we supported as part of our young mums education program. This was her first pregnancy and she had no partner or family members who were in a position to support her. She had experienced violence as a child and, when she was referred to our service, she was experiencing homelessness following a time in detox for substance misuse. With the support of one of our most experienced volunteer doulas, Kate was able to access the information she needed to take a more active role in her pregnancy and birth. She found that having someone by her side throughout her pregnancy, labour and in those first few weeks after her baby was born empowered her to make more informed choices and feel greater confidence as she stepped into motherhood.



CLAUDETTE*, 24 was born in Sierra Leone and came to Australia as a refugee in 2007 at age 15. She became pregnant in 2015 and, soon after, began to experience violence at the hands of her partner, the father of her baby. Referred to us by a women's crisis service, when we first met this courageous and resilient young woman, she was heavily pregnant and living in a refuge. She had been diagnosed with anxiety and depression and was incredibly nervous about birthing alone and becoming a single mother. Through our doula support program we were able to help Claudette feel more confident in her ability to give birth and to care for her new baby girl.

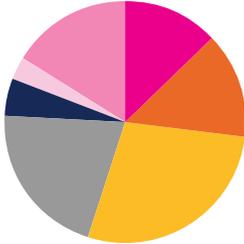


SANAZ*, 20 is a young, Afghan-born, Muslim woman, who arrived in Australia on a spousal visa in 2014. Referred to us through a migrant settlement service, Sanaz spoke very little English and was living well below the poverty line and experiencing social isolation. The uncertainty and conditions of her visa status and her lack of family support put her at a high risk of experiencing perinatal depression. Being able to offer Sanaz the services of a bilingual volunteer doula who was able to offer culturally sensitive support meant that she felt much less fearful and less isolated during her pregnancy, labour and after her baby was born.



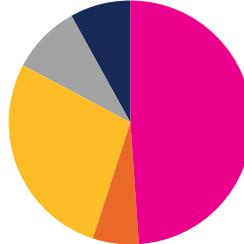
NYANDENG*, 26 was born in South Sudan, and having arrived in Australia via an Egyptian refugee camp, when we met her she was living in temporary accommodation on the outskirts of Melbourne. We supported her through her fourth pregnancy and she was facing a more complex and high-risk set of circumstances than most. While she had a healthy and bubbly three year old daughter, she had experienced the grief and trauma of losing one child to malaria in the refugee camp she lived in and another child to miscarriage. She had a chronic health condition that required constant monitoring and she was experiencing severe social isolation and financial hardship. Our volunteer doula was able to give her the valuable care she needed to go through the pregnancy and birth feeling well supported, which assisted in her experiencing positive birth and maternal health outcomes.

SNAPSHOT OF THE WOMEN WE HAVE SUPPORTED



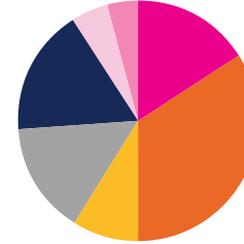
How old are they?

15-19	13%
20-24	14%
25-29	28%
30-34	21%
35-39	5%
40+	3%
Not provided	16%



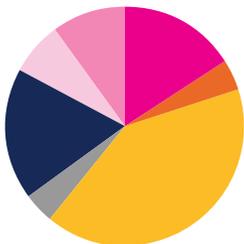
Where are they giving birth (by region)?

Inner Melbourne (RWH)	49%
South East	6%
Northern	28%
Western	9%
Other	8%



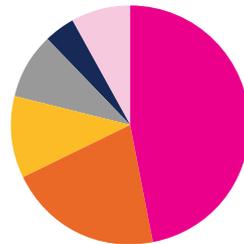
Where are the referrals coming from?

Community/family support services	16%
Hospitals	34%
Maternal child health services	9%
Other/not known	15%
Refugee/asylum seeker/migrant support services	17%
Self-referrals	5%
Women's crisis services	4%



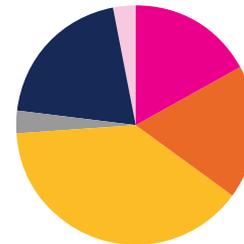
What is their first language?

