

Submission
No 426

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

In 2019 I gave birth to my first child. I was induced due to post dates at the [REDACTED] Hospital. I was under the continuity of care model CATCH. Following insertion of the cervidil tape, I was in a lot of discomfort and upon requesting pain relief was denied as I 'wasn't in labour' according to the midwife.

My waters were broken the following morning and I had IV syntocin. I laboured all day with minimal progress due to baby being in posterior position. The cascade of interventions followed including an epidural as I was unable to cope with the contractions and the midwives had issues giving me gaps between contractions on the syntocin. I eventually gave birth vaginally with forcep delivery and episiotomy. I had prolonged rupture of membranes and maternal exhaustion.

As I was holding newborn, trying to take in that my baby had been born, the obstetrician was stitching up my episiotomy cut. The epidural had worn off, as we had ceased it during the pushing stage, and I flinched and groaned with every stitch. The obstetrician told me off for moving, then was surprised I could feel it, then continued to finish stitching despite my clear discomfort. This significantly impacted me connecting to my baby and we had subsequent breastfeeding issues.

Though I felt traumatized by the obstetrician stitching my up without any pain relief, having continuity of care from a midwife made my birth experience much more positive. I felt supported and listened to despite the interventions and long labour and was able to debrief post birth.

Despite having an instrumental birth, I was not offered any womens health physio support through the hospital. The episiotomy scarring felt significant and I had pelvic floor exhaustion for the following year, despite paying to attend an independent womens health physio. The episiotomy scar impacted my sex life, causing a lot of pain and discomfort.

In 2022 I had my second child. I had a normal vagina birth but unfortunately suffered a significant post partum hemorrhage and needed to go to theatre. I had 30 minutes with my newborn before I was taken to theatre. I came to four hours later, where I was told I could not be reconnected to my newborn as there was Covid in the hospital. I was then told that I could not hold or see my newborn for another 24 hours. After spending the next two hours crying about this, as nothing feel worse being separated from the baby you just birthed, I was told there had been a miscommunication and there was no covid and I could see my baby every 4 hours to feed. I was in the close observation ward for the next 24 hours, seeing my baby only for 30 mins at a time every 4 hours for a feed.

I had an in dwelling catheter that was incorrectly placed during this time, leading to my bladder retaining 1.5l of urine. Staff apologized, and I was told the hospital had no physios available for me to see and I would need to privately find someone if I had any issues. I then suffered incontinence for the following few weeks once I was discharged.

I feel I was discharged following both my births with significant pelvic floor damage and emotional pain that was dismissed and ignored by the hospital system.