

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

My name is _____, I am 35 years old, I live in _____ NSW with my Fiancé and two Daughters aged 7.5 and 4 years of age.

I experienced trauma during my first Pregnancy, between Feb 2015 and November 5th 2015 at _____ Hospital. When I was pregnant I was 26 years old, I am from Ireland and did not have a support system, I had no one to advocate for me or to speak up for me, it was myself and my partner, our first pregnancy journey, thinking that this was just how it was.

I opted for gp shared care, I did not know about the midwife led care, I wasn't told about it or offered it. I realised after my daughter's birth that I was traumatised after the whole experience and I held so much anger and resentment for my whole journey and the experiences.

I am 5ft 2 and quite petite. My baby was small and not measuring up to the correct weeks gestation, my pregnancy was considered high risk and My daughter went off the Centile scale at around 35 weeks gestation.

A Female Doctor at hospital asked me if I took drugs, specifically Cocaine, when I answered no she told me that they would drug test my baby and find out. I did not take drugs.

I was informed that I would be having an induction and that a Foley's balloon catheter would be used at 37 weeks gestation, because my baby would not be able to handle labour. I was not asked for consent, I did not give informed consent, I didn't know that I could refuse, they did not tell me any of the risks. I was told; it doesn't matter if you want it or not, as long

as you understand.

I had to come to hospital at 3pm on the 4th of November, I had some lunch before I went to the hospital. I was told at hospital that the balloon would bring me to 3cms dilated and then it would fall out. The balloon was inserted in the evening, my partner went home, I did not know that my partner could stay to support me that night, I didn't ask and they didn't tell me. I was told not to make myself comfortable as I would be moved up to the Maternity ward, so I sat on a chair and waited for hours, I did not get fed all day or night, at 1am a nurse came in to my room and asked what I was still doing up, I told her I was waiting to go to the maternity ward, she said I would not be going up to maternity and to try get some rest, I got into the bed and tried to rest, I was kept awake all through the night to the noise of

women in labour and giving birth to their babies.

At 8 am the next morning the balloon had not come out, a nurse said it hadn't worked and that my cervix was not ripe enough. A nurse tried to Insert a cannula into my hand but she could not find a vein, she told me I had white collar syndrome. Finally a vein was found, another nurse came in and broke my waters, I was 0cms dilated on my first pregnancy. The drip was started to bring on contractions, I had a nurse in my room telling me what a natural labour entailed telling that because this is my first labour and being induced that it's going to be very long, I felt like these comments were not necessary. After hours I start to have pain, the nurse offered warm towels which I refused, I was offered gas which I did not want, the nurse still encouraged it, I put it in my mouth and it is a big mouth

piece inside my mouth, I heaved and took it out and said no. I was offered an epidural which I refused because I thought I could still do it myself, I was also offered a pain relief Injection that would last for 2 hours, I can't remember the name of it, I was told I could only have it once, I refused this also. At 12pm the nurse said I was 3cms dilated and in active labour, at 4pm I was checked again and the nurse said 3cms dilated, I was losing hope at this stage, I was in a lot of pain and my contractions were very close together and very long, 6 in 10 minutes, which I now know is hyper stimulation, all the while the nurse is telling me about natural labour, shortly after 4pm I asked for an epidural, an anesthesiologist could not administer the epidural so I had to wait for the head anesthesiologist to come administer my epidural. After my epidural I felt no pain so

I tried to get some rest, I was exhausted. I told my fiancé to go home to get some rest. They pumped up the drip, then told me I was not sensitive to it and that my baby was, they told me my hips were too narrow and that my baby was not coming down, my baby's heart beat started to drop and was not recovering, most likely due to the hyper stimulation that they never told me about. They told me they were considering emergency Caesarian section. I called my Fiancé to come back to the Hospital and that we were having a caesarian section. No medication was administered for my baby's heart rate. I was brought for an emergency caesarian section and my daughter was born at 7.05pm. My veins were collapsing and a cannula had to be put in again, when the Nurse was putting it in, it would not go into my hand and I screamed from the pain,

she found a spot in my arm, I felt scared. My Daughter weighed 4lb 14oz, her apgar score at 1 minute was 9 and again at 10 minutes it was 9. I did not get to see my baby when she was born, I didn't get to hold her or see her, she was brought to neonatal with no consideration given to me. They also gave her formula after I said I wanted to breastfeed and not to supplement with formula. I felt that nurses were discouraging me from breastfeeding, telling me it would take too long for my milk to come in, when I finally got to see my baby I wanted to feed her and they said you can't feed her she is too tired now. After my Caesarian section I went to recovery and then back to my room and did not see my child til hours later, I first seen my very first child via a photograph on a mobile phone. I am still upset about that to this day almost 8 years later. I did