Arabic	16%
Burmese	4%
English	41%
Oromo (Ethiopia)	4%
Other	18%
Other (African languages)	7%
Persian (Farsi or Dari)	10%



What number pregnancy are we supporting them through?

First	47%
Second	21%
Third	11%
Fourth	9%
5+	4%
Not known	8%



What is their continent or region of birth?

Oceania (Australia)	17%
Asia	18%
Africa	39%
South America	3%
Middle East	20%
Not known	3%

THE STORY OF SELAM AND ZAINAB

We are glad to have the opportunity to share the story of two remarkable young women and clients of Birth for HumanKIND, Selam and Zainab, with you.

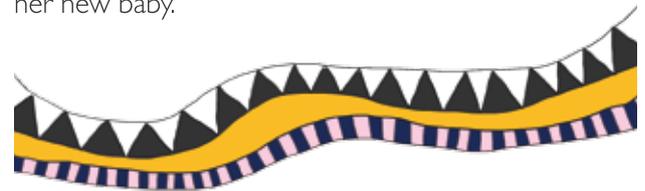
Selam* was born in Ethiopia in 1990, but fled civil war with her sisters to a refugee camp in Kenya when she was still very young. Growing up in a refugee camp, she had little access to formal education and she couldn't read or write her native Oromo language. After spending her whole childhood in the camp, Selam and her sisters were granted a visa to come to Australia in 2009.

Glenys, our Doula Coordinator & Supervisor, first met Selam in 2012 through the *Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Program*, where she worked prior to joining Birth for HumanKIND. At the time, Selam was 22 and pregnant with her first child. Since she'd arrived in Melbourne, she'd become estranged from her sisters, and her husband was living in Malaysia because he could not get a visa to join her in Australia.

One September evening, alone, and with her husband thousands of kilometres away, she went into labour. Everything from here, she recalls, was a bit of a blur. After labouring for a short time at The Royal Women's Hospital her baby became distressed and

she ended up having an emergency caesarean. She was scared by the thought of having a brand new baby at home on her own while she was recovering from birth. Luckily, a friend living nearby offered for Selam to stay with her because she knew she didn't have anyone to support her and her tiny bedsitter apartment was too small to even fit a cot.

When her baby boy, Dawit* (which means beloved in her mother tongue), was a few weeks old, Selam felt confident and well enough to move back to her own home with him. However, because of the small confines of where she was living, every time Dawit cried, her neighbours would yell and scream and bang on the walls. This made her feel so unsafe and upset, not to mention made little Dawit cry even more. She started spending as much time as possible in the local shopping centre where it was air-conditioned and noisy enough that it didn't matter so much if he cried. It was a tough time for Selam, managing alone with her new baby.



Four years later and now in her role as Doula Coordinator & Supervisor for Birth for Humankind, Glenys was visiting a new client, Zainab*, in one of Melbourne's high-rise estates. This young woman's situation was remarkably similar to the one that Selam had been in a few years earlier. She, too, was born in Ethiopia, came to Australia as a refugee and was pregnant with her first child at 22. She had told Glenys over the phone that a woman from her community had given her a place to stay during her pregnancy because she didn't have any family here or a partner to support her. This other woman was also pregnant, and they were both due in the same week.

Well, who should have opened the door when Glenys visited Zainab that day but Selam!

Remembering how valuable it was to have had the support of a friend when she had a newborn, Selam had taken Zainab into her home and was supporting her. So, on that chilly Melbourne winter day, not only did Glenys pay an antenatal visit to Zainab but she also had the pleasure of reuniting with Selam.

It turns out that in the years since Glenys had first met her back in 2012, Selam had managed to secure a visa for her husband to come to Australia as well as a two-bedroom unit in a high-rise estate for the three of them to live in. She had soon become pregnant with her second child, and that's when she had met Zainab.

To make this story that little bit more magical, Selam told Glenys that her husband was not attending the birth of their second child meaning that she would likely be on her own in the birthing suite. It was

the perfect opportunity for Glenys to connect her with one of our wonderful volunteer doulas, Mariko. So in a beautiful turn of events, Mariko ended up supporting Selam through the birth of her baby girl at the same time as Glenys supported Zainab through the birth of her baby boy.

