

Submission  
No 383

## INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

**Name:** Name suppressed

**Date Received:** 14 August 2023

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Partially  
Confidential

I have now given birth twice.

In November 2019 I gave birth to my son on the [REDACTED] QLD. This birth was a traumatic experience- a very long labour which resulted in a vacuum assisted delivery, significant tear and a pelvic organ prolapse. Though my care team treated me with respect throughout my delivery, my experience of aftercare was not the same. At my 6 week review my Obstetrician ridiculed my descriptions of incontinence and what I now know to be prolapse symptoms stating “what did I expect? Of course your vagina is going to feel different after giving birth.” There was no attempt to discuss the birth, offer of a birth debrief or support to access perinatal mental health services when it was clear I was suffering from both PTSD and postnatal depression. My physical and mental state impacted how I was able to care for and bond with my baby. It placed significant stress on my husband and extended family, who were so concerned for my welfare they were providing around the clock care to me. Given that I am an Allied Health Professional myself, I was aware of the services I needed to access and independently sought private mental health support and the services of a women’s health physiotherapist who supported me through my rehabilitation and pessary prescription.

In July 2023 I gave birth in [REDACTED], NSW. During the pregnancy I was diagnosed with Gestational Diabetes and later as GBS positive. At the time, I gave informed consent to the Glucose Tolerance Test but not to the GBS testing given that it was simply stated to be a routine test. I was completely unaware of how the potential results would impact my impending birth and this was not explained to me prior. Subsequently my Obstetrician stated I would need to be induced at 39 weeks (despite my GD being very well managed on diet alone) and be given antibiotics every 4 hours during labour. This was a significant departure from my previously expressed wishes regarding my birth. At no time was the evidence of risks and benefits of both interventions provided to my husband and I so that we could make an informed decision. It wasn’t until we arranged a meeting with the Obstetrician to discuss our concerns and requested all the information that it was begrudgingly provided. My Obstetrician then stated she would “allow” me to continue my pregnancy until 40 weeks, with little regard to the healthcare decisions my husband and I were entitled to make for ourselves. As a health professional myself, I value medical knowledge and experience, understand birth plans need to be flexible and am not opposed to interventions when they are required for the safety of mother and baby. However, this care experience meant that my pregnancy was an extremely stressful experience. The trust I felt in my care provider was shattered and I spent significant time and financial resources seeking additional information and medical support.

Pregnancy should be a joyful and exciting time for women and their families, however on two separate occasions I have experienced unethical and disrespectful care at the hands of the Obstetric community. I feel very fortunate that I have the confidence, knowledge and financial means to advocate for myself and my family, however it is my concern that not all women do and therefore miss out on the care they deserve. If I could recommend anything to prevent birth trauma and improve care it would be that respectful, evidence- based, trauma informed, and holistic care should be the standard afforded to every woman giving birth.