

Submission
No 306

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

I am writing because I feel it is important to acknowledge the trauma that women experience during birth. I have 2 children (5 and 2 years) of which the births were very different.

With my first I was under the care of a doctor who missed a few routine tests and didn't inform me I could go with a midwife. My first was only 4 days overdue when I went to hospital) because she wasn't moving as much. I was informed she was fine but just had less room to move. The doctor said they were very quiet at that moment and pushed for an induction. There was no medical reason for it but as she was a doctor I trusted her.

Because I was induced I was heavily monitored. When it came to the final stages of Labor I was told not to push because I had not been labouring very long and it was my first. I was made to doubt my own body and ability to birth without help. It was only after my insistence that I needed the toilet that they checked and discovered the baby was on its way. Because they wanted to continue to monitor the heartbeat I was forced to lay down (which I didn't want to do). Resulting in a lot of tearing. After the cord was cut a midwife came and jabbed with a needle saying it was to birth the placenta. It wasn't a discussion or question. It was just done. Then a man and woman walked into the room and headed straight for my virgina. They didn't introduce themselves they just started talking to each other about how bad the tearing was. The midwife informed me it was a doctor. I assume the other person was a trainee. After he painfully stitched me up he said (the only thing he said to me at all) that my virgina will never look the same again and I may have lost all feeling in my cliterous. Then he left.

As a result of being induced my milk supply was delayed by a few weeks which was also a very stressful time for me. I was left too scared to be intimate with my partner for over 4 months for fear of the doctor being right. I struggled with depression and I still feel traumatised over my first birth experience.

My second birth (NSW) was very different. This time I was under the care of the midwifery practice and I had a very supportive midwife who empowered me to make my own choices. My second child was 2 weeks late but was delivered without the need for induction. The midwife's were hands off during the birth and gave me space and the reassurance to trust my own body. They gave me the option to have an injection for the placenta or to birth it naturally. Of which I did naturally. Although I always remained open to medical interventions if they were necessary I never felt pressured into anything. They were viewed as a last resort instead of a convenience for medical professions to manage their workload.

It was a very empowering and healing experience.