During a postnatal visit to see how both young women were faring after their births, they told Glenys how great it had been to have her and Mariko by their sides during labour and birth. They now call them their 'sisters'.

It's heartwarming to see women supporting other women to bring new life into the world. It's stories like this that get to the heart of why we do what we do at Birth for Humankind: for healthier mums, babies and communities.



WHAT IS A DOULA?

A doula is a trained birth companion who supports women and their families during pregnancy, labour and the weeks following birth. A doula provides practical support, emotional care and information, and may assist with communications between the mother, her family and the hospital staff. Unlike a midwife, who oversees the medical aspects of birth including the delivery, a doula's expertise lie more in offering continuous care, natural pain relief strategies, reassurance, encouragement and non-biased information.

Birth for Humankind volunteer doulas are required to adhere to our Doula Code of Practice to ensure the highest standards of professional and ethical care.



Birth for Humankind's Doula Coordinator & Supervisor, Glenys, holding new twins

“Alex was kind. They said it [birth] could be pleasant but I thought, how can it be pleasant? But it was pleasant! It was so different to my first birth.”

- Lena about our volunteer doula Alex (Lena* was in a Darwin detention centre for her first birth and during the labour guards were stationed outside her room.)*

“It was the first time I've worked alongside a doula and I was a little intimidated to begin with. But there were no problems once we got to know each other and I know that the patient found her presence reassuring.”

- Midwife at Casey Hospital



Our volunteer doulas attending the monthly 'Birth Support Circle

WHAT WE OFFER



DOULA SUPPORT PROGRAM:

Our flagship program is our doula support program, which provides free one-to-one doula support to women in vulnerable and disadvantaged circumstances during pregnancy, birth and after the baby comes.

Volunteer doulas are matched with women as they are referred to the program, which may be at any stage of their pregnancy, and together they develop an individualised care plan that includes a minimum of three antenatal visits, presence during the birth, and two postnatal visits. If required, English language interpreters are utilised during home-visits and labour as many of our clients do not speak English as a first language. Our volunteer doulas also refer women to other relevant support services, as needed, such as housing and homelessness services or other community and family services.

Whilst primary care and attention is given to the mother-to-be, our volunteer doulas also provide invaluable support and guidance for fathers and partners. They are there for the whole family to support the transition to parenthood.

Since 2014, we have supported 76 women and their families through this program (at June 2016). We are now receiving upwards of ten referrals per month from a range of hospitals and support agencies throughout Victoria, including The Royal Women's

Hospital, Sunshine Hospital, The Northern Hospital, Foundation House, Salvation Army, Launch Housing, and Foundation House.

Demonstrated outcomes of our doula support program include:

Women feeling more confident in their ability to give birth and to care for their baby

Women having the information they need to take a more active role in their own health care and to make more informed choices

Women feeling less fearful and confused about birth and parenting, which may reduce the risk of perinatal depression and anxiety

Women feeling less isolated by receiving care and support and being connected to other community services, which they can access throughout their pregnancy and parenthood

Our doulas' continuous care throughout pregnancy and birth reduces the likelihood of medical intervention and eases the burden on hospital staff

“Barbara was fantastic! She put the patient at ease and took my advice to coach her through [labour]. A fabulous birth assistant who assisted the entire way through birth and breastfeeding.”

- Mercy Hospital Midwife about our volunteer doula Barbara

MEET ONE OF OUR VOLUNTEER DOULAS



Meet Alex Harrison, one of our incredible volunteer doulas. Alex grew up in Sydney and spent nearly 20 years working as a performer and choreographer in theatre and dance. She now lives in Melbourne's west with her partner and their three and a half year old son and she also has a stepson who is 20. Alex has been a volunteer doula with Birth for HumanKIND for a year now, after doing a mentorship with our Co-Founder and Chair Kirstan Flannery. We are delighted that she has shared her insights and reflections with us for our inaugural Annual Report.

When did you first learn about the role of doula and why did you decide to become one?

