

The New Zealand Home Birth Association

Wellington Branch
 Box 11-412
 Wellington

Dear Barbara,

I enclose some material I have sent to all branches. I realize that as Lobbying Co-ordinator, I have little to offer your branch as regards lobbying advice and suggestions, since you are of course on the ball and politically aware. I will however send you any material such as this which I circulate around branches so you know what's going on nationally. I also feel that the rest of the country could learn a lot from your activities and experience, so please give us any advice or suggestions you may have, so I can spread this around to benefit all branches. Also, pull me up if I make any mistakes! - I feel very "green" in this job!

Henriette

The New Zealand Home Birth Association

Wellington Branch

To all branches.

Box 11-412

Wellington

1 June, 1982.

Dear members,

A number of things have been happening over the past few months which clearly show that home birth may die a slow death unless we rally our energies to counteract this process. The Minister of Health has expressed his personal opposition to home birth. The Societies of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists are in the process of setting up an Obstetrics Review Committee which will limit the number of G.P.s who can practise obstetrics and will be used to reduce, if not eliminate, the number of G.P.s doing home births. The Nurses' Association have made a long list of recommendations to the Health Dept's Maternity Services Committee which will severely limit and reduce the practise of domiciliary midwifery in NZ if it is implemented. Obviously, if we don't do something to counteract these moves and to enlighten the politicians, the future of home birth in NZ doesn't look too bright.

A well-informed, organised national network for lobbying is now essential. We are all parents with young children and babies- in many cases tired and overworked already. We are also the kind of people who, for the very same reasons that we believe in home birth, would have a natural aversion to the hard world of politics and pressure group tactics. However, a unified national lobbying network would need only a minimum of one or two persons per branch who are prepared to act politically. Since probably most of us have had no experience of what is involved and how to go about doing it, we have created the job of Lobbying Co-Ordinator, whose responsibility it is to give branches the necessary information, facts and figures, and advise you on what you can do in your area and how to do it. I have taken on this job although I have no experience or skills in the field of lobbying, but am prepared to find out and learn. I realize that it is vital that we have a well-organised network.

Below, I have outlined what I think needs to be done, and I sincerely hope that someone in your branch will rally to the cause.

Lobbying, if done badly, can be counter-productive, so please make sure that, before embarking on any, you study and follow the advice given in the notes titled "HINTS FOR LOBBYISTS" which every branch received a copy of in September last year. If you do not have a copy, let me know and I will send you another one.

We can expect positive results from our lobbying of politicians, because the home birth issue is not crucial to Government policy. So lobbying our local MPs will be a main part of our campaign.

Politicians will listen to us more readily if we have the weight of public opinion behind us. This is best done through lots of publicity. Publicity through the media is therefore another important part of the campaign. Please use the notes on "Press Releases" your branch was sent last year. Try not to use personal opinions and local experience, but use the facts and information given by the Lobbying Co-ordinator.

Give information and arguments for the home birth option to any G.Ps who are supportive of home birth and ask them to represent us on the Medical Association.

Although the Nurses' Assn. and O&G societies are obviously against home birth, I see no harm in providing them with information and our point of view. With a bit of luck this may enlighten some members which may sway policy making.

It will be my job to ensure that you get all the facts, figures, and information that you should use with your MPs and the media. Could you please keep this information in a special file and duplicate this material yourself. I will also let you know when any submissions are due to any select Committees and who to write these to.

Another avenue for change is to communicate and befriend any people who are active in the local branches of the major political parties. These people can be used to present remits about home birth to their party branch meetings, regional conferences, and national conferences.

Lastly, will you please keep me informed of your campaign activities, no matter how small, and send copies of any letters from MPs, press articles, letters written by you, meetings with MPs, etc.

If you have any queries don't hesitate to ask me.
Happy lobbying,



Henriette Kemp (Lobbying Co-ordinator).