

DIVISION OF MATERNAL WELFARE

BIRTHS

The increased number of births during 1946 imposed a considerable strain upon maternity services.

ACCOMMODATION

As materials and labour for building purposes were scarce, administrators and licensees in most cases had to make the best of existing accommodation, so that facilities did not always reach the standard laid down for maternity cases. After internal discussions, the Department temporarily waived the full-scale standards where necessary to ensure that this essential service be maintained. Nevertheless, thanks to a high standard of medical and nursing care, the maternal-mortality rate of 2.05 per 1,000 live births was the lowest ever recorded in New Zealand. The still-birth rate of 21.75 was also the lowest on record, and the neo-natal deaths compare favourably with previous years.

During 1946–47, Auckland, Wellington, and Christchurch Hospital Boards opened maternity wards for normal cases wherein patients were allowed own-doctor attendance.

Other Hospital Boards in some cases provided overflow accommodation within the general hospital. The Department recognizes the necessity for this temporary overflow accommodation, but realizes that safer facilities for confinement cases must be provided.

At this date it is estimated that 400 to 500 new beds are required to provide an adequate maternity service throughout the Dominion. Some of these beds would be in replacement of sub-standard accommodation.

STAFFING

The Department thanks the many retired midwives and married nurses who relieved during 1946, also Plunket nurses who gave up week-ends to relieve charge sisters.

In October, 1946, the Director of Maternal Welfare and the Matron of St. Helens, Wellington, represented the Department on a committee of inquiry into short-term and long-term remedies for staffing of obstetrical hospitals.

FIELD SURVEY

The Directorship of Maternal Welfare was vacant for two years. During 1946 the present Director travelled over the greater part of New Zealand in order to assess maternity hospital needs.

POST-GRADUATE CENTRE

During 1946, negotiations were furthered between the University of New Zealand (and its Auckland University College), the Auckland Hospital Board, and the Department of Health for the founding of a post-graduate obstetrical and gynaecological teaching centre in Auckland. It is envisaged that this centre will have far-reaching effects upon medical, nursing, and research obstetrical interests throughout the Dominion.