I first learned about doulas when I studied the medicalisation of women's bodies in my anthropology

degree. Many years later I had my own child and a friend told me about birth attendant training with Rhea Dempsey. My response was an immediate and unequivocal 'YES! I have to do this!' I trust those big 'yesses' when they come along.

How many women have you supported so far, including those through Birth for HumanKIND, and is there one in particular whose story you would like to share with us?

I have supported eight women through their pregnancies and births so far and they have all been so utterly unique that they are all, in some way, 'firsts'. Birthing stories are truly sacred stories and they all deserve space to be told in their own right. However, Zahara* is one woman that I supported through Birth for HumanKIND whose story particularly moved me. She had endured 14 miscarriages and a stillbirth before the arrival of her baby daughter - a brave and beautiful woman whom it was an honour to support.

Can you sum up the role of doula in a few words?

For me, they would be: presence, embodiment, dynamism and heart.

What's your favourite part of being a doula?

My favourite part of being a doula is when a baby becomes visible, audible, present to the world and meets her or his mother!

What difference can a doula make to a woman's experience of pregnancy? And how important is that continuity of care before, during and after birth?

For positive birthing outcomes women need to feel safe – territorially, emotionally, psychologically and physically. Someone who knows a woman's fears and desires for the birth, and the history of birthing women, can more effectively advocate for them. The presence of a doula can allow women to trust the situation they are in and focus on the demanding business of giving birth. It is profoundly powerful for women to be regarded with respect, wonder and love as they grow into their capacity as women and mothers.

Why do you think the support of a doula is so important for Birth for HumanKIND's clients in particular?

The women supported by Birth for HumanKIND are bravely bringing forth children in so many challenging circumstances. They are women enduring social or geographical isolation, they often have absent partners and families, uncertain visa arrangements, lack of peer support, limited English, health problems,

histories of persecution and detention, histories of trauma and inexperience with the Australian birth culture. That they labour and birth with the advocacy and support of doulas is so crucial to birth outcomes and wellbeing in the prenatal and postnatal periods. But beyond that, doulas can go further in deeply honouring these mothers; acknowledging their strength and courage and welcoming them and their children into the community. Ultimately there is much to learn from these women and their families.

What is your hope or vision for birthing mothers worldwide?

My hope is that birthing mothers are respected and loved by their communities and are empowered to trust themselves and their children.

If you could tell the world one thing about Birth for HumanKIND what would it be?

One thing about Birth for HumanKIND? Ahhh! That these women are brilliant. Absolutely brilliant. What a need they meet, what excellent perception to address that need and it is a gift to be involved.



Some of our volunteer doulas with birth educator Rhea Dempsey



Doula training with Fiona Hallinan

OUR DOULA TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

From 2014 to 2016 we held six volunteer doula inductions and recruited 30 experienced doulas, midwives and student midwives into our doula support program. Our induction into the program includes training in the processes and practice requirements of being a Birth for HumanKIND doula, cultural competency training, as well as training on working with specific client groups including women from migrant and refugee backgrounds, women who have experienced trauma and young women.

In addition to our induction training, we offer monthly peer group debriefing (Birth Support

Circles), and regular professional development opportunities. These have included weekend training sessions with childbirth educator and birth educator Rhea Dempsey on trauma and birth, a session with midwife Fiona Hallinan on 'making space for baby', childbirth education training through The Royal Women's Hospital, and a number of shorter workshops, including working with women who have experienced sexual assault. Our volunteer doulas also receive individual supervision and on-call support for every birth they attend.

OUR TRAINING SCHOLARSHIP

We are excited to have partnered with Dial a Doula who provide one annual fully-funded scholarship for a bilingual community member to undertake their 20-week foundation doula training. The scholarship recipient then becomes part of our volunteer doula

team upon completion of the training, providing bilingual doula support to women from her community. In 2016 we were delighted to offer this scholarship to Wafa Ibrahim, and in 2015 to Elizabeth Mazeyko.



Meet Wafa Ibrahim, our 2016 scholarship recipient

"I was born in Lebanon and my first language is Arabic. I am very excited to be a volunteer doula with Birth for HumanKIND. Providing support to pregnant women during their most needed time is a wonderful thing to do. I joined Birth for HumanKIND to be part of a wonderful supportive team that has compassion and understanding for vulnerable women of all ethnicities, races, religions, and ages. That's what I really like about being a doula with Birth for HumanKIND."



