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GROUP WORRIED OVER EFFECT OF GP SHORTAGE

Press Assn Dunedin

The New Zealand Home Birth Association predicts that fewer general practitioners and midwives will be available to attend home births if the recommendations of the maternity services committee of the Board of Health are implemented.

"This is likely to lead to an increase in nonprofes-

sionally attended births, if the committee's recommendations are implemented," said the president of the association, Mrs Marilyn Walker.

The committee's report stated that home births should be discouraged to ensure that babies had the best care.

Mrs Walker believes the report should have encouraged more flexible attitudes from hospital staff towards professionals and parents choosing home birth. She said this would relieve much of the stress associated with transfer to hospital.

"If the committee were sincerely interested in the safety of mother and baby, the recommendations would include an endorsement of home birth as a desirable option for low-risk mothers."

She said that statistical evidence and research, both in New Zealand and overseas, indicated that properly conducted home birth was at least as safe as, if not safer, than hospital birth.