

Submission  
No 646

## INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

**Name:** Name suppressed

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Partially  
Confidential

In 2021, in the middle of a hard COVID lockdown, I gave birth to my beautiful boy. My birth, that I was informed, prepared and so ready for was traumatic and still

Impacts me today despite it being close to 3 years on.

I had a healthy and very normal pregnancy. I exercised regularly, ate well and my baby was growing perfectly. At 40 weeks the doctors and midwives at the hospital I was birthing at began pushing for induction. At my appointments, it was suggested to have a stretch and sweep and multiple examinations. Although my baby was healthy, the amniotic sack was perfect and I was feeling great I was still booked in for an induction.

Upon arrival for induction we waited hours in Emergency before being seen. I was given the gel that evening and my partner told he had to leave as he wasn't allowed to stay the night.

This was the beginning of a series of events that left me with PPA & PPD and years of psychology appointments and bills.

The following morning I had my 'assessment' in the birth centre - I was 3cm dilated but not fully effaced. We were told my partner could come back and wait with me in the ward as there was no room in the birth centre. That day they had over 30 babies born and this impacted our ability to get anywhere near the centre until almost 8pm that evening.

We were left to labour on the ward for hours - no access to the pool, shower or any basic birthing tools. A midwife came in every few hours and despite me saying I was in labour was continually told it was 'active' labour because it didn't meet the times they set. My body and my partner knew this was not the case.

After hours of being alone and riding the pain of labour alone my partner demanded at least a birthing ball and someone to explain why we were still in the ward, when we could go to the birthing suites or just know what is happening.

Hours passed and still no information about when we would be able to move rooms. By this stage my labour was progressing and contractions were very close together. I desperately wanted access to a shower or bath but was refused because we were on the ward not in the birthing suites. No one read my birth plan, no one asked if we needed anything. We get completely alone and scared.

It had been hours since I had been able to use the bathroom and when we told the midwives nothing came of it. Eventually I sat down to use the toilet and my waters broke. Finally, the midwives believed I was in active labour.

We were taken down to the birthing suites - to be left alone yet again. Not one person came in after we were initially dropped in the room and by this stage I was feeling the pressure of needing to push. My partner wasn't able to get any of our things set up and the room was cold and uninviting. Eventually we pushed the emergency button because I knew I was ready to push. When the midwife came in she dismissed me and said there was no way I was ready. She then did a intents exams and could feel my babies head.

She helped me onto the bed on all fours which we were so grateful for as an active birth not on my back was a top priority for us.

After some time she decided it was taking too long and the monitor around my belly kept slipping off because I was lying over the ball. She told me we had to put the monitor on my babies head internally and therefore I had to be on my back.

Once on my back her and another midwife told me to put my feet up and start pushing. I was so uncomfortable and desperately wanted to be off my back. They wouldn't let me and before we knew it there was more people in the room and a doctor telling me if I didn't get my baby out soon he would use a vacuum. This terrified me but I couldn't push when lying down and no one listened to us asking to move. I was so scared and my partner was shocked and didn't know what to do. Shortly after Mr the doctor said if I didn't get him out they'd cut me. They did so in two places and I very quickly started bleeding profusely.

Just as I pushed my baby out and finally held him on my chest a midwife began jumping and slamming her arm into my stomach saying my placenta wasn't coming out. They gave me a needle and continued to slam my tummy with arms and elbows. The doctor then told me I had to go to surgery and I was losing too much blood. They took my baby off me, I don't know where to and shoved an iPad in my face, they said I had to sign a waiver as I might have to have a hysterectomy. I had no idea what was happening or why. I was being yelled at and taken away from my partner and baby before I even got to kiss my boy or say goodbye to my partner.

Hours later I woke in recovery and just cried and cried for my baby, to know if he was ok and I was ok.

I was taken back to the birthing suite where my oftener had been left the whole time, alone with our baby, no idea what had happened to me or if I was ok. He knew there was significant blood loss but no one told him anything more.

We then were left alone, again, in the suite. No access to anything - food, water, shower or a bed.

After what seemed like an eternity we were moved to the ward (they stated they were too full before this point in time). We were very lucky to have an amazing midwife in charge who knew what had happened to use over the last 24 hours and wrote an exemption for my partner so he was at least able to stay with us for the coming hours and potentially days.

We ended up staying for 6 nights, a combination of tests needing to be done on our boy (that returned nothing except absolute terror for 24 hours for us not being able to see him and be with him) and the midwives not believing I was ok to have my catheter removed.

We had multiple midwives give us different information - some kind and caring and some cold and uninterested. I had a PPH of 2.5L, this in turn meant I had trouble bringing my milk in and I had absolutely no help in understanding what had happened to me or why I couldn't get my milk in properly. Some midwives shoved my baby into my breast but no one truly sat down

and explained anything to us about feeding it latching or anything to do with helping our newborn.

The traumatic experiences that we endured then confined at home with months of ILBC appointments, weight gain issues and appointment after appointment. It wasn't until my check up with my shared care GP that she finally asked if I was ok and then and there helped me get a mental health plan organised to deal with the PPA & PPD that had started.

For years I have struggled to process and understand what happened. It took a long time to talk about it and be able to know that none of what happened was my fault. The lack of continuity of care, understaffed hospitals and a process that does not support women to listen to or trust themselves is the cause for so much trauma in the birthing world. Almost every woman I know has some level of trauma. It is few and far between the stories we here of births where the woman is supported and listened to and allowed to follow her body and her baby.

I desperately hope this changes. The impact is so great and is something we have to carry around for the rest of our lives.