

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

I gave birth to my first child at _____ Hospital and participated in a range of birthing and parenting classes beforehand. Having a midwife talk through the different options, explore pain management techniques, explain potential interventions (when they are necessary, why, what the flow-on effects might be including cascading interventions), and empower all of the expectant mothers and their partners to trust in our bodies and to be the ones in control of birthing (except in emergencies), to ask questions such as the benefits, drawbacks, other options and to ask for time to consider what to do if interventions are offered or suggested... all of it was phenomenally helpful. The check-in process the day I went into labour was smooth. The birthing suite was quiet and dim and felt safe. It was a wonderful experience.

I gave birth to my second child at _____ Hospital. Classes weren't offered that I know of. Things were progressing well when I arrived, in labour, but I had to go looking for a staff member when I arrived on the birthing ward and was then told off for doing so. I didn't feel safe or welcome, and labour slowed down considerably. I was offered pain relief or to have my waters broken overnight and I chose pain relief. 10 hours later I asked for my waters to be broken but it was almost shift change time so they asked me to wait another hour. My waters then broke naturally and the baby was in a hurry to arrive. I gave birth in the shower with two midwives and my partner in attendance, and when I looked down they were cutting the cord very quickly. I asked them not to, that I had asked for delayed cord clamping, but they said they needed to do so because the baby wasn't breathing, and they hit the emergency button in the shower. Suddenly seven staff arrived en masse and the baby was taken to the crib while I was left alone in the shower. Eventually I made it to the bed and a midwife came to hold my hand. When I asked if the baby was OK, she said "we don't know yet - just let them do their job". The baby was OK, as it turned out, and was soon on my chest. As the midwives sewed me up, they asked if I wanted them to go through what had happened. I said yes and the two of them walked me through every decision that was made, why it was made, who the seven people were and what their roles were. That debrief made all the difference. Without it, I probably would have said that it was a traumatic birthing experience, where I felt like things were completely out of my control, but with that debrief I felt calmer about everything that had happened and now say it was a stressful birth but not a traumatic one.

Looking back, I think that more could be done to give women the information they need to make informed decisions, to put them in charge of the birth, and to look after the woman as well as the baby throughout - like I experienced the first time around.

I welcome this inquiry and thank all of those involved. I hope it will lead to better outcomes for women, their babies, and the generally wonderful staff who try their best to create good birthing experiences and outcomes. I also hope that sharing my story has been helpful.