

Submission
No 333

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

My first birth in 2018 was under model GP shared care, birthing at _____ Hospital. I had no connection to any of the care providers present at the time I laboured and during the birth. There was handover of care multiple times and moments when I felt there were lots of people in the room. This made me feel unsafe. The first traumatic experience was having my waters broken without informed consent of what was going to happen following. I ended up having an unplanned c-section which I feel the level of the emergency was not discussed. I often wonder if the decision was made by the medical staff involved to keep things on a timed schedule. The midwife on at the time, appeared to be inexperienced and had verbalised that she was doing a 6 week rotation into birthing unit. This made me feel distrust and lack of confidence with the care that I was experiencing. I felt disempowered by the limited encouragement of different positions or support to labour naturally. There appeared to be conflict between staff members (nursing and medical) about my patient identification being mixed up. Overhearing this felt very unprofessional. I felt scared. During the c-section I felt as though I wasn't heard and requests (delayed cord clamping, skin to skin) were not honoured. My baby was taken from me for observations and I didn't get to meet her until I was in recovery. Once I was in recovery I had a couple of minutes with her on my chest before she was taken again to special care nursery because she had a temperature. Of course this temperature emulated mine as it should when a baby regulates in kangaroo cuddles. Antibiotics were administered before serology was back to confirm an infection. The doctor who was on at the time was very dismissive of my questions and concerns. I was told "this is not the time to worry about breastfeeding and antibiotics being passed on through breastmilk" and not to worry about bonding and establishing breastfeeding as I was concerned about being separated from my baby. I had no emotional support offered when I was upset at his response. Formula via a bottle was offered without my consent to my baby. I struggled with attachment, postnatal depression and my baby had ongoing failure to thrive following our experience.

My second birthing experience in 2020 was also through _____ hospital with the mgp program. I loved our midwife and the continuity of care. The end of my pregnancy felt rushed and hurried to a time schedule. I felt threatened as my pregnancy went past my due date. I didn't want to have an induction and felt pressured to have an unwanted ultrasound with feedback that I had a big baby which in fact wasn't the case (the norms for 40+ baby are not very accurate). Again lots of people in the room as I laboured and on my back from the moment I entered because medical staff wanted more monitoring. It was during a redevelopment and I had no access to a private toilet or bathroom. No access to water (shower or bath) for pain relief. My waters were broken again to control what was going on as my baby's head was not yet engaged. I was then under the clock. I remember clearly being told 'to be quiet' as I laboured that my noises were off putting to others. I remember lots of internal checks back and forth with several different health professionals, which I wasn't happy about. Again conflict with nursing and medical as it appeared that inexperienced medical staff were not able to access veins for an intravenous line. It was very clinical and not calm at all. A probe was placed on my baby's head a feral scalp monitor which later left a lump and required paediatrician review. The doctor didn't leave much time for things to progress and an unplanned c-section was pushed with the doctor coming in and saying "my boss is not happy that we are not doing anything" again I felt disempowered and was told that my baby's

are too big and that my hips are too little. I felt like I wasn't a capable woman. My baby was taken from me again because she appeared "stunned".

On maternity I had collected colostrum and giving this to my baby was taken away from me as the nurse squirted it all into my babies mouth without reading any cues that perhaps she was doing it a bit fast, baby gagging and most of it spilling out wasted from my baby's mouth.

My third baby girl was born at home. I was so traumatised from my birthing experiences at hospital that I couldn't go back into the facility. I did have a self-initiated debrief session with a clinical nurse educator - a who reviewed files with me and from what she could see in my notes she said that there was a significant wrong doing on several accounts in my history where my plans for birthing naturally were taken away from me. This included breaking waters at times when the baby's decent was not at an appropriate time. I did not appreciate the fact that there was no support person allowed during times of covid to be present for appointments. I birthed my baby with the support of a private midwife and doula in my own home naturally. It was the safest I have ever felt during labour and post birth.