

Submission
No 515

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

My son was born at [REDACTED] Sydney in early 2022.

surprised to learn I was expecting twins at 6/7 weeks of pregnancy, early as I had presented to the EPAS clinic with pain and bleeding. Waiting hours to be seen and scanned, steeling my nerves & chatting nervously with another lady, the last 2 left - both advised we were pregnant. The midwife said - "well it's twins, I know it's a shock, you'll be fine; you'll get the bigger car and they will sleep together for the first bit. Get your head around it - you can do it." She hugged me and I left. This was 2021 and the height of Covid, my partner wasn't allowed to attend with me - the ultrasound technician said "im not allowed to do this but give me your phone & I'll take a pic of the screen you can show him".

Thereafter I attended the "twin clinic" stream at [REDACTED] the care lacking at best but during a global pandemic and much unknown we all accepted this was the state of play. During a routine scan (alone) the ultrasound technician asked me "is your partner nearby? I just think you'd have a better experience if he was here" she went and collected him as no partners were allowed into [REDACTED] during Covid. When he entered the room, we were quickly advised that one of our twins "had demised" they didn't know why and I was to wait in the waiting room to be seen by a doctor. Shaking and in shock I waited, a midwife stormed around the corner yelling on approach to my partner "you can't be here! No visitors are allowed in here! What are you doing?! Outside now! I'm calling security." Masked and rat tested, both in shock, I couldn't speak, and was still sobbing. I knew one baby was dead & was unsure of the other. At some point my partner managed to say one of our babies is dead they just told us. "Fine. chairs outside" and she walked off, we dragged 2 waiting area chairs outside a glass automatic door and I sat shaking and sobbing for an hour waiting to be seen - "we will see you when we get to you - you don't have an appointment today".

Eventually a young doctor called us and asked "what was the matter? She would have to get my notes from ultrasound" & explained they didn't know what had happened but that they would monitor me closely for the remainder of the pregnancy. I would give birth to both our boys & I would "see a consultant next time." Some weeks later i saw a fetal medicine specialist who assured me our "remaining baby" looked ok.

I went into labour 6 weeks early on a Friday, eventually I was taken for a c section early Tuesday morning after several doses of steroids. I laboured alone or with a midwife for brief periods, eventually I was moved to a ward. Beside myself with panic - i was taken very early in the morning to theatre when my entered active labour again. I saw "one of the doctors" who attempted to unsuccessfully place a spinal block 3 times. I had 9 failed cannulas over a 48 hour period. Nurses removed one, a trainee anaesthetist scolding me - "why would you let them take it out?" My arms repeatedly ultrasounded for a suitable vein (4 times), none found I was told "don't worry they will get it in theatre". Following a failed epidural, laying naked on a table in theatre I was asked "is it possible you're a bit anxious"? When they said the line in my arm "wasn't working" At which point the "supervising" anaesthetist advised "we have to put you to sleep now - we have to get your babies out & it's (the epidural) not working properly. Sobbing I said no, I wanted to be present for the birth and see both babies.

I woke up being told I had lost many litres of blood and was "very sick" but "not to worry you didn't have a hysterectomy" I begged for pain relief and was told "we aren't set up for PCA's - it's oral meds only" the medications never arrived. Hours and hours of pressing buzzers and being met with students (as per their name tag's) "I don't know about medicine - I'll have to get a midwife, I don't know about breastfeeding I'll have to get a midwife". Having to keep

track of when I had last had panadine forte (not effective for major stomach surgery) and being snapped at by a midwife "we have no staff and we are trying to get you off them so you can go home!" On Day 2 when I hadn't yet stood up post surgery.