“Elizabeth was very friendly, supportive and respectful of the family’s birth space and midwives’ work.”

- Midwife at Sunshine Hospital

“Elizabeth was amazing in providing support and care of her client.” - Staff at The Royal Women’s Hospital

Meet Elizabeth Mazeyko, our 2015 scholarship recipient

“I was born in the early 1950s in Montevideo, Uruguay, in the southern area of South America. The population is almost three and a half million and 98% of people are from migrant backgrounds including European, African and Asian. I was very lucky to have a childhood that allowed me to learn and share with people from many different cultural and religious backgrounds. My mother tongue is Spanish (Idioma Castellano) and I can also speak English, Italian and Portuguese.

In 1977 my husband and I decided to leave Uruguay, which was very sad. We left behind our family, friends, culture, and many other sentimental values. I arrived in Melbourne with my husband and two-year-old daughter, bringing with me a lot of dreams for this new country, full of opportunities for our family. In 1978 our second child was born. It was emotional and very hard to not speak English well and to not be able to communicate with health professionals.

Almost 40 years later I believe I have achieved more than I could ever have imagined, part of which is my love to work closely with women in women’s health.

Working as a bilingual health educator for the past 28 years for different organisations, I have learned to listen very carefully to women’s needs and teach them their rights, and how to stand up for these rights particularly for women who have

just arrived in Australia, because newly arrived women have no idea how the health system works in Australia.

I have always been very interested in women’s reproductive health, pregnancy, pre and postnatal support: these are still big issues for some women.

In 2014 I heard that Birth for HumanKIND was offering a scholarship and I applied with all my heart! I thought that this would be a perfect time for me to become a doula.

So why did I become a doula?

Because history tells us that many years ago women across different cultures were accompanied by other women at the time of labour and birth. Also because I’m a mother and a very dedicated grandmother; and I have helped so many mums in the past, including my two daughters. I strongly believe that birth for every woman has to be respectful, and we need to help women to work with their bodies and feelings and to reinforce that they have the power in them.

The most beautiful moment is multiplied by all the women who I have accompanied during birth. It is that moment when the woman takes her baby in her arms and looks at it for the first time. It’s a look of recognition, joy and fulfillment that fills you too.

A woman giving birth in an atmosphere of respect and freedom is the most powerful image I’ve ever seen. There is nothing more beautiful!”



OUR EDUCATION PROGRAM

MOTHERING 101: A CRASH COURSE FOR YOUNG PREGNANT WOMEN

Research shows that young women typically do not access conventional birth and parenting education services because the content and delivery is often too formal, costs are prohibitive, and they report feeling uncomfortable and fear being judged.

In May 2016 we piloted a pregnancy, birth and early parenting education and support program for young mums in partnership with Melbourne City Mission and with referrals and support from The Royal Women's Hospital.

Mothering 101 is a six-week education program designed specifically for women under 25 years, that uses a facilitated peer-to-peer learning model. The co-facilitators, a qualified doula or childbirth educator and a young mum, provide tailored information and support on a range of topics such as: how pregnancy changes your body and your life; looking after yourself and your baby during pregnancy; understanding appointments, hospitals, tests and support services available; preparing for labour and making informed choices about birth; breastfeeding and how to care for a newborn.

The sessions are interactive and activity based, with an open discussion format. The program guide is flexible and can be adapted in response to participants' questions, concerns and interests. The program includes an additional optional session for support people and/or partners to learn how they can better support the mother and baby. We also refer participants to family support and other community services as needed.

“I was so scared because I didn't know anything about pregnancy and birth, but after the young mums program I feel better and more ready. It was so good to meet other young mums, hear their stories and realise I'm not alone. I wish every young mum could do this program.” - Ava*, program participant

“I think this young mums program is good for all young mums, so we can talk to each other and learn from the teachers. If I could say some advice to other young mums I would tell them to be strong and don't give up.”

