

Submission
No 813

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Mrs Colette Puckeridge

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Partially
Confidential

My name is Colette Puckeridge, I have 2 boys ages 3 and 1 and gave birth to both of them at Hospital in 2020 and 2022 respectively. During my first pregnancy, I was reliant on the care in the antenatal clinic. I was considered high risk because I have a thyroid condition and my elevated bmi. At my first extended appointment in the antenatal clinic, a midwife insinuated that I was putting my baby at risk of death because of my weight, (despite me having a good diet and active lifestyle, and being a size 16-18) and presumed that I made poor lifestyle choices. This had a detrimental impact on my mental health and caused me to suffer considerable anxiety in the remainder of the pregnancy.

When I went into labour it was Easter 2020, during the first covid lockdown. The birthing unit was under construction and as such I birthed in the temporary unit. Upon arrival at 10pm I'd already been experiencing contractions for 20 hours. I handed the midwife my birth plan and she laughed and put it in a drawer. My pain was intense so they suggested giving me a sleeping tablet and I would be admitted. My husband However had to go home as per the covid regulations. I was terrified of what was to come. I then laboured alone in a room in the birthing unit for 7 hours.

I had no support, was given morphine to help my pain, but had no assistance getting to the bathroom which was several meters down the hall as the temporary wards had no private bathrooms. It was decided at 6am that my labour would be augmented, so it was left to me to call my husband to come back in to the hospital. My labour then progressed, and my son was born after 36 hours but he was quiet. He was rushed to the nicu and i was told "he's fine don't worry" but wasn't able to see him or hold him at all. My husband left with my baby and I was left to be fixed up. When I was able to go to the nicu to see my baby my husband had to leave as per covid regulations. I was alone in the nicu with 1 midwife who was helping another mother. I had no idea how to breastfeed and was left to it, the midwife tried to show me but it wasn't working.

When I was transferred to the ward, my husband was allowed 1 hour per day, and was kicked out promptly at the end of this time. After my traumatic birth, i was then left alone to listen to other women labouring and screaming for their husbands because they weren't allowed overnight. It was horrifying. I had a lot of colostrum Expressed for my baby but overnight when I was struggling a midwife said it would be easier to just give him formula. When I told her about the colostrum, she rolled her eyes, got the colostrum and just handed it to me, without explaining what to do. It was only when I was in tears with my screaming baby that a lactation consultant offered me a nipple shield. My experience with my first born left me with significant trauma and anxiety leading into my second pregnancy, leading me to hire a doula for extra support during pre partum, birth and post partum, because I did not believe i would receive it from the hospital system.