

AUCKLAND ^{HBA} ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER No. 27

P.O. Box 7093 Wellesley Street Auckland

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EDITORIAL

Already it's March, nearly on quarter of the way through 1985. Those of us actively involved in the work of the Auckland Homebirth Association have found that the New Year's activities have already demanded considerable time and energy. All the Support Groups have at least started their first set of antenatal meetings for the year, and it is good to learn that in many areas new people have come forward to help with these. Postnatal meetings have also been organised in most areas. The committee has been meeting regularly since January and already has projects afoot. We would like to remind you that Committee meetings are open to all members. We would be delighted to see some new people come to these meetings and become involved in the work we do. (Meeting dates and times are listed later in this edition.)

Leave space
for graphs
(Evy Shicker)

Nationally, plans are already underway for the National Conference which is to be held in Nelson in May this year. The issue of 'Incorporation' for the National Association is to be discussed again. Last year Auckland formally withdrew from the existing Incorporated Society structure of the National Association. This move has prompted discussion amongst other Branches during the year and, as a result, a special meeting of representatives from all the Branches is to be held just prior to the start of the conference to share ideas and hopefully to come up with an alternative structure for the NZHBA which will serve the individual needs of the Branches and which will assist us nationally in fulfilling the 'Aims' of the NZHBA.

The following is an outline of the ideas which were formulated at our 1985 AGM at the beginning of March and which we will be presenting to the National Meeting on your behalf.

At our 1984 AGM the Auckland Branch unanimously passed a proposal to put the following remit to the National AGM:- That the NZHBA Inc. be wound up as from the 6th day of May and that any funds be distributed among the branches equally and that notice of this resolution be given to the Registrar. - This remit (with date changes) was again passed

unanimously at this year's Auckland AGM.

Although this ~~statement~~ remit looks rather negative when read by itself, we firmly believe that the existing 'Incorporated' structure of the NZHBA is hampering rather than helping us to work towards our aims.

The existing constitution, 'Rules of the NZHBA' is a traditional and formal document which binds us to a hierarchical structure and bureaucratic system which we feel is unnecessarily cumbersome and unsuited to voluntary organisation which functions cooperatively and whose aims and beliefs are, in general, the opposite of those held by 'establishment' organisations.

Since we became incorporated more time has been spent at National Conferences etc., ~~servicing~~ the organisational structure and discussing possible amendments/additions to the constitution than any other single issue, and in spite of these lengthy discussions agreement has never been reached and we have continued to function outside the 'Rules' in our Incorporated document. If we were constitution-less this time could be spent working directly towards our aims.

The constitution requires us to have a National Executive. We have been unable to satisfactorily agree on the geographical placing of the officers. If they all come from one Branch (on a rotating basis) that Branch loses a good deal of the people energy available to them at a local level. If the officers come from different Branches throughout the country communication becomes very cumbersome. We feel that direct communication among the Branches is more efficient and effective than filtering communications through a National Executive no matter what their geographical position.

The system of voting at AGMs etc has also never been resolved. The options have been one Branch one vote, or having the number of votes proportional to the number of members. We believe that an organisation whose aims and beliefs are as clearly able to be defined, and agreed on, as ours, can easily reach consensus on any issue of practical relevance to the Association so has no need of a voting system.

If we have a National Executive, we have to support it through levies from the Branches. We believe that this money is much better used at the local level and if smaller Branches need financial assistance this can be requested directly of the larger Branches rather than filtering it through a National Treasurer.

Although we feel that the Incorporated structure as it stands is unsuited to our needs nationally, we recognise that there are certain advantages in being Incorporated at Branch level - if only to enable us to apply for funding and other types of assistance from other organisations and agencies. - We propose that all groups incorporate at a local level and that Nationally we become a Federation of New Zealand Home Birth Associations.

A number of Branches feel that it is at least necessary to have a National Spokesperson to coordinate submissions etc to Government etc. and provide a focus for replies and Press statements etc. We suggest that with effective communication amongst the Branches/Associations either, one Association can take responsibility for coordinating submissions and presenting one on behalf of the National Federation, or, if it would be more effective, each of the Associations can present its own submission which supports those being presented by the others.

Similarly individual Associations could take responsibility for specific other areas of our collective function e.g. communication - through the National Newsletter, manufacture and distribution of promotional material e.g. buttons, bumper stickers, T.Shirts etc., education e.g. pamphlets, booklets, photographic displays etc, statistics - collecting, collating and setting up comparative surveys.

We look forward to the forthcoming meeting to discuss possible changes in the structure of the National Association. We hope that the other Branches will agree that a Nationally Incorporated Society is unnecessary, that National AGMs can be done away with and that time at National Conferences can instead be used to share ideas and information which will really assist us in achieving our aims.

- Brenda Hinton

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BELIEFS AND AIMS OF THE NEW ZEALAND HOMEBIRTH ASSOCIATION

OUR BELIEFS

1. Birth is a family affair, an experience to be shared as the family chooses.
2. Responsible homebirth is an acceptable alternative to hospital birth.
3. Parents, in consultation with their medical advisor, have the right to choose whether their baby is to be born in hospital or at home.
4. We are a Pro-Homebirth group not an anti-Hospital group.
5. Competent ante-natal care is essential. This includes:-
 - (a) Medical check-ups
 - (b) Childbirth education classes.
6. We are a collective organisation rather than a consumer service.

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OUR AIMS

1. To offer support to those who choose to have their baby at home by:-
 - (a) Informing parents of the facts of homebirth so they can make an informed decision.
 - (b) Holding meetings to cover selected topics.
 - (c) Compiling a list of guidelines and services available for those who are anticipating a homebirth.
2. To work with the medical profession to help them understand the needs of homebirth parents and to inform them of the services available.
3. To bring together those who want homebirths, those who have had homebirths, Doctors, Midwives and Childbirth Educators.
4. To communicate with other homebirth groups and exchange literature, expertise and information.
5. To seek support from existing maternity organisations and government agencies.
6. To research aspects of homebirth and to promote comparison studies of home and hospital births.
7. To work towards a sound Domiciliary service, locally as well as nationally. A sound Domiciliary service will include:-
 - (a) Adequate antenatal care.
 - (b) Midwife and/or Doctor attending.
 - (c) Post natal care.
 - (d) A sound back-up service.
 - (e) Payment for Domiciliary midwives comparable to that of colleagues.
8. To collect, collate and distribute statistics on planned home births in N.Z.