

Submission
No 554

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

I've given birth twice within in the NSW public health system.

The first time was a [REDACTED] and I was supported by my local hospitals midwife group practice program. The night I went into labour, my assigned midwife was not working, so I had a midwife I had never met before. She was nice, though spent the majority of the time sitting in front of the computer so I did not feel like I received much support beyond her standard checks. As time went on I faced immense pressure from the doctor on duty. This lady, who I had also never met during my pregnancy, would abruptly walk into the birthing room and present me with ultimatums..." if you don't do this intervention, it will be a C-section". In a time of extreme vulnerability I felt very unheard and unsupported and eventually stopped resisting the threat of the C-section, when the doctor made the phone call (in my presence) to ensure that the team would prepare the theatre. The 'team' were on call and not at the hospital and one had no way to get there so the doctor was telling them to get an Uber etc. Being exposed to this conversation whilst in labour felt unprofessional at the least but was also incredibly disruptive to my birthing space. Ironically by the time this 'team' made it, my baby had started to crown whilst I was in the lift on my way down to theatre. The doctor was quick to intervene once there, gave me an episiotomy... as "that was routine practice with forceps" and then proceeded to extract my baby. I was left feeling as though birth had been done to me, rather than having birthed my baby.

My second pregnancy was with MCDA twins in 2023. It was deemed high risk due to the nature of the twins but the pregnancy was without any complication and I made it to 37weeks gestation. After my first birthing experience, I had hired a private midwife to support me within the public hospital, with an obstetrician who was also prepared to be on call for my birth (and very supportive of my birth preferences).

I agreed to induction due to risks of a longer gestation with my twin type and received a balloon catheter on the Sunday night to prime my cervix for the following morning - where they would break waters etc.

My midwife and husband went home to sleep whilst I stayed overnight. A few hours later contractions started to roll in regularly and the ballon fell out. I was monitored by the antenatal midwife on duty who could see on the machine that the contractions came at regular intervals - yet she continued to say I don't believe you are in established labour. I had had a baby before so I felt like I was but when the professional in charge questions you, I doubted myself.

Time went by as I laboured by myself.. wanting to call my support team and the obstetrician... but being told it was too soon to bother them. I continued to buzz for the midwife on duty though by this point I felt she was annoyed by my calling, which she confirmed when she told me to download a contraction counter app and count my contractions. I finally got her back in the room and told her I was feeling immense pressure and was pretty sure I could feel a head. She checked, went silent, ran for a wheelchair, told me to get in and raced me to the

birth unit, literally kicking open the doors. I was was met there by another midwife (who I must say was exceptional despite having never met me or even had time to read my file) and within minutes gave birth to my first twin. The birth unit team then arrived and quickly got involved, with the registrar inserting her hand into my uterus to locate the feet of twin two and extract him. It was so fast that pain relief for the manual extraction was not possible. I later learned that ultimately a manual extraction of twin two was performed as this registrar would not have felt comfortable or adequately trained to support a natural breech descent, which is fair enough as this should only be supported by those with the experience and skill, but had I been listened to and believed in the earlier stages of labour - I would have had my organised support team and obstetrician there and the birth may have been managed differently, and as had been discussed prior. Whilst I'm proud of myself for birthing my boys vaginally, I will always be disappointed that it was done alone and without the presence of their dad. He arrived whilst I was having significant perineal tearing stitched. The boys were both well too - had they not been, then this birth story and lack of belief of being in labour and subsequent rush to the birth unit with an unprepared team would have been a much bigger issue.