

Submission
No 425

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Committee Secretariat

Select Committee on Birth Trauma

NSW Parliament

Macquarie Street

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Re: Inquiry on Birth Trauma

Dear Chair,

I am a NSW resident who recently gave birth in 2021 in regional NSW, and I would like to make a submission to your inquiry on birth trauma.

In February 2021 I delivered my second child via VBAC at [REDACTED] Hospital in [REDACTED]. The birth and recovery has been very traumatic.

My first birth in 2013 involved an emergency C-section under general antiseptic, due to a rare complication called a Bandls ring, this experience I don't relate with birth Trauma, as I recovered from the experience and I was able to enjoy the blissful experience of becoming a mother.

My second birth however, has left me with life long injuries, that effects my day to day function.

Leading up to my second birth, my midwife said to me there is no reason why you could have a natural birth. My Obstetrician said the risk of having another Bandls ring were very low, and the other risk of my uterine scar rupturing was also very low as there was a 7 year gap between births. I thought the worse thing that could happen was I would have another C-section.....no once told me I could end up with life long injuries. I thought trying for a Vaginal Birth was going to be a better outcome for my child. (How wrong I was).

On Feb 25th my membranes were ruptured, which initialed a fast and furious labor (unlike the 3 day long first labor I had). The pain was intense, no pain relief was offered. Within 2 hours I was in second stage of labor, where I was being coached to push for over an hour and half. The midwife let me know I had been in second stage for over an hour, which they didn't like for V'BACS so they needed to try something else. I was in so much pain, I was desperate for anything to make it stop.

The Obstetrician proceed to deliver my baby with forceps, mid cavity extraction and an episiotomy. This was the most excruciating experience, as there was no pain relief given. Not

long after the delivery I was rushed to theatre to try and work out where all the bleeding was coming from. I sustain a 2.5 litre PPH, and a 2nd degree cervical tear, and 2 vaginal arteries were repaired.

My daughter was then transferred to NICU as she was diagnosed with Laryngomalacia. I was unable to see her for hours as I was receiving a blood transfusion.

When you have a sick baby the last thing you are thinking about is what injuries you may have sustained, everyones focus was on my baby, especially mine.

After birth, I didn't receive follow-up care relating to the surgery I had.

About 4 weeks post partum, I came to realise what I thought was swelling wasn't actually going away, and I shared these concerns with my GP at my 6 week check. This led to a string of appointments where I was diagnosed with a 3 part compartment prolapse, and a Levator Ani Avulsion.

This diagnosis matched the physical symptoms I was feeling, of heaviness, the inability to stand for long periods of time, the troubles with going to the toilet.

I suddenly couldn't get through my days with out crying, I was in constant discomfort. I plummeted into depression.

Birth trauma has had a profound impact on my life.

When I was in the depths of Post Natal depression sometimes my grief was so encompassing that I felt I couldn't look after my baby, and my mum and partner had to step in. I also felt tremendous shame about this, and like a failure as a result.

I was so hyper focused on my injuries that it was all I could think about, constantly trying to read medical papers to understand it, find a solutions.....however they just left me feeling more and more hopeless as there wasn't even research into Levator ani Avulsions, let alone a solution. The permanency of this injury I'm still trying to accept.

I was robbed from the baby bliss that I had experienced with my first born, and my life felt like a series of appointments from physiologist, pelvic floor physiotherapist to Urogyncoligist (that I had to travel 6hours return journey to get to), and not mention not wanting to leave the house for fear not being able to properly manage my toilet requirements, and being in a constant state anxiety.

Because of birth trauma I wasn't able to return to work as early as I had hoped, or to the capacity I would have liked. I am a Yoga teacher, and I still have to make modifications, and completely avoid some postures as I fear doing something will put too much pressure on my pelvic floor and make my injuries worse.

This of course, coupled with the cost of appointments needed to manage my injuries has added financial strain to our family.

Because of birth trauma, my participation in social and recreational activities has changed. I no longer feel like the “active fun Mum” I could be with my first born. Being told not to baby wear my child, not to run or jump anymore has been heartbreaking adjustment.

Before and during birth, I wasn’t given adequate information to make informed decisions about the use of Forceps. No-one told me they could lead to a Levator Ani Avulsion, or any injuries for that mater.

I have also learnt since this birth that I had other risk factors, such as high maternal age (41), and Gestational Diabetes. I wish that I was informed during the pregnancy, as if I fully understood the risk, I would have not chosen a VBAC.

Thank you for holding this inquiry. I look forward to seeing the outcome and, hopefully, a substantial improvement in reducing birth trauma in NSW and beyond.

I also hope it shines a light on Levator Ani Avulsions, which is known to occur in up to 36% of parous women. This Birth injury is then associated with high failure rates in prolapse surgery. My biggest hope it directs some funding for research in how to repair this debilitating birth injury.