



# It Takes Two to Tango!

My story about having a baby

By Tanya Pawlowsky







My name is Tanya, and this is my story of pregnancy and having a baby. This photo is of me and my Dad. It was taken at Christmas time and I was four months pregnant. Me and the baby's Father, Ash, weren't together during my pregnancy.

A few months before Christmas, I was getting really bad pains and I didn't know what it was. You know when you get that period pain feeling, when you know you're due? Well, this kept going on for 2 weeks and I thought, 'Oh, something's not right here'.

My period still didn't come. Sometimes I couldn't move. I'd just lie there and so I made an appointment with my Doctor and went to see him. He said I could have a bladder infection, but the urine sample came back clear. Then he said, 'Come here and have a look at this!'. And he goes, 'You're pregnant'.

I was in shock because the baby wasn't planned or anything, but I have been trying with other guys that I have been with, and nothing's happened and now something's happened.

The Doctor gave me a leaflet for an abortion. The closest place is Albury. Then he said, 'Take it away and you think about it and then come back and let me know if you are going to keep it or not'. I went to see my Youth Worker and they said, 'Well, it's really your choice'.

Then I'm thinking, 'Should I keep it? Shouldn't I?' and then I thought about it and then got a lot of support from my family and friends, so I thought, 'Well I don't really want to get rid of it, I'll have it'.

A few weeks later, I was with a friend of mine and we wanted to go to Coles. We asked my mum's neighbour if he could give us a lift and he said, 'Yes'. I got in the front. This neighbour had already been shopping and there were groceries in the front seat against the gear stick. He was having trouble changing gears, so he decided to move the groceries and 'cos he was so focused on them, we veered off the road and hit a tree.

I was in the front seat and I hit the dashboard with the whole front of my body, and the ambulance came and the police came. When we finally got to the supermarket I bought this pregnancy test. I felt happy 'cos it showed I hadn't lost the baby. Two stripes mean you're pregnant, one stripe means you're not.





This is a photo of me in an Antenatal Clinic appointment at the Wang (Wangaratta) Hospital. I think I saw a Midwife or Doctor in these appointments. I had lots of these appointments when I was pregnant. I'd get a check over, and listen to the baby's heartbeat. They use this thing that's sort of like an ultrasound, but instead of seeing it you can hear it.

One time I had to drink glucose and get some blood tests. I think they were checking for diabetes, 'cos you can get diabetes while you're pregnant. I wasn't quite sure what the tests were for, though, because I don't know how to read their little languages, you know, their codes on the paper for Gribbles Pathology.



The Antenatal Clinic is where you can talk about anything about pregnancy. I didn't get morning sickness, but I got blood noses and red palms when I was pregnant, and I got really, really tired.

When I was 18 weeks pregnant the baby moved. It's exciting 'cos you can feel it inside your stomach. It feels like butterflies sort of flying around. Sometimes it's painful too, like when it kicks towards the end.



This is the ultrasound photo of my baby. I wanted to find out the gender, but it was in a weird position. The ultrasound was covered by Medicare. You can only have one. After that you have to pay, about \$80 bucks. I really wanted another ultrasound to find out the gender, but I ended up being okay with it, 'cos it left me with money to buy whatever I needed. 'Cos otherwise you're forking out too much money, just to find out.

It's good because I haven't had to pay for much. Like the Doctors - I get bulk billed, the Midwives - you don't have to pay at all. The only thing you've got to pay for is the accessories, like the nappies and, you know, your own things. The hospital sent me some brochures about Antenatal Classes. I think this is just getting together with other people and doing a few exercises before the baby's born. I would have done them if they were less money. But they were \$50. \$50 bucks!



Actually, my money's lasting me. Like, from when I got paid last I still had \$100 bucks left, so that's why I'm putting money into my Award Saver Account. I don't have any plans for it as yet, just keep saving.



This photo is of me looking at an information stand about pregnancy in the hospital. They have heaps of brochures women can read to know about having a baby. If they don't like reading they might be able to get videos from the Midwife. The Town library, here in Wang, might have videos and tapes, or even DVDs. There are other services too, like Ovens and King, a Community Health Centre.

Sometimes I didn't know what things were that the Doctors and Midwives were saying, so I just looked it up in the book- it doesn't matter what pregnancy book you get, they're always going to have the meanings at the back of it.

