

**Submission
No 761**

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Mrs Phillipa Reimers

Date Received: 10 August 2023

For me, personally, I didn't find my birth experience traumatic. It was very dramatic, and deeply disappointing, as it ended in an emergency caesarean section, after a long labour. I feel proud of how I laboured and I know there was nothing more that I really could have done under the circumstances.

But it was very traumatic for my husband. He hadn't slept well the night before, which would not have helped. And having the strong protecting and caring personality traits that are further developed by being a nurse and paramedic. I am aware that he felt very powerless to help me during the labour, despite participating in the hospital's antenatal class. He still helped to advise and support me during the labour process, including getting an epidural (which I was very afraid of). He was present for the birth of our son in surgery, which was a calm and ordered affair (at least from my perspective).

Unfortunately during the hospital stay I contracted COVID 19, which was VERY prevalent during January 2022. So when we arrived home with our beautiful baby boy, we were still having some feeding difficulties and our son was still losing weight. And then Covid symptoms started and we were very sick, including our son (who was admitted back into hospital for observation). But because of staff shortages at the hospital (and also a baby boom) our midwife was pulled to staff birth suite, and therefore, unable to come to our house and assist us with the feeding or the tongue tie we had just discovered.

During the next two months I was identified to be a mother who was struggling and the child and family health team came to our house to help us. While I was helped and (rightly) had lots of assistance, I think there might have been a mention of an app for dads. And that was about all the assistance that he got.

I knew that a lot had happened and I tried to get him to engage with the counsellor we had used before (but he didn't), I didn't realise how traumatic he found the birth until we did a Calmbirth course in preparation for the VBAC we are trying to achieve. He actually started talking about the birth of our son and how it was for him. To my knowledge no-one was disrespectful or dismissive of him or me, but he processed the event as traumatic anyway.

For me the postpartum was very traumatic, due to a very unique mix of personal circumstances (a long fertility journey and IVF being present in the mix), the pandemic, the policies in our birthing hospital/NSW Health to have "down time" for maternity services in Jan, including repainting the postnatal ward during a known period of lots of births and having a lactation consultant on leave and not replaced, leaving the staff without extra help on those days (which was during my admission). And then of course wait times for out-patient services. It took at least two weeks to get an appointment with the child and family health teams, who were to take over our care after the midwives couldn't come (it was on Zoom and was to help me use a nipple shield and continue to breast feed for another few weeks). So my husband had this follow up to a traumatic birth experience as well. Not sure if this is the scope of this inquiry, but I thought it worthwhile to include anyway.

This is also my perspective on my husbands experience. Not my husbands lived experience. Only he can give that.