

Submission
No 259

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 15 August 2023

Partially
Confidential

Birthered by freebirth, not by choice.

Dropped from birth care model so late in pregnancy that I could not adequately and emotionally/mentally adjust and get good, trusted care.

Birth led to fatal situation upon my child.

Baby rushed to hospital by ambulance

Baby was on life support at

Baby is now deceased.

Date of birth: September 2022.

I gave birth to my last child in September 2022, at 43 years of age. I was under the care of Midwives and Hospital. I carried my daughter to full-term and delivered her at home. All scans and ante-natal check-ups showed that she was a growing, healthy, active baby inside my womb. My beautiful daughter is no longer here!

I believe the inadequate care provided to us and the trauma surrounding our care contributed to my daughter dying.

I have three other living children who were all born naturally overseas. I had comfortable and beautiful homebirth experiences. All births were supported by midwives without any drugs or medical interference necessary. Not as much as a stitch was required.

The support I received from Midwives and Hospital was traumatic and was focused more on what is right for them instead of me and my baby.

Referred by my GP to Midwives as I requested midwifery led birth support. I was also referred to as my doctor wanted the hospital to manage my thyroid condition during the pregnancy.

Hospital spoke in very alarming language. They referenced my age continuously and made me feel alarmed, disrespected, stressed and fearful. I commented several times that I had never felt old until this moment. They continuously spoke about me being high risk due to my thyroid/ auto immune condition. Throughout every pregnancy and birth, I have had this condition and I was supported with regular testing and medication adjustments but was never spoken to in this alarming manner. It was used to try and coerce me into taking actions that I expressed I was not comfortable with and did not wish to do.

I was made to take additional tests and even though these showed I was low risk, I was still told I was high risk due to my age. I was never spoken to in such an alarming way or threatened during my care birthing in two other countries. (UK & NZ)

I had two ultrasound scans prior to my appointments with _____, at approx. 12 and 24 weeks, including the morphology scan. After this, during my antenatal appointment at _____ (as I needed their referral to _____ to qualify for home birth care) they coerced me into another scan to identify chromosomal abnormalities and Down's Syndrome. I was also told they wanted me to have weekly scans after 26 weeks due to being a high risk. I explained I did not want to do this. I had to speak to several different midwives and a doctor during this appointment to answer all the same questions and give all the same feedback. It felt like a coercion strategy using someone else to tell me the same thing and trying to scare me and force me into doing everything they wanted. On arrival, I completed a form providing all my information. Then I was made to repeat this as MW entered this manually into the system, then go through with another midwife then doctor.

I gave in and agreed to have the extra ultrasound. I was much longer than any other ultrasound I've had and far more painful. I was not warned it would be. The lady was very rough putting on a lot of pressure and digging around hard at different angles. The manner of the woman providing the scan was not good. The woman pressed very hard, for longer and more painfully than any other US scan I've ever had. I felt very anxious in a hospital environment, was struggling to breathe under a mask for the hours I was there, and did not feel supported. The resulting scans showed that this number/ risk was low and I was referred officially to _____ midwives.

I had several call from _____ stating that they want me to come in for another antenatal appointment. I was reluctant after my previous encounters, but also as I've an auto immune condition and the hospital was full of people suffering from Covid, influence A and B and I only recently recovered from sickness. After another call I was told that they wanted me to take Glucose tests. I declined and explained that I would buy the kit and regularly test and monitor my glucose results. I was threatened several times that if I didn't do as they say they could prevent me from having a homebirth by removing care from _____ midwives. My results were always in the normal range. I continued to monitor and neither the hospital or midwives asked about any of my results. Therefore I didn't believe they really cared, rather just wanted me to do as they say to tick there boxes.

Each time I met with the _____ Midwifery team I was supported by a different midwife, there was no continuity of care and I was told contradicting messages.

