

Submission
No 315

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

I am a 33-year-old mother of two and am writing this submission on my child's 13th birthday. 13 years ago, at a regional hospital I was induced at 42 weeks for post-dates. I went on to have a normal vaginal birth but sustained large guttural & perineal second degree tearing. The Obstetrician on call attended to my suturing in the birthing environment. This Obstetrician performed three rectal examinations on me during the repair without giving or gaining informed consent. Despite my clear objection, he continued, despite multiple occasions of notifying him that the local anaesthetic was not effective in the area he was repairing, he continued. I was not listened to by the Obstetrician or midwife caring for me. I experienced birth trauma as a result of how I was treated that night. This Obstetrician's repair was poorly executed and left me with ongoing sexual dysfunction and incontinence issues. This Obstetrician is no longer allowed to practice, thankfully.

At the time of this birth the only maternity care options available to women in my area was to have antenatal care through a GP or a private obstetrician. You then had whichever Obstetrician was on call who attended your birth if required. My private obstetrician was not the doctor on call that night. However, when I went to see my private obstetrician at 6 weeks postnatally, still sore, stitches undissolved and still bleeding, he said nothing about my unhealed stitches and terrible repair job. Not a single word. I assumed as a young mother that this must just be a normal part of healing postnatally. It was not until I presented in labour with my second child, unable to tolerate vaginal examinations that he told me that the scarring was that bad that if I didn't tear in the same spot this time, I would need to come back in to have it rectified. His response sheepish when I explained that it was indeed him who had told me it was healing well at 6 weeks. Apparently, the fear of whistleblowing on a colleague despite numerous malpractice claims was too great. Thankfully, many years later someone was finally brave enough to stand up for women in our area.

I was not offered appropriate postnatal care – women's health physiotherapy or psychological support after either of my births. This is something I would like to see changed as there is little to no public funded postnatal support available in our area. I would also like to see mandatory trauma informed training for clinicians.

The only way women in this regional area can access a midwifery continuity of care model is through our student midwife programs. We desperately need better options for our women, MGP, birthing on country, birth centres.

I am now a student midwife. I chose to go down this career path to advocate for women. To be the midwife that I needed that night 13 years ago. I have witnessed on multiple occasions during my degree, medical professionals not giving informed consent. I do not believe that women and birthing parents are protected by the law, policies and legislation from birth trauma. It is just not good enough.