
REPORT TO MINISTRY OF HEALTH



*Home Birth
Aotearoa*

NATIONAL HOME BIRTH SERVICES

CONTRACT 342476/00

PROVIDER NUMBER 651241

01ST JULY 2013 – 30TH JUNE 2014

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BACKGROUND:

This contract succeeded contracts held by Community Birth Services for the provision of National Home Birth Co-ordination from 2002 - 2008, and contracts that Home Birth Aotearoa Trust has held for National Home Birth Services from August 2008 to July 2011.

Home Birth Aotearoa Trust would like to acknowledge the significant benefits in terms of time, energy and cost savings of the 3-year term of the current contract. This term has enabled clear and purposeful focus and expansion of the continuity and implementation of projects and initiatives to fulfil on the Contract Service Objectives and Components. Our contract runs for one further year, to June 2015. We look forward to starting a conversation about future contracts in early 2015.

This report covers the work undertaken in this contract from 01st July 2013 until 30th June 2014.

The Home Birth Aotearoa Trust is a well-established support organisation for the home birth community of New Zealand. Currently there are approximately 25 Home Birth Associations or Support Groups active within Aotearoa. Some groups experience periods of inactivity but contact details and communication in those regions continue to be maintained. This year has seen the addition of several new support groups, who have been supported by Home Birth Aotearoa through provision of resources and mentoring. Information about national hui, resources and updates are provided to all groups.

ATTENDANCE AT NATIONAL FORUMS:

This year saw a continuation of our new hui strategy, whereby our previous twice yearly national hui has been reduced to one annual spring hui and one round of regional pod hui. The intention of this change in format is to allow for more grass roots communication, inclusiveness and participation in our regions, whilst still maintaining a more formal gathering of all groups and the trustees on an annual basis. The “pod” concept aims are to provide greater opportunity for attendance, a forum for localised discussions and networking by Home Birth groups and their communities’ birth workers, who often share maternity care resources.

The national hui is hosted by a regional Home Birth Association or Support Group. Sharing this role around the groups that comprise the HBA membership allows resources, especially prominent locals and their wisdom, within widely varying communities, to contribute and form robust connections from outside of the immediate location. Regions are asked to consider and comment on the strategic direction of the organisation, send a representative to hui and/or submit a report. Representatives are invited from other affiliated organisations including Nga Maia o Aotearoa me te Waipounamu, Maternity Services Consumer Council, TABS, NZ College of Midwives, Home Birth Midwives Collective and La Leche League.

The previously established, second annual national hui has now been repurposed into several smaller hui, occurring throughout the country. These hui are convened by groups that have been clustered together, and are nurtured by one Trustee per cluster. The establishment of these pod hui was in response to a robust consensus discussion with Home Birth Aotearoa’s membership.

NATIONAL HUI:

08- 10 NOVEMBER 2013: ARAI TE URU MARAE; DUNEDIN.

This hui was held in Dunedin over the weekend of 08th - 10th November 2013.

The hui began with a welcoming Powhiri by the local iwi, followed by an afternoon tea and meet and greet. The Home Birth Aotearoa Kei a Wai ceremony was held the following morning, where all attendees were given an opportunity to add water to our tāonga vessel and share their stories, words and intentions for hui.

After this, the Home Birth Aotearoa Trust AGM was held, with a report on the trusts activities and initiatives of the year, a review of our strategic plan and financial reports. A range of discussions followed, including the web site project, International Day of the Midwife planning, the progress of the pod hui concept, HBA conference planning for 2015 and general perspectives on home birth in New Zealand shared.

Sharon Knightbridge delivered a report on her representative role with the New Zealand College of Midwives and discussed the upcoming NZCOM conference in 2014. The membership was encouraged to attend and / or submit to this conference, and a scholarship was offered to the membership to do so.

After lunch, reports were received and presented verbally by the regions represented, or were submitted in writing prior and were tabled. The regional reporting time created an opportunity for the regional representatives to share ideas about publicity, membership and support to their communities.

