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The New Zealand Home Birth Association

Waikato Branch
34 Betting Road
Hamilton

URGENT TO ALL BRANCHES

We know it is late to be providing branches with more material to consider before the conference regarding the future of the Home Birth movement in N.Z. but because of our particular situation here in Hamilton we ask that Branches consider carefully what we have to say.

Over the years we have had 3 Dom Midwives. The first two were (are) receptive, caring people who tried their hardest to make our births the experience WE wanted. Over the past year we have had a totally different type of midwife, whose goals are some-what different to those of the group. Working with her has created a LOT of tension and division within our Branch. Our main complaint is that she is not prepared to allow parents to take the responsibility which we think is theirs. In short she is the epitome of what most parents are trying to escape, by having their baby at home. For those who just want a home birth that's fine, but many of us want to EXPERIENCE childbirth, with a midwife who is caring and sympathetic.

Over the months we have had to put considerable pressure on her, and the only reason this has been effective was because of the imagined weight of a NATIONAL body with the same beliefs, goals and ideals.

This however is still not enough. She has been working independently to secure a position as a hospital based Dom. Midwife. She can then become independent of us and have hospital approval to practice and gain clients. A position we cannot support for many reasons.

Up until now, other branches have been lucky attracting midwives who are genuinely caring about the needs of H.B. parents but it may not always be this way.

Just having our babies at home shouldn't be the ultimate goal of H.B. parents. We MUST BE THE GUARDIANS OF NATURAL CHILDBIRTH as well.

It could be, that if the Waikato hospital Board creates a position of Community midwife, as our midwife hopes, that other Boards will follow suit and eventually all Dom. Midwives will have to be employed by them. (All then under the direct control of hospital obstetricians) This could then signal the end of home birth. We believe that for this reason alone we need a STRONG NATIONAL body.

WHY haven't we employed a lawyer (preferably someone within the movement) to rewrite a constitution which is SIMPLE leaving groups autonomous as long as they practise within the NATIONAL PHILOSOPHY. It could have been written loosely enough for national positions to be individual OR group based. (I.E those willing to do the work being able to do it, where-ever, who-ever they are)

WHY is it expensive to run a national body? The only costs need to be mail to keep each group informed.

Even if the Nat. Body is just a figurehead with no real power they add weight in the eyes of the public and medical profession.

From the majority of literature we have received, we get the feeling that disincorporation of the Association is inevitable. We feel very sorry about this however if this IS the case we must have something to replace it.

We see that the Next best thing is to IMMEDIATELY form a
FEDERATION OF HOME BIRTH ASSOCIATIONS

but we MUST have a common philosophy and common goals (AIMS)

What is legally involved with this action??????????????????

If people agree that this is the case, group reps MUST have discussed with their groups what they think a national philosophy must be and also common aims and objectives of a Federation.

We believe that this action is going to place much more pressure and responsibility on groups and individuals, most of whom are already physically and emotionally tied up with young families but that is a decision for groups to make. We still feel that a National Spokesperson and a Medical Advisory Board comprised of midwives and sympathetic doctors (both local and international) who would be prepared to speak out publicly when necessary, would be invaluable;

PLEASE CONSIDER THESE POINTS CAREFULLY AND COME TO THE CONFERENCE READY FOR PRE-DECIDED ACTION.

We hope for a profitable conference.

The following are some questions that came to mind as having to be answered, hopefully by consensus, at the special meeting planned in Nelson before the conference. In order to reach consensus which represents the views of your branch as much as possible, it would be useful for branches to discuss these questions and for delegates to be aware of their branches standpoint.

A. NATIONAL ORGANISATION.

- do we want a national executive?
- if yes, what form would it take, and what would be its function?
- do we want a national levy?
- if yes, what would the national funds be used for? (In the past, it has been used to pay for postage, stationery costs incurred by national officers and the national newsletter, travel costs of national officers to and from conference, national publicity (car stickers, posters).
- do we want a national spokesperson? How is he/she to be chosen?
- what tasks do we want the national body to perform?
(e.g. national newsletter, distribution of information, speaking to the media, lobbying Government, communicate with other organisations, bodies, Health Dept., etc..)
- action national publicity (Pamphlets, booklets, seminars)
- others?

B. NATIONAL MEETINGS.

- run along traditional lines or as 'facilitated' meeting?
- what sort of things do we want to see discussed?
- how much do we want branches to have discussed topics before the meeting and how much can the meeting decide without branch consultation?
- how are decisions made? By voting or consensus?
- do we limit the number from each branch who can participate in discussion and decision-making?
- how often do we meet and where?
- what should be the name of this decision-making body?

C. NATIONAL CONFERENCE.

- what is the function of a national conference? (Meeting each other? Inspiring each other? Sense of unity? Exchange of ideas? Decision/policy-making? Learning? Speakers?)
- where and how often?
- how much time should we spend on the different functions of the conference?
- what are 'good' workshop topics?
- is there a place for specific activities designed to break down barriers, warm up, relax when things get tense, rest when things get hard work?

D. NATIONAL BODY.

- Do we want to be a 'legal' body?
- what are the advantages and disadvantages of being a legal body?
- Can we continue to call ourselves an Association even though we are not an Incorporated Society?
- Would a new name for our movement be a good idea?
- Any suggestions for a new name?
- Do we need any rules? e.g. on length of time anyone can be a national officer, remit to be distributed to members before a certain time, AGMs to be held by a certain time of the year, etc..

NOTE

I have just heard from Nelson that they are setting aside the whole of Sunday to get answers to these questions. I look forward to this day as a positive beginning for a new, unified home birth association!

Henriette