

✓ 20073-24-045

CENTRAL DISTRICT HEALTH SERVICE
20 DOWN ST.
FRESHWATER N.S.W. 472

Dear

We would like to bring to your attention the fact that the Queensland Nurses Registration Board is suing two lay midwives for practicing midwifery without registration. This case has arisen because the midwives concerned attended a woman in February, 1981 whose labour resulted in a stillbirth.

The Coroner's Inquest is to be held on the 30th July and the court hearing instigated by the Nurses Board on the 20th August, 1982. One midwife almost completed her general nursing training but did not sit for finals; the other is a natural therapist and acupuncturist, and was practicing this skill for several years. They both attended a series of lectures given by a trained midwife consisting of three hours a week for nine months. Regular weekly attendance at an antenatal clinic provided practical experience. Both midwives had attended approximately 15 to 20 births.

As far as we can ascertain there are no regulations pertaining to domiciliary midwifery in Queensland. However, there is a law in the Statute books which states practising midwifery without registration is subject to a fine of maximum \$1,000. The mother whose baby died also attended a doctor, a general practitioner who was sympathetic to home birth and felt she was a suitable candidate. The parents bear no malice and place no blame for the loss of their child on the midwives.

We are very concerned about the implications of this case for all home birth midwives in Australia, especially lay midwives and home birth attendants. We are in the process of obtaining suitable legal advice and help, and would like to have your advice and support, particularly financial support as fighting this case may cost a considerable amount of money.

As far as we know this case is the first of its kind in Australia and may set a precedent. We therefore feel it is necessary to take a stand as this is an important stage in the battle for homebirth and women's rights in Australia.

Elsine Bruce and myself are practising lay midwives and are writing on behalf of the two midwives in question.

(Elaine Bruce) Psychiatric and Personal Counsellor
Trained Nursing Sister

(Denise Neil) Trained Psychiatric Nursing Sister
Certificate of Child Welfare
Childbirth Educator

Ms D Neil E. Bruce