

Submission  
No 632

## INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

**Name:** Name suppressed

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Partially  
Confidential

I am a student midwife. The most gut-wrenching part of writing this submission is not knowing where to start. I wish I only had one experience to share. Throughout my three years observing and participating in caring for women in health facilities, I see women experience birth trauma and its ongoing impacts firsthand. Stories of childbirth are full of fear due to interactions with care providers.

I have seen birth. Physiological birth. I have heard the roars of women in labour. I have seen women battle through hours of endless contractions and through tears birth their babies. I have seen partners and family rally around her. I have seen obstetric emergencies handled with compassion and efficiency keeping the woman at the centre of the decision making. This is birth.

Unfortunately, this has been the absolute minority of my experience in my 1000+ hours clinical practice.

What I see much more frequently is the strength and power of women being replaced by fear and women believing that their bodies have failed them when really it is their care providers and the systems they are birthing in that have failed them.

The scream of the terrified women receiving a forced episiotomy without consent I will never unhear.

A woman declining a vaginal examination and it being done anyway.

A woman screaming STOP during a 'stretch and sweep' and being told I am almost done.

The woman who pleaded to be taken to birthing unit, told she wasn't in labour, only to birth her baby less than one hour later.

Women's knowledge of their own body continuously doubted.

Women declining intervention and being told they're going to kill their babies.

Partners watching their loved ones scream no to procedures and not have their voice heard.

Women coerced into making decisions that are not even based on evidence. Countless women being induced because their babies are 'too big' birthing babies that are 3 kilos.

The constant exposure to this tears away at what you know about birth until you think this is normal. The impact of witnessing this trauma on a sometimes daily basis, unpaid and exhausted has detrimental impacts on a person. I can say firsthand the trauma I have seen women experience haunts me and has changed me forever. The times I've witnessed it and felt so helpless. The times I have probably unknowingly participated due to the culture surrounding maternity care breaks my heart.

This does not mean I am not cut out for the birth space. This means the birth space is broken.

I can't understand why women so forgotten in the birth space. The same woman whose body has been capable of forming life are left feeling dehumanised, violated, and powerless.

This isn't birth. This is obstetric violence.

Please educate girls in schools and women about childbirth and pregnancy.

Please give student midwives more training opportunities with homebirth or private midwives.

Please create insurance options for homebirths.

Please educate girls in schools and women about childbirth and pregnancy.

Please prioritise continuity of midwifery care.

Please ensure obstetric education includes low intervention birth and the observation of normal birth.

Please listen to our voices.

Thank you.