

Submission
No 562

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

Unlike many submissions you'll be reading with regards to this Inquiry, I wanted to share the amazing experience I had with a doula and a Midwifery Group Practise (MGP) supporting my birth as a way to help shape the recommendations to help end the epidemic of Birth Trauma and Obstetric violence we face in NSW and around the world. I was compelled to make this submission on hearing from a podcast that you were after positive experiences and that I'm part of 3 different mothers' groups in which I am either the sole or in the minority of the group who don't have trauma from our experiences. I would love to help change that so that more women get to experience how amazing birth can be.

When I fell pregnant with my first babe, I turned to the local hospital (a major one for the region) for information on options for the birth. I was quickly attracted to the MGP model of care, and at my 12-week appointment requested to be part of that program. But alas I was already too late, places were full for my due date and I was put on a long waiting list. I was offered the option of a place at a MGP close by at another Birth Centre, but while part of a smaller hospital, there was no obstetrics care available on site, and if any complications arose, I would need to transfer to the major hospital. It seemed too big a risk to take being my first, so I declined and went into the general midwifery care model with the major hospital.

While always having lovely interactions with the rotation of midwives in the general clinic, the desire to have continuity of care for both myself and my husband during this life changing process took us down the path of finding a doula. Our wonderful doula was instrumental in helping educate us on the birth process and the wide range of choices and decisions we may have had to make; removing the fear around birth that was ingrained in me from the stories I had heard from family and friends; assisting me to tune into my maternal instincts and learning how to advocate for myself and my baby against the cascade of interventions we may be encouraged to use if our birth didn't follow the hospitals script; and to tune in and trust that my body and my baby knew what they needed to do.

At 36 weeks I had a call from the Birth Centre MGP, they still had spaces available for my due date, and as I was not going to get a MGP spot at the major hospital this late in my pregnancy, would I like to swap over to their centre. Thanks to the work we had done with our doula, deciding to make the change felt so good, and I was excited about giving birth in the Birth Centre, where I believed I had the best chance to have a natural, un-medicated birth free from the pressures of intervention.

And we did. On a Friday morning at 39w 6d, I woke at 2am to my contractions starting and by 7am I was on the phone waking up my doula and the MGP midwife (my assigned midwife was on leave, but as we had our doula for continuity, that didn't bother me) and making our way to the Birth Centre. 40mins after arriving, and approx. 20mins after getting in the Birth Pool, our little girl was in my arms and I was truly in shock that we had done it – an un-medicated, uncomplicated birth with a happy healthy Mum and Bub on the other side.

I did have a tear from how fast she arrived, but the experienced MGP midwife was able to stitch me up in the Birth Centre, and I was able to avoid being transferred to the major hospital, where I likely would have been assigned to a junior doctor with much less experience than the MGP midwife.

We were home later that afternoon, safe in own bed and beginning our new life as a family of three. The MGP midwives visited for 2 weeks, longer than the general midwives, and we were able to navigate feeding challenges thanks to that extra time.

What I think made our experience so wonderful and that I wish more women had were:

- Access to MGP models of care & birth centres away from obstetrics services that want to meddle in the magic of each individual women's birth process – leave women alone to do what our bodies are designed to do!
- Doula support – having someone outside the medical system to help give you context was so beneficial to me overcoming my belief that birth was scary and confident in my decision to aim for a natural birth.
- 2 weeks of home visits to allow for the myriad of challenges in navigating life with a newborn that don't all come out in the 5 days the general practise supports.

It would also be great if the entry requirements and ability to continue with MGP care were less strict so as to allow more women to participate and/or not loose their place in the program.

Thank you for taking the time to read my submission, and I do truly hope that we can make some change for the better.