

Submission  
No 105

## INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

**Name:** Name suppressed

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Partially  
Confidential

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I would like to report my case of birth trauma and obstetric violence. My first baby was born at \_\_\_\_\_ NSW on \_\_\_\_\_, 2004. It was the most horrible experience of my life.

At four months into my pregnancy I started getting severe pelvic pain. I suffered from a condition called symphysis pubis dysfunction. This caused me to have horrible pain all the time, and made moving around during labour almost impossible.

I started having contractions at 2am on \_\_\_\_\_, two minutes apart. I called delivery but the nurse said I didn't need to go in. The contractions got stronger so I went to hospital a couple of hours later, but I was sent home. I was admitted to the labour ward around 11am after my clinic appointment - I was 3cm dilated. At 4pm I was taken to the delivery suite and my waters were broken to speed things up. An hour later I had the pethidine because it felt like every one of my ribs were breaking with each contraction. Around 6pm I had an epidural because I just could not handle the pain. I was still 3cm dilated.

At 11.40pm a midwife checked me and said I was fully dilated and it was time to push. I pushed as hard as I could with each contraction, but I was exhausted by now. I tried so hard to give birth, but my baby was stuck. More midwives were called in, but they just stood there and did nothing. Then a resident medical officer came in. She shouted at me "what's going on in here. If you don't push this baby out I'm going to open you up with the scissors." I was absolutely terrified of an episiotomy. After more and more pushing, it was decided to use the vacuum to get the baby out. My baby was born at 2am after two hours and twenty minutes of pushing. I had a second degree tear. I asked how many stitches I was getting and the resident medical officer gave me the filthiest look I've ever seen. I was so shocked I couldn't speak or even cry.

After all the midwives and my husband had gone, I was left alone in the delivery suite. I was still on the delivery bed where I'd given birth, holding my baby and nearly falling off the side from exhaustion, but I didn't know if I was able to stand up because I'd had the epidural. No one came to get me until after 6.30am. After I had a shower I was made to walk up to the post natal ward (no wheelchair was offered). I still hadn't fed my baby because I didn't know how to, and I thought someone would show me how. In the ward I asked if I could have some breakfast (it was after 7.30am by now), and a nurse snapped at me "no, breakfast is over." I didn't know what to do and I was in so much pain from the birth.

About 10am I asked a nurse if I should feed the baby since she was born at 2am. I tried to feed her but she wouldn't latch. The nurse got the lactation consultant from down the hall. It was a man, and he just walked in, pulled my breast out and started squeezing it without asking me if that was ok with me. But my baby would not feed.

All day my baby would not feed, so it was decided that she had to be drip fed with a syringe because she had no suckle reflex. This means I had to express my milk into a container, and then draw the milk into a syringe, which is drip fed to the baby. Patients are not allowed to do this because the baby could choke.

My baby screamed and screamed all night. I had to call a nurse every three hours since I wasn't allowed to feed her. Each time I called the nurse in, she shouted at me for interrupting her paperwork. But I had no choice - I had to call her because the baby needed to be fed. I was on my feet the whole night trying to calm the baby and stop her from crying. I got no sleep.

My baby screamed non stop every night and refused to feed. Another lactation consultant (a lady) was trying to get my baby to feed, but she would not latch. I used the breast pumps to

express my milk. I had blisters and cracks on my nipples from pumping. A nurse saw me using the breast pump and said I had to turn it up higher. I turned it up higher, and this caused my nipples to split and bleed more. The nurse then said I had to throw out my milk because it had blood in it.

Once I tried to breastfeed my baby using the football hold (tucking her under my arm on the same side she was feeding from). A nurse saw me doing this and shouted "that's not how you're supposed to feed her." The nurse then snatched her out of my arms really roughly, jerking the baby's head backwards.

A nurse said I could give my baby her first bath in the nursery bathtub. I thought a bath would calm her down but she just screamed. The nurse said to me really crossly "babies will cry."

I had no chance to sleep during the day, and my baby screamed and screamed every night. I was awake and on my feet for at least five days and nights after a twenty four hour labour. I was so exhausted I was getting headaches. At one point while I was expressing my milk in the feeding room, it felt like I was going to collapse. But I couldn't let that happen because I was scared of ripping my stitches open. In the end I had to bottle feed her, even though I really wanted to breastfeed. I told my husband to bring me cabbage leaves to put in my bra to suppress the milk flow. He brought in a small cabbage and the nurse shouted at him for not bringing enough cabbage.

I thought having a baby was supposed to be one of the happiest experiences of your life, but it isn't. When I went home a week later I didn't feel connected to my baby at all and I couldn't believe how nurses that are supposed to care for you could not give a damn about you. There was no care whatsoever from Hospital. The nurses and midwives could not care less about you in your most vulnerable state. I was disgusted back then, and I still am. I can't believe such bullies are allowed to be midwives and nurses.