The afternoon was a long session on a Home Birth Herstory filming project. Briggette Lauper, film maker led this discussion and showed several excerpts from her complete interviews and filming on this project. The hui committed to following through on this with the establishment of a steering group, supported by HBA, to explore possible future avenues for this project.

The Sunday of hui was set aside for a Te Tiriti ō Waitangi workshop, facilitated by Dunedin academic, Kelly Tikao. Kelly gave a talk on her Masters research into traditional birthing practices of Maori, and demonstrated some of these. This was followed by the screening of her short film, “Iho – a Cord Between Two Worlds”.

Kelly Tikao was the 2011 recipient of the Ria McBride Research Award from the New Horizons for Women Trust for her project: “Looking to the Past to Improve the Future - Iho – a Cord Between Two Worlds.”

The aims of the “Iho (umbilical cord) – a Cord between Two Worlds” research/film project – is to document traditional Māori birthing practices and explore how they could be integrated into a modern medical model of maternity care.

The hui ended on Sunday afternoon, with everyone attending feeling a renewed energy and inspiration.

POD HUI:

OTAGO / CENTRAL OTAGO / SOUTHLAND / GORE / TE ANAU 17TH & 18TH OF MAY 2014

Over the weekend of the 17th and 18th of May, the Southern regional pod celebrated home birth together at Te Takutai ō te Titi Marae (Colac Bay) in Southland, a stunning location.

“Our Hui brought together Members from Queenstown, Te Anau, Dunedin, Invercargill and Bluff. It was a beautiful experience in a beautiful and magical location surrounded by equally beautiful, magical and likeminded people” - Samantha of Southland Home Birth.

The hui began with a welcoming powhiri, afternoon tea and was followed by a Kei a Wai ceremony. The afternoon and evening was spent, sharing stories, ideas and initiatives between the variety of women attending. Trustee, Sian Hannagan conducted a promotional photo shoot where participants were invited to describe what home birth means to them on a chalkboard and be photographed with their message. This traveling chalkboard has been used in hui in Dunedin and Southland and at the NZCOM conference. This is a longer term project of the organisation, with the intention to utilise the images for promotion via social media, on our website & magazine and printed resources. On the Sunday a workshop on Natural fertility was held, followed by a closing ceremony.

NORTHLAND / AUCKLAND / WAIKATO / THAMES 2ND, 3RD AND 4TH MAY 2014

Friday 2nd – Sunday 4th May 2014 Held at Karanga camp, Te Henga (outskirts of Auckland)

The Auckland Homebirth Support Group hosted a Northern region hui over a sunny weekend. The hui was an opportunity for supporters of homebirth to connect with others, learn or share about

homebirth experiences, and strengthen the kaupapa of creating safe spaces for birth.

Hui was followed by “The moon inside you” event, at the same venue, run by Auckland Home Birth Support Group.

Hui was attended by around 35 adults plus lots of kids, some stayed overnight at camp, some came just for the day or when they could. A few student midwives from AUT attended, some for whom it was their first contact with a homebirth group which was exciting. While invitations were sent out widely, attendees were mainly from the greater Auckland area. A variety of discussion topics around homebirth were initiated by attendees and everyone had the opportunity to contribute in a meaningful way.

This comment from one attendee outlines the benefit of regional hui:

“for me, being near Whangarei, I have seen a good follow on by running into people there from hui - always feel connected. Also some friends from my town went who wouldn't have gone to national hui as it's never been close enough to home”.

The hui was a space for whanau, midwives, students, and natural birthing supporters to gather, connect and converse, with the aim of strengthening the community and the individuals within it. Those who attended were able to have a voice in what was discussed, and what conversations were prioritised. Embracing a philosophy of listening, of allowing what needs to arise to come forth, and allowing space for children, fathers, and extended whanau to be a part of the hui and the discussions, the wider homebirth community was fully involved in the hui process.

REPRESENTATION AT NATIONAL FORUMS

NEW ZEALAND COLLEGE OF MIDWIVES REPRESENTATIVE

There has been home birth consumer representation on the National Committee of the New Zealand College of Midwives since the College's foundation.

