

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

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Partially
Confidential

In March 1997 at the age of 19 years old I delivered my first child, a Daughter I named _____ at 38 weeks and 5 days pregnant. The following his her story.

During my pregnancy with _____ I booked into the pre-natal care of _____ Hospital, during intake I was advised that as I was young an healthy I was being allocated as a patient of the family birthing centre, a "low risk" midwife only clinic designed to offer a home birth like experience in the safety of the hospital.

I can not stress enough that this was not a choice I was given, I was told this was where I was being sent. I was informed this service meant I would be allocated a midwife and she would be the person I seen at every visit.

From my first meeting the Midwife I was allocated expressed her opinion that I was not a priority in her clinic. I was informed that my age was "to young" to be having a baby and that she wouldn't tolerate complaining. I had zero ability to develop a sense of security in the care I was receiving.

At 32wk's Pregnant I became very sick, I was unable to keep food down and over the following weeks this would worsen to times when I could not keep water down. I was loosing weight and had constant fatigue.

I brought this to the attention of my allocated midwife, I was attending every appointment and I was enrolled and attending the hospital's pre-natal parenting education and had no idea why I was so sick though it did not seem normal. I asked for an ultrasound or CTG and was told "resources like that are expensive and saved for women that actually need them, NOT neurotic first time teenage mothers who can't handle the reality of being pregnant."

On March 18th 1997 I attended the Family Birth Centre, it was not an appointment, I went in to say my baby wasn't moving enough - I approached the staff room and the midwives were at lunch I was so excited to see a new face I felt hope - till my allocated Midwife seen me and jumped in - In front of her colleagues she stated " You're so worried about your teenage bikini body - Do you think I haven't noticed your losing weight? your baby is big and it doesn't have the room to move!"

Another midwife gave me a fetal movement chart and told me to go home have a cup of tea and count each time the baby kicks - I was told to bring it back next week.

On March 19th 1997 - I called the labour and delivery ward stating I couldn't use the chart as I wasn't feeling movement, it was as though my baby was floating I'd see/feel a knee or elbow poking at my belly but I never felt the baby change position like I used to - I was transferred to the FBC - I was instructed to discard the chart as it was just making me more anxious, I was told to put my feet up and relax.

On March 25th I returned to the FBC - My allocated midwife proceeded to shame me based on my physical appearance, age and her opinion of my intelligence being below her own - I advocated for my baby and stated repeatedly I need a Doctor, My baby's heart rate was the lowest I had ever seen it - I stated to her pre-natal classes said it shouldn't be that low - She mocked me saying " Oh you did pre-natal... Well I'm a midwife and I have been one longer than you've been alive!" She then stated "My own children are older than you and they would never question me like this!" I refused to leave with out a Doctors appointment - She finally booked me one stating well since you know everything you will have seen the Doctors are on strike!! You can see the Doctor next time - My appointment was April 3 1997.

On March 29th 1997 - I went into labour at home, My waters broke and instantly knew the water was meconium stained - I had my partner call the FBC about 5am to tell them, he was told tell her to stay home till her contractions are 5min apart. I knew that wasn't right and called an ambulance - I arrived at labour and delivery about 5:30 - I told them I was an FBC patient and they had told me to wait till I was in active labour but I was scared - Immediately I was told that because the amniotic fluid wasn't clear I wasn't allowed to be transferred to the FBC - For that I was grateful.

Then they attached a CTG monitor to my belly, the trace wasn't successful so a scalp electrode was inserted in my baby's head - after a truly chaotic scene in the delivery room it was decided they needed a second scalp electrode - it beeped to a flat line .. it was ripped out deciding the first was in the right spot.

The intern became escalated yelling at everyone including me, screaming that "We have things to organise here" and "Where is your partner?" I remember laying in the bed being rolled side to side as they tried to get the best fetal heart rate reading - as the Doctor yelled, her hands thrown in the air as she asked where my partner had disappeared too.. I tried to speak saying he was trying to call my Mum, but I wasn't heard - The senior midwife present calmed the Doctor saying they're scared and they don't understand what's happening you need to tell them, the Doctor yelled - I'm trying but he's not here - The midwife stated he needs a minute but we'll get him ... I was shaking - once my partner returned we were told the baby had "Bradycardia" This was not explained - We were told I was being sent for an emergency C-section under full anesthetic and could not be awake - a polaroid photo would be taken then the baby would be flown to Sydney before I woke up.

I was in shock, I was shaking and cold, a younger nurse tried to put an IV in my arm, she was shaking too - After 3 attempts in different locations my arm was covered in blood but the IV was in.

2hrs after arriving at the hospital my "Emergency" c-section took place - The anesthetist seen the blood from my IV attempts and thought I had been in an accident, he commented that

the inside elbow was a silly location for an IV in the arm of a new mother - Maybe this should have been a red flag.

I woke in an unused recovery room alone, I can clearly remember sitting up asking "What did I have" "where is my baby" - A nurse in the distance spoke - "I'll get you a Doctor" the next time I woke I was told " There was nothing we could do." I was repeatedly given pain relief injections to sedate me - once I woke and my daughter was placed beside me, as I woke thinking it had all been a bad dream and she was fine, I tried to get up, pulling my IV out I tried to reach her - A nurse found me, handed her to me and gave me an injection ... I was sedated until my family were present to advocate for me to be heard.

I was transferred to a ward, given no answers, no social worker, no information. I had to ask for everything. 24hours later I was sent a social worker who cried more than I did - It took 2 Nurses to pry my stillborn infant daughter from her arms.

I followed all legal avenues and eventually hospital admitted all liability in the death of my daughter - It was revealed I was not healthy despite being young and fit - I was diagnosed with Antiphospholipid antibodies which caused serious blood clots to the entire placenta, when I tried telling the midwife I was sick, I was in fact very sick, my daughter was slowly suffocating in utero, as my blood clotted - By the time she was delivered I was at significant risk of infection which placed me in Jeopardy of a full hysterectomy, the head of obstetrics told me if I hadn't gone into labor when I did I may have died from septic shock before my next hospital check up on April 3rd.

Added to all of this during the legal process the staff on duty in labor and delivery were interviewed - They admitted they lied to me, they new my baby had already died in utero, by rights I should have been given the dignity to labor and deliver my daughter as a part of the natural grieving process, instead the staff admitted they made the decision to send me for a c-section under a general anesthetic to quote "Avoid having to tell me until I was sedated, as it was uncomfortable for them"

It has been 26 years and 4 months - I live with PTSD and will never trust any part of the medical profession again, I can't stand hospitals and I am terrified of any of my children ever needed intervention medically.

At the age of 19 my life was destroyed by the actions of multiple staff at hospital
- I Have written so much though it is not all of the injustice I experienced.