

Submission
No 469

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

I had my first baby in 2021 through a MGP and overall had a supportive and informative care provider, however I would like to highlight the importance of sensitive communication to women and mothers who have just been through birth, let alone an experience involving trauma.

After a beautiful pregnancy, labour and natural birth, I had a spontaneous and significant post partum hemorrhage, losing approx 2L+ of blood and was rushed to surgery and put under general anaesthesia after maybe 15-20 minutes with my baby. I remember there was difficulty cannulating me in the process and I was aware this was increasing stress levels for the medical team.

Now, I would like to mention that in the moment of my PPH, I felt incredibly supported and safe with my MGP midwife and knew what was happening and what was being planned. This practice made a world of difference in my ability to process what had happened later. The communication that I would like to highlight for the purposes of this inquiry however was that morning, not even 12 hrs later, my midwife came to visit me on the ward. In conversation, she casually said to me and my husband that given what happened, I will never be considered low risk in future pregnancies, would not be accepted into another MGP program and that I would have to labour in hospital so I can be cannulated early. Despite this probably seeming casual for her, this devastated me and I am still working through more psychological harm from this than from my PPH, especially as I discuss and prepare for trying for baby #2. In that moment, having a choice felt like it was, and still has been, taken away from me in how I can labour and birth any further babies I have. To me, it felt like a completely unnecessary comment and inappropriate for the time and experience I had just had that morning.

On a different note, on behalf of my husband. As I was rushed out of the delivery room and in to theatre, my husband was told to take his shirt off, handed our newborn to do skin to skin and then left alone in the room I lost 2L of blood in, a lot of which was on the floor in front of him. He isn't sure how long he was left there for and acknowledges his concept of time was warped given the whole labour experience, but he recalls sitting by himself with our baby in that room for what felt like eternity before someone came back to give him an update and help him. While he did sit there alone with our baby, he recalls thoughts about whether I was going to live and how he would raise a newborn without me. To think of that experience for him, without anyone communicating or staying with him is heartbreaking.

I, and other friends and family with some level of trauma in their births, echo a similar sentiment that once the birth is over, there isn't the appropriate communication, sensitivity, information and access to support to assist women to process and heal from their experience. As I stayed on the wards for approx. 5 days, I had VERY few conversations about my own health and the focus was all on caring for our baby. Whilst that is obviously very important, understanding and supporting my own mental and physical health would've led to greater success and confidence leaving hospital and transitioning to home - especially as I was very physically fragile.

I would also like to note that I don't share my story to discredit MGP and the incredible work the midwives do through continuity of care programs. I 100% value and advocate for MGP care and personally experienced and witnessed the benefits through my pregnancy, labour and birth. I would like to see increased access to these programs for women so they weren't so competitive and more women with varying risk factors can easily access continuity of care and reap the well documented benefits. A massive thank you to all the amazing midwives who are taking strides in and making efforts to deliver person centred, informed and safe care.

Thank you for allowing me to share my story and I hope that NSW can improve our systems to support more women to have empowering and supported births!