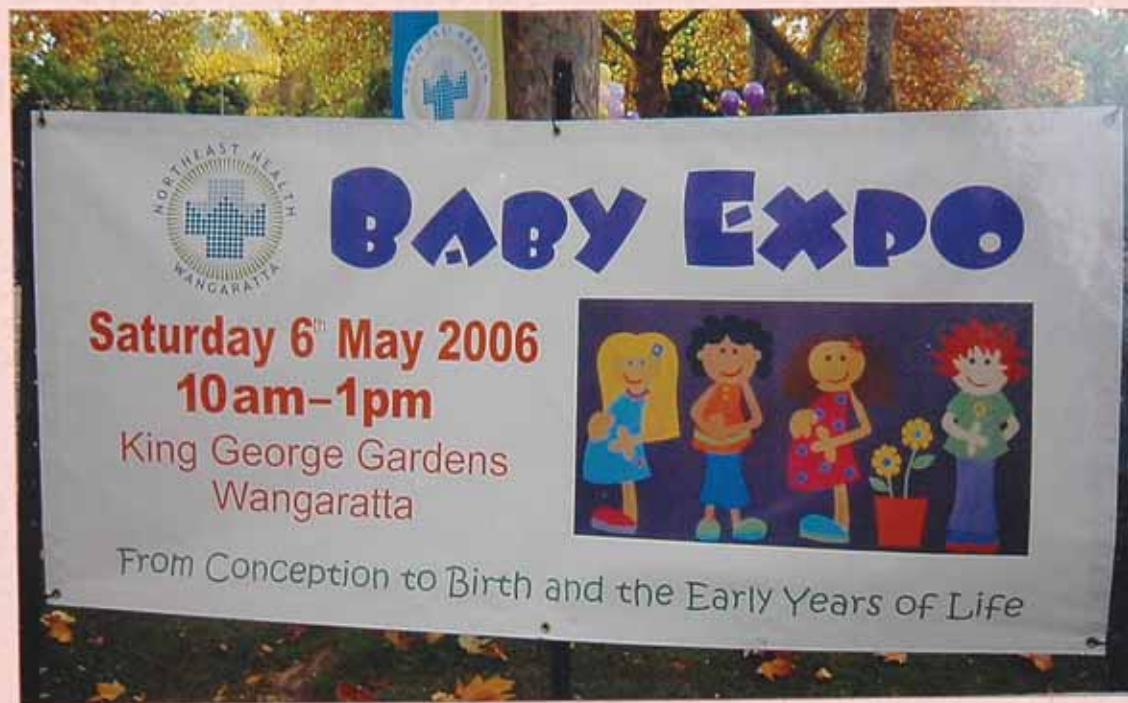
Also, if you don't know what the Doctors and Midwives are talking about, you always ask them there and then. You say, 'That word's new to me, I don't know that word, what does it mean?' Well, I suppose you're not going to know ALL the words that they use, but once you've known all the knowledge, you're going to know for next time if you have your second child. You're going to remember, 'Oh, I know that word'.

Doctors could also explain things differently, like shorten the words to words that we use everyday. You know, *Midwives*, they're like *Nurses*. Just make things easy to understand.



When I was pregnant there were a lot of rumours going around that the baby wasn't Ash's. So I went to the town library to use the internet and I looked up DNA tests in a program called Google. I clicked onto one of the sites and a box appeared and it said I can chat to someone live so I clicked on it and I chatted to a lady named Caroline. She wanted to know how she can help me and I wrote and asked how much it would cost for a DNA test. She wrote back and said, 'For 'peace of mind' it's \$495 anywhere in Australia'.





During my pregnancy I saw posters advertising the Baby Expo displayed around town, so I went to it with my Dad's girlfriend. There were different stalls there about Day-care, Antenatal Classes, books, sausage sizzle, jumping castle and kid's train ride. I got a free show bag with a few goodies and I went into a few free raffles. A few days later I got a phone call to say I won a prize. I won baby shampoo, soap and a face washer!

At the Baby Expo I went on a couple of train rides with my Counsellor's daughter. I was seeing this Counsellor because when I became pregnant they took me off my anti depressants for four months. I then got a lot of anxiety, panic attacks, stress and depression and I kept going into Hospital because I couldn't breathe.

The Doctor said it was the panic attacks. They advised me to go back on my medication and they said to get some free counselling as well. Sometimes you can actually lose the baby if you are anxious and depressed, so that's why I got the counselling.



This photo is of me getting my L Plates when I was 34 weeks pregnant! While I was pregnant I went for my L's four times. I really wanted to get my L's so then I'd have my own transport. You know, instead of relying on other people 'cos they could be busy. This way it will be easier for me and the baby to get around. I didn't get upset about re-sitting the test. You're not going to get everything the first go. After the first few tries, they gave me a Supervisor to sit with me. I passed with 81 percent!

I'm glad I got the help in there 'cos some of the words are hard. The Supervisor worded things differently so I could easily know what's going on. There were a couple of words in there that I didn't know, and I said to her, 'I'm bought up in the country' and they were to do with the city, like about six lanes and things. I know more country stuff than city stuff.

