

Submission  
No 399

## INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

**Name:** Name suppressed

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Partially  
Confidential

My name is \_\_\_\_\_, I'm 34 years old and sadly a victim of obstetric violence and birth trauma.

In July 2020 I gave birth to my first child. I had a relatively smooth pregnancy and I was happy and confident in my birth intentions. I had excellent continuity of care through the midwifery group practice program at \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_ NSW.

Two days before my estimated due date I presented to \_\_\_\_\_ with some concerns regarding blood pressure. I also had trace amounts of protein in my urine. Not extremely high but enough to get an assessment.

With my partner and my midwife we met with one of the Obstetricians who did a scan on our baby and said he would like to book me in to start the induction process the next day. At the time I was concerned but did not feel the urgency to be induced. I wish I had been given some other options but at the time I was left with little choice but to book in. His words exactly were "If we don't do this tomorrow our next day will be Thursday and who knows what will happen between now and then." It was Sunday at the time and I felt immense pressure to agree and sign the forms.

The following afternoon my partner and I went to the hospital to begin the induction process. I was taken to the labour ward where I waited to be inserted with a double foley catheter.

Before this took place the obstetrician gave me an extremely aggressive stretch and sweep which left me bleeding and in excruciating pain. I was offered gas as they inserted the double foley and then sent back to the maternity ward in tears. Later that evening I started to get regular contractions which I notified the midwives about. They told me it was just the balloon doing its thing and I just need to rest. My partner was unable to stay with me overnight so he went home. At 9pm that evening the balloon fell out in the toilet and I asked the midwives if everything was okay and they said that was normal and I had nothing to worry about. Not long after I experienced my bloody show and my contractions started to get more painful. I asked the midwives if I was allowed to have my partner back with me and they said no as it was night time.

They gave me pain relief and a sleeping tablet and told me to sleep it off.

I barely slept and continued to labour throughout the evening mostly in tears.

The next morning my partner arrived back early and we were moved to the labour ward. After a very painful attempt which failed to break my waters my waters they attempted again and were broken by another obstetrician.

I told them I felt like I was going to labour quickly which they laughed about and was told "first labours are never quick." I really wanted to labour without Syntocinon for as long as possible. This wish was denied and they started the drip. This limited my ability to move about the room and labour actively like I wanted to. They were then unable to get an accurate trace of the babies heart beat with a normal monitor so they told me they wanted to put a clip on the babies head. If i'd known now what these clips were I would have declined. This further restricted my ability to move or get into the bath which I also wanted to do.

The drip was turned up and I was left to labour hunched over a swiss ball. The pain was intense and I begged them to let me do it on my own which is apparently not an option once you sign induction paperwork.

Back to back contractions with no rest break was traumatic. It was also extremely distressing on my partner who is still dealing with many emotions about how our first birth went.

They kept getting the anesthetist back who offered different pain options. I decided I wanted to keep using the gas until it all become too much. An epidural was called and they came to start the process. By this point I was still having back to back contractions and was told to stay still through these while they inserted the needle into my back. At the same time I felt the urge to push and told them to stop the process. I felt ready but was told that I was only 6-7cm dilated and not ready to push. The urge became more intense but I was made to sit still on the bed while they continued with the epidural.

When the needle was inserted I was rolled on my back and they realised I was in fact 10cm dilated and my urge to push was right.

Now I was forced to push on my back which was not the greatest position for either myself or bub at the time.

The midwife on duty at the time went quiet and began to leave the room and call people. My partner and I were both confused as people started to enter the room and a lot more people became involved. I was told that our baby was in distress and needed to come out quickly otherwise I would need to have an emergency c-section. There was very little communication about what was going on and why things had escalated so quickly. One of the obstetricians started telling people to prep for theatre, call the resuscitation team and other midwives were called. Before I knew it in my most vulnerable state I was surrounded by people I'd never met before staring at me while I lay on the bed naked, shocked and confused.

The next 20 minutes were the most traumatic I have ever experienced as I was told to push while I had a mans hands inside me trying to turn my baby. He repeatedly screamed at me to "Get Angry With Him" while I was pushing, I was then told they were going to "cut me" to help the baby out. I never consented to an episiotomy and still have numbness where my scar is 3 years later. Another obstetrician then used a ventouse to vacuum our baby out. This was pulled with such force she had her foot on the bed and it came off and she fell back on the floor.

I also never had the epidural drip hooked up after the needle was inserted so I had a giant needle in my back for no reason but was unable to birth in a position I felt comfortable in.

When our baby arrived I was in complete shock. I didn't get the delayed cord clamping that I wanted and my golden hour with our new son was rudely interrupted multiple people.

One of the most traumatic things about my birth is that I had so many questions that were never answered. I was left feeling like a failure and extremely degraded surrounded by a room full of strangers. I spent the first night with my new baby screaming constantly because he was in so much pain from his traumatic delivery and the bruising on his face and head. He still has a scar on his skull from where the monitoring clip was screwed into his scalp.

When I left the hospital I did not have that cloud nine new mother feeling. I was left shaken and after two nights of conflicting breastfeeding information I went home with no idea what I was doing and was already on the path to severe nipple damage.

My milk did not come in till day 5 after our son arrived and I didn't even feel comfortable giving him his first bath because I was so afraid to hurt him after all he had been through.

I often look back on my birth experience and wish I'd been better informed and was better prepared to advocate for myself. I also believe that continuity of care is the most important thing a woman can receive during her pregnancy and birth. I unfortunately was unable to have my amazing midwife with me at the birth of my son and she knew exactly what I wanted in my birth experience and I know if she had been able to be there things would have been very different. I still to this day will never be able to not get the image of the obstetrician out of my head as he screamed at me with his hands inside me.

My second pregnancy I was bullied by many doctors who told me I was going to have a big baby because I had gestational diabetes. I was recommended to be induced at 38 weeks to avoid any complications due to gestational size. I was brave enough to advocate for myself with the help of my midwife who always informed me of my choices and my rights. I had my dream intervention free birth at 40+3 with just my midwife from group practice and a student midwife and partner in the room. My baby was a normal size 3.61kg and his sugars were completely fine. There was never any complications. I refused to be seen by an obstetrician and never received fetal monitoring or cervical examinations.

I am now heading into my third pregnancy and have chosen a private midwife and to birth at home a choice I would have made in my first birth it was an available service to me at the time. This is an option which I believe needs to be available to all women especially those who have experienced birth trauma within the system. Birth should not be traumatic and intervention has sadly become the norm.

As a member of the [REDACTED] community and now a huge advocate for birth rights I believe the Obstetricians we have to choose from in rural areas are too quick to jump to intervention and see it more as a convenience due to staffing ratios at our local hospital.

I am hoping this inquiry leads to change especially in rural and remote areas where many women feel forced into birth intervention due to not only their location but also their choice in care providers. The cascade of intervention that follows far too often ends in trauma and PPD which I experienced with my first born and I never want women to feel the way I felt. If my story can help other women avoid the same trauma I will shout it to the high heavens and back.

Thank you for reading my story.