The Home Birth Aotearoa representative contributes to the governance of the College as well as representing the voice of home birthing women and whanau, via the networks and discussions of Home Birth Aotearoa.

The current home birth consumer member is HBA trustee, Sharon Knightbridge (since 2009). Sharon has attended the following meetings for the period of this report:

2013

March 20th-22nd

August 14th - 16th

November 27th-29th

2014

March 12th-14th

“I have found being part of the national committee a very rewarding experience. I feel like a valued and useful member of the committee with my perspectives, both personal and organizational, welcomed. I have met some wonderful people whose work and passion for midwifery and maternity are inspiring.” Sharon Knightbridge

REPRESENTATION FOR THE MATERNITY QUALITY AND SAFETY CONSUMER REPRESENTATIVE FORUM

This year we were thrilled to be invited by the Ministry of Health to send a representative to this consumer forum. Our representative, Tess Trotter found the day invaluable to connect with maternity consumers, other consumer groups and MoH representatives. We were further honoured to be invited to help facilitate one of the discussions as a consumer group.

We currently have one board member and numerous community members participating as consumer representatives in their local DHB Maternity Quality and Safety Programmes.

REPRESENTATION AT P.E.A.C MEETING OTAGO SCHOOL OF MIDWIFERY

This year we have been invited to attend the Permanent External Advisory Committee meeting (PEAC) held at the Otago School of Midwifery.

Our Home Birth Aotearoa representative has attended both meetings this year so far and is confirmed for the third meeting occurring later in November. These meetings offer a place to talk to our Home Birth community in the context of midwifery training, as well as build connections with the faculty and student body. There has been great interest in our magazine and website, with contributions offered and accepted. It has been an honour to have a voice in these meetings with much value gained from attending.

REPRESENTATION AT THE PACIFIKA AOTEAROA MIDWIVES NATIONAL FONONO

July 5, 2014

Wellington School of Midwifery Studies, Wellington Hospital

Report by Nadia Kersel.

In October 2011, I attended the NZCOM (New Zealand College of Midwives) inaugural Pasifika fono on behalf of Home Birth Aotearoa. It was out of this fono that the Pasifika Midwives Aotearoa collective formed. Since then, this group has been gathering several times a year and have two seats on the NZCOM national committee.

I was pleased to catch up with the group after keeping track of their steady progress through their email list and I, along with HBA kaupapa was heartily welcomed. There were many Pasifika midwives and nurses, as well as a strong contingent of Pasifika midwifery students.

Prior to the fono, HBA was placed on the agenda and I took this time to speak to:

- our goals and aims, our contract and our kaupapa
- our shared networks and shared kaupapa
- our intention for continued, committed connection with Pasifika Midwives Aotearoa
- our commitment to partnership with midwives at an organisational level, which reflects the partnership model at a woman-to-midwife level.
- our recent work to re-brand, create website and magazine, and increase social media presence
- our initiatives, including the future intention to create a student midwifery welcome pack, and home birth specific curriculum.
- My personal wish for more Pasifika representation working to bring homebirth and HBA's missions to Pasifika families
- Extended an invitation to our national hui, held in Auckland in October.

As well as this, I sent around copies of our resources, including our new branding and gifted t-shirts to the kaumatua of the group.

There was a lot of interest in our process of re-branding as Pasifika Midwives Aotearoa are at a stage of creating a logo and "brand" for themselves to reflect the identity that they have crafted for themselves. I was happy to be able to offer HBA's experiences of this process and it was personally very valuable to have the opportunity to reflect back on HBA's fledgling years and the work it took to create our identity and kaupapa within our contract, aims and goals.

Pasifika Midwives Aotearoa showed much support and interest in our organisation, and acknowledgement of the volunteer hours and energy that fuels what we create. We were welcomed into connection, and into an open consumer role for future fono.

I am grateful to have had the opportunity to attend this fono and strengthen the bonds that exist between our organisations. Thank you to HBA for funding my way there. I look forward to bringing the HBA voice to future fono.

