

Submission
No 186

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

Good afternoon. My name is .

My birth trauma story is not exclusive to nsw. However for the point of this submission. I will specify my two nsw births under the public system in the hospital in where I lived

My second birth story was in a lot of ways very healing and I have a healthy beautiful nearly ten year old. When I fell pregnant in 2012, I had been very unwell with vomiting non stop. My gp forgot to send in my birth registration details. And I became too sick to work regular hours. I was immediately discouraged to worry. And I became too unwell to speak up. I had never heard of Hyperemesis gravidarum. But this was my second birth (first in nsw) and still my pregnancy was dismissed as me needing to just test more.

I had a supportive husband. And he encouraged me to seek more help when I began to not take water. It seems silly now. Finally at 21 weeks a emergency nurse mentioned after being told to just go home that I might need medication. Which they didn't offer me at the hospital. I asked for medication and I couldn't afford ondansetron being a low income worker and having to reduce my work load for pregnancy.

Then I took maxxilon which somewhat helped me manage eating once a day and keeping some fluids down. At no point was there any weight checks or standardised testing for my severe morning sickness, I vomited without fail 5 times a day. I opted for seeing the drs as I was told that my last birth was too large at 4kgs and put the MGP program off my list of possible birth care.

I saw a different midwife every fortnight and I continued to go down hill. But didn't know any different as my last birth was similar in health and fatigue/ vomiting.

My hospital dr was exceptional. And he helped me feel at ease to north my next large baby. But when it came to the actual birth despite labouring for a few days and having a stretch and sweep breaking my waters I was not monitored for birth size. While in labour it became their choice immediately after they broke my waters to lay me on my back against what I wanted. And to give me two episiotomy's which I agreed to because they told me I had no options. Baby was not in distress and I was progressing to 9cms nearly. They then stitched me up despite me asking for options. And they did this for far too long. And I was refused knowledge of how much blood I lost. And they stitched me what I now no is too many stitches. I have scarring I didn't know how to take care of and I wasn't given any pelvic floor information after this birth- just a general sheet on pelvic floor muscles and actions which I didn't have time to ever go over to understand as a young new mother. I was already severely anemic despite trying to always take a daily vitamin C and iron supplement. My baby without medication was birthed that same day at 4.25kg (and I only weighed 65kgs at full term 40wks. I was tired severely and often couldn't sleep or rest well in the year after my second, because I was still iron deficient and had no visits from the midwives as they got too busy and forgot to schedule me. Rang and told me to visit a health clinic but I had pain sitting for any amount of time from the stitches and I also uncommonly(but didn't realise at the time) I bled for 16 weeks after birth. But there was nobody to ask about this. And my health clinic when I finally went was so full they told me not to come as I wasn't a first time mother and I had no immediate concerns over the phone when I rang to book a health check.

My gp said the words "eww" to me when I told her I was still bleeding and couldn't have a post birth health check six/ eight weeks after my baby. And so I never went back.

Every step of the way they manipulated my choices by making sure they told me it was decided rather than will you agree. I had no options for any early birth and they didn't give me any regular size checks despite me asking for these. I was told I could manage to pay outside of hospital care. I could not have. They made assumptions and I felt embarrassed and belittled about needing extra help I couldn't afford and didn't know what to ask for.

For me I felt brave this birth. And I tried to just be thankful. But I've had three more births and have a better understanding now. I was made to feel powerless. And I suffered what I didn't know was postpartum trauma and depression until I felt differently with my third baby and was given options that worked for me and my baby. I also suffered silently (despite asking so many questions at every appointment and wanting more care around my vomiting) and my teeth have been affected greatly by the lack of oral care after vomiting through all my pregnancies. This area needs change. I have been since to see now that I live in qld a public hospital pelvic floor physio and she has shown me why I experienced so many issues. A lot to do with stitches and not being properly accessed after birth. I have still a long way to go but by gods grace the second north which was so painful to heal from and left me ashamed took five years to fall pregnant again so by then I had some new birth advocacy and felt I could do a birth again. And I did. Every time I faced the very same issues I spoke up. And fought for my rights to birth a way I wanted. For my last three births I only bleed upto 4 weeks. A significantly less painful and easier no episiotomy. And when I mildly tore- I asked for my right to not be stitched. And then my right to a iron infusion for my last birth so that I could recover from my anaemia and blood loss, eventually after five babies they decided I could use a bit of iron. And I went home last birth(last year) with a lot more energy and I felt safer standing and walking and recovering. Often times with my second that I had so much issue with- I became too tired yo even eat or safely sleep with my baby sometimes needing my hubby home to lift him because I was so weak.