

Submission  
No 376

## INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

**Name:** Name suppressed

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Partially  
Confidential

In the early hours of Tuesday 3rd May 2016 I gave birth to our son at [REDACTED] Sydney. I suffered a traumatic birth and subsequent PTSD. On the advice of our obstetrician, we took this up with the hospital at the time and they offered counseling which consisted of 1 phone call and 1 text message. Very little aftercare or support was given.

The early hours of 3rd May 2016 saw me having a drug free VBAC after being left for 5 and a half hours completely alone with no medical staff or family or friends to support me - with just a couple of extremely brief visits to the room by my assigned midwife for less than a minute at a time saying 'I'll be back to examine you', despite me being a high risk VBAC. A traumatic, frenzied, drug free VBAC after hours of being alone in pain, was not my birth plan after signing a waiver given to me by the hospital - who subsequently had a duty of care. I wanted a VBAC and was keen to have an epidural so I could (hopefully) have a relatively calm vaginal birth for my third and final baby, similar to the experience that I had with my first baby in 2011. I realise nothing is guaranteed except you'd like to believe the duty of care by [REDACTED] Private hospital as per their waiver document. This level of care was not given.

Fast forward to the delivery. Sadly, I was found at approximately 1.30am on 3 May, writhing in pain on the floor of the darkened delivery suite unable to find the call button due to all the lights being switched off by the midwife - with only a tiny spotlight to see by. I'd been in there since 9.30am on 2 May when my waters were broken by a midwife. I hadn't been checked by a midwife since the afternoon of 2nd May, with a substitute obstetrician doing a sweep at approximately 7.30pm that night. At the time of the sweep I had no friends or family with me and then remained alone until approximately 1.30am.

Prior to midnight I'd been told to take Panadol and 'try to sleep' by the 3rd midwife assigned to me over the course of that day. She came on her shift at 9pm at which time I told her my contractions were 6 minutes apart. Despite this, she did not examine me at all before I was found on the ground in pain around 1.30am. Let's remember, I was in a private hospital in [REDACTED] Sydney that seemed more like a small public hospital in the outback of Australia based on the lack of care given to me from 9pm up until the birth of our son in the early hours of the morning.

At around 1.30am, a midwife, who I was later told was the head of the Ward, found me doubled over on the floor in pain and asked when I'd last been checked. On finding out it was 7.30pm she called out the door to my assigned midwife saying she needed to check me immediately. I was 8.5cms dilated but had received no examination since the sweep at 7.30pm and no pain relief at all, except for panadol that I'd brought from home. The head midwife said it was too late to get an epidural and I was finally offered pain relief being the gas.

My assigned midwife had been saying for more than 2 hours and on several occasions that she'd be back to examine me, but she was always busy with a supposed epidural or something

else that must have seemed more important / urgent than a high risk VBAC. I can only imagine it was either very busy at the time, or I was lower on the priority list due to being a third time Mum. As I told her the pain was getting more intense very late in the evening and reminding her that I wanted my husband there (he'd left at 7pm as was told by another midwife to go home to sleep) telling my assigned midwife at the time that i also needed to get the babysitter to our home before my husband could leave for the hospital, she still didn't feel the need to prioritise examining me then and there so I knew if I should call my husband. In a private hospital you expect a certain level / duty of care and this was totally lacking. Had she examined me when she was mentioning it and before I was writhing in pain, I could have had an epidural, had my husband by my side during labour, rather than a mere couple of minutes before the birth (where he almost fainted from the experience), and had the birth experience I'd hoped for.

I know that the end goal is to deliver a healthy baby and that happened and I'm truly grateful for that. I feel very lucky and very blessed to have a beautiful baby boy. However for a very long time i couldn't stop replaying the traumatic birth experience in my head. I feel it could have been so different if I had been checked even just once between 7.30pm when the obstetrician performed a sweep and when I was finally checked for the first time by a midwife at around 1.30/45am after writhing on the delivery suite floor in pain.

I Spent 19 hours in the delivery suite leading up to the traumatic birth of my son at 2.28am on 3rd May. The delivery notes given to my obstetrician said I went into labour and gave birth 38 minutes later. I believe this was an attempt at cover up the failings of the hospital staff.