

**Submission
No 730**

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

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At 36 weeks gestation, we discovered at a growth scan that our baby was breech, when we had been told for a couple of months at every check that baby's head was down. The dating scan also showed that there was something concerning with the brain but it should've been picked up on the 20 week scan, leading everyone to believe it was human error rather than a true concern.

I was caught up in the fear of our health professionals, as our local hospital is not equipped to delivering a breech baby vaginally. I was not offered the entire range of options available to me, but rather scared into an ECV. The ECV alone was an incredible trauma, one which was very casually explained to me, instead of being up front and honest about what this intervention may lead to. After the traumatic experience of the ECV, it failed. I had a couple of weeks to wrap my head around the idea of a c section - surgery being one of the most truly terrifying thoughts to me.

The night of my ECV, my waters broke. I didn't experience a single contraction. Was made to feel like an idiot when I went into hospital not having put on a pad when water was gushing out of me, (I had a soaked towel, a pad wouldn't have done much) but it was an inconvenience to the staff as they weren't convinced it was my waters. When we confirmed it was, I was put into a private room, left alone with no real explanation of what the day ahead might look like. Eventually we were called in for our c section, my husband was told to wait outside, leaving me entirely alone, meaning the emotional support I had in preparation for not just surgery but meeting our first baby was that of strangers.

While they were wonderful at their job and caring for my physical health and that of my babies, I'm not just a body. I am a mind and a soul and both of those were broken that day. I had to disassociate to mentally cope with birthing my baby. Who was then taken straight from me, wiped off all vernix and given to my husband all wrapped up so I met a tiny squishy face. Because of this huge disconnect with myself, I also experienced a disconnect with my baby. We did not bond. It took a lot of time and effort and love for us to achieve a bond, which was a mammoth challenge while I was still grieving the birth I had hoped for, the bond I had dreamed of and in very deep, dark trenches of PPD and PTSD.

4 years later we have NDIS support for my sons suspected ADHD, ODD and possible ASD, and every single practitioner has asked after his birth and correlated the trauma to his disconnect. He wasn't ready for the world and 4 years later we're still trying to teach him that he is safe.