

Submission
No 529

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

Dear Members of the Committee,

I am writing to share my personal experiences and perspectives on behalf of women who have encountered birth trauma. As a woman who has personally experienced birth trauma I hope to shed light on the impact it can have on individuals and families.

I, _____, have experienced birth trauma firsthand.

The specifics of my own encounter with birth trauma are as follows: I was planning a homebirth through the _____ birthing centre. I had a very slow hind waters leak which as soon as I mentioned to my midwife she instantly stated that I had to go to _____ to be induced though I from a previous conversation knew I according to policy could wait 24 hrs. I had to fight to get this. I then saw my care provider within 12 hrs and she suspected meconium which was not true. I felt dropped from my care provider so suddenly and quickly which in itself at such a vulnerable time felt cold and unnecessary. After making compromises and me not going into labour I felt my only choice was to birth in _____. I have always had a fear of hospitals so this put immense stress on me. Though I went and ended up being induced in hospital. As soon as I got to hospital and was hooked up to the machines they could see I was having strong regular contractions I was just feel no pain with them. Unfortunately my midwife began the syntocin when my forewaters were not broken.. again for another 2 hrs the machines were showing strong regular contractions just no pain with them. Eventually another midwife came in and she broke my forewaters. Instantly the pain was there with contractions. I spent most of my labour in the bath room with my partner. The midwives kept coming in and asking me to not be in certain positions as the monitors kept dropping out. A midwife told me they were going to put the fetal scalp monitor in though I know that baby was coming and even though I knew I didn't want the fsm in I knew to save my energy rather than fighting them on it. I knew when I was transitioning and I didn't feel I could trust the midwives so kept it to myself. Then I felt the strong urge to push. Again I kept this to myself until I couldn't and instantly they moved me into the room and up onto the bed. This is where somehow the drip got knocked and wasn't sitting in my vein properly anymore. Pushing stage began to get really hard. A random midwife whose voice I did not recognise then told me she was going to give me an episiotomy to which I yelled out no.. I had another midwife with her hands inside my vagina stretching me which no one ever asked me permission for. Pushing got so hard and intense they were coach pushing me telling me to push in between contractions to the point that my pelvic floor will never be the same again. My beautiful boy finally was born and within minutes I had another midwife who I hadn't seen before sternly questioning me as to why I didn't want pitocin to help the placenta come out when I'd been on it all day. To which I explained that was my homebirth plan and obviously things have changed. Looking back a conversation I feel they should have had with me before beginning the induction. This midwife was aggressively rubbing my belly and pulling on the cord to get my placenta out. I still feel the sensation now thinking back to it and it makes me feel sick. The placenta then came out with a lot of blood. They had 2 litres written down on the discharge papers. It is only now that they realised the syntocin drip isn't in my wrist properly as they can't use it to get the anti haemorrhage medication in. I had medication in other arm, in leg and up my bum. Next they wanted to check me for tears to which I had one so they put my legs up in the stirrup thing to stitch it up. Whilst my legs were up I began to feel really overwhelmed and dizzy and my legs were going numb, I asked to get my legs down. But they said no it would be better if I could just finish. Next I started projectile vomiting. Then they were like oh sorry that's a side effect of the drugs we gave you for the bleeding. Still wouldn't let me get my legs down. Finally stitching

finished and im resting with my baby in my arms and another midwife comes in and starts hassling me because the baby hasn't fed yet... plus another man coming in to hassle me about decloning the vit k. a discussion i had already had in depth with my [REDACTED] midwives. at a point where i was at my most vulnerable i felt like i was being spoken down to and not supported. i did have my student midwife with me still who was an angel and made a horrible situation a little lighter. my son was born at 7:21 and by the time all of this had happened it was 11:30 when they moved me to my room and told me that my partner couldn't stay and that my baby couldn't stay in the bed with me??? i felt like another number in a system that didn't recognise the beauty that should be held in these precious first moments of me becoming a mother and my baby being earthside. the next day was doctor after doctor coming into see and check on me. even a group of student doctors to which i said no me and the baby have already been checked over enough this morning. the midwife that day kept trying to hand express me as bubs wasn't latching the best and really hurting me. me and my partner kept saying we wanted to go home and could we please get discharged but she kept saying strange remarks like i just don't know if you will feed your baby? like im going to let me baby starve??? it was quite odd so i felt i just had to keep letting her aggressively milk my boobs just so we could go home...

Having reflected upon my experience, I believe that several factors contributed to my birth trauma. These factors may include procedures not being explained properly, procedures not being conducted properly such as being put on syntocin when my forewaters weren't broken, i believe i would not have needed the syntocin if my waters were broken in the beginning, the fact that policies are in place to protect the system over supporting the mother, i have a strong fear of hospitals and don't feel safe there hence wanting a home birth. PROM is treated differently in different parts of the world, no one ever gave me the option to get monitored daily, the only option was to get induced. outdated ideas, i feel the midwives were old school and not nurturing to the fact i didn't want my baby to leave my side but instead guilt tripped me into letting them take him away to settle him. i just didn't feel like my ideas and values were respected.

Drawing from my personal journey, I would like to propose specific solutions and changes to enhance maternity care in Australia, with the aim of preventing future instances of birth trauma. The following are the changes I advocate for: continuity of care.. having my student midwife with me who knew me and my desires made a huge difference, even though she couldn't technically change anything she was on my side. just being treated as a human, as the queens we are literally birthing more humans into this world. talk to us with respect. don't poke and prod us without consent. don't guilt trip into getting consent. out dated policies need to be redone. the woman needs to be valued for her own beliefs not just the system knows best attitude.

Thank you for considering my submission. I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute my experiences and viewpoints to the committee's ongoing inquiry. If necessary, I am willing to provide additional evidence during a hearing to further support my perspective.

With sincere appreciation,