

DOMICILIARY MIDWIFERY SERVICE IN CRISIS

Since early 1989, women in Rotorua have been able to take advantage of the Domiciliary Midwifery Service offered by midwives Jan Klausen and Ann Hopkirk. This has meant that pregnant women have had more options available to them but, just as importantly, they have been able to have continuity of care throughout pregnancy, labour and the postnatal period. The domiciliary midwives have offered a service which has included home birth, domino birth (Domiciliary midwifery care in and out of hospital) and postnatal care for women choosing early discharge. This service is now under threat. Why?

One reason is simple economics. Domiciliary midwives are paid by the Ministry of Health, not the Area Health Board. The Ministry of Health does not however pay for hospital deliveries unless they are planned home births which, for medical reasons, require transfer to hospital. Somehow, until recently, the Ministry paid midwives for domino deliveries - presumably they thought they were emergency transfers to hospital of planned home births. Now, noone wants to pay. The Ministry will not, the hospital cannot (not surprisingly) and the Area Health Board does not seem to be able to cope with nuts and bolts matters, loftier matters such as board structure being of greater importance.

So, what are the incomes of domiciliary midwives like, compared to doctors who claim that they are poorly paid for maternity services they offer?

	Doctor	Midwife
Antenatal visit		
1st	\$35	\$16
Subsequent	\$17.75	\$16 (maximum of 2)
Delivery	\$245 (even if not in attendance)	\$225
" Prolonged attendance	\$60 per ½ hour (after 1½ hours)	\$37.50 per 1 hour (after 6 hours)
Post natal	\$17.75 (includes visits to postnatal ward)	\$16 (maximum of 12)
6 week postnatal check		
Mother	\$35.50	-
Baby	\$17.75	-
Mileage allowance	\$1.50 per kilometer plus travelling time.	70¢ per kilometer (reducing to 40¢ after 1600 km)