

Submission
No 928

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

My name is _____ and I live on the _____, NSW.

In 2013 I had my baby boy at _____ Hospital. I was 25 and put into care with a group of about 8 midwives, none of whom had been there more than twice, and none of which were present at my birth.

I wrote a succinct birth plan and hoped for a natural birth. As it was my first birth I asked (in writing with the form they supplied) that I was not put under the care of a student midwife for my birth.

As my due date approached I felt a little cast adrift, I didn't have anyone I could ask questions, and my only option was to phone the hotline for the midwives and hopefully receive a call within 24 hours.

I was about 8 days overdue, it was Friday, and I was told I'd have to wait until after the October long weekend for a check-in as they were just so busy and couldn't fit me in. I had been experiencing contractions all day and felt very confused and scared.

We went into the ward as I felt I just needed to talk with someone and ask questions about what was happening with my body. The midwife that took care of me that evening was dismissive and brusque. She said 'welcome to the mad house'. She told me some women can't handle contractions, and I wasn't having real contractions because I felt them in my lower back and that's not where you feel them. In fact, I felt them in my lower back throughout my entire labour. She told me I should take a Panadeine Fort, go home, get some rest and my husband should call an ambulance if my baby comes quickly. I sobbed, explaining that my mother had a history of opioid addiction and I would prefer not to take opioid based medication. I was not offered any alternative. I was scared and tired and just wanted to be cared for. Apparently my cervix wasn't even 1cm dilated.

We went home in the early hours of the morning (around 5am), and by the time we arrived back at about 7.30am I was 5cm dilated. I was scared to come back to hospital as I thought I'd be sent home again.

On arrival I was put straight into care of a student nurse doing a maternity rotation who was extremely ill equipped and nervous. I didn't know I could refuse that. I could tell something wasn't right. She'd watch the monitor with her hand over the emergency buzzer and as soon as I looked at her she'd turn to me with a big fake smile. I was sat on a bed with a monitor, I had been doing much better standing and moving and wish I had been given this option.

The midwife and a doctor entered and checked my cervix. They asked how long I'd been pregnant and I said 41+2. They said that's long enough and broke my waters. They then told me they had to put a scalp electrode on my baby. They were asking if I was allergic to anything in case they had to make any quick decisions. I realised they were concerned for my baby's decelerating heart rate during my contractions, and wanted to know in case they needed to make any quick decisions and put me under anaesthetic, I asked for an epidural so I could be awake for his birth.

By the time they got me onto the operating table my epi was just taking effect. I was 10cm dilated, so they attempted a high forceps delivery. I felt so disappointed in myself that I couldn't have a natural birth.

My beautiful boy was born healthy and hungry.

My placenta was infarcted. I should not have been allowed to be pregnant that long, my placenta was dying and had I been properly monitored and induced earlier, what transpired may have been avoided.

I shook uncontrollably in recovery and then was taken to the ward. I waited over an hour for my husband and baby to get to me. Everyone was just so busy.

The second night on the ward was so awful. My baby was so so hungry and pooped all through his bedding. I had to hobble around in pain, finding clean bedding and the midwife did not help or even seem to want to answer my desperate questions. I asked her what I was meant to do because he wouldn't stop feeding. She told me he was 'cluster feeding' and that I was feeding him wrong and to just keep feeding him. She was so rude and dismissive and I just sobbed. I had no idea what she was talking about. I was so upset after that night that I went home the next day. I struggled with breastfeeding and the midwives just told me different things every time they came to my house. My nipples were shredded, however I ended up feeding by bottle for 18 months.

At 3 weeks PP I experienced a substantial bleed. I went to emergency. They took a blood test and without checking me or being seen by a gynaecologist or obstetric registrar, I was sent home. I was not given antibiotics or told to follow up.

At almost 8 weeks PP I experienced a Delayed PPH. At home, alone, with my tiny baby. I phoned an ambulance and had an emergency surgery to try to stop the bleeding. I haemorrhaged again in ICU and had an emergency hysterectomy. Despite internal and external investigations, no one has been able to figure out the cause of this. I believe it was a pseudo aneurism after my c section. Had I had a CT Angiogram with contrast there may have been the option to save my uterus.

The busyness and lack of continuous care throughout my pregnancy and PP has left me with compounded mental health issues. As someone who was already diagnosed with OCD and GAD, I also experienced PTSD. I have spent an enormous sum in psychological care and worked extremely hard to be a present and loving mum and wife. I dreamed of a bunch of children, and what transpired around my birth has caused inexplicable grief, and changed the entire trajectory of mine and my family's life.