

Submission
No 581

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 8 August 2023

Partially
Confidential

On the 27th of May 2019, my first daughter was born at [REDACTED] in [REDACTED] Sydney through the private system at 40 weeks and 1 day. I didn't experience any complications during pregnancy aside from some bout of slightly high blood pressure. My labour started on the 26th of May 2019 at about 7pm. I took my time heading into hospital and only made my way in when the pain started to become unbearable. By the time I got to hospital, it was the early hours of the morning. I cried and screamed in pain for hours until my mother took charge and ordered me an epidural. I then calmly and patiently awaited nature's course until I was fully dilated and ready to push. I pushed for about an hour with no progress. By the 1 hour mark, the midwife called in the head midwife to see what was going on. The head midwife noticed that my daughter's head was sideways and stuck. Instantly, they had the OB on duty called in with about 5-10 different nurses and drs and an ultrasound machine to determine next steps. Within minutes my calm and serenity turned into terror and panic as I was rushed into theatre for an emergency c-section. With a full spinal block, episiotomy and one last try at forceps, my daughter was yanked out from my vagina.

For recovery, I was placed in a shared room with a baby who was crying non stop. I couldn't sleep, I was in so much pain, I could hardly move and the midwives kept taking my precious new baby into the nursery so I could try get some rest. Who could rest after such a fearful experience, in a room with a constantly crying newborn (that isn't your own baby) and with nurses continuously taking your baby away!?! To make matters worse, my husband wasn't allowed to stay and comfort me due to hospital policies. I developed intense baby blues and couldn't stop crying for at least two weeks. Not only was this completely against my parental instincts, to have my baby rooms away from me, but it didn't prepare me for what was to come at home where I felt completely lost.

At my 6 week check, I was told that everything was fine and all had healed well. I decided to visit a pelvic floor physio to gain a second opinion and my GP supported this with a chronic disease management plan. My scar had caused tension in my pelvic floor and I had lost control of some of the muscles. With therapy I was able to gain everything back. I believe that these care plans should be included as basic post natal care for all women!

On the 27th of Feb 2021, my second daughter was born at [REDACTED] in [REDACTED] Sydney as a public patient at 40 Weeks and 2 days. At 34 weeks, I was admitted to hospital for monitoring as I had experienced a change in fetal movements. With monitoring and a scan I was discharged home with all appearing normal. However, my baby was already measuring at 80th percentile for weight. At each following appointment I worried about the baby getting stuck but was continuously reassured that these scans can be inaccurate and all with progress naturally as it should.

I laboured well with my second baby and things progressed quickly. Before I could get any pain relief, it was already time to push. During this process there was a point where the room filled with people and I soon found out that my baby was born not breathing. She had gotten stuck in the birth canal around her trunk (trunk dystocia) that had caused her to stop breathing. This was because she was born at 4.6kg. She was treated with chest compressions

and resuscitation and was rushed to the NICU where she would spend the first week of her life. She was soon diagnosed with hypoxic-ischemic encephalopathy (HIE).

The midwife who delivered my baby was extremely apologetic as if she felt she had done something wrong. This was very confusing and unsettling. I felt as though I was not listened to throughout the end of my pregnancy and perhaps this situation could have been avoided if I were more assertive with my instincts. Once discharged from the hospital we received no follow up support as parents (outside of tracking my baby's development). I spent the next year in therapy.