

Submission  
No 166

## INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

**Name:** Name suppressed

**Date Received:** 1 August 2023

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Partially  
Confidential

I completed a three-year full time diploma course in the UK and qualified as a midwife in 1999. After arriving in Australia in 2002, I registered to work as a doula. I have accompanied many birthing mothers to various hospitals.

This submission relates to a birth at the Birthing Centre which I attended with my client in 2013 as her doula. My client (Lorna - not her real name) wishes to remain anonymous and has given me permission to share her experience, using her own words which I paraphrased here. The birth trauma at Lorna's birth is not an isolated incident.

Lorna was prepared and looking forward to having an undisturbed natural birth. Instead, Lorna's traumatising birth experience started shortly after being admitted to the birth centre where she laboured in the bath, which was helping her to cope with her labour pain. Two midwives bullied her and said that she had to get out of the bath for a Vaginal Examination (VE) and that if she didn't, that they would refuse her care. This was the start of the inappropriate, disrespectful and abusive treatment Lorna received throughout labour and during birth. As it was approaching the end of the midwives' shift, with no explanation other than being told she was taking too long, Lorna was transferred to Labour Ward. The disrespect and abuse continued with an impatient obstetrician that sped up her labour with a drip telling her that if she did not have her baby NOW, that she would have a dead or brain damaged baby. Lorna was made to push her baby out resulting in a 4-degree tear. Lorna was taken to theatre to be stitched. Separated from her from her baby, Lorna had a hard time bonding.

Other factors contributing to my client's birth trauma included:

- Lack of choice, continuity and control. During my training as a midwife, I was taught that the essential 3 c's are the cornerstone of good obstetric care.
- There was no trauma-informed care – in fact, quite the opposite. My client was told by the specialist who was there to monitor her tear that no one recovers from 4th degree tear and that she will become incontinent.

Lorna was in excruciating pain and described her stay in the hospital like a torture chamber. She was broken mentally and physically.

My client describes the birth and the treatment she received as an ordeal. When she complained to the hospital, an officer came round to listen to her birth trauma she remembers crying (actually howling) and narrating her whole experience. Lorna recalls the officer stood there stone cold watching her as if she was a toddler throwing a tantrum and that the lack of empathy was appalling.