not get to see my daughter til late on the 5th of November or early on the 6th of November. I was not given any food until the 6th of November at breakfast time, I had not eaten since Lunch time on the 4th of November this is roughly 43 hours. My baby was in neonatal for 6 days, My baby had a shallow/poor latch so I was given a nipple sheild. When we were being discharged a nurse told me I should stop using the nipple sheild, I did not know how to stop using it and continued to use it and to pump milk for 10 months when my daughter weaned herself. In the neonatal I was discouraged from holding my baby, I was told that she is growing when she is asleep. I felt ashamed and upset the whole time in the hospital at how small my baby was and I felt like a failure for not being able to grow a big baby and also for having a caesarian section, I cried every day and I

was angry . I apologised to the Female Doctor for the size of my baby and she said it's OK she's perfect you just have small babies. I also had an allergic reaction to the chlorhexadine for the caesarian section. The Female doctor told me of an ointment to get at the chemist, she wrote it on a piece of paper and told me not to show the staff at the chemist my stomach and back. When I went to the chemist they immediately asked what the medication was for, I told them and they asked to see it, I showed them. I had bubbles and blisters and sores all over my back and stomach as well as recovery from an emergency Caesarian section. The whole experience was so horrible. I continued through, I felt worried when my baby wouldn't sleep, I tried to not hold her so she could grow, remembering what the neonatal nurse said about her needing to

sleep to grow. I got diagnosed with post natal depression when my baby was 5 months old, I feel like my whole experience affected my bonding with my baby and was the cause of my post natal depression.

In 2019 I got pregnant again, this time I knew I would not be treated badly because I would not allow myself to be treated the same way, I opted for shared care with my GP again, this was the only positive of my whole first pregnancy, I was offered the midwife led care but I told them that I wanted an elective caesarian section and gp lead care as my pregnancy would likely be high risk again, at my first appointment I told the nurse/midwife what had happened in my first pregnancy about not meeting my daughter, she was

sympathetic and told me that hospital had changed since then, I told her to write it down on my file that I want to have skin to skin with my baby. At every hospital appointment I told each doctor or nurse that I wanted skin to skin and to see my baby when she was born. My second daughter's pregnancy went to high risk due to an antigen in my blood, she had to have scans every week to check the blood flow in the brain to ensure that she was not becoming anaemic, she was also quite small, like my first pregnancy, but this time around I just had to come to the hospital every 2 or 3 days for monitoring of the baby's heart, the doctors and nurses were very relaxed about her size and commented that I just have small babies, a far cry from my first pregnancy. My Daughter continued to be healthy so I got to continue my pregnancy until 38 weeks

when I got my elective caesarian section, the morning of my section I told my nurse I wanted to see my baby when she's born and the nurse told me she wasn't looking after the baby she was looking after me, I told her go and tell whoever is responsible that I need to hold my baby when she is born, I told the nurse that I needed to be out of bed after 8 hours and she agreed that if my baby was in neonatal that I could, I went down to a waiting room before my section and I told the next nurses that I wanted to see my baby and could they let someone know please. I got brought down to theatre and before I got a chance to say I wanted to hold my baby, the nurse who was inserting the cannula in my hand asked me if I was right handed or left handed I said right and she said OK we'll put this in your left hand so you can Hold bub, I felt such relief that It was

someone who was involved in the crucial birth was telling me this, I started to calm down a bit but I was overjoyed and overwhelmed and sad that I had to be so defensive for my whole pregnancy. When I went to get my surgery it was a full female team and that made me feel happy and that everything would be positive and OK. My baby was born at 10.31 am weighing 5lb 1oz and I got to hold her and have skin to skin with her it was amazing, she felt so warm and her eyes looked black but she was looking right in my eyes, I kissed her head, it was beautiful, I got to see her again when I was in recovery, and they wheeled me to see her at neonatal when I left recovery, I got to stay there with my partner and do the first feed and lots of skin to skin. I am so glad and thankful that I got to experience a pregnancy where I was respected and treated like I was

important, I am forever happy that I got to see what a normal birth was, my bond with my second baby was instant and so strong, with my first baby I feel everything got affected and it still makes me sad to this day. But my second birth was a positive one.

I feel that Hospital has changed since my first birth in 2015, I think it is important for women to meet their baby when they are born, I feel it is crucial. Also it is important to be to be given Information about possible procedures, to be told the risks involved, and to know that they have to give consent. I regret how ashamed I felt when I had my daughter, I should have been treated better.

I feel when women are away from their baby's when the baby is in neonatal, that the woman should be in a room with no

babies in it if possible. I also feel that hospital staff, nurses, midwife, surgeons, doctors should receive training in birth trauma and that there needs to be more funding into lactation support for new mothers.

Thank you for reading my submission

