

Submission  
No 1043

## INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

**Name:** Name suppressed

**Date Received:** 15 August 2023

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Partially  
Confidential

In October 2021 I gave birth at major Private hospital in Sydney.

What was meant to be a beautiful experience meeting our baby for the first time was traumatic and didn't go as planned.

- **Unnecessary induction:** I wanted a natural vaginal birth, without intervention unless required for the safety of my baby, instead I was pushed into an induction. At 40w3d I started having contractions in the morning and headed into the birthing suite following their advice on the phone in the late afternoon. It took 45mins-1hr for them to get a read on the baby's heartbeat. They then examined me and advised I was only 1.5cm dilated. They asked if I wanted to stay or go home, so I asked for their advice not wanting to go through the same process again in a few hours. They said there was room and labour should pick up overnight so to stay. I didn't get any sleep that night and in the morning was advised I was only 3cm. The midwife said I was no longer allowed to go home and that I needed to discuss induction with the locum OB. I didn't want an induction but was told they were now committed to me having the baby that day and recommended I have my waters broken. She said if I continued to wait for labour to occur naturally I'd have no energy to deliver vaginally which would lead to further intervention. In this moment I felt trapped. I'd had no sleep, wasn't allowed to go home & didn't feel like I had any choice in the matter. I wish the staff had informed me the night before of the consequences if my labour didn't progress. I wish I went home.
- **Trauma to my body:** I proceeded with the induction and my baby was born within 3hrs of the induction. I didn't have an epidural and followed the OB's instructions on when to push but was told I had torn 'more than what they would have liked' and suffered a 3a degree tear. I could hear the locum OB asking whether my regular OB would usually do the stitching himself or send a patient to theatre which wasn't very encouraging. She then started doing it herself, it was very painful so they took my baby away before I could provide the first breastfeed. I asked why I tore so badly and she said 'the head was bigger than what I thought'. This didn't make me feel very good or cared for knowing that it could have been avoided by better head control as advised by my OB at my post-partum check-up. As a result, I've suffered physical & mental trauma. The recovery was extremely painful and required a lot of daily care. To protect itself from the tear, my pelvic floor has become overactive and can't relax causing issues emptying my bladder/bowel and painful sex. I've spent over 18months in physio costing me thousands of dollars & suffered post-natal depression as a result. I am still not ok.
- **Misinformation about breastfeeding:** After being stitched up I was advised to eat, shower and breastfeed once transferred to a room. Once I was settled the next midwife told me I had 'missed the opportunity for breastfeeding as the first feed must take place within the first hour'. I was devastated as I had only followed advice from the previous midwife. I felt like a failure from the get-go and disappointed at once again not being provided with information up front to make informed decisions. The next midwife that came in said that was not the case and to keep trying. This was extremely confusing being given such different advice from different staff members.

As a first-time mum I should have felt cared for and supported, but I felt scared and traumatised. Birth trauma has impacted both my physical & mental health, caused intimacy

issues with my partner and made me nervous about having another baby. I no longer have trust in the system and will be opting for a planned c-section for my next pregnancy.

If I could recommend three things to help prevent birth trauma and improve care they would be:

- Provide all pregnant women with access to a women's pelvic floor physio before & after birth which is covered by Medicare.
- Provide pregnant women and partners more information on their options to allow informed decisions to be made.
- Provide more care & support to avoid physical trauma for mother's wishing to have natural vaginal births.