

## P R E S S   R E L E A S E

The theme for this year's International HOMEBIRTH Week from October 23 to 30 will be "Homebirth is Your Legal Right".

This comes at a crisis time for the Homebirth Association in Auckland as only two full-time and two part-time domiciliary midwives are now serving the entire metropolitan area.

Last year eight domiciliary midwives were working to full capacity. However the number of Auckland women wanting homebirths has increased. Local area support groups of the Homebirth Association can offer them ante-natal classes but not always a midwife. So women are being forced to go to hospital against their will.

The reason for lack of domiciliary midwives is an economic one. They earn a fraction of a hospital midwife's salary. Yet they are on call 24 hours a day, hours are long and exhausting.

For each birth the midwife makes at least one antenatal visit, attends the labour and birth, and two weeks of post-natal visits. If a domiciliary midwife assists 60 women per year, at a gross rate of \$141.50 plus mileage allowance ( plus 17% from 1st October, to be added after the wage freeze) per birth, she earns \$8,490.00 before tax. This figure does not include job-related expenses.

But, according to the Social Security (Maternity Benefits) Regulations 1939, it is mandatory for the Health Department to provide any medical or midwifery services requested by a woman planning a homebirth.

So the Homebirth Association is encouraging women to take action to ensure that the Department of Health fulfills its obligations to provide an adequate number of midwives and examines the poor rate of pay for such excellent services.

During Homebirth Week local support groups in Auckland will run stalls in shopping centres for general publicity. South Auckland Support Group plan to hold one day stalls at shopping centres in Papatoetoe, Papakura, Manurewa, Howick, Otara, Manukau, and Otahuhu. North Shore Support Group plan stalls throughout the week at Shore City and Glenfield Mall, between 10 am and 2 pm. Central Support Group plans stalls at Parnell and Three Lamps. Western Support Group plans stalls at Henderson Square and Lynnmail.

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Homebirth videos and photographs by Kevin Donovan will be shown at

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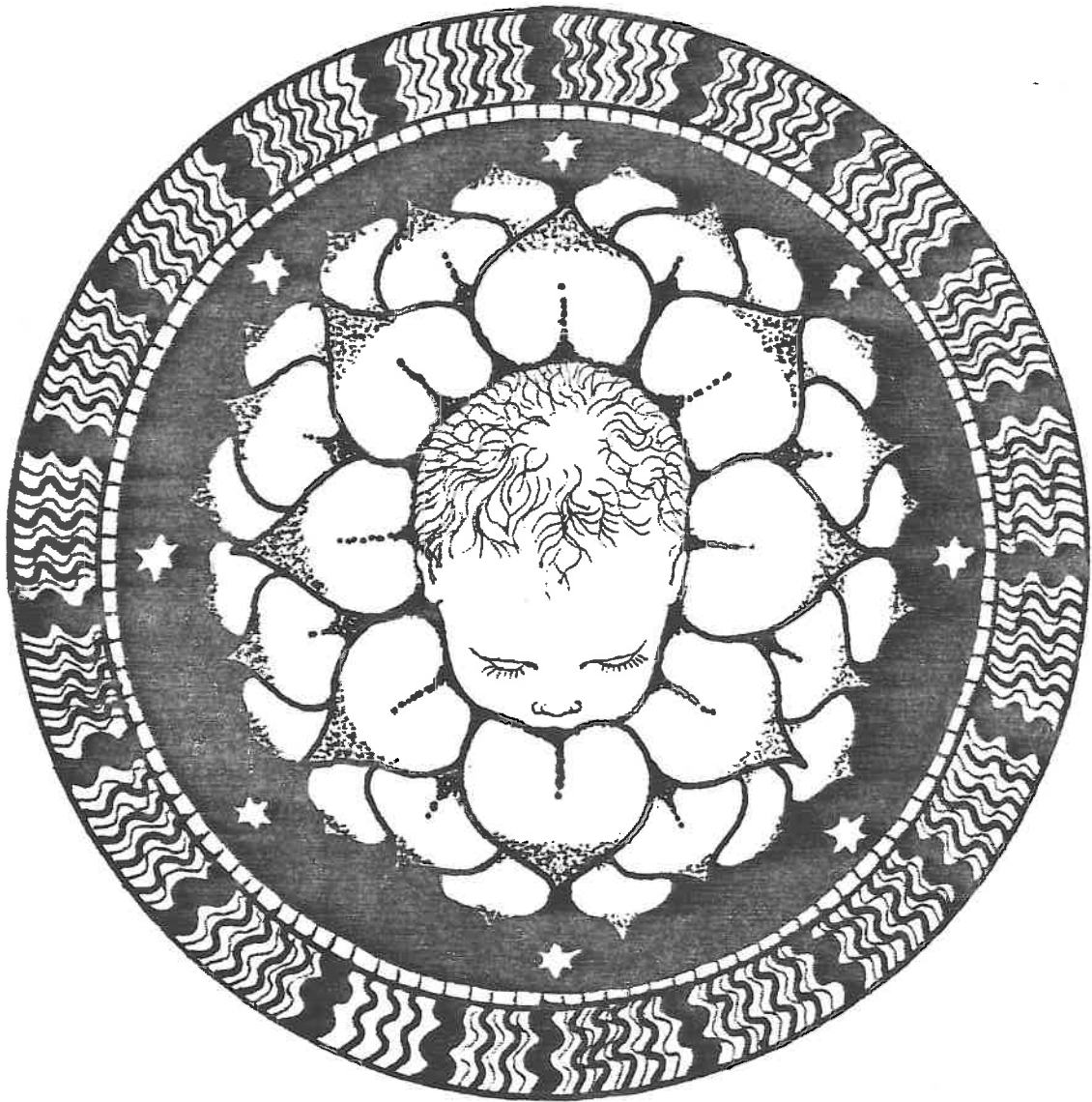
For further information please contact:

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or

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# International Home Birth Week.



Oct 23-30