

Bill will give midwives responsibility

WELLINGTON

(PA)

A midwife will be able to take sole responsibility for the care of a woman and baby during childbirth, under a bill introduced to Parliament yesterday.

Introducing the Nurses' Amendment Bill, Health Minister Helen Clark said that at present only a medical practitioner was permitted to take responsibility for a birth but under the bill, a registered midwife could do that.

She said that with the advent of medical technology, there had been a trend towards treating pregnancy and labour as an illness.

"This has resulted in an increasing amount of medical intervention in the management of normal pregnancy which has led to the erosion of the midwives' role.

"This has proved to be costly and in many cases inappropriate."

While the expertise of medical practitioners was necessary for high-risk complicated and abnormal pregnancy or childbirth, the focus of midwives' expertise was the low-risk, uncomplicated and normal pregnancy and childbirth.

Ms Clark said 85 percent of births in New Zealand were normal and did not require medical intervention as a matter of course.

The bill would give New Zealand women the choice to use the services of either a medical practitioner or a midwife.

Opposition health spokesman Don McKinnon said lack of health funding had put pressure on the Government to establish low-cost maternity services.

He said while the Opposition supported the two-clause bill, he was sorry it was not bigger. He asked whether midwives would be able to prescribe drugs. Later Ms Clark said they would not.

The use of drugs would indicate an abnormal situation in which case a midwife would call in a doctor or refer the woman to hospital.

Southland Times 10/11/89

New midwifery practice

*Dec '89
Ch-ch local paper*

City midwives have formed a new practice offering more natal care for pregnant women.

Known as Independent Medical Practice, or IMP, the group plans to offer midwifery care for women in their own homes both before and after birth.

The service will be free of charge as midwives are contracted to the Health Department.

New mothers could be discharged as early as six hours after birth with the

back-up provided by a midwife.

IMP will also liaise with other services including Plunket, G.P.s, hospitals, La Leche and the Home Birth Association.

An answerphone service has been set up to answer questions about childbirth and breast-feeding.

Antenatal classes are pending.

More information is available from Barbara Pullar telephone 555-229.

Midwife admits illegal homebirth

WOMEN and their midwives have gone ahead with illegal home births when doctors would not take responsibility for them, a Nelson midwife says.

Ms Bronwen Pelvin says she is the first midwife in New Zealand to admit publicly she has delivered a baby in an illegal birth. She risks losing her registration if a complaint is made to the Nursing Council.

She wants the legal requirement for a doctor to be responsible for home births to be scrapped.

Under the Nurses Act a midwife is liable if a doctor has not taken the final responsibility for the care of any woman having a baby.

Ms Pelvin delivered a baby at a home birth in Brightwater, south of Nelson, in September. The mother, Ms Karen Walsh, was unable to find a doctor willing to attend the birth.

Ms Pelvin decided to go

ahead and deliver the baby rather than force Ms Walsh to have her child in hospital.

The requirement for a doctor to be responsible for a home birth completely denigrated the profession of midwifery, Ms Pelvin said.

"The professional basis on which I function is totally dependent on another person — I resent that and reject it," she said.

Nelson general practitioners spokesman Graham Loveridge

said he would not condone the illegal act of delivering a baby without a doctor's awareness.

He said he believed involvement of both a doctor and a midwife was the best and safest care for both the mother and baby.

Deliberately not involving a doctor but assuming one would attend in an emergency was imposing on a doctor's goodwill. — NZPA