- Yassmina, program participant*

Some of the demonstrated and intended outcomes from our young mums education program include:

Developing a deeper understanding of how to care for themselves during pregnancy, leading to better perinatal health outcomes for mother and baby

Learning about their choices for labour and birth, leading to improved birth experiences and easier bonding with their babies

Feeling more confident and less fearful and anxious about their pregnancy, birth and caring for a new baby, reducing the risk of perinatal depression and anxiety

Feeling less isolated and more connected to their community by linking them in with a broader support network that includes other young mums and appropriate services, which they can access throughout their pregnancy and parenthood

Feeling inspired to take more of an active role in their own health, both during pregnancy and afterwards

We have had some excellent feedback from the young mums who participated in the pilot program and, looking ahead, we plan to offer the program quarterly, in different locations across Melbourne based on need.



“I felt it was good to meet other young girls also pregnant, to hear their experiences and know that other young women have also gone through it, so I’m not alone. I looked forward to it and it made me want to find other groups or courses to do, so I’m going to ask my midwife because I want to do more. I don’t know what topics, I just want to keep getting more information and see what is available.”

- Chamut, program participant*

BUILDING OUR FOUNDATIONS

Over the past two and a half years we have been busy establishing the organisation's foundations and setting up our legal, financial and operational frameworks to stand us in good stead now and into the future. Some of our key activities have included developing a three-year strategic plan and budget, crafting our organisational policies and procedures, developing a secure database,

updating our IT systems, and diversifying our funding base. In March 2016 we ran our first community fundraising campaign during World Doula Week, achieving our target of \$15,000. We have also developed a communications strategy, with a focus on growing the organisation's profile, building our digital media presence, and refining our branding and key messaging.

RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY

Research and advocacy is a key part of our long-term focus. We want to see positive changes in the maternal health system towards greater equity and woman-centred care. With our doula support program demonstrating clear positive outcomes, we have started to lay the foundations for an evidence-based research and advocacy program. We have established a research advisory committee including noted maternal health researchers Professor Rhonda Small, Dr Kerreen Reiger and Dr Monica Campo. We are also

developing a partnership with the Multicultural Centre for Women's Health to work together on research initiatives going forward.

In 2016 and 2017 we plan to undertake a comprehensive literature review and develop an evaluation framework for our doula support program. We will be reviewing existing international and Australian research on the provision of doula support for women in a range of disadvantaged and vulnerable circumstances, in order to further develop our programs.

LOOKING FORWARD

Over the next year we look forward to building on our foundational work, growing our community and working in partnership with agencies across the maternal health system who can provide specialist information about options, eligibility, accessibility and referral pathways into their agency and onwards.

In our doula support program we will run one induction to recruit an additional ten volunteer doulas, and offer a number of professional development opportunities for our existing team.

We will continue to develop strong relationships with hospitals and referral agencies and will seek funding to employ an additional doula supervisor to manage increasing demand for the program's services.

In our education program we plan to offer our six-week young mums education program every quarter. We also aim to expand this program by facilitating culturally specific pregnancy support groups and education sessions for women from refugee, new migrant and asylum seeker backgrounds.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

The following financial information reflects the operations of Birth for Humankind from 2014-2016 and should be read in conjunction with the audited financial statements ending 30 June 2016 and their accompanying notes (available at our inaugural Annual General Meeting and at www.birthforhumankind.org).

Summary Income Statement		
	2015	2016
	\$	\$
Donations - Philanthropists	31,596	168,404
Fundraising Revenue	-	18,194
Bank Interest	-	2,696
Total Income	31,596	189,294
Expenditure		
Personnel	15,521	68,058
Facilities	5,439	19,379
Doula Support	5,001	57,279
Communications and Marketing	5,635	4,572
Education	-	5,329
Total Expenditure	31,596	154,617
SURPLUS (DEFICIT) FOR YEAR	-	34,677

Summary Balance Sheet		
	2015	2016
	\$	\$
Cash	-	352,406
Receivables	-	5,243
Total Assets	-	357,649
Payables	-	19,134
Provisions	-	3,838
Deferred Income	-	300,000
Total Liabilities	-	322,972
NET ASSETS	-	34,677

OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Our board of six directors have backgrounds in the community, government and corporate sectors. We are so grateful for their hands-on support and guidance and for sharing their knowledge and expertise.



