

Short-stay trend alarms midwives

The nationwide trend of sending new mothers home early from hospital has created a crisis in Hawke's Bay's post-natal care, says Hawke's Bay spokesperson for the New Zealand College of Midwives, Julie Kinloch.

In June local doctors received a letter from hospital management requesting they reduce the number of days women spent in hospital after giving birth from six and a half to about five, if medically possible.

Ms Kinloch said there was no extra

provision being made to look after new mothers and children in the community.

"The situation had become frightening," she said.

Public health and plunket nurses were already overworked and were unable to pick up all the extra cases.

Women are being forced to travel to hospital out-patient clinics with their new born children for postnatal care, when they should be attended to in their own homes.

Ms Kinloch has written to the board asking that they consider setting up and

funding a community-based midwife service in the area and that midwives have a say in any future changes to the area's maternity services.

President of the New Zealand College of Midwives Karen Guilliland said midwives were taking the initiative in providing community-based services. "In Otago, midwives have submitted a detailed plan to the Otago Area Health Board to provide a midwifery service as an alternative to the closure of Queen Mary Hospital.

Hawke's Bay Area Health Board

chairman Noel Toomey said community-based health care was one of the issues that would be discussed during a board weekend workshop to be held later this month.

Although it was a national trend to reduce the number of days a woman spent in hospital after giving birth, no dramatic changes had recently been made in Hawke's Bay, he said.

However, he said, community-based health services would probably be an issue to be dealt with after the new board was elected in October.

Mothers slam facilities at maternity annexe

A lack of adequate facilities at Napier's Arohaina maternity unit resulted in one woman being kept isolated in a delivery suite for three days — and caused another to discharge herself early because she couldn't stand the "stuffy" and "cramped" atmosphere.

The complaints come in the wake of restructuring within the unit, which has created overcrowding and understaffing, according to three women who spoke out today.

One said she was confined to the delivery suite as she had the flu and there was nowhere else to isolate her.

"It was embarrassing because I hadn't even had my child yet," she said.

Another woman, who gave birth to her fourth child last week, described the maternity ward as "hectic". All 24 beds were full and

there weren't enough staff to go round.

Rather than put up with the cramped atmosphere of the ward she discharged herself early.

Another Napier woman who was in Arohaina earlier this month said the four nursing staff on duty were stretched to the limit trying to cope.

"When you walked out into the hallway you could see all the red call lights on but no nurses," the woman said.

She added that she had to supply her own sanitary towels, nappy pins, soap and baby wipe, as such items were only provided for the first 24 hours.

The women blamed the conditions on the closure of the antenatal ward on June 5.

The ward is being renovated for conversion into an orthopaedic ward and is due to open next week.

However, acting manager of Napier Hospital, Doctor Roger Foote, said the ward had to be used more profitably — and as an orthopaedic ward it would be.

He conceded Arohaina was busier than in the past but that in the previous four months it had not been overfilled.

Hawke's Bay Area Health Board general manager, Peter Clark, said people had to understand only limited resources were available to health services and the board had to do the best it could with the money it had.

"We can't have \$5 million taken off us and expect everything to carry on as before," he said.

Mr Clark said he had not received any complaints about the conditions at Arohaina.

Spotlight on midwives

Today is National Midwives' Day and women throughout the country will be promoting the role midwives play in our communities.

Hawke's Bay midwives will be dropping off flowers and information to all areas, and to people in hospitals involved with childbirth.

Each baby born at Napier Hospital today will be delivered by midwives and the mothers given a special gift.

Midwives gave away balloons, flowers, sweets and information about midwifery on Napier city streets this morning.

The Hawke's Bay spokesperson for the New Zealand College of Midwives, Julie Kinloch, said the aim of the day was to increase public awareness of midwifery.

Ms Kinloch said midwifery — a profession concerned with the promotion of women's health — was under threat in New Zealand.

She said the Nurses Act did not allow midwives to practise as independent practitioners. Currently the law only allowed the midwife to practise under a doctor's supervision.

She said there was a serious shortage of midwives throughout New Zealand.

Only a limited number of midwives are being trained in New Zealand therefore forcing the profession to rely on overseas midwives and general nurses to make up staffing levels, said Ms Kinloch.

In response to the article in last Tuesday's edition on the conditions at Arohaina Maternity Annexe it is true the unit is understaffed and overcrowded at present. However, what I think the article failed to say was that it is the commitment, dedication and extra work of the staff which compensates for these shortages.

I have just spent six days there as a first-time mother and was in a room with three others. I couldn't speak more

Napier Hill

Mrs E. M. M. WADDELL

highly of the midwives and nursing staff. Arohaina came highly recommended and lived up to my expectations and more.

I wonder however at the value of using the time of trained, experienced nurses to make beds and change water jugs? Do we ask our bank managers to clean their banks or teachers to clean their own classrooms? At what cost and whose cost are these cuts being made?

Toddys Annexe praised