

Submission  
No 77

## INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

**Name:** Name suppressed

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Partially  
Confidential

The birth of my first son at the \_\_\_\_\_ Hospital in Victoria \_\_\_\_\_ in 2014, left me feeling traumatised, unsupported and disempowered. I arrived at the hospital late in the evening (spontaneous labour, 38 weeks) and was monitored overnight. As dawn approached and contractions began to feel intense I hopped into the shower to help with pain. Whilst I was in the shower a new nurse arrived in the room, checked my chart and spoke with my husband. She had read that I had a history of depression and anxiety and proceeded to tell my (deer in the headlights first time dad/husband) that I was at a much higher risk for post natal depression.

Next she stripped the bed and packed my things, telling my husband we should go home and continue labouring at home as I was still in early labour. When I returned from the shower in the adjoining room the nurse informed me I should continue labouring at home. I stated that I didn't want to, the pain was increasing, I felt nervous, being first time labour and I wanted to stay. The nurse then questioned if there was a "reason I didn't want to be at home? Was I "fearful of something at home?" In a tone that implied domestic violence. I explained there was not, I just didn't want to be labouring alone. The nurse then told me that if I continued to stay I'd be "on the clock" and after a certain amount of hours if labour hadn't progressed fast enough I'd require interventions. I felt so upset, alone and hurt by this encounter that we did leave and laboured at home.

I was scared, lonely, in pain and wished I had support. Finally we returned to the ward in the late afternoon and baby was born at 8pm. I had to wait almost 2 hours for the epidural as the anaesthetist was busy elsewhere and only one was on call. Those last 2 hours were unbearable pain. I later wrote in a blog about how if I'd had a gun at that point I would have shot myself in the head. The entire birth experience left me traumatised. I wasn't sure I would ever have another child due to the experience. The main part which upset me was the treatment by the nurse who sent us home. We felt as though we were given no option to stay. I felt so incredibly fragile, alone, scared and in pain. The feeling that we were "taking up a bed" or "on the Clock" at one of the most intimate moments in one's life was really awful.

I wish I could have had a supportive team of women around me, someone to rub my back, someone to speak with me and talk me through the process. I longed for an intimate setting, dimmed lights, warm cosy furnishings, a bath, a birthing ball. Not the sterile hospital room, where someone hooked me up to a heart monitor and told me to stay still. I did not have agency, autonomy or choice.