

Submission
No 494

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

In October 2022, I gave birth at the [REDACTED] Hospital under the Midwifery Group Practice (MGP). What was meant to be a happy and beautiful event meeting our baby ended up leaving me with trauma that I had to process whilst also trying to navigate life with a newborn.

I experienced care and professionalism by my wonderful MGP midwife, however due to hospital policy on various circumstances, I had to be visited by an obstetrician on a number of occasions. I found this obstetrician to lack care, respect, communication skills and evidence-based knowledge. One of the worst moments for me was when I had begun pushing my baby. After 48 hours of labour and one hour of pushing, baby was not out, so my MGP midwife had to contact the obstetrician to visit me as per hospital policy. Until then, I was not aware that I had a 2 hour time limit to push baby out before intervention would be forcefully recommended (even if baby and I were not distressed). When the obstetrician saw me, she told me that I needed forceps, a vacuum and an episiotomy to get baby out immediately.

I told her I did not want this (in between pushes) as baby and I were not in distress, and that I would push my baby out. I also told her that I had 2 hours, and it had only been 1 hour. The obstetrician told me that she would return to see me just before 2 hours had lapsed to review this. After 15 minutes, the obstetrician returned, and from that point she began threatening me, "you need to get baby out, you need to get baby out. I am going to have to get the forceps and vacuum". She continued to stay in the room, threatening me, "two more pushes and if baby is not out we will need to do an episiotomy, forceps and vacuum". She was getting more and more forceful, "you have one more push otherwise I will need to prepare the vacuum and forceps". This continued on and on. Determined to push my baby out, I did it with 2 minutes to spare (before my 2 hour time limit). At this time when I should have felt encouraged, cared for, supported, especially after a mammoth 50 hours of labour, I felt disrespected, threatened, bullied, coerced and angry. Birth trauma impacted me for months after my birth as I had to process my experience whilst also trying to connect with my newborn and learn to be a mother. My trust in the health system for women has diminished even more, and I feel scared to birth within the healthcare system in the future.

If I could change things for the future, I would recommend professional training/upskilling and communication skills for birth workers, in particular, obstetricians. I was shocked at the lack of basic communication skills and empathy from some of the hospital staff, including the obstetrician. Healthcare providers, including medical staff, should undergo training in physiological birth, effective communication, active listening, and shared decision-making. This will facilitate meaningful interactions with birthing people and their families, fostering trust and collaboration whilst keeping up to date with the latest evidence based research.

Furthermore, I do not believe that the obstetrician or hospital in which I birthed at had policies and information based on the latest evidence, and I understand that this is similar across hospitals in NSW. This is not good enough and this needs to change. We only need to see that statistics on birth across NSW hospitals, including for caesarean sections, and compare this against World Health Organisation recommendations to see that this is not good enough.