I was alone in a double room, during the second night I was told - "a woman is coming in, we have no beds - she will be no trouble she's had a vaginal birth" - why on earth I was told this I do not know. We both sobbed all night in agony, pressing buzzers that were answered 2 hours after being repeatedly pressed. A student that attended with my room mate screamed "blue baby! Blue baby!" Staff rushed in and removed my room mates baby - she screamed and sobbed, she had very poor English. A lady appeared and started yelling the doorway "I need money from Bupa. They NO PAY, YOU CALL - no student, you can't stay here if you don't pay!" This exchange was so loud, so inappropriate and so the mocking of this woman and her lack of partners English, after the 4th repeat of "no pay, you call!" - i said "can this conversation be had outside?" From inside my curtain. "I don't have permission to remove a patient from a room!" Was called back to me. I called back, please leave her baby is sick, the woman continued to sob, her partner returned and explained he would call Bupa and check the status of their student funding. When my partner arrived for visiting hours, we shared an interpreter service. My room mate was removed & another lady arrived, she cried all night, calling out in pain; her husband complained and she was "given a private room". My pain was never managed post surgery - due to the inconsistent administration of panadole and neurophen, occasional panadine forte "if I can find a midwife" the students advised. I was visited twice on day 2 by a woman asking me "if was ok to go home? We will visit you at home!" My baby was unable to breastfed, I was completely out of my mind with pain, had not gotten out of bed or been showered & couldn't consider going home. My partner was not allowed to stay and assist me "you're in a public bed, if you wanted your partner to help you should have gone private". The morning of day 3 we asked if someone could show either one of us how to bath the baby, "no we aren't staffed for that." I was helped by a midwife to a bathroom and sat on a chair, the midwife left and told me to shower myself after removing my catheter. I fainted alone and a student that returned to check on me screamed and said "I don't know what to do" to me whilst I lay on the floor. my partner arriving to visit said - get towels and pressed the buzzer. I was returned to bed, I begged for pain killers & was moved to an elusive private room when my partner complained I had been left alone. I was "discharged" 4 hours later with no pain relief, no ability to feed my baby and no instructions on how to care for myself, other than to remove my c section dressing in a few days. On arriving home we contacted my GP who arranged a video call, a script for endone & instructions to return to [REDACTED] if I could not get my pain under control. She advised me that if [REDACTED] could not help me to consider travelling to the [REDACTED] hospital at [REDACTED] some 30 minutes away. Days later I fainted attempting to remove my c section dressing in the shower as instructed. I returned to [REDACTED] desperate several days later with a post partum hemorrhage and in agony. Post 2nd discharge I attended with my GP and community nurse, both helped my establish breastfeeding and basic care of my baby. The overall standard of care was so incredibly disgraceful and dehumanising I remain traumatised and have been very unwell providing even basic details for this submission. I suffered from severe Post partum depression and now post traumatic stress disorder. I am now unable to attend basic follow up blood tests 16 months later. I am unable to go to have follow up checks with my GP or go to the dentist and am completely fear avoidant of any task involving my own body. I shake, faint and sweat for the most basic medical appointments. This has affected my work, life, relationships & has stolen the joy in caring for my newborn. If I took an animal to a vet they would have received more appropriate care than I received at [REDACTED] I have never had any follow up & when I am strong enough to provide additional detail I will consider approaching

█ for my records with view to commence a review of this disgraceful situation. I wonder is there much point? The response will be a lack of overall resourcing during a global pandemic. Midwives didnt ever arrive for my home visit, I had to beg for an earlier appointment with the council nurse so that I could have help feeding my son. My GP assisted me and managed to get me an earlier appointment with the council nurse. I had been feeding my son with bleeding cracked nipples for 5 weeks when I eventually saw the council nurse. I cannot understand the attitudes of the nursing and midwives on the ward post birth. I fail to see how █ has any ability to allow students to attend with patients alone in an acute state post surgery or at any point in a hospital setting, I understand it is a teaching hospital but a basic level of supervision would be expected. Using students to triage buzzers seems inappropriate. I work in health and believed in the system I have worked so hard in and for. I see now that public health is truly a luck of the draw situation. There is no follow up care unless women seek it out & self fund. I am left with physical and emotional scars that I cannot afford to manage on a healthcare workers salary. I am doing my best. I hope something comes of this enquiry as women as there appears to be a lack of standards, basic procedures, governance & systems of review.