NATIONAL PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES:

HOME BIRTH AWARENESS WEEK – LABOUR DAY 28 – 03 NOVEMBER 2013:

Our message this year was acknowledging the underlying value and positive outcomes of the great work done by regional support groups and associations, as well as introducing our new branding and logo. An excerpt from our HBA week press release sums up our intentions:

HBA asserts that the act of sharing and supporting home birth experiences can have flow-on effects to encourage positive parenting choices. Nadia Kersel, spokesperson for HBA, says that “through our work across the country, we have noticed that the choice to birth at home often fosters a desire to parent with consciousness and compassion.” Choosing to birth at home is synonymous with self-confidence and a belief in birth as a normal, healthy life event, and Mrs Kersel states that “this creates in parents an empowered perspective from which to make those important choices early on, such as breastfeeding.” Indeed, according to the MMPO (Midwifery and Maternity Providers Organisation) report of 2011, an impressive 87% of babies born at home were exclusively breastfed – in line with what the WHO (World Health Organisation) recommends as optimal for infant growth and development as well as for a lifetime of wellness.

Full text of press release attached as appendix 1

Alongside this, we had a parallel theme of books - celebrating and acknowledging the way that shared information and stories can be so empowering. We were thrilled to support the launch of **‘Where the Heart Is – stories of home birth in New Zealand’** by midwife Carla Sargent – a compilation of New Zealand Birth stories . <http://www.birthrite.co.nz/birth-book/>.

All regional groups were supplied with resources in the form of a bookmark of recommended reading in home birth, which they were encouraged to promote and discuss with their local library. In addition our new branding was introduced via a HBA sticker ‘Home Birth happens in Aotearoa’.

Example resources attached as appendix 2 & 3

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE MIDWIFE 5TH MAY 2014

The International theme for International Day of the Midwife in 2014 was “Midwives changing the world one family at a time”. Some groups in New Zealand, including Home Birth Aotearoa extended this theme to encompass the theme of violence and that every woman and every baby has a right to birth in the absence of all forms of violence. Our IDM press release focused on this aspect.

Our initiative for IDM was a dual purpose postcard, to be sent to midwives by whanau as thanks, as well as to the New Zealand College of Midwives as part of a midwives regular review. The post card was perforated, where the mother could write a personal message to her midwife and also provide feedback around key facets of home birthing to the NZCOM. The NZCOM were very positive about this initiative and pleased to work with us. The post cards and stamps were sent to all home birth associations and support groups as well as being made available at conferences and via our website.

“... very many thanks for going to such lengths to support women to give birth with grace and dignity and for the midwives who attend them. A mutual admiration society I think! It gives me great pleasure to share your press release and resources with the National Committee of the College. We hope you too have a wonderful midwives day!

Very kind regards

Karen Guilliland

Chief Executive NZCOM “

Full press release for IDM attached as appendix 4

Postcard attached as appendix 5

KEY ACTIVITIES

WEBSITE DEVELOPMENT

This year has seen the progression of our website redevelopment project to its fruition and launch in May. Since the website launch, the site has had 14,627 unique users, and over 38,000 page views. 71% of users have been new users, and 29% returning visitors. It is our aim to continue to attract both new and returning visitors and have our website recommended to any newly expecting family.

The website has been completely rebuilt, with the following highlight features:

Our **Home page** the home page provides some entry points into different spaces in the site and is also where birth stories are located. Clicking into the photo grid, you can begin reading tales from across Aotearoa (and beyond) and also add your own birth story, right there and then if you so desire.

Also featured on the home page is our entry point for dads, Voices of Tane - utilizing the sections here filters information contained in the site to dad specific resources.

Your Home Birth is the place to go for all things mind, body and spirit related to preparing for birth at home. Packed with informational articles, this area of the site is for families seeking guidance, information and support in their home birth journey.

Why Home Birth is the entry point for those considering or seeking understanding about home birth. Here you will find the most up to date statistics, the benefits and testimonials on home birth in Aotearoa.