Mei Lai Swan CEO & Founding Director

Mei Lai is the Founder of Birth for HumanKIND and currently manages our rapidly growing organisation, with an inclusive and participatory approach. The inspiration for Birth for HumanKIND came through her diverse background in social work and community development, as a doula, and as a yoga teacher - all fuelled by immense amounts of passion and a desire for a socially just and thriving world. She has experience developing, managing and delivering psychosocial and community development programs for Aboriginal communities, young people, and people seeking asylum. She has a Master of Social Work with a focus on cross-cultural counselling and community development. For Mei Lai, it's a simple equation: Birth Support + Social Justice + Heart = Birth for HumanKIND for healthier mums, babies and communities.



Kirstan Flannery Co-Founder, Chairperson of the Board

Kirstan is the Co-Founder of Birth for HumanKIND and a certified doula working in private practise as Birth Wise. She believes 'mothering the mother' and nurturing babies within thriving environments is key to creating healthy communities. Motivated by and committed to social change in action, Kirstan has provided mentoring and philanthropic support to various non-profit enterprises. She ensures that projects are designed with sustainable foundations in order to generate long-term service and availability in the community. Her collaborative projects include Centre for Social Change and Recre8 Bush Adventure Therapy. Her community spirit and special interest in maternal child health care shines forth in both her work and personal relationships.



Sarah Jefford Secretary

Sarah is a lawyer with a long involvement in legal aid, community services and management. She is currently the manager of Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service and she has previously served as a board member with Women's Information, Support and Housing in the North (WISHIN). Sarah is the mother of two children with a deep appreciation of the importance of the role of doula.



Raj Gopiraj Treasurer

Raj has more than 10 years' experience in both the commercial and not-for-profit sectors and has lived and worked in Australia and the US. He serves as a non-executive director for Asha Global (appointed March 2015) and Bendigo Bank – Prahran and Windsor branch (appointed May 2015), and is an adviser with Australian Red Cross on corporate partnerships and relationship management. Raj began his career as a consultant at AECOM and interned with the United Nations in New York on Project Umoja. He is currently the priority account portfolio manager at PwC and brings a vast array of skills in business development, financial & risk management, business strategy planning and partnerships.



Carly Lord General Director

Carly is a young mum and the inspiration behind the establishment of Birth for HumanKIND. She has been involved as an adviser, advocate and presenter for various projects at The Royal Women's Hospital. Carly is a powerful spokesperson and advocate for young mums and is a core part of Birth for HumanKIND's team, developing resources and co-facilitating sessions in our young mums education program.



Kerryn O'Rourke General Director

Kerryn has an extensive background in public health, nursing, women's, adolescent and refugee health, consulting, and management. She is currently the Principal Program Officer – Health Equity at VicHealth. She established and coordinated a MamaBake group in Brunswick to support local mothers, and is also the mother of two children with a deep appreciation and passion for the role of doulas.

OUR STAFF TEAM

We are incredibly fortunate to have a talented and caring team who are committed to and passionate about our work. Our core team includes:

Mei Lai Swan

CEO & Founder

Kirstan Flannery

Co-Founder, Doula Support Program Advisor
& Education Program Facilitator

Annabel Davies

Chief Operations Officer

Stamatia Venetis

Chief Finance Officer

Glenys Janssen Frank

Doula Coordinator & Supervisor

Trixie Pavey

Education Programs Coordinator

Carly Lord

Young Mums Education Program Facilitator

Kester Naismith

Administration Officer

Carmen Hawker

Communications & Marketing Officer



Left to right: Glenys, Kirstan, Kester, Mei Lai, Annabel, Carmen and Stamatia.

