

PEOPLE

Giving birth in a home-like setting

By POLLY SUTTON

The first cry of life shatters the peaceful atmosphere of a quiet room, and a baby is born.

No clinical white walls, or strange masked and gowned figures.

The intimacy of birth is shared by mother and father alike, the new child is immediately a part of the family unit.

This is the situation Cecily Harmey, a midwife, and one of the co-ordinators of the Launceston Birth Centre Incorporated, has sought to create.

The birth centre offers a place for women to give birth in a home-like situation, she said.

And Cecily said that helping with a birth in the centre is a gratifying experience.

"Most importantly you get to know the person and look after them antenatally, through the birth and post-natally."

"You appreciate far more what they are going through and feel as if you have helped personally on a one to one basis," she said.

"Because you know the person you can watch them through the birth. You see their face and observe speech patterns to know how far along they are," said Cecily.

Jessica Rose Woodward had the honor of being the first child to be born in the Launceston Birth Centre Incorporated.

Her mother, Dianne Woodward gave birth to her on August 24.

"I think that childbirth is part of the natural flow of life" said Dianne.

"It's not a medical condition".

Dianne said that she was happy and glad to have such a facility available to her.

"With a home birth there are too many



● The co-ordinators of the Launceston Birth Centre Incorporated, Susan Eddy, of Riverside, and Cecily Harmey, of West Launceston.

ents the chance to have the birth of their child conducted in the manner they choose, close to medical help if it is needed.

"It was great, we had the freedom to do what we wanted and go for walks when the labor slowed down" said Dianne.

"The advantage of the birth centre is that you get to know your midwife during the pregnancy and there is one or two people at the birth not lots of different people."

Dianne said that in a hospital people were rushing around with gowns and masks on.

"In the birth centre you can create your own environment. At Jessica's birth the people were just sitting waiting.

"Because you have built up a rapport with the woman and her husband you know, they what," said Cecily.

The parents can be directly involved with the birth of the child and afterwards keep the child with them.

"The woman can see the baby's head and feel the baby as it is coming out, its a marvellous experience," said Cecily.

There is no rush to clean the child and the room.

"You treat them as a family the whole time and the husband can be actively involved and not feel like just an onlooker".

"The birth centre is a good half way house" said Cecily.

But Dianne does not recommend the birth centre for all people.

"Yes, if you have been through the Childbirth Education course and learnt a fair bit about childbirth" she said.

"But you have to be well prepared mentally as well as physically".

After Jessica was born, Dianne chose to go home.

"I could have gone into the QVH post-natal ward but I went home about two hours after the birth because I thought I would get a better sleep in my own bed."

Dianne said that the birth centre was badly needed.

"I would definitely use it again," she said.

A woman is eligible to use the centre if her doctor and the midwife think it is safe.

If a woman has had a caesarian or a forceps birth then investigations can be made as to the cause and a decision on acceptance will be made.

There is a charge to use the centre which is not refundable from medical insurance funds.

"There has been a lot of interest shown by the public in the centre, there is obviously a need for it in the community," Cecily said.

For more information about the centre contact Cecily Harmey on 31 5505.



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Dianne said that she was happy and glad to have such a facility available to her.

"With a home birth there are too many risks" she said.

The centre offers a home-like situation with large quiet rooms and a normal double bed, bathroom, and kitchen available.

It gives the feeling of a home birth with the advantage of being only 100 m from the labor ward of the Queen Victoria Hospital.

Situated in a ground floor flat in the QVH nurses home, the Launceston Birth Centre Incorporated offers par-



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● Dianne Woodward, of Dilston, holding her daughter Jessica, the first child to be born in the birth centre, with Sarah, 5, husband Chris, and Emma, 2½.