

Submission  
No 578

## INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

**Name:** Name suppressed

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Partially  
Confidential

I am a first time mother living in [REDACTED] NSW. I had conducted a lot of research, read books and listened to stories in preparation for my birth. I exercised, ate well and prepared my mind and body. I was excited to experience birth, a beautiful and natural part of being a woman.

I decided to give birth at [REDACTED] hospital as many around me expressed their fear of home births. As I live in a rural area, private midwifery or continuity of care is very difficult to access.

I chose not to receive a GBS swab as I had no intention of medicating myself and my baby with antibiotics unnecessarily.

When I called the hospital to say I was in labor, they told me I had to be at the hospital within a time frame. I didn't realise I could say 'no' to hospital policy. They immediately put a cannula in and put me on antibiotics. They messed up the cannula and blood spurted everywhere.

I had discussed with the midwife my stance on pain relief; I wanted to try natural relief methods first. The first midwife tried to persuade me to take morphine before offering any other strategies. Luckily, at this point, I was aware enough to remember my education and say no.

I had a prolonged labor. My baby nor I were ever in danger. However, with time pressures of the hospital and the anesthetist going home, I was pressured to have an epidural with the threat that if nothing progressed in two hours of the epidural I would be having a cesarean.

I was pressured into having five vaginal examinations throughout my labour. In my birth plan, I had requested no intervention and this was expressed to the midwives. During one of these vaginal examinations, the obstetrician attempted to push back a cervical lip midway through a contraction. She did not explain what she was doing. I felt my body automatically pulling away from her and I became unconscious for a split second from the pain.

I had requested a physiological third stage. But as I became more vulnerable and my choices stripped away, the midwives coerced me into accepting an actively managed third stage, "to speed it up."

I ended up requiring an emergency cesarean. The hospital was understaffed and so I waited four hours to go into theatre from the time the decision was made to have a cesarean.

I had requested delayed cord clamping. The staff said they were able to do that even with a cesarean but I realised later on from looking back at photos that the cord was cut before the baby was even properly lifted from my stomach.

My birth notes were written down as "failure to progress." My birth was not explained to me and I felt that if I should complain, the response would be "that's hospital policy."

I had one appointment with a midwife postpartum. They checked my scar and said it was healing nicely. They didn't explain about wound and scar management and therefore I have a large keloid scar that is irreversible. I only found this out after seeing a women's healthy physio (I had to travel 3 hours) and she explained it to me.

I developed postpartum depression and suffered symptoms of PTSD. I felt there were no supports in place for me other than the 6 week check up with my GP. I felt unable to talk about it and the doctor didn't even ask.

I'm 18 months PP and still have symptoms of PTSD including fear of falling pregnant again.

I believe we don't have the supports in place to protect women at their most vulnerable during birth. We birth in a society that values efficiency and policy over compassion and skill. We are coercing our women in their most vulnerable state, to accept treatment akin to a production line. Women should be educated that hospital policy is not law and hospitals should not be depicting it as such.