We would also like to acknowledge the involvement and achievements of those who helped grow our organisation in its early days:

Samantha Dennis, founding member and first Doula Coordinator & Supervisor

Indrani Parker, founding member, administrative support and ongoing volunteer doula

OUR VOLUNTEER DOULAS

We are so grateful to have such a skilled and compassionate team of volunteer doulas who dedicate their time and energy in support of our clients. Thank you to the following wonderful women:

<i>Alex Harrison</i>	<i>Fernanda Perez</i>	<i>Madeleine Murray</i>
<i>Amy Volich</i>	<i>Fiona Harrison</i>	<i>Mariko Meagher</i>
<i>Barbara Ferguson</i>	<i>Glenys Janssen Frank</i>	<i>Mei Lai Swan</i>
<i>Bec Wisby</i>	<i>Indrani Parker</i>	<i>Phoebe Ely</i>
<i>Charlotte O'Donnell-Young</i>	<i>Ingrid Corbett</i>	<i>Rachel Worboys</i>
<i>Christine Stavrakis</i>	<i>Kirstan Flannery</i>	<i>Samantha Dennis</i>
<i>Claire Wyborn</i>	<i>Kylie Cavanagh</i>	<i>Shogoufa Hydari</i>
<i>Colleen Crawford</i>	<i>Laura Lee Berlingieri</i>	<i>Stacey McCall</i>
<i>Dionne Fraser</i>	<i>Leigh Sussman</i>	<i>Susan Mitchell</i>
<i>Elizabeth Mazeyko</i>	<i>Liz Varney</i>	<i>Tanya Strusberg</i>

OTHER VOLUNTEERS

We would also like to thank these other fantastic volunteers:

Stamatia Venetis who began as our volunteer finance officer before moving into a paid position as our Chief Finance Officer

Karen McNeil who helped set up our education program

Carly Lord for setting up our young mums education program

Tracy van der Zalm who drafted our first communications strategy

OUR SUPPORTERS

OUR FUNDERS

Birth for HumanKIND is extremely grateful to The Flannery Foundation and the Flannery family for providing seed funding and ongoing support for our organisation.

You have made our work possible.

OUR PRO-BONO SUPPORTERS

We are indebted to the following individuals and organisations who have contributed their time and expertise to help us develop our programs and operations:

Anna Somerville at The Business Edit

Beth & Michael Walsh at Northmost Studio

Fiona Hallinan, Midwife and Birth Educator

Gerlee Jones at Kids Moving Pictures

Jay Chubb at Nest Coworking

Rhea Dempsey at Birthing Wisdom

Sunderai Felich at Dial a Doula

Susan Croke Design & Illustration

OUR DONORS

We would like to acknowledge and thank all of those who have generously donated funds, goods and services to our organisation since we began, in particular:

Aromababy

Angela Gallo

Charlotte Roberts

Lindy Lawler

Pinky McKay

Suburban Sandcastles

Wattle Health

GET INVOLVED

As an organisation that is growing at a rapid rate, there are so many useful and important ways that you can get involved in our work. From becoming a volunteer doula to hosting a fundraising event – if you are passionate about every woman having access to the support she needs during pregnancy, birth and early motherhood then we want to hear from you!

VOLUNTEER AS A DOULA

Are you a doula, midwife or student midwife who would like to offer your skills and expertise to support, educate and care for women experiencing disadvantage? As a member of our volunteer doula team you will have access to ongoing professional development opportunities, peer support, and on-call debriefing. Contact us to find out more.

VOLUNTEER A SKILL

We are always looking for talented people to volunteer their skills. If you are experienced in administration, IT, fundraising, marketing or media, and would like to be part of the Birth for Humankind family, please get in touch.

BECOME A REGULAR DONOR

We need ongoing funding to reach more women and families in need. The best way for you to secure the future of our work is by becoming a regular donor. By making a monthly donation, you will make a lasting difference: birthforhumankind.org/donate

FUNDRAISE FOR US

It's easy to fundraise for us! Host an event or pledge a special occasion – it could be your birthday, a baby shower, an afternoon tea, whatever you choose! Simply register your event at mycause.com.au.

SUBSCRIBE TO OUR MONTHLY E-NEWS

Join our growing community of subscribers and each month we'll send you the latest news about our programs, upcoming events, and the latest information about birthing and parenting. Subscribe at birthforhumankind.org.

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Join in the conversation by being part of our growing online community! Follow us on Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn.



Thank you for your support

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