My personal circumstances changed and I needed to move to temporary accommodation. This was less than 30mins away from our previous address, but I was told that they would not attend our birth at this address. I arranged a homebirth appointment another home in _____. When asked where we would birth we mentioned that we were considering the option to birth at my friends home or Airbnb in the city, so to be within range, I specifically asked if they need an address now, and did that matter. I was told no. If it's in the city in areas that they cover that they would come out to me. The MW was lovely. I explained my

interactions with [redacted] and the threats on phone and in person about not allowing me to have a supported homebirth if I didn't do what I was asked by them. The midwife stated that's because I had not done everything I was told and was a red flag. I had obviously been black marked before this point. She was lovely and said we could escalate in [redacted] if we received any more threats.

Our temporary address was approx. 25 mins away from our previous address, where we would have been supported to birth from home.

I had a call from another [redacted] Midwife (two previous midwives I had seen were on leave). They requested that my next antenatal appointment at 36 weeks would be attended in person at their birth centre. I agreed to this. On arrival, we were immediately told me they will no longer support our home birth. The reason given was that they must complete a home inspection and deliver oxygen prior to 36 weeks gestation. I was told there was no time to arrange that now. After examining, my blood pressure was slightly higher than normal. The midwife stated that its to be expected as she knew the news they delivered would have caused me stress. It was a bombshell. I had never delivered a baby in hospital and

They had planned the whole discussion. They had the supervisor waiting to talk to us. She was introduced to us as soon as we arrived, delivered the news and then walked away. We stood there at the end of the conversation and were told no point to talk further to as it won't change anything.

At approximately 34 weeks I was told they would no longer support my homebirth

After this bombshell I started to try and find my own private midwife. I tried many different organisations but it was too late in the day and all were booked. I thought I had found an independent midwife but was then told she couldn't help as couldn't find a 2nd to support her.

I knew other retired midwives. One of whom came straight after the birth. They were not allowed to support during my birth.

After refusing to support my homebirth. I was left with the fact that the system preferred me to birth alone than to birth with one midwife or a retired midwife!!! This must be the most upsetting and restrictive rule invented. The system would rather a women birth desperately alone and be at risk than have less risk and be supported by a professionally trained individual.

Once birth was completed and baby was in serious life of death care:

In care support at the hospital was also very traumatic. We received minimal support from the care workers despite saying that I was experiencing severe trauma and unable to think straight. I was also pushed into making significant decisions that I was not equipped to make due to my mental state.

I felt bullied and harassed my teams of doctors to make rushed and uninformed decisions that I was not adequate to make.

Lack of sleep

Left in the birthing ward listening to other people have their children.

In Neonatal staff were laughing and joking with other mothers whose baby was awake and breastfeeding. My agony and grief was through the roof. It felt extremely insensitive to have no provisions for a private space for us.

No counselling

Constant interruptions and visitations by groups of doctors and nurses pushing me to make a decision on organ donation and then turning off of life support all within 5 days of being at the hospital.

Knew we had no support from family or friends as were overseas and loved to area shortly before lockdowns.

Made to make decisions quickly. Within 7 days. Daily reports bad news, rushed to make decision about life support organ donations but NO psych support offered. I said I needed support and requested phys. No one on duty that day. I believe I had a brief visit by a couple the next day. Who asked a few questions. No support provided through hospital and need to seek after.

I was not of sound mind. I told them I was not able to Understand and process information. I was still rushed to make a decision to turn off life support.

I believe the language used was to lead up into Decision to turn off by stating that.

- she may pass anytime and at a time without her family with her.

I'm confused as

-told she would never leave the hospital

- that some parents have not turned off machine and slowly the baby gained weight and organs eventually fail one by one and implied suffering

- implied that less suffering. That no way to know if she's in pain right then that she could be suffering.

-in my right mind this is not a Dickson I would ever make. I am a believer and do not support abortion of life under any circumstances.

I was told she'd never taken a breathe on her own without machines then after decisions discussions about organ donation was told she did. I had a funny turn and near passed out and was blanking.

Fear of hospitals - I birthed at home due to a massive fear of the hospital and its systems

Knew statistics of interference and things going wrong in NSW which terrified me more in trusting hospital with my care.

Requested record and were not received