

Submission
No 662

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Mrs Grace Beaver

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Partially
Confidential

My name is Grace and I am a 32 year old mother. I have experienced 4 births. I have 3 living children 6,4 and 10months.

My births have included an emergency c-section in 2017, a hospital VBAC in 2019, a TFMR in 2021 and a homebirth with a private midwife in 2022.

I gave birth at _____ hospital, and subsequent births were _____ and at home in _____

My first birth was the most traumatic.

I was showing questionable signs of possible pre-eclampsia late in pregnancy. I was told by the time the medication started working to bring my blood pressure down, it would be a bit late, and that an induction is going to be my best option. I was not given any guidance on risk surrounding the cascade of intervention surrounding this and the doctor was adamant this was going to be the best option.

I was given the gel, and then the syntocin. My contractions started hard and fast and I felt out of control immediately.

I was lucky to have a bath where my waters broke and I was told to get out for monitoring.

I felt like I was unable to regain any clarity, and the contractions felt so unproductive. I was not supported to be up and moving, I couldn't move from sitting cross legged on the floor.

I was able to be lifted on the bed, I was told that they would "just pop a little clip into the top of baby's head" (I didn't know anything about it and had I have known there is NO way I wouldve allowed it to happen. She had a scab on her head for at least a week after birth). I did not feel I had a chance to consent properly due to the way they worded what they were doing.

They waited until my support team left the room for the doctor to say I was a failure to progress (I had no idea that this is because it wasn't "real" labour), and a c-section is needed because baby is in distress.

I then had a midwife, under her breath, tell me she doesn't even know why we were going to theatre because she didn't think it was an emergency c-section scenario yet. By the time my support team came back in, I was coerced into signing the documents and I was shattered.

I felt everything was ripped from me from the start, and I wasn't fully aware of the high chance of risks.

After the c-section, I was put into my own room (which was great), however I had to lay in that room and listened to another woman on other side of the wall give birth naturally to her baby.

The MCHN that came to visit me gave me all the information regarding an upset baby- told me the risks about SIDS as she was leaving and then said "sometimes babies just don't wake up."... and left.

I fell into Postnatal depression and anxiety.

My second birth:

I was told by the doctor at _____ Hospital that by having a VBAC, I was "irresponsible" and that i am "at high risk of having a dead baby".

I was told I would have to travel nearly 1hr, and drive past my local hospital as they don't support a VBAC there due to limited resources.... but manage to have it when they have decided on emergency c-sections.

It was raining heavily and a big thunderstorm was happening when I was in labour, so I made the judgement call to present to my local hospital to be assessed before travelling in a storm. When I arrived, I was greeted with "you've been told not to attend this hospital, it's irresponsible to have turned up and not gone straight to _____", by a midwife and ward staff. I was then asked if I needed a wheelchair and again scolded for turning up.

The next midwife supported me through being assessed and was the best part of the labour. However when I got to the next hospital via ambulance, my experience was a midwife coaching me to push. She told me I had an anterior lip she would "just hold out of the way" and proceeded to insert her fingers to do so while telling me when to push. Due to this, I received a severe clitoral tear that required stitches. I was then told that I was stubborn and couldve listened better to when she told me I had to push.

After these two experiences, I then had a TFMR which was traumatic in its own right
However I was treated with respect and dignity.

By my fourth baby, I decided that I had experienced so much intervention, trauma and heartache that I was not going to engage the system again. I chose to have a home birth with a private midwife and it was the most healing experience. Continuity of care, and funding for midwives to be apart of Medicare is essential for women to receive care they are entitled to. Mothers are entitled to dignity, respect and the support required to allpw them to safely transition their baby into the world. "A healthy mum and bub" needs to include emotional, mental and spiritual wellbeing too. Not just that they survived.

It is time for change.