

NEWS

THE FREEZE

Banana price slip brings no penalty

A COMPANY which slipped when selling two bananas was discharged under section 42 of the Criminal Justice Act in the Wellington District Court yesterday on a charge of breaching the price freeze regulations.

Sew Hoy Holdings Ltd, trading as the Mecca restaurant and coffee lounge in Mercer Street, pleaded guilty before Judge P J Bate to committing an offence against section 18(1)(a) of the Economic Stabilisation Act 1948.

The company was charged that without lawful justification or excuse it failed to comply with regulation 4(1)(a) of the Price Freeze Regulations: that being

The two bananas in question weighed 307 grams. The inspector was charged 90 cents. He should have been charged, on that basis, 41 cents, so he was overcharged by 49 cents for the two bananas.

Counsel, Mr Garry Evans, said he understood it was the first prosecution in New Zealand for a breach of the price freeze regulations where a plea of guilty had been entered.

He said he desired to make it clear that the plea was entered upon the express instructions of his client and not necessarily upon legal advice given as to whether an offence had been committed or was likely to be proved.

"The defendant is not a retailer of

HOME births will be severely restricted if recommendations in a Health Department report published yesterday are implemented, the Home Birth Association says.

Wellington co-ordinator Henriette Kemp said yesterday the report written by the Board of Health's maternity services committee was restrictive and would "put the lid on" expansion of home births in New Zealand.

"Though we agree with some of the recommendations, in general they are harmful to home births," she said.

The 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.

Mrs Kemp said most members of the

maternity services committee were male and many were obstetricians. She said the report was biased in favour of hospital births.

"I know for sure that there are very few, if any, obstetricians in New Zealand who favour home births," she said.

Some of the report's recommendations, such as the one requiring a five-yearly review of home birth midwives' contracts, were plainly discriminatory, she said.

"It's very unfair to review a domiciliary midwife's contract every five years when there is no similar assessment of hospital midwives," she said.

"If it's good enough to do that for one section then it's good enough to do it for the other."

Mrs Kemp said the report's recommendation that domiciliary midwives should be contracted to hospital boards was a threat to their autonomy and the special nature of home births.

"Our main concern is that hospital boards will start demanding that domiciliary midwives adopt certain specifications and requirements that will take away the essential nature of their kind of practice, which is natural childbirth," she said.

The association was worried that individual hospital boards would use different criteria for controlling and supervising midwives.

"Every New Zealand women who wants a home birth has the right to one and we feel she should have the same

opportunity to have a home birth wherever she is," she said.

"It's not fair to make it easier under one hospital board than under another."

The Minister of Health, Mr Malcolm, said when he issued the report that he would look closely at the recommendation that domiciliary midwives should be contracted to a hospital board and based at the obstetric unit of the area.

The report also says that contracts should only be available to registered midwives with recent experience in a modern obstetric unit.

It says general practitioners attending home births should also have adequate qualifications in obstetrics and should apply strict criteria to the selection of patients suitable for home births.

Under the Nurses Act 1977, it is illegal for anyone other than a midwife or a registered nurse to provide nursing services to anyone during pregnancy or birth, and the nurses must be supervised by a doctor.

"Some births are conducted without any professional supervision at all," the report says.

"We are not suggesting that the Department of Health should actively hunt out and prosecute those fathers, friends and others who may be illegally conducting confinements. But we do emphasise that the reason Parliament has seen fit to include this section in the Nurses Act is that the unborn baby has rights as well as the mother and the father, and society should ensure that adequate care is provided for the baby," it says.