

Submission  
No 734

## INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

**Name:** Miss Ashley Joyce

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Partially  
Confidential

My name is Ashley, I am 32 years old, I live in NSW & I have a 10 year old daughter and a 16month old son.

There are a little over 9 years between my children due to infertility and the need to do IVF to bring our son into our world.

I gave birth to my daughter at Hospital on the 12th of May 2013 and my son in the very new Hospital on the 29th of March 2022.

I waited 9 years to re-do birth my way. Except "my ideal birth" was taken from me.

I was induced due to being an IVF pregnancy. I asked for gas only. When I sucked on the gas I felt like I was getting nothing. There was no machine noise, no taste. I was just told I've had enough and to breathe and let it work. I asked for it to be turned higher and eventually was told it was up as high as it could go so I would just have to put up with the pain.

I asked for an epidural. This is not something I have ever contemplated for myself. I knew I could do this. I was born to do this. I'd given birth to my first baby with only using gas as pain relief with no issues so for me it just made sense that would happen again.

And yet here I was, amidst the chaos of birthing my son, not only in the highest level of pain my body had ever experienced but I was being forced to push my inner belief system aside and go against everything I believed I could do and have an epidural. I cannot express to you how it feels to make that shift mentally while in that moment.

By the time the Anaesthetist arrived in the birthing room I had brought my son into the world. He arrived quickly and I experienced a significant amount of bleeding. I remember raised voices coaching my birth. Again, not what I wanted. We weren't told that my partner could catch our baby without gloves, which definitely would've been the personal preference.

After my birth my body went into shock as a result of what I had been through. I couldn't hold my baby I was shaking so uncontrollably. Very quickly a female doctor entered the room. She was amazing. She looked me right in my eyes and spoke clearly and specifically about what she was going to do to help me and to stop my bleeding. She told me she was going to check for a tear via my rectum and I told her that I would need something to get through it as I couldn't deal with any more pain. I expressed to her that I didn't think the gas had actually worked and she looked around the room confused and walked to the power point and I heard her say "this gas has not even been turned on". She came back to my side and held my hand and said "I am so sorry for what you just went through."

The same doctor also confirmed with me the next day in the maternity ward that I had birthed without any pain relief because for some reason the gas machine hadn't been turned on.

This is a trauma. I still struggle to speak out loud about a birth that I had so eagerly awaited. I have never watched my birth video or looked through my birth photos. A birth that I had anticipated to be so beautiful and empowering now lies dormant in my heart in a place I do not go very often. Even when wanting to write this took me until the last moments to submit.

Please, if you can do anything to change the way birth happens for women. Just do it.

My midwives that day were        &        . (If this even makes a difference)

Thank you for reading my submission.

Ashley Joyce