

Submission
No 163

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

I birthed my first baby in a NSW public hospital in 2019. During my labour I feel I was spoken to by both midwives and doctors in a way that made me fear for my baby's wellbeing, and coached me towards a consent answer. E.g. something to the effect of "we believe your baby could be in distress so we suggest this little scalp monitor on her head, okay?". It was also implied that internal checks were just part of labour. Whilst I think I was asked for consent and agreed, I did so out of perceived necessity and I didn't know I had the choice to say no to these.

I was very anti-c-section, so when things weren't going 'well' I was taken to theatre to deliver my baby vaginally with instrumental assistance with the doctor stating "we'll give it 20minutes and if we can't get her out, it will have to be a caesarean section". Being bluntly told the limits placed on me and what they were going to do to me was terrifying and dehumanising.

My baby was born after the use of vacuum, episiotomy and forceps. I sustained a 3b tear.

Unfortunately she needed resuscitation and was whisked away to special care while I remained in theatre to have my 3b tear repaired and was then moved to recovery for what felt like an excruciatingly long time. Even though it occurred after my actual action of birth, this is the most traumatic part for me. I was left with no updates about my baby and there was no sense of urgency from any of my care providers to reunite me with my newborn baby. My first update actually came from the patient transfer assistant who had helped take her down to special care and came back through for another job and let me know he heard her cry and she was okay.

I was finally taken to special care nursery for a quick cuddle and then taken back to my room where I stayed bed-bound for approx. 10hrs and only had one beautiful midwife bring her to me about 4hrs into this time to see if she would latch. Again, there was no urgency to get me reunited with my baby. I had to get my catheter out, pain medication and helped to get up before I could make my own visits to the special care nursery. For the rest of my stay my pain relief was sporadically missed and I would have to chase up and request pain relief. I was also made to feel like a hassle for asking for stronger pain medication even though I had a significant tear and was walking long distances from my room to the special care nursery.

This submission has been really difficult for me to write, however I understand that it takes people like me sharing my story for things to change. And change is essential.