

Submission  
No 782

## INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

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Partially  
Confidential

I have given birth twice now, and have had 2 very different experiences. My first was in NSW, in 2014. I was coerced into an induction because they didn't believe me when I told them I knew when I ovulated so their estimated due date for me was wrong. I was not told the full process of the induction so my consent was given because I not only felt powerless to say no, but I only consented under pressure to the part of the process that was explained to me, not the whole thing. I ended up with a cesarean due to the medical staff's failure to wait. My body was not given time to dilate and I was forced to accept the syntocinon drip, which was turned up too strong and forced my body into back to back excruciating contractions. I truly believe that my cesarean was unnecessary and forced upon me. My next birth was in February this year at

I found that even going to a different hospital was not enough to stop the panic I felt at having to speak to obstetricians. At the first appointment I was cold, sweaty and shaking. I cried as I left. The head obstetrician told me if I left the baby's cord attached over 2 minutes that the blood would circulate back to the baby and make it sick. This was a complete lie and set me up to not trust their advice. Throughout my pregnancy, I was told vaginal birth has no value, that my chances of successfully birthing vaginally were extremely low due to my weight and age and that my baby would be stillborn if I insisted on going over 41 weeks. At the end of my pregnancy I was told on a Tuesday that my baby would be still born by the weekend if I didn't submit to a cesarean by Friday.

I was NEVER made to believe that I could birth vaginally. At one point I was repeatedly questioned over why I wouldn't agree to be examined vaginally, until I raised my voice and asked how many times do I have to tell you I do not consent? My sister had been forced into having a vaginal examination after she had yelled at the midwife to stop at that same hospital and I was not letting that happen to me too. They were aware of this fear but attempted to force me to agree anyway. Every appointment felt like a fresh opportunity to be bullied into submission. I made plans to freebirth because I did not feel safe birthing there. I was bullied into booking an induction, but I didn't show up.

I stayed at home in labour as long as I could, labouring at home with no medical assistance for over 24hrs as I did not want to put myself in a position to be bullied and coerced. I ended up calling an ambulance and going to maternity only after I had been unable to urinate for hours. Luckily a young doctor was on shift, with 2 midwives who respected my wishes. My doula and husband came with me and I birthed within 1.5hrs of arriving. I had agreed in the heat of the moment to a 'just in case' cannula, which had to be inserted twice so my both my hands were badly bruised. I felt a sadness that even staff who I felt a connection with were able to go against my birth plan when I was vulnerable and they were more likely to gain my 'consent'. The bruises on my hands as I held my baby were reminders that even though I had fought my hardest, that they were still able to use my vulnerability against me.

If I do birth again, I will freebirth at home, and probably come up with some pain relief alternative. I don't even think I could face the antenatal appointments.