

Submission  
No 302

## INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

**Name:** Name suppressed

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Partially  
Confidential

I have been blessed enough to have three very different birth experiences

My first was born in 2017, and throughout my pregnancy we were diagnosed with a significant heart defect. I felt the hospital staff communicated well with us, and for the most part respected our decisions to continue with the pregnancy. However, at many appointments it was brought up about how we had decided to skip the 12 week testing and often felt judged for having skipped this, despite the fact we would be keeping our baby regardless of the results. I would have felt better had we not been repetitively questioned on why we had decided to skip this test. I was classified high risk and had to relocate to a tertiary hospital for birth, and was given a continuity midwife for antenatal (not birth). This was helpful in providing me a contact person in a whole new city when navigating the antenatal appointments. I would have loved the option of also being provided continuity throughout labour and post partum. I was offered an induction due to my relocating away from home, but declined and was not pressured into it. I was given an induction date at 41 weeks however was lucky to not need it.

Birth was a classic first birth, long labour with augmentation,. I felt like the midwife only ever came to offer me pain relief even after I had declined it. I had wished she had offered other support like movement or massage or pressure points, but she only offered pain relief. I felt defeated for having the augmentation, and he ended up being a ventouse with an episiotomy. I don't remember that being overly traumatic, but sad that I felt my body had failed me. There was no birth debrief, and my baby was taken to the nicu. But being a first time mum I didn't know what I could ask for or decline.

My second birth I was determined to have continuity of care after educating myself so much more after my first birth. Unfortunately after a mix up with my GP refer all I missed out on group practice and ended up in a smaller team of midwives at the birth centre. Still a wonderful experience, and even though I didn't know my midwife at birth, all my requests were listened to and respected. No pressure for induction even though I got to 41 weeks. The culture in the birth centre team of midwives was so encouraging of physiological birth I never once felt pressured into anything I didn't want. We did make a post dates check up at the hospital if I had gotten over 41 as per "policy" but I didn't feel I would need this anyway (and was ready to happily decline this if needed).

After birth I had a PPH and felt my a lot of my positive experience was overtaken by the early post partum. There was lots of chaos and concern, really painful fundal rubs and medications given, VE to find bleeding. In all honesty I felt fine and a little bit like they'd overreacted. Perhaps they were right, and I'm thankful for the care, but I know haemorrhages and blood loss is not correctly estimated a lot of the time, and perhaps a slower approach to my care (one intervention at a time instead of all at once) could have improved both my physical outcomes and my birth experience.

My third was a planned homebirth through the public homebirth group practice. I can not fault them one bit. Every appointment felt individualised. My midwife came to my home (helpful since

I had two kids at home already), she became part of our family. No unnecessary interventions or screening tests were recommended, everything was individualised. Due to my previous PPH, we discussed an active third stage which I was happy to have because my personal situation was taken into account and we discussed the risks vs benefits together. No decision was made for me, but all in consultation with me taking into account my individual needs. Birth was beautiful, a calm water birth in my lounge room surrounded by my family and the midwives. No stressful car ride, no uncomfortable transition interrupting my labour. But a wonderful homebirth to bring my baby into his family. I feel so insanely blessed to have access to a publicly funded homebirth group in my area and be low risk enough to utilise it, as I know this is not the case for the majority of women. Group practice, both birth centre/hospital birth and homebirth should be publicly available to all women.