

Submission
No 727

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Mrs Nicole Maisey

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Partially
Confidential

My name is Nicole Maisey and I gave birth at the age of 29 in July 2022. This was my first pregnancy and my first birth.

I gave birth at Private Hospital in NSW. My husband and I were very fortunate to be able to go private and have our very kind obstetrician throughout our entire pregnancy and labour experience.

At 38 weeks of gestational age, I tested positive for Covid-19 and fell quite ill. My obstetrician cancelled my 38 week check up despite hypertension throughout the third trimester. On day 3 of being covid positive my husband unfortunately tested positive. On day 6 of being covid positive I did reach out to my GP as I had concerns about my breathing but was advised a telephone appointment was all they could offer. I was prescribed an inhaler over the phone.

On day 7 of covid, my obstetrician checked in with me and said she would like to see me the following day. That night, at 39 weeks of gestational age, my contractions started at 9pm. I immediately called the midwives at my private hospital and was told I was most likely only in early labour and it could last days. I enquired what their covid 19 policy was and if my husband was allowed to attend but the midwife told me not to concern myself with those details as I was only in early labour.

At 10pm the contractions were more painful, I was vomiting and the contractions were lasting three minutes and were two minutes apart so I called the midwife back. Sounding rather annoyed, she explained vomiting could be normal and to call back when the contractions were closer together.

I called her back 30 minutes later, explaining the contractions were incredibly painful and were back to back contractions. She then said she would get a room ready but I was not to come to the hospital until she called me back with a room ready. She also then took this opportunity to tell me my husband was banned from attending the birth as he was also covid-19 positive.

I don't have any immediately family in Australia so my husband called his mother who agreed to meet us at the hospital.

We waited and waited at home and when I couldn't take it anymore as I thought I could start to feel the baby's head, we ignored the midwife's advice and drove to the hospital which was only a 10 minute drive away.

My midwife was outside the hospital having a cigarette upon arrival. Upon seeing me, she asked if I was Nicole Maisey and shouted at me for arriving when she hadn't granted us permission. I was bending over the car screaming in pain at this moment and she slapped our car to tell my husband to open the boot as my husband was only on day 4 of covid and was extremely sick and didn't want to leave the car to infect the unmasked midwife.

My mother-in-law arrived at the same time and we were shown into a delivery room. The midwife checked how dilated I was and said I was only 2cm. I begged for an epidural and the midwife said she'll arrange one but it may take a while.

We were left alone in the birthing room from then (around 11.15pm until 2am). She never informed us where the buttons were to call for help and every time my mother-in-law stepped outside to ask for some ice or assistance the midwife shouted at my mother-in-law to get back into the room. When the anaesthesiologist arrived at 2am, he administered the epidural but I could still feel the pain. As he was about to increase my dosage, the midwife asked to check me again and realised I was now 9cm dilated. The anaesthesiologist was shocked as I shouldn't have received any epidural that late and my midwife rushed out of the room to call my obstetrician.

My baby was safely delivered at 3.30am with the help of an episiotomy and vacuum.

After I was stitched up and the obstetrician left, the midwife left too. My baby soon became incredibly unsettled and was covered in meconium all over me. My mother-in-law tried to get the midwife to come back to help us but she shouted at my mother-in-law saying "no, the mother is busy doing skin to skin. Get back in your room. I'll help in a bit." She eventually came in over an hour later. I asked for assistance to breastfeed as a first-time mum, as I thought that might be why my baby was crying, and she said "did you not attend antenatal classes?".

The midwife showed me how to breastfeed but rather hurriedly and left soon after as her shift was over. A new midwife then helped us who was incredibly kind and took her time to show me how to breastfeed my newborn and helped me shower and clean up.

Upon waiting for a room, we were told I would then have to isolate by myself as NSW had a 10 day isolation period for covid-19 and my mother-in-law would have to leave me. I was horrified and begged the midwives to allow my mother-in-law to stay. They then said yes, but she would have to isolate in the room with me and not leave. My mother-in-law was 60 years old and hadn't packed anything for an overnight stay. I begged them to reconsider and they finally allowed my mother-in-law to return in the morning wearing an N95 mask and could show a negative RAT test.

The next few days in hospital were the worst days of my life. Any calls for assistance were met with delays of at least 30 minutes as midwives had to dress in full PPE gear. It was clear they saw this as a bother and would put any calls from me for assistance at the bottom of their priority list. I also fell incredibly sick very soon afterwards and after extensive tests I was diagnosed with pneumonia, pre-eclampsia, a bug in my blood and also suffered an allergic reaction to my first round of antibiotics. I never slept more than a full one hour during my entire 7 day stay due to blood pressure checks, medications that had to be taken to the hour, new IV antibiotics and not to mention a newborn I was forced to take care of myself.

My husband was finally allowed in the hospital to see our little girl when she was 6 days old.

During my entire stay at [redacted] I felt ashamed and unworthy of being a mum as I had caught covid-19. Bio hazard labels were stuck to my door, warning all personnel of what virus I had. I heard other new parents talk about me as they passed me in the hallway (I was placed in room 1. The room all personnel had to walk past to get to the rest of the maternity ward). I was refused morning and afternoon tea as the lady with a trolley wasn't allowed to enter my room. I was refused visitors until I was on day 11 of covid. My husband was refused to see his newborn and his wife until he was also on day 11 of covid. I was discouraged from receiving in person medical care whilst pregnant and covid-19 positive. We were treated like criminals rather than victims of the pandemic. NSW needs to change their policies and level of care they give covid-19 positive patients, so that covid-19 patients are treated with more dignity.

All hospitals should also send patients a feedback survey. A full comprehensive feedback survey where feedback on staff and practices are encouraged and asked for in detail instead of a brief "rate our staff out of 5". All feedback should be reviewed by a dedicated board/committee. That midwife I had on duty when I gave birth should not be practising.

Thankfully, after reaching out to my local child health nurse at 3 months postpartum, she referred me to free counselling through our local health district. I was diagnosed with PTSD from the birth and PPD.