

Submission  
No 1044

## INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

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Partially  
Confidential

I wouldn't say that I have experienced birth trauma myself. But I want to share how much difference midwifery continuity of care has made in my two births, both at [redacted] Hospital. When a friend heard second hand about my second birth, which was very quick, and that I had a post partum haemorrhage and needed to have surgery under general anaesthetic because of it, she said she was sorry to hear that it had been so traumatic. I still remember her wording, since I do not consider it traumatic at all. Although needing surgery was intense, it came after I achieved a VBAC, without having previously experienced labour at all. I felt like superwoman! Not only because of the outcome, but because of how respected and supported I felt by my caregivers, particularly my Midwifery Group Practice (MGP) midwife. In contrast, my first birth was a c-section at 41 weeks, the day after discovering that my baby was breach. I was under general midwifery care. Although I had seen one midwife for my antenatal check ups, I didn't know anyone that I saw on the day we learned that my baby was breach, or the day of my c-section. It was a relatively calm experience. I had a spinal block, so I was awake to meet my baby. But I felt so disappointed and unempowered about that birth – like I had no choices, like I had somehow failed. I was told I could not have immediate skin-to-skin with my baby, and had to be away from my baby for a certain amount of recovery time. With my second, my choices were respected. Some things didn't go to plan – I had wanted a water birth, but there was not enough time to move to a room with a bath. I ended up having an episiotomy, which was something I hoped to avoid. But since it was my MGP midwife who I knew who explained why she recommended it to me and sought my consent, I felt like it was an easy decision for me to make. I was able to have skin-to-skin and feed baby before I needed surgery. And even when the haemorrhage became urgent, I felt very calm. Having my known midwife there really made a difference.

It is clear to me that when it comes to birth, having the support of a known caregiver, who really cares about what matters to you, and with whom you build a relationship during pregnancy, during birth, and for post-natal visits, can make challenging events something that you experience positively. And conversely, lack of that support can mean that events that do not seem particularly bad can be an experience that leave you feeling unempowered and incapable – definitely not the way you want to feel at the beginning of motherhood.

I am currently pregnant with my third baby. I have moved out of the area for [redacted] Hospital, and I was keen to be in MGP at my new local public hospital, [redacted]. However, I was told I am ineligible to be in MGP, because I have had a c-section. The thought of not knowing who will care for me during birth, and whether they will be supportive of my preference for physiological birth, made me feel really anxious. I feel that the policy of excluding VBACs from MGP is arbitrary, and I worry that there would be other arbitrary policies that I would need to stand my ground against, and I do not want to be in the position of having to put energy into standing up for reasonable things that I want. I have chosen to engage a private midwife for this birth, and plan to birth at [redacted] the only hospital in NSW with admission rights for private midwives.