

Submission
No 429

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

Birth trauma submission

I want to preface by stating I have diagnosed PTSD from childhood sexual abuse. During my first pregnancy in 2019/2020 all medical professionals I worked with were made aware early on and was brought up at any necessary opportunity.

My name is _____, I am 30 years old and I live in _____ NSW.

I have three children aged 3, 1 & 3 months.

I have had one c-section birth and 2 subsequent vaginal births.

Our first pregnancy we were accepted to the midwife group practice (MGP) at _____ hospital around 20 weeks.

Our care was wonderful and we loved the continuity of care with our trusted family of midwives.

This birth was a 25 hour labour with a posterior baby and hospital transfer to _____ Hospital _____ for pain relief. Once admitted, the I had 4 failed epidural attempts and one/final successful attempt. We were convinced into having my waters broken although my husband _____ had asked for 1 hour to let me feel some relief and have a rest. Going against medical professionals didn't feel right so he agreed if they thought that was best. We also agreed to have a fetal heart monitor placed on babies head. This was sold to us as "a tiny prick on babies head" only to find out later it is actually a sharp spiraled metal hook that essentially gets screwed into whatever spot they can find on babies head and would leave our baby with a 5-6mm wound.

After breaking my waters almost immediately after the epidural was administered, babies heart rate spiked and then dropped. A alarm was signaled and the room was full of people. _____ got pushed to the back of the room and there was a handful of people grabbing my body and flipping and rolling my body from side to side.

No one told us what was happening in these moments.

_____ face of sheer horror is still etched into my mind.

Babys heart returned to normal and we asked for some time to see if I progress to birth vaginally.

We were shoved a form to sign about a c-section saying that was best and we should get baby out cause they were unhappy.

We reluctantly agreed and were taken to theatre. I don't believe this was an emergency situation. I believe I was taking up time and space and still a while to "progress" and I was subject to the cascade of intervention.

Fast forward to 2022 and our second pregnancy during the Covid lockdowns and mask introduction. I was under the maternity care within [REDACTED] up until 28 weeks until I got accepted into [REDACTED] MGP.

Due to the PTSD I was given a mask exemption by my long term clinical psychologist.

I had expressed concern about flaring up my anxiety surrounding the mask as it reminded me of having my mouth covered by my abuser so I couldn't scream during his attacks.

My psychologist felt this exemption was valid and the exemption would allow me to still participate within the community without having that constant reminder over my face.

I was horribly excluded from the community because of this. I was pushed aside, spoken down to, spoken about from afar and abused more than a dozen times during this time. I was refused service and care. I had multiple nurses refuse to work with me because "we don't do exemptions". I was treated like I had the plague and it was incredibly unfair when I was doing everything in my power to ensure my own (and my babies!) health and safety and would never have put anyone's lives at risk if I were unwell. No one would hear me out though.

Once my care started with the [REDACTED] MGP these negative encounters became less and my midwives all understood my exemption and make me feel welcome and care for.

This birth was fairly straight forward and positive although due to needing stitches for a second degree tear and not having an epidural, the experience was incredibly traumatic for me. My baby got rushed to the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) and my husband accompanied him leaving me with the dr and midwife. I asked the dr to please wait for my husband to get back to me before touching me which he did. His phone rang 4 times in about 10 minutes and made me feel I needed to allow him to continue doing his job and not hold him up.

I wish I had waited as I've since had to work through over a dozen hours of talk therapy and EMDR therapy to work with the PTSD from this experience.

Moving along to 2023 and our third and final birth and we have left our birthing era completely healed. We were under the [REDACTED] MGP once again with the most incredible midwife (who was also present at our second babies birth) and she paved the way for us to have the most beautiful and healing experience.

Our birth was fast and flawless and completely physiological (minus the use of gas/air in the last hour) in the water.

We were on a euphoric high for weeks afterwards and I wish my other births were the same. I only wish from now other women get to experience that.