



LYNNE McLEAN hasn't got the fight anymore.

Home birth report last straw for sole midwife

A HEALTH Department report recommending against home births is the last straw for Wellington's only domiciliary midwife.

Lynne McLean is quitting her job and mothers in the region will have no option to hospital births.

For almost a year Ms McLean has been wondering whether she could continue her demanding job with poor financial rewards and a lack of professional support.

Then, earlier this month, a Board of Health maternity services committee report to the Minister of Health, Mr Malcolm, recommended against home births. This was the last straw for Ms McLean. She has decided to leave her job at the end of March.

"The report is so undermining for domiciliary midwives . . . and so threatening for the home birth movement. It makes the future very uncertain," Ms McLean said.

In its report to Mr Malcolm, the committee recommends a five-yearly review of home birth midwives' contracts.

"This doesn't happen to hospital midwives, so why the discrimination?" Ms McLean said.

The report — The Mother and Baby at Home: The Early Days — also recommends midwives' contracts be transferred to hospital boards instead of the Health Department.

"People opposed to home births are trying to control us. They're wanting a much bigger say in who does what, why and how," Ms McLean said.

She said the committee was made up of people who were known to be against home births. Half of the members were obstetricians.

"Some of the recommendations are all right. Everything might work out in the

end. But I just haven't got the fight anymore."

Ms McLean has been working as a home birth midwife in the Wellington area for five years. She knows of no one who will take her place and is concerned that after March, Wellington women will have no option to hospital births. They may also take the risk of having a home birth without a midwife.

She said the job was stressful — a midwife was on call 24 hours a day. Yet she said midwives hardly make \$10,000 a year.

"The maternity benefit a case is totally inadequate. General Practitioners get twice as much."

Ms McLean said that since a home birth midwife based in the Hutt Valley had stopped working last April, she had felt an increasing professional isolation.

"You need the support of colleagues," she said.

Malcolm said that his commission to the right one to continue the scheme they