

Submission
No 448

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

I am 36 years old and have 2 children aged 3 and almost 1.

My first child was born in Victoria during the middle of severe covid lockdowns and despite this timing and a 30 hour labour, overall my experience was really positive, much more than I had in NSW for the birth of my second child.

In Victoria I had my first child at the [REDACTED] private hospital in [REDACTED]. At the time this operated a shared care model of care where you see 5 obstetricians throughout your pregnancy and then one of those will be on shift for your birth. It worked really well for me and I loved the care and support I received throughout my time as a patient there. Only positive things to say about all of the doctors, staff and the process. It was seamless.

For my second pregnancy, I was flagged as high risk from the beginning, I was 35 years of age, second child and had tested positive for low Papp A on the NIPT. Having recently moved to NSW from interstate (had my first child in Victoria in 2020) I wasn't sure of the best providers / pregnancy care options in NSW. I trusted the recommendation of my GP (who was aware of the team and care I had back in Victoria, so I felt like she would give a good match for care providers in [REDACTED] and went with a private OBGYN in [REDACTED] (I also put my name down for the MGP at [REDACTED] Public, hoping but not confident that I would be accepted, I wasn't accepted and no reason given).

So I had my first appt on the phone with the OBGYN and was told from this appt that it would be likely I would have to have a c section because of the low papp A result. I was 10 week pregnant. I was devastated. I was told to keep in mind that it was a very high chance of this being the end result.

At 14 weeks I had a significant bleed on a Saturday afternoon. [REDACTED] Private told me I wasn't in their system yet, even though I had already had my first appt with the OBGYN. Told me to go to [REDACTED] Public ED. I went there and spent over 8 hours in the waiting room on a Saturday night during COVID times thinking I had miscarried. When I was finally checked by the doctor (who left a speculum inside me while she went to get another male supervising doctor to come and check), I was put on a reclining chair in a hallway for 3 hours and told to come back the next day for a scan. I was by myself this whole time as my partner was at home with our 2 year old.

The baby was fine and I was okay but completely exhausted and scared after that experience. It was a matter of paperwork that resulted in me not being able to go to [REDACTED] Private on that occasion for the check up.

I had made it very clear to my OBGYN throughout my pregnancy that my preference was for a natural birth with no intervention unless absolutely necessary. Fast forward to later in my 3rd trimester. Having extra scans for my low papp A result to see if my baby was 'small' due to my placenta possibly not doing its job. The scan showed not only was my baby healthy and well but in the 97th percentile for growth. My risk then changed from possibly having a small baby to now having a huge baby and talk started of induction very early on.

I persisted with my preference to birth naturally and without induction, unless absolutely necessary. I persisted at every single appointment. To the point where I ended up having to book in my induction and pushed it out to 12 days past my due date.

At one appointment my OBGYN said "There is just no need to go past 40 weeks, the chance of your baby dying is very very high from then on. We don't want that do we!". I instantly cried at that comment and the OB said "I think you have some PTSD from your first birth that you haven't sorted out yet".

I had tried to change OBGYN at about 28 weeks pregnant but no other private providers had availability. I wasn't keen on going into the public system without being in the MGP as I had heard some really scary and unpleasant stories from other local families.

I looked into getting private midwife to birth at home late in my pregnancy but could not afford the cost of this after already paying so much through my private health and OBGYN.

At 41 weeks pregnant, my partner came home from lunch at the pub on a Saturday afternoon and said did you know your OB is away this weekend? I laughed and said pretty sure I would know that and not someone at the pub! The next morning I went into labour, naturally, I called the hospital and the midwife said now you know your OB is away this weekend so her partner Dr XYZ will be looking after you when you come in.

I had no idea. At the time I was really shocked and angry. But it turned out amazing. The Dr that supported me through my labour was everything I needed in that moment and let me labour how I wanted and needed to. No unnecessary intervention and let me birth my 5kg baby boy naturally and with only a little help breaking my waters. I did not tear or need any assistance. I knew what I was doing. I was so confident in my body and my baby and the Dr supported my choices on the day. How lucky I was to not have my original OBGYN who provided me with continuity of care for my whole pregnancy available on the day I gave birth. One of the midwives even commented to me after the labour and said you are so lucky your original OB wasn't in today, she definitely would have cut you open.

The following day on the ward when my OB was back from leave and doing her rounds of patient checks, she half pretended to know my birth story and half not know it. It was very strange. I'm sure she would have had a handover with the attending OB. As she was leaving my room, facing the door as she walked out she said 'oh sorry I wasn't there' and left the room.

A few more things happened during my post partum stay and return for postpartum haemorrhage but the biggest impact I wanted to share was my pregnancy care.

One final point I would like to share is that at 6 months post partum in February I required a second D&C, I put my name down with the public hospital and was considered high priority. It's now August and I still haven't even had my appointment.

Part of the care that I appreciate and pay a lot for in the private system is the access to faster treatment. I was able to have the D&C the same week I saw my OB in February this year. I was in extreme pain and it was resolved immediately. I can't even imagine what my health and life would look like right now if I was still waiting for the public system to give me my appointment. It would have resulted in yet another ED admission!