

Submission
No 790

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

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Partially
Confidential

My name is Stephanie, I am 34 years of age. I am a mother to an almost 3 year old boy and currently pregnant with my second beautiful baby due next month in September 2023.

I live in the _____ of NSW and in October of 2020 when I was expecting my son I was the victim of what I would consider negligence during my labour.

I was in the _____ Hospital MGP and I was really excited about birthing my baby. My midwives seemed confident as I had a straight forward pregnancy and I naturally went into labour at 40w3days beginning the most traumatic event of my life so far which included 4 failed epidurals, a failed spinal and coerced into a caesarean under general anesthetic. Upon delivery my baby was taken from me which threw me into 2 years of PTSD and depression.

The following outlines this event for me in more detail..

After labouring 12hrs at home I went into hospital due to poor weather in our area and laboured in the tub straight away. My midwife was nothing short of absent, taking long naps and working on the computer providing no assistance or suggestions other than to check my cervix which I had made clear I was not interested in. She was not true to the midwife meaning of being with the woman. At the end of her shift I was exhausted and she suggested an epidural so I could rest and as she left the room the anaesthetist team arrived and administered an epidural that did not work. Due to it being a Sunday and only one anaesthetist being available for the entire hospital I had to wait hours for him to come back and redo the epidural. After he came the second time and redid the epidural he treated me as though I was a complaining woman in labour who he had no time for. The second epidural failed again after 45 mins. The team of nurses called him and he advised them to administer me more fentanyl through the Bolas which completely overdosed my system and caused me to throw up, have full body convulsions as my body came down in shock. This happened numerous times over the course of a few hours as we were waiting for him to come up a third time.

This process of failed epidurals, waiting hours for the same anaesthetist to readminister and being overdosed with fentanyl happened a total of 4 times in which I put a complaint into the consulting anaesthetist during my labour in which the attitude of the original anaesthetist completely changed on his fourth presentation and he suddenly seemed more empathetic.

During this process I was throwing up constantly while still heavily contracting and stuck in a bed only adding to the pain and discomfort without being able to reposition my body. By the end of the labour the inside of my mouth was completely chewed raw from the shaking and convulsions of the drugs I was able to speak properly for days.

I was heavily pressured into having a caesarean during this in which I strongly declined, desperately wanting to birth my baby vaginally and meet my baby with my husband.

After the 4th epidural my team of midwives suggested to induce me so that I could fully dilate and push my baby out vaginally. I was able to fully dilate and as I started pushing the epidural once again stopped working and I was pushing and throwing up and in absolute agony from the syntocinon. It was then my baby's heart rate escalated and I was taken to theatre for a spinal and forceps or a caesarean.

After I was assured the spinal would be instant relief it once again failed with no explanation and I was lying in theatre fully contracting and pushing and waiting for the on call obstetrician - pleading for help and for my life.

After 45 hours of an incredibly traumatic labour and a lot of hard work mentally and physically I then had to have a caesarean under general anaesthetic in which I was robbed of the opportunity to meet my baby with my husband and kicked off an incredibly dark and depressive 2 years of wading through birth trauma.

When speaking to the anaesthetist team the next day there was no responsibility or acknowledgement taken of the negligence, instead a suggestion that I have 'spina bifida' only adding to the doubt in my body and ability to birth and piling onto the trauma I had experienced.

I have spent nearly two years talking, processing and dealing with this traumatic labour. I experienced heavy dark depression - crying daily for 12 months, PTSD and panic attacks began after 18 months when I thought I had started to deal with my trauma.

This trauma stays with me leading into my next labour with an overshadowing fear and doubt in my body and ability and an absolute fear of needing any interventional drugs or medical assistance.

I am working hard to build confidence in my body and claim back the power that was taken from me, hopefully resulting in a more positive and bonding experience with my second baby.