

# Home births not just for the 'way-out'

by Nicole Parish

Home births aren't just for 'way-out' or 'alternative people' — they're for anyone who is fit and able.

That's the message for National Home Birth Week from the Horowhenua Home Birth Support Group.

Horowhenua midwife Jane Stojanovic said each case was assessed on its merits but anyone able to have a baby in a small rural maternity hospital such as Otaki or Levin should be able to have a home birth.

The number of home births occurring in the area was still small but the possible closure of hospitals like Otaki Maternity could see it increase, she said.

Basil Dellabarca, seventh child of Delia and Mike, was born at home in Levin two months ago, and his mum and dad were more than happy with the experience.

It was her first home birth but Delia was sure it was what she wanted after becoming increasingly disillusioned with the hospital experi-

ence.

Since her first child was born at Palmerston North, hospitals have changed to work in more with a mother's needs and wants but she still had to fit in with a system and routine, said Delia.

"I just didn't want to be part of that system anymore."

Having her baby at home the way she wanted it meant she felt more in control of the whole process, she said.

Routine procedures such as temperature taking could be done when it suited Delia rather than the nurses.

Jane became her personal midwife and visited three times before the birth to learn what Delia's individual needs were and to familiarise herself with the house.

Delia said having the same midwife present throughout her labour was important for her confidence.

In a hospital a woman in labour can just begin to feel comfortable with an attendant nurse only to have her go off duty as she goes into the birthing room, she said.

In a home birth the midwife is responsible for the whole birth though a doctor must be present at the end to check that everything's okay.

The midwife visits the mother and baby a further 12 times after the birth.

Having her husband and children with her the whole time was also a big bonus, she said.

In the past Mike had often missed out on seeing his children born either because he was not allowed in the theatre or because he had to go home and look after the others.

Delia said the children enjoyed the experience, popping in an out to see how she was getting on

or for a cuddle, and making cups of tea for the adults.

At no time did she feel concerned or frightened that she had done the wrong thing and has no regrets.

And husband Mike also was in full support of the home birth, saying he felt more involved and able to help than with any of the previous births.

Jane has been acting as home birth midwife in the Horowhenua for the last six months and firmly believes it is a 'marvellous' option for anyone not keen on hospital births.

She carries everything with her found in a maternity hospital except analgesics or pain relief.

Jane uses natural pain relief such as hot baths and massage.

About 400 home births take place in New Zealand each year — 40 or 50 of those in Palmerston North, she said.



The birthing team — Delia Dellabarca with Basil and husband Mike and personal midwife, Jane Stojanovic.