Community houses the forum and links to regional group information. With easy sign-up capability to the forum, there is a wide scope for the community to connect. Over time our goal is to build up a wealth of mother to mother, whānau to whānau advice and suggestions that serve as a guide to others seeking information. This is also the place to have regional conversations, plan pod hui, and other local connections.

News is our calendar of events and regular blog. Featuring events and dates relevant to the home birth community, the calendar is another space we welcome input. Our news blog is a space for current issues, events and messages. We will update here regularly, with trust news, highlights on what is happening in the natural birth landscape, guest features and links to other interesting blogs.

Resources Books, links, postcards, downloads of reports and resources and a directory for all things home birth. Check out our suggesting reading, our downloadable affirmations and so much more on this page. Again your suggestions are most welcomed.

Your midwife is our database of true home birth midwives across New Zealand. With multiple search functionality, users can browse midwives in their area and find out how to contact them. This page also features an ability to for midwives to add themselves on the listing, and tips on choosing a midwife to partner with. This will be downloaded periodically and supplied to the ministry.

About us is our grounding. Who we are, where we have come from and what this community is all about.

MAGAZINE LAUNCH

Our magazine was released this year along with the website. The magazine is something our community have been asking to have available for some while now and it has been a huge investment to bring it to fruition. The magazine was funded from board savings and sits with the website as a resource that offers up to date, seasonal resources in the form of articles, opinion pieces and board news.

It is an online magazine released quarterly with the seasons, available for download and subscription. Older issues are archived and available for download also. The magazine has been built in *Wordpress* and has been designed with functionality in mind making it easy to use by people who have had little or no web training. This is to future-proof the magazine to keep it functional with minimal maintenance.

Part way through production the woman initially hired to act as editor resigned her position. As such the role was taken up by one of the board members under a temporary paid position until the magazine has gained ground. At which point we will review the editorial position and consider re-advertising the role.

Response to the magazine has been robust approval, with lots of positive feedback from the community and contributors. Since the first issue was published we have had 36,000 page views with 13,000 discrete users with 46% of those users originating in Aotearoa. We use the magazine to drive traffic to our website and vice versa. It's a cost effective and energy effective way of getting our voice heard nationally.

Our aim is to have the magazine self funded so that we can maintain its publication going forwards. We have built a media kit and advertising rates and we have approached a selected group of advertisers to publish.

Many members of the community have asked for a print magazine to supplement to online magazine. Currently we are in the process of researching the cost involved to take this on. Our vision is to have an annual publication of our best articles and most informative pieces, and this could be used as a resource by our regions to fund local activities.

The magazine as an overall project has built our online profile and enabled us to make connections with important birth luminaries in New Zealand and abroad. We are proud to represent the voice of Home Birth Aotearoa on such a wide scale. New Zealand is renowned for its progressive and evidence based birth culture and Home Birth Aotearoa are helping to place us in the global eye, as well as offering a voice to Home Birth advocates at a national level.

CONTACT WITH HOME BIRTH ASSOCIATIONS:

National hui, a Yahoo email group, our website, Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest are the main methods of contact and networking for home birth associations and the wider home birth community. The HBA Facebook page has grown to 1450 page “likers” and is extremely popular for those seeking information and sharing ideas. The page as a resource has proven to be extremely useful in promoting initiatives, polling opinions and connecting, not only as an entire community or localised group, but also with the specific needs of individuals around information and resource sharing.

A comprehensive database of local associations and support groups, as well as relevant associated agencies and organisations, updated regularly and receive regular communications from HBA. Information about regional home birth associations is posted onto the website and Facebook page, and updated regularly.

A number of associations maintain their own websites, blogs and Facebook pages, which are proving popular ways to connect and share information.

We regularly contact all local associations and groups on all of our initiatives and disseminate information provided to us from other sources such as the MoH, NZCOM, NZBA, NGO council, etc.

We have established a Facebook group specifically for committee members of regional associations and support groups to network, share ideas and seek advice from one another around membership, fundraising, liaison with DHBs and other committee issues.

