

**Submission
No 728**

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

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I planned long and hard to have a natural birth with low intervention and what I got was the exact opposite. I was treated like a piece of meat, I was threatened and ultimately fell victim to the infamous cascade of intervention.

Before I even made it to hospital I was under pressure to make sure my labour and delivery fit into my midwife's schedule. She made it clear to me that she only worked a 12-hour shift and if I didn't deliver my baby in that time that I would have to have another unknown midwife.

I laboured at home for as long as I could, being a first-time mum I was naturally unsure when was the best time to go into the hospital. We arrived and within a few hours I was being encouraged to push during my contractions - even though my body was not ready to push. This coached pushing led to the midwife asking for an internal examination, which is when everything went downhill. My body got the urge to push after I was examined and my midwife informed me that I had a cervical lip which meant that I had to stop pushing. I had two midwives literally holding me down on the bed telling me to breathe through my pushing urges and stop pushing while they organised an epidural. The epidural was to stop my body from pushing because apparently that was what needed to happen. The epidural came and did not work, so I needed to have a second one. In the meantime they started antibiotics because being hot and cold was cause for concern (it is not, it's a normal response to the body pushing and contracting but not in hospital policy). I cannot tell you what else they injected into me that day, I know they put some pain killers in me, antibiotics.. what else who knows. They then started pitocin to get contractions started again. At this point I was completely naked on the bed when a full team of doctors walked in and stood at the foot of my body.

It was the most humiliating time of my life. My husband told them all to leave. They did not knock or ask if they could come in. It was as if I wasn't even a real person and who cares if I was embarrassed or not, it felt like I did not deserve the dignity of some privacy. This is when a doctor told me I had one hour to push my baby out or I have to have a caesarean. Naturally they came back in and told me that the baby wasn't recovering from contractions so I had to have a caesarean. On the way to theatre I was throwing up from all the concoction of drugs that they had pumped me with and in the theatre I felt like I was a cow there for the butcher. Because the second epidural failed they had to do a spinal block. I asked the doctor to make sure my baby was brought straight to me once she was out. They did not do this. They took her and I was left paralysed on the bed screaming 'where is my baby' and no one answered me. She finally was brought to me when I started having shakes so bad because of all the drugs that they took her off me. Then when we were in the recovery area the midwife did the checks and dropped my baby on her head onto the counter top she was doing the checks on. Furthermore the doctor doing the surgery used staples to close the incision. Staples haven't been used for surgery for years, yet they decided to leave huge scars on my stomach from this one.

I have recently just had another baby. At home. with a private midwife. and it was the most beautiful experience of my life. I laboured naturally, was not coached or on a timeline. My baby came after a totally natural physiological birth with zero tears and I felt amazing. I now encourage every woman I know to stay as far away from the hospital system as possible. The maternity system in Australia is disgusting and all the protocols and policies need to be revisited and adjusted with up-to-date research. I know ONE mum who has had a good experience in the

hospital system. ONE. I know plenty of mums who are now free birthing because they dont want to go into the system but cannot afford a private midwife. Women would rather not have a medical professional at their birth regardless of what implications that may have then go into hospital and have a baby. In a country where medical care is free, people would rather not have it than accept the free care. What does that say about what type of care people are receiving.