I really need my own car because there's not a lot of public transport in the country. Like, there were evening swimming classes for pregnant women, but I couldn't get to them 'cos no buses go near where this place is. Especially at 8 o'clock at night, no transport runs then, and anyhow, I don't feel so good travelling on public transport in the dark.

All I need now is a car and a person with their full license, and then go for my P's. Not many people I know have their full license, including family. I've got to really check that out, 'cos I've got the card now.



This photo shows my growing stomach! I was a long way into my pregnancy here. People kept going, 'Oh, show us your belly'. I got funny like that, 'cos more guys did it. I didn't mind the females asking to see, 'cos they've probably been through it, or they want to go through it. But males just seem to think they can touch you just 'cos you're pregnant. I don't know what's going through their minds.

People treat you differently when you're pregnant. Like, once I was going to stay at a friend's house and she goes, 'You can have my double bed' while she has the couch. She goes, 'Oh, it would be better for your back' 'cos she knew I was pregnant. I thought, 'Oh, it doesn't faze me where I sleep, I'll sleep on the floor, I don't care'.

I know people were just being nice but it's like I was disabled! 'Cos they go, 'Oh no, you sit down, I'll get it, I'll grab this and that, you just sit, and you can have the double bed and I'll have the rusty old couch!'.



These photos are of me shopping for things for the birth. A book I had when I was pregnant told me what I had to buy. Things like nappies, creams, wipes, baby powder, pads for me, like special period pads. I put everything I bought on Lay-by at Big W.

The best bits about having a baby are just having people there for me, like support. A lot of things have been given to me, just out of the blue. My Aunty might say something to somebody and then they'll say, 'Oh yeah, I know someone with one of those that she can have', or like when one of her friends just gave me a big bag of clothes for the baby.

Saint Vinny's said they're going to help me. They said, 'If you need a hand with anything, just let us know'. Sometimes I go there to get a food voucher, to help out with food. If people didn't get support, life would be pretty hard.







IT'S A GIRL

They told me to push so I did! Then I popped the baby out- it's a girl! It only took about two hours. No one was with me except the hospital staff. But it was pretty easy. I didn't get stitches. Everyone's different with birth. Like my Mum, she had stitches with me, which I never. Some people get stretch marks but I didn't.

I named my baby Shandy after the beer and lemonade drink. She was four weeks early. They put her in a humidity-crib to keep warm and to give her oxygen. I was scared when I held her because she was so little and tiny.

When I was 36 weeks pregnant I started having really bad pains, like period pain, real bad, and I was bleeding. I came into the hospital and they checked me over and sent me home. The next night, at 12 o'clock, there was so much pain, coming and going every five minutes. I wasn't scared but I was very worried though. The pain took my breath away. When I was walking up the hospital stairs I felt like I was going insane. I did what the hospital told me to do. They made me take off my clothes and put on their gown. There was blood on my undies so they told me to open my legs. They said they could see the baby's head!







This photo is of me feeding Shandy. 'Cos Shandy was in the crib, the Doctor told me to keep holding her and feeding her. One night at the hospital I was asleep and the Nurses said she kept crying all night and she wouldn't go to sleep, but when I came in she didn't play up at all 'cos she was with her Mum.

In the beginning I fed Shandy with stuff called Colostrum - my breasts were producing it. It's sort of clear, a bit thick and it's good for her. She was too small to suck from me so the Midwife fed her with a syringe. A lot later I fed her with a bottle and formula.

One day in the hospital she had an episode. She was being fed and she had three vomits and that's when she went blue and purple. As soon as I saw her, I just ran out of the room and the alarms went off and everyone kept racing to the room and I stayed out and people came backwards and forwards to tell me what was going on. I just didn't want to go back in there. I'd never seen anything like it before.

They said she was having fits. She had lots of tests and they found out she is deaf in her right ear and partly in her left ear too. They think it's 'cos she's so small, and she's got a small brain and 'cos of the CMV virus I had when I was carrying her. She might have learning disabilities as she grows up. I'm just going to try and think positive and, you know, there are always miracles.



This is my dog Snoop. He just had to pull through when I was away with Shandy in the hospital. My Dad said, 'It isn't fair to the dog'. I decided to give him to the RSPCA because now I'm focused on Shandy. Snoop was getting cold and hungry and they were going to feed him there and make sure he wasn't freezing.

Dogs are intelligent. They know when they're left out. So I thought, 'If he goes to a good home, like even a farm or something, someone might take him'. He's not vicious- he'd lick you to death! I didn't want to, but it's what I had to do.

I stayed in the hospital for four days, but Shandy stayed in the hospital for over a month. So, I stayed at a friend's house near the hospital and visited her every day. When I wasn't there she was crying and wriggling and as soon as I came and touched her little hand and she squeezed my finger, she quietened down.