CONTACT WITH OTHER PROVIDERS/AGENCIES/PROFESSIONAL INDIVIDUALS:

As can be seen in previous sections, HBA continues to maintain and promote ongoing contact with other providers such as:

- the New Zealand College of Midwives
- Pasifika Midwives Aotearoa
- Otago Polytechnic PEAC
- DHB Maternity Quality & Safety Groups

We also have ongoing contact with support organisations including:

- La Leche League (National and Local groups)
- Maternity Services Consumer Council
- Women's Health Action Trust
- Nga Maia Maori Midwives
- Positive Birth Movement Groups
- Plunket
- Parents Centre

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

MEDIA RELEASE BY HOME BIRTH AOTEAROA TRUST

Home Birth Breeds Positive Parenting

For immediate release - Nationwide - New Zealand's Home Birth Awareness Week begins, quite suitably, on Labour Day each year. During this week, families and communities around the nation celebrate the choice that all women have to birth at home in New Zealand. For Home Birth Aotearoa (HBA), the national collective of New Zealand's home birth support groups, it brings a chance to highlight the positive effects of home birth and home birth support groups on our communities.

HBA asserts that the act of sharing and supporting home birth experiences can have flow-on effects to encourage positive parenting choices. Nadia Kersel, spokesperson for HBA, says that "through our work across the country, we have noticed that the choice to birth at home often fosters a desire to parent with consciousness and compassion." Choosing to birth at home is synonymous with self-confidence and a belief in birth as a normal, healthy life event, and Mrs Kersel states that "this creates in parents an empowered perspective from which to make those important choices early on, such as breastfeeding." Indeed, according to the MMPO (Midwifery and Maternity Providers Organisation) report of 2011, an impressive 87% of babies born at home were exclusively breastfed – in line with what the WHO (World Health Organisation) recommends as optimal for infant growth and development as well as for a lifetime of wellness.

Families that make positive and empowered parenting choices, including home birth, often go on to proactively support other families in their communities. HBA consists of 25 volunteer-led home birth support groups. While diverse in structure and based in different regions of New Zealand, these groups are made up of families, midwives and whānau whose lives have been touched by home birth. Active support can range from book lending to birth pool hire and post-partum meal support as well as the far-reaching and deeper benefits of community. "Home birth support groups often form the basis of a new family's community through deep, honest connection and lifelong friendships," says Mrs Kersel. These groups create a foundation for these connections by providing a space for new parents to experience the enduring and positive effects of home birth. Mrs Kersel explains, "expectant mothers and their partners get to witness,

in the flesh, what is often an alternate experience to what they have come to expect for themselves through media and mainstream birth culture”. Furthermore, she states that “families who gather with the intention to support others in home birth stand as a strong testimony to the generosity and commitment to family and community, stemming from their choice to birth at home.”

According to HBA, communities founded on a respect for birth and parenting bring limitless potential for cultural change - “given the disturbing rate at which child abuse is prevalent in New Zealand, a positive and empowered start to parenting makes a significant contribution to the wellness of those families, their communities and our nation as a whole” says Mrs Kersel. Essentially, this co-ordinated, grass-roots effort to empower parents and support home birth creates a pathway to conscious, positive parenting as well as uniting diverse families into caring communities. Plentiful rewards for us all it seems, for but a little labour.

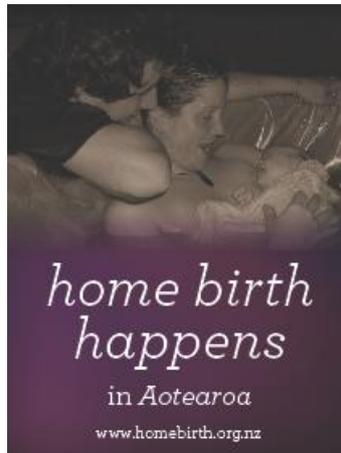
HOME BIRTH AWARENESS WEEK 2013

- From Monday 28 October to Sunday 3 November
- Followed by the annual Home Birth Aotearoa National Hui in Dunedin, 8-10 November
- Check out www.homebirth.org.nz to contact your regional home birth group or to find a home birth midwife
- Find HBA on Facebook www.facebook.com/homebirthaotearoa

