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Home birth criticism challenged by doctor

WELLINGTON, Today (PA). — The Home Birth Association has challenged a Health Department report that says the best and safest place for delivery for both mother and child is a maternity unit.

Dr Deryn Cooper said statistics showed that home births were safer.

The mortality rate of babies born at home was four in 1000 compared with about 14 for hospital births, she said.

The departmental report *The Mother and Baby at Home: The Early Days* says the best and safest place for

delivery for both mother and baby is a properly equipped and staffed maternity unit.

The association's Wellington co-ordinator, Henriette Kemp, said the report by the Board of Health's maternity services committee was restrictive. If implemented it would "put the lid on" expansion of home births in New Zealand.

Mrs Kemp said the recommendation that the contracts of home birth midwives be reviewed every five years was discriminatory.