

Submission  
No 777

## INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

**Name:** Mrs Melanie Schulze

**Date Received:** 9 August 2023

---

Partially  
Confidential

My name is Melanie Schulze, I live in [REDACTED] NSW. I'm 25 years old and I have 2 young boys, [REDACTED] age 21 months, and [REDACTED] age 2 months.

During my pregnancy with [REDACTED] I received antenatal care mainly in the town of [REDACTED] including from the midwifery team at the local hospital there. Shortly before the birth of my son my pregnancy entered the high risk category due to my BMI, meaning I would be unable to deliver my son in [REDACTED] so decided to birth in [REDACTED] NSW as that was my closest hospital able to birth for my situation. My waters broke naturally on Friday 22/10/21 at about 11pm and so my husband, mother and I made the 2 hour trip to [REDACTED] that night. On arrival I still had no contractions after rupture of membranes so the midwife set me up in a room and said to try and get some rest. At 7:30am my contractions had still not begun so the doctor discussed my options with me and we decided starting the hormone drip was the best cause of action due to meconium in my waters.

During the early stages of my labour I had a supportive midwife team and everything seemed to be going well, I opted for an epidural and the anaesthetist was prompt and professional. When the time came to birth my child after 10 hours on the drip, the doctor explained that things hadn't gone to plan and my son would need a bit of help. He discussed all my options with me and it was decided that I would have an episiotomy and forceps to assist the delivery of my son. I in no way believe my labour not going to plan was fault of my medical team but it was my experience over the following few days that left me never wanting to return to [REDACTED] hospital. As very common with a birth like mine, I had a rather large postpartum haemorrhage of over 2 litres. I was very weak and in an out of consciousness from very shortly after my son was delivered. He was a beautiful 4.58kg and a lengthy 58cm! Born at 17:53 on 23/10/2021.

The first part of my care that upset me was that his birth details, including the time of his birth and the length of my labour, were all recorded incorrectly by my delivering midwife on our medical records. Due to his size he needed frequent blood sugar monitoring, and I was so weak from loss of blood that I wasn't even unable to pick him up. Due to not being able to move me from the delivery room due to weakness the midwife team waited until 10pm to move me to a room, which should have been private due to my private health and opting to use it, but it was not. They then told my husband and mum they had to leave and unfortunately they had no where to sleep and due to the time of night we're not able to book anything, and so slept in the car.

The midwives brought my son to me from the nursery every 3 hours for a feed when blood sugar monitoring was required the first night. At 4am they left him with me as everything was looking good, but I was still unable to pick him up due to my weakness so needed to buzz every time he required attention of any way. The next day I was desperate for a shower and so my mum and a midwife slowly helped me walk to the shower. The midwife stated she would not change the sheets I'd been laying on, completely covered in blood, because I was "just going to bleed more". My mum said I was not getting back in the bed the way it was and she would change the sheets if that's what it took. Needless to say, the sheets were changed. After my shower I fainted before leaving the bathroom (but I was never left alone as this was a known risk due to my condition) and was wheelchaired back to my bed.

Every time I needed to use the bathroom over the next 24 hours I needed assistance to make it to the bathroom. Over night after my husband and mum had left, the midwives were extremely rude to me when I needed help. When I would buzz because I couldn't pick up my son when he needed something I was met with rolled eyes and angry sighs. My baby had done a poo in his nappy and I buzzed the midwife as I was unable to lift him, when she came she rudely said "well why aren't YOU changing his nappy?" After explaining I was too weak she once again rolled her eyes, changed him, and laid him back in his bassinet rather than passing him to me. The treatment I received from the midwives when no one was around felt horrible, especially as a first time mum.

It got to the point where I would ask my family for help to use the bathroom just before leaving at 7pm and then hold it until they came back the following morning at 7am. It also meant that I got no sleep because I was too afraid to buzz for help so sat up all night long with my newborn in my arms so I could feed, change and cuddle him without being a burden. But none of this seems as bad as when the medical team told me "you lost so much blood that we probably should have done a transfusion, but we don't like to give out blood". I could not wait to leave that hospital, but was too weak to go home. After 3 nights in [REDACTED] hospital, they transferred me to [REDACTED] hospital. My care at [REDACTED] was amazing in every aspect and I can not fault them, the midwives were so helpful and the doctors amazing. I swore I would never go back to [REDACTED]

When getting pregnant with my second son, [REDACTED] my husband and I discussed in length what we would do, as due to my BMI I would be unable to deliver in [REDACTED] again, and there was no way I was going back to [REDACTED]. We decided I would birth at [REDACTED] hospital. I had a doctor and midwife team in [REDACTED] as well as a local midwife in [REDACTED] so I didn't have to travel the 3 hour trip there and back every time I needed a midwife and not the doctor. I can not fault the care I received from my [REDACTED] team or my [REDACTED] midwife. I am very grateful to me team of medical professionals during this pregnancy and birth because I was adamant that I needed an elective c/section after my first experience. My medical team told me they would support me if this was my decision. After many lengthy and informative discussions we decided to try for another vaginal delivery and I'm so glad we did because it was the most healing birth and experience I could have hoped for.

I unfortunately never lodged a complaint against [REDACTED] hospital due to being overwhelmed with postpartum depression, but wish I had of.

I wish that medical staff would realise the impact they have on women in labour, especially when at their most vulnerable. If I could prevent even one person from going through what I experienced with my first birth, I would.