

Submission  
No 625

## INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

**Name:** Name suppressed

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Partially  
Confidential

I gave birth to my first baby at [REDACTED] Private Hospital in February 2016.

Firstly, the hospital antenatal classes were not advertised well and I enquired in early November to be told at the time that they didn't hold the classes in December, and there was no vacancy before my due date. Babies are born year round! This should not be an issue! We hired a private midwife to come to our home to go through the information instead. We definitely missed out on vital information, even just how to bathe your baby, how to breastfeed, who to ask for help in hospital. We were already on the back foot. ALL parents should have access to an antenatal class at all times of the year.

We arrived with me in active labour at 4pm but the ward was busy. So we were told to go for a walk and come back if the contractions continued. I was experiencing contractions in Westfield shopping centre!

When we arrived back at hospital at 8pm, I was put on monitoring and left on a bed in a room with my husband. I was given pethidine and transferred to a delivery suite. We had very little interaction with the midwife over the next few hours. When I felt the urge to push (around 12am), my husband had to leave the room to look for someone as noone came when I pressed the call button. Noone was there to coach me throughout labour. I was scared.

I was told that I wasn't ready to push. When my obstetrician arrived 15 minutes later she urged me to push because my baby's heart rate was showing signs of distress. Then the next thing was a man approaching me with a cannula in case we needed to go for a c-section. Noone telling me what was happening but that I needed to "stop screaming" so I could have the cannula inserted (which wasn't required in the end anyway).

Then an episiotomy, again, without information, explanation or expressed consent.

I was given a shower following birth by the midwife then left to get dressed alone. About an hour after birth, I walked the length of the ward to our room (approx. 2am).

Around 8am, construction crews arrived and were working loudly next door all day due to refurbishment in the ward - loud music, talking, banging right next door. I literally didn't sleep for the 5 days I was there. We were moved to a quieter part of the ward from day 3 (but only after requesting it!). However, it was too late for me. I had descended into mania, along with delusional thinking and hallucinations.

I was discharged after 5 days in hospital.

I was diagnosed with post partum psychosis after two presentations to Emergency, 7 days after giving birth. I was hospitalised away from my baby for 10 days.

I strongly believe that this was partly due to the multiple traumas during birth and following events causing severe sleep deprivation and also the lack of empathy, compassion and understanding from maternity ward staff. This problem stems from poor staffing levels and not enough post partum mental health education in hospitals, maternity wards and emergency departments.

Our decision to remain "one and done" was primarily due to my lack of faith and trust in systems that could adequately support us in antenatal, birth and post partum. We had private health insurance but were still out of pocket thousands of dollars post-birth with psychiatrist, psychologist and medication costs for nearly a year.