

**Submission
No 145**

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Lucy Pickett
Date Received: 1 August 2023

I chose from the get go, after much self education, to have a homebirth. The first GP I went to to get a referral (for Medicare purposes) refused to give one and told me it was irresponsible to birth anywhere other than a hospital. He was condescending and patronising and truly wanted to shame me into a different choice. I went to a second more ambivalent, certainly not supportive, GP who provided me with the required referral.

After this I secured a private midwife and my pregnancy care began. I initially declined all scans but by 18 weeks my midwife had put increasing pressure on me to have the 20 week morphology scan. Against my judgement, my intuition and all of my research I went ahead with it to appease the midwife. I was told several times that I wouldn't be required to have any more scans. Cut to 34 weeks after a completely low risk, healthy pregnancy and the midwife suddenly demanded I have another 'third trimester growth scan'. My fundal height was measuring perfectly and I knew it was completely unnecessary so I attempted to decline. I was told by both my main private midwife and the second midwife that if I kept declining I was endangering my baby's life, that I was being irresponsible and they wouldn't be able to support my homebirth. They said repeatedly "you have to have this scan or we can't support you and you don't want to end up birthing at home alone as that's the worst thing that could happen, you could both die". They told me it was routine policy and I couldn't decline.

Despite their fear mongering, their coercion and their pressuring I did decline and ended up severing my care with them. This caused me much distress and was a truly traumatic time. At 37 weeks pregnant I felt vulnerable and had wanted to feel relaxed and excited about my birth and there I was with no midwifery care at all. My husband and I were confident to birth alone at home but I had wanted the support that experienced females could provide me.

I ended up finding a new private midwife to support me from 39 weeks who was completely supportive of my wishes. She told me it wasn't policy of any kind to have a routine third trimester scan and that that kind of treatment was extremely out of line.

I ended up birthing at 42 weeks and 2 days gestation in a waterbirth at home. My baby was 4.7kg and completely healthy as was I. I have no doubt had I birthed in hospital I would have been subjected to repeat scans, been flagged for a potential 'big baby', would have been pressured for an induction from 39 weeks and certainly would not have been supported to go into spontaneous labour after 42 weeks. I also had close to 2 hours of 'pushing time' which would have gone completely against hospital policy and I no doubt would have been pressured into an episiotomy plus an instrumental birth for taking 'too long' to birth.

I have 3 friends who were coerced into inductions by 40 weeks that all ended in an 'emergency caesarean' and 1 who had an unwanted episiotomy that they verbally didn't consent to.