

NEWS

Home births keep going in spite of midwife lack

WELLINGTON WOMEN are still having their babies at home, even though the region no longer has a home birth midwife.

Local co-ordinator of the Home Birth Association, Mrs Henriette Kemp, said about 12 mothers had already planned home births when the only domiciliary midwife in Wellington resigned last March.

One woman had since had her baby at home with a doctor in attendance. Another one or two had hospital births.

"A lot of mothers will go ahead and have home births and their doctors will be obliged to attend," Mrs Kemp said. "The doctors aren't very happy about that, but they have an obligation to attend."

Trying

She said the association had written to every midwife in Wellington asking them to take up home births. It was also looking at ways of offering financial support because domiciliary midwives were not paid as much as hospital midwives.

"We're certainly not prepared to take this lying down.

We won't accept that we have to go to hospital to have our babies and we're trying everything," she said.

Mrs Kemp said she knew of several hospital midwives who would be prepared to do home births on a part-time basis. They would work as a co-operative and share the load between them.

Demand

The association was seeking a meeting with the Wellington Hospital Board to discuss the proposition.

"We know the demand for home births around Wellington is for about 50 a year, so one or two midwives would be enough," she said.

Mrs Kemp said as a last resort the association would encourage home birth midwives to go into private practice. This would mean that they would not receive the maternity services benefit and parents would have to pay the full fee.

"We're not very happy about it because we feel every New Zealand mother has a right to free maternity care. So we're trying to avoid that option."