

**Submission
No 759**

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Georgia Higgins

Date Received: 10 August 2023

I have given birth once so far in July of 2022. I had an incredible birth experience but I know I am an outlier and I know I had to work incredibly hard to set myself up for success. Most women are not so lucky or privileged to have access to the resource I had privately.

I attribute my happy, pleasant birth experience to my hard work in spite of the system not because of it.

I was living regionally and had to secure an OB, psychologist, psychiatrist, social worker, doula, private hospital and other support in a metro area away from home to get the support I needed. This all was done because of my research and honestly money. I finished work in my first trimester and focused on having a successful birth. This includes researching medication and processes that would not be contradicted with my mental health. I was so anxious knowing that the hospital or any of the staff would force their policies on my low risk birth to better suit staff schedules or hospital policy.

I had a water birth. Most hospitals it is against hospital policy because they do not train staff in it and they do not want any liability. It was against hospital policy at my hospital as well, not because it is not legitimate but because it complicates their systems.

The hospitals use complicated and threatening language to manipulate mothers into making it easier/cheaper/faster for hospitals. They say it's against policy - what that means is they don't want to do it. They make out like your baby will die if you do something against hospital policy - which is their guidelines. My OB was great in creating the opportunity for me to pursue my birth plan. The head nurse did everything she could and gave every threat she could to not allow me to get in the bath. She demanded a vaginal examination despite my not wanting or needing one and would not let me get in the bath without one. So I got on my back and her aggressive VE was the most painful part of giving birth. She was mad. She didn't want to be defied by the OB or allow me to birth naturally. After she did every check on me she could think of she had no other reason to delay. I am lucky I am white, young, skinny and healthy with family support and resources. I had a good experience because of my resources and privilege and that is a reflection of the system.

I had to advocate so hard to do what was normal. I am so grateful for the midwife who was allocated to me - she had trained in the UK and their training included water birth.

She was incredible at leaving my body to do the work and supporting as needed.

I had a mental health complication during my pregnancy and not one professional educated me as to the increased risks of PPDA with a managed third stage because of the drugs used. A birth worker told me and I ended up sending medical journals to my OB to educate him. That is not ok.

Not incurring birth trauma was my full time job for six months and still the stars had to align. Mental health is the responsibility of medical professionals also.

The language used talking to pregnant mothers is so aggressive and negative and often does not properly convey risk. This is an issue with “due date” terminology and going over term. Babies do not keep a calendar and dr say the risk of still birth increases after that date. It is nuanced and they use this information to scare mothers into thinking their baby will die at 40+1! The increase of the risk is so incredibly small but doctors manipulate language to get their outcome.

Please listen to Australian Birth stories podcast and hear the birth trauma and manipulative language used in these real women’s accounts.