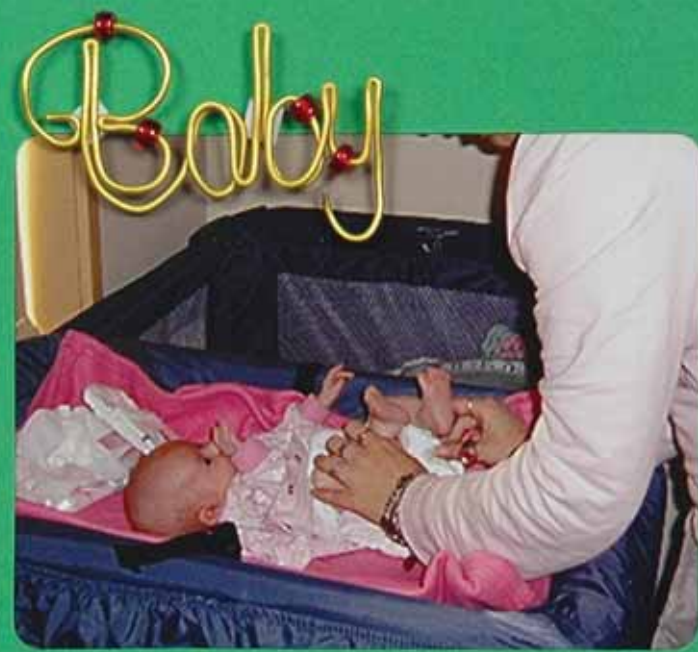
There wasn't much for me to do in there. The only thing I did was feed her, touch her little hand and that's basically it. The days were fairly long. Sometimes I felt like just lying in the chair, falling asleep. You see her asleep and you feel like you want to go to sleep yourself. It gets tiring. I really wanted some visitors.



This photo is of me changing Shandy's nappy when I brought her home. I was living in emergency housing but then Rural Housing rang me up a few days before Shandy had to leave the hospital and they told me I had to pack and move into my new place. I'd been on the listing to get my own place for 4 years. My Dad knows people that own houses but I didn't end up getting private rental.

The hospital wanted me to stay overnight, practicing doing Shandy's cares like night feeding, bathing, changing her, and in the daytime I was moving house with the help of a family friend Richard! It was pretty busy.

In the new house the carpets were steam cleaned and they were damp, really damp, and I tried out the heater, but nothing was coming out the bottom. It wasn't warming up the house at all. Winter was really cold. The Midwives wanted to know if the heater was actually going or not, because Shandy couldn't come home until it was. I had to ring the Gas people and say it was urgent. There was a fork stuck in the heater and a hair clip! It had stuffed up the fan belt. Until it was fixed Shandy couldn't get out of hospital, so she stayed there 3 more days.



On my first night home with Shandy, I just felt doubt. I didn't know what to do. I was hoping that someone would be here. This is my first, so I'm sort of a learner, you know? I think your second is sort of easy, 'cos you know what you've learnt from your first. Then a friend and my sister came over and I thought, 'Oh!' Relief that I had people come over! And now some of my mates are pregnant with their first.



This is a photo of me and Ash, the Father of Shandy. We got back together when Shandy was born. He'd ring me and say, 'How are my two girls going?'



When I was pregnant I thought a bit about being a single Mum. It's going to be hard for single Mums without support. But I thought, 'I just want to do things on my own for a while, just wait for the right one'. 'Cos most of them only want you for your money. They think, 'She'll be getting money for having a baby, I'll just be with her for that certain time and then...' Oh, I don't know what they think.

It's going good with Ash now. He got me a pram, 'cos at home I had a second hand one, but it had gone all mouldy, really yukky and disgusting. Ash said he'd buy me a brand new one.

Ash says he wants to be a big part of Shandy's life. It's good for Shandy to know her Dad 'cos everyone's got to know who their Father is. I hope it works out for us.





Hi, I'm Tanya. I've done a project on my pregnancy with Women's Health, sharing my experiences with them from beginning to end and after the birth to see what's changed.

The purpose of this project was to share my experiences with other young women about the things I've found out about pregnancy and birth.

This book is my story for anyone to read, with easy wording to understand.



Women's Health Goulburn North East (WHGNE) was established in July 2000. Previously known as NEWomen, Women's Health Goulburn North East is the government funded, specialist women's health service for the Goulburn Valley and north-east Victoria.

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This publication has been written, designed and created by Tanya Pawlowsky with support from Women's Health Goulburn North East workers and volunteers.

Special thanks to Tracey Whinray for transcribing interviews and to Shades of Art, Wangaratta, for a 20% discount on scrapbooking materials.

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