

20073-93-033

AUCKLAND HOMEBIRTH PRACTITIONERS
(GPs & MWs)

23 February 1991

Hon Simon Upton,
Minister of Health,
WELLINGTON.

Dear Simon Upton:

The Auckland Homebirth Practitioners are concerned that the maternity services should remain Government subsidised at the primary level.

In the interests of mothers and their babies - our future citizens - we contend that the Government has a responsibility to continue to uphold the principle of free maternity care.

We see this as the only sure way to ensure basic safety and well-being in pregnancy and childbirth while providing effective choices for women. This is also in accord with the Government's already stated commitment to health care for under-five-year-olds.

We would point out that if maternity care is not subsidised but is opened up entirely to market forces, it would place the Government in the position where it would be very difficult to impose safety factors in relation to birth attendants.

In North Carolina a 1974 - 1976 study of 1296 home births reported in JAMA (vol 244, no 24, 19 Dec 1980) shows that of the 768 planned home births attended by midwives the PNMR was 3/1000 live births; in the planned home births without a midwife the PNMR was 30/1000; while among those who had unplanned (precipitate or failure to plan for health care) home births the PNMR was 120/1000.

We feel that to compromise safety factors in this important area because of economic considerations would be a false economy. We therefore urge you to support continuation of subsidised primary maternity care.

Sincerely,

c.c. Task Force on Health Benefits

Dr John Crawford, Principle Medical Officer, Benefits & Subsidies.