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Contact:
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Home Birth Aotearoa
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APPENDIX 2



APPENDIX 3



*Birth matters.
It brings us
into being,
on many levels.*

~

ANANDA LOWE

*Home Birth
Aotearoa*

May 5 - Nationwide - The Association for Prenatal and Perinatal Psychology and Health say, “Any violence which greets a baby in the womb or around the time of birth will serve as a silent and unconscious form of conditioning which acts like a template for future relationships. This conditioning, depending upon its frequency and severity, can affect a person's physical and mental health for decades to come.” Home Birth Aotearoa spokesperson Nadia Kersel adds that “this goes for the birthing woman too – the residual trauma from a violent birth can affect her, and her parenting for many years”. She goes on to say that “unfortunately, with the normalisation of medicalised birth comes the acceptance of the medical violence inflicted on mother and baby, threatening all levels of their wellbeing.”

Home Birth Aotearoa (HBA) is a nationwide collective of home birth support groups and associations who value midwifery care in New Zealand. Every year on May 5, the world celebrates International Day of the Midwife. This year's theme is “Midwives changing the world one family at a time”. Some groups in NZ, including Home Birth Aotearoa are extending this theme to include that “every woman and every baby has a right to birth in the absence of all forms of violence”.

A recent case in Brazil highlights the reality of what obstetric violence in birth can become. 29 year-old woman Adelir Carmen Lemos de Goés was set upon by police in the middle of the night as she laboured. She was verbally abused by police before being taken to a hospital where she was forced, against her will, into a caesarean section. This was done by court order, under the guidance of her obstetrician who based the decision for this coercive measure on the results of an ultrasound scan that Lemos de Goés was neither permitted to see nor discuss.

Mrs Kersel says that “In New Zealand, because informed consent is a cornerstone of our healthcare system, and because we have a midwifery-based maternity system we could say that a case like Adelir's would never happen here, but we must take note. This level of coercion is a reality for many women globally” and is the outcome of “a system which views the rights of women to determine the type of care they need for their bodies and babies as negotiable”.

According to Mrs Kersel, “Medical, or obstetric violence is not only this extreme. What violence looks like in birth is the same as what generally would be considered as a threat to overall wellbeing”. This includes, but is not limited to: intimidation, coercion, misinformation, disempowering language and having one's senses and physical wellbeing undermined and threatened. In their work to support home birth at a community level, HBA have spoken to many women about their births and have heard hundreds of birth stories. What becomes evident is that coercion, intimidation and physical injury is extremely rare in home birth “home birth is, in essence, non-violent” they say.

HBA assert that at the core of the home birth experience is self-determination - that of the parents and their wider whanau. “When self-determination is present, violence is absent” they say. “As parents and their whanau become clear about their accountability, they are empowered to minimise or avoid circumstances that may be damaging to their baby’s, or their own wellbeing”. For example, a mother who is self-determining in her birth at home, can choose who enters her birth space, calling only on the people who are committed to her baby’s welfare and happiness, as well as that of their wider whanau.

Midwifery support can also be key - Midwives trained in normal, natural birth and who are open to the myriad of experiences and possibilities within it are well equipped to support and help create a non-violent birth for expectant mothers, their babies and their families.

In honour of International Day of the Midwife, HBA are releasing a postcard through which home birthing women and their whanau are encouraged to express their sentiments of gratitude toward their midwives and the New Zealand College of Midwives. The postcard, available in print and online, positively reinforces the gentle and respectful care that can be made available by choosing a midwife as an LMC, and by choosing home birth.

International Day of the Midwife is on May 5

Postcard downloadable HBA on Facebook www.facebook.com/homebirthaotearoa. PDF attached.

Find your local home birth support group at www.homebirth.org.nz

Contact details:

Tess Trotter

admin@homebirth.org.nz

021 027 88583

APPENDIX 5

