

**Submission
No 185**

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

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Birth trauma

Every mother in my local mums group believes that the birth of their first child was traumatic in some way. That's 100% of approximately 20 women, who all gave birth at the same hospital.

My first birth was quite traumatic and I had a year of counselling in attempt to work through it. Fear based tactics were used that resulted in me choosing to be induced, followed by a cascade of interventions and resulting in an emergency cesarean section.

My son was measuring "big" (he weighed 4.1kg at birth) and I was told the best way to prevent a cesarean section (which I desperately wanted to avoid) was to be induced. I had an epidural(which I'd also wanted to avoid) at 3cm dilation and then lay on the hospital bed for hours. I was told I couldn't get on my knees on the bed. I was told I was 10cms and to push with my legs in stirrups, and later found out that I was only 9 according to the reports. I was told the baby was in distress even though a test done by the dr on the shift before showed he wasn't. I was told I could have three pushes with the vacuum in theatre and that was my last chance. I was told the drapes would be dropped so I could see my child being born, they weren't and I wasn't told why. I was eventually handed a baby so wrapped up that I could only see his eyes, nose and mouth. I felt nothing towards this child that I couldn't see or feel.

I was told things that weren't true, or best practice. I was given advice that wasn't backed up by recent research. I was made to feel that I had no control. I felt robbed of the birth of my child.

For the birth of my second child I researched even more than I had for my first. Now rather than knowing what I wanted to avoid I understood why and had the research base to back me up.

I had a beautiful birth for my second child. I laboured at home with only a labour tens machine until my waters broke. Not long after arriving at hospital I started to push and gave birth to a healthy baby on my own terms. However, I don't appreciate the way that my daughter's cord was clamped without my consent. I asked multiple times for the midwife not to clamp it, but as my daughter wasn't crying straight away she ignored me. My daughter did start crying of her own accord seconds later and was left on my chest where she belonged, but she missed out on the vital nutrients from the placenta for no good reason.

One thing I kept asking myself during my research was why. Why did I have to do research to be able to have a normal vagina birth in a hospital? Why did I have to defend my right to make my own choices? Why do I have to pay for a private midwife or doula if I want the support of someone who will use best practice, researched techniques! Why are we having to pay to

learn how to breathe through contractions, and what positions are the best for birth? I still cannot understand why the hospitals are not giving the tools and support needed for a natural physiological birth.