

# AUCKLAND HOME BIRTH ASSOCIATION

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Dear Kathie

Thank you for your letters. Sorry I've taken so long to reply. The National Home Birth Assn Conference was held in Palmerston North last weekend so we have all been busy preparing for and attending that.

We are delighted that you and Taya are seriously considering starting up a HBA in Gisborne. There have been two attempts in the past to start groups on the East Coast but they have died 'natural' deaths, possibly because of the isolation - hopefully because you will not be alone initiating this group, it will succeed in surviving where others have failed. The more Branches we have throughout the country the better our chances of bringing about some changes.

Where to start;- You mention that you have spoken to a few other women apart from Taya who are interested in becoming part of a HB Group. Before you start to tackle the institutions as an organisation it would be advantageous to have formed a strong core group. I have enclosed a copy of a notice that the recently formed Whangarei Group put up in places like Playcentres, Plunket Rooms, Doctors Waiting Rooms, Family planning Clinics and Citizens Advice Bureaux etc etc - anywhere women are likely to see them - to let people know that the group was in existence and to rally support from those interested. Once you have received a few enquiries you could start holding meetings to discuss the situation locally. Some groups meet during the day others in the evening. You can invite people to speak at these meetings as extra incentive. It's surprising what skills and knowledge you find amongst a small group of people and how willing they are to share and how interested others are in learning. Already with just you and Darryl and Taya you have considerable resources. Darryl with his acupuncture, you because you are pregnant and Taya with her political affiliations are already a strong core group. Your doctor may also be willing to address a group. Once you have established support you could issue press releases to local papers and radio stations etc to advertise your existence - the demand for HB in your area and the need for a domiciliary midwife.

Don't forget to put a contact name and address on any material you send out. If you feel confident you may also be able to arrange radio interviews etc - this would give you a chance to explain why there is such a shortage of domiciliary midwives in Gisborne and N.Z. in general.

Again if you feel confident you could arrange a Public Meeting once you have assessed the level of consumer support. We could lend you some videos of Home Birth in N.Z. to show if you thought this appropriate. If you decide on a Public meeting it's an opportunity to invite members of the local medical establishment. When the New Plymouth Group did this last year they had about 8 hospital midwives attend - some very anti, some unsure but at least they came. Doctors are a little more difficult to entice. If you can't get the Press to attend you can send them another press release about what happened at the meeting. Publicity helps to ferret out consumer support and hopefully a supportive midwife.

One of the most practical things the group can do once established is to fund raise. Domiciliary Midwives have to provide all their own equipment - this amounts to an outlay of up to \$1,000 before starting work. In many areas the local HBA buys the equipment and lends it to the midwife - this often serves as extra incentive to a midwife who is considering taking up a domiciliary contract.

Something else which happens in some areas is that two midwives who work at the local hospital take out domiciliary contracts and make sure that they are rostered on different shifts at the hospital. This means that they are not dependent on the paltry income they can earn as a domiciliary midwife and there is always one available to attend a woman at home when she comes into labour. It also helps in areas where the demand for HB is just becoming established so there is insufficient domiciliary work to provide full employment. So

The Whangarei Group canvassed all the doctors in the area by phone or in person to see whether or not they did obstetrics and what their feelings about HB are. They were surprised to find that 9 of the local doctors would be prepared to consider attending Home Births if there was a domiciliary midwife! I've enclosed a copy of the questionnaire they used.

There is no formal procedure involved in becoming affiliated to the National HBA. Each of the groups is autonomous and functions independently. Decide with Taya what address you are going to use for your

contact address and let me know. We, the Auckland Group, publish the National Newsletter so we'll include your address and the other branches will put you on their mailing list for their newsletters etc. When you're a bit further underway ~~xxxxxxxx~~ you can send us a report of your progress to publish in the National Newsletter so the other groups can find out where you're up to.

Our monthly committee meeting will be held on 17 June. I don't know if you'll be in Auckland then. My phone number is 767 614 - so give me a call and we can arrange to meet and if any of the local support groups are meeting at that time you could go to their meetings. (Because of the size of the Auckland Group ~~where~~ we have four support groups as well as the committee in operation.)

Best Wishes, I look forward to hearing from you when you're in Auckland. Some of our midwives use acupuncture during labour, Darryl may like to meet with one or two of them for a sharing session.

Brenda