

Submission
No 490

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

It was my first pregnancy and I was a healthy 39 yrs old. I took the advice of the midwives at The Hospital and my doctor and had all the necessary tests for a pregnant woman of my age. I was hoping for a natural birth and had my bag packed with all the accessories such as music, essential oils, snacks for the husband and a tens machine.

I started labouring at 39 weeks in the early evening and went through until 7.00am the next morning when we rang the birthing suites and were given the green light to come in. My waters broke on arrival and I was transferred to a birthing suite around 8.00am – 9.00am. With music on and tens machine attached I continued to labour with a midwife checking on me regularly. I remember I was dilating but slowly. This second stage labour went on for 6hrs and was very intense. I never had any urges to push. Around 2.30pm there was concern from the midwife and the registrar was called in along with a team of student doctors. It was becoming a blur to me by this stage and I certainly was not concerned about the music and had the tens machine controller in my mouth biting down on it firmly.

The concern became heightened when they realised that my son was posterior and his shoulder were preventing him from birthing naturally. At this stage I was given an epidural and they were unable to perform an emergency caesarean at this point because the baby was too far down the birthing canal.

With a team of students looking on the registrar performed a forceps delivery and I was given an episiotomy.

All I could really remember was panic as I felt that something was very wrong and that the baby felt very stuck. I could not really understand the conversations that were going on around me as I had my eyes firmly closed and I was feeling very frightening. My son was born blue with the cord around his neck and his shoulder dislocated and a forceps mark across his face. He was rushed off for further monitoring and, The registrar spent the next hour stitching my wounds .

I then spent the next 5 days in a shared ward at Hospital with a catheter inserted for the first 24 hrs. When it was removed I completely lost my bladder all over the floor and experienced total numbness for the next 6 months. The nerve damage was extensive to the point I could not feel any sensation around urinating or holding my urine, I had a Cystocele and Rectocele prolapse as well as a fourth degree episiotomy. The baby was with me the whole time and the midwives never offered to take him for any length of time so I could rest post birthing.

The hospital sent me home with latex gloves to fill with water and freeze to relieve any pain I may have in my recovery. The frozen fingers make excellent vagina ice blocks they told me. They could not wait to get me out, as they knew I had not had a good birth. There was no follow up for my injuries and no thorough conversation that I recall about what had just

happened to me, at this point of my life the worse injury I'd had was a dislocated knee cap so I was completely overwhelmed. My mother stayed for a week or so but after that it was just my husband and I and a newborn baby. I cannot remember being given any discharge notes stating the severity of my injuries as a result of a forceps birth. I did make my own way to a specialist clinic's at [redacted] but the outcome was surgery which I was not prepared to do at that time.

I arrived home with my first baby with severe injuries and was unable to control my bladder or bowel movements. It took several years and several visits to specialist before I was told that my damage was caused by the forceps delivery and that I would need surgery at some point. That was 19yrs ago and I still remember the trauma and panic I felt to this day. I have done extensive physio work and so far have kept any major health concerns at bay. I have worn incontinence pads for 19yrs and could not go swimming at the beach for many years when the children were young as I was unable to wear swimmers in fear of being unable to control my bladder as you can't really wear pads with swimmers. Also when my children would cry I also struggled to control my bladder due to my reaction to their emotional needs.

It was a horrible experience and one I did not repeat when I gave birth to my second child. I had a private Gynaecologist at the [redacted] Hospital and a caesarean birth, which was delightful.

I hope that my story and all the other traumatic birth stories high light the lack of care given to woman during this incredibly important time for both the mother's and the child's start to life. I would like to highlight the lack of insight the medical professionals have to the actual position of the baby during labour and the birth outcomes resulting from this lack of insight. We can put humans on the moon but we cannot tell if a baby is posterior in one of Australia's leading [redacted] hospital. I hope this inquest highlights the lack of care given to the mothers of these injuries as they continue their lives carrying these traumatic injuries to major functioning parts of their bodies and to the mental health of mothers of traumatic births as they raise their families. To highlight the impact traumatic births have on mother's life styles and family life. And too highlight that, this is mainly done in silence as no one wants to know or talk about it. Many of my friends at the time had emergency caesareans.

I would also like Caesarean births to be an expectable birthing method and not to be looked upon as unnatural or expensive on the health system. Bladder incontinence and prolepses are also unnatural and expensive and lasts a mothers lifetime.

Thank you for this enquiry.