

Submission
No 493

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

I'm a 34 year old mother of 4 children, currently living in regional NSW.

I had my first baby at the [REDACTED] Hospital in [REDACTED] in 2009. My second baby was born at home in Brisbane in 2012, and my third & fourth children were also born at home in NSW, in 2014 and 2017.

I'm not sure if my story is completely relevant to the Inquiry as I have not given birth in a NSW hospital, however my experience with birthing within the QLD hospital system was enough for me to not even consider the possibility of birthing at a NSW hospital. My 3rd & 4th child were both born by planned free birth, as I didn't want to be involved with the hospital system at all.

My birth trauma story from my QLD hospital birth in 2009 in summary:

* I laboured for 2-3 days, coming to the hospital on three separate occasions before they would admit me in to the birthing suite. I had to travel over 30 minutes to get to the hospital, being in the car while in labour was one of the most painful experiences of my labour.

* On one of these occasions while at the hospital, a midwife performed an internal examination where she accidentally ruptured my membranes. I felt violated by this.

* As a result, the hospital followed procedure to book me in for an induction for within 24 hours of ruptured membranes as my labour failed to progress. I did not want an induction, but I felt pressured into this.

* After I was induced, the midwife sent my partner home to get some sleep, as it was around 2am. I felt alone after my partner left as my contractions started to increase with intensity.

* I cannot recall the exact details of why, but I do recall being attached to an IV drip for the duration of my labour & postnatal stay in hospital - for antibiotics I think, but I don't think there was a strong reason why I needed them, apart from "following procedure" due to ruptured membranes. Being attached to this drip machine was more painful than the labour itself, and in hindsight I feel it was unnecessary.

* My birth plan was to have a natural birth, I did not want any pain relief medication. However, when in active labour, a midwife asked if I wanted pethidine. This was not what I wanted, but I said yes. I regretted this later, and I don't feel the midwife should have offered pain relief when my birth plan clearly stated I didn't want pain relief medication.

There were numerous instances where I felt vulnerable and was lead to making a decision that actually wasn't what I wanted. One intervention lead to another, and I was made to feel powerless.

Because of this experience, I opted to have a home birth with a midwife for my second birth, and then decided to freebirth my third & fourth children.

I would love to see a reduction in interventions in hospital births - everything from vaginal examinations, inductions, medication administration and caesareans. Women need to feel safe to give birth, and currently a hospital does not feel like a safe space for me to give birth.