

Submission
No 461

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

I wish to add my support into this Parliamentary Inquiry, it's important that the voices of birth patients and their partners be considered into future decisions around prenatal and postnatal care to prevent trauma.

I gave birth to my first child in December 2021 at a public hospital in my local area. Unfortunately, this public hospital was located an hour away from my home and I did not have the option to birth at my local hospital (5 minute drive) due to current public health restrictions. My local State MP, [REDACTED] is raising the urgency for re-opening birth services at the local hospital in [REDACTED] NSW and this I believe would have greatly assisted in preventing my trauma experiences if I had the option to birth there.

I wish to raise a number of points in my submission:

1. Please support increased midwifery-lead care, this is currently only available in select metro or regional areas, the lack of consistency in my midwifery care resulted in numerous conflicting conversations regarding birth choices and management. This resulted in increasing my anxiety, fear and feeling not supported in my choices. I am now preparing for the birth of my second child and I have chosen to engage a private midwife to improve the situation and thus far, it has been a very positive experience.
2. Excessive travel to give birth in a public hospital, as mentioned above requiring the birth parent to travel up to an hour, allow a major public highway during December (busiest period of the year) was a major stressor / anxiety factor. It meant that I was encouraged to arrive earlier at the hospital, however this meant I wasn't actively in labour and I was told to wait in a general ward until labour had progressed enough to be given a birth suite. I felt incredibly alone, even silly for not knowing as a first time mum whether I was in labour and doubted my ability.
3. The above point, also resulted in numerous discussions to pressure me into accepting induction to progress the labour even though there was no medical reason to suggest induction being a benefit to myself or the baby. I am deeply distressed by this point, as I understand from speaking with medical professionals that inductions increase risks to the baby experiencing distress, shoulder dislocations and other complications. I was not overdue - in fact my baby ended up being born 12 hours ahead of her due date. I should not have been pressured to take an induction, as it would suit the Doctor's schedule and make this easier for the hospital. If there is not medical benefit, women should be support to birth naturally.
4. In fact, 10 days prior to my birth due date I was pressured to book in an induction, again even without there being any medical reasoning. I felt I had to comply and was not allowed to decline the offer. These may seem like minor factors, however they can greatly increase a birth parent's anxiety.
5. Whilst being in active labour, the overseeing doctor entered the birth suite to inform me that I was not birthing fast enough - this was despite having contractions every 2-3 minutes, and the midwives confirming I was in labour and things were progressing. Again I was told I should be induced to speed things up. When I asked the doctor, what the risks (percentage of risk) were if I waited another hour she was unable to answer or provide any medical reasoning. I don't mind receiving medical advice, in fact I am very open to it however, when blanket statements are made such as these - when you are in the act of labour, it's incredibly disappointing and distressing. If birth parents are to be given advice and options, they should be provided more information, including medical data and facts to support those statements.
6. I do wish to add that overall I found my experience with NSW midwives to be positive and supportive, it's a shame that a few factors such as those outlined above can cause such distress. It's something I have reflected on since the birth of my first child and today as I prepare for my second. I know that a few changes could greatly decrease the likelihood of trauma being experienced by birth parents.