

Submission  
No 980

## INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

**Name:** Name suppressed

**Date Received:** 6 August 2023

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Partially  
Confidential

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I live in the \_\_\_\_\_. I'm 34 years old and I have a two year old and am currently 8 months pregnant.

I live in \_\_\_\_\_ and had planned to birth at \_\_\_\_\_ hospital with the support of a doula and my partner. I was rejected from the MGP as it was full and offered the MAPS program which did not give me continuity of care in regards to knowing who would be there for one of the most significant moments in my life (my first child's birth). I was due to give birth early October 2021 and ended up having my baby on the 16<sup>th</sup> October.

At 38 weeks due to covid changes in regulation my doula application was denied. I explained to the hospital that my family line has some complex mental health issues that arose after childbirth and that having a doula there was my safeguard and preventative strategy to ensure I felt safe and supported in my birth to avoid any adverse mental health outcomes. This application was denied with an offer of a referral to their mental health team. As a mental health professional, myself I can tell you this is far less than sufficient and I have never felt more vulnerable, unsupported, and scared. I decided to switch to a homebirth and had an amazing private midwife and felt so supported and safe.

Unfortunately, after a long labour and heart decels from bubs after contractions we ended up making the decision as a team to head into hospital and it was decided best thing for bubs in that moment was an emergency caesarean. The nurse present in the operating room kindly held my hand as I reached out mid contraction before they gave me the spinal block. This gesture in this moment was everything and I am so thankful to that nurse.

After baby was not given to me, despite coming out crying and well. I was sent to recovery on my own and robbed of that first special hour with my baby and my partner was left alone with bub. This still brings me to tears every time I think of it.

In my aftercare some midwives were lovely and some not. I had one grab my nipple when I was trying to breastfeed and shove it into baby's mouth. I did not even ask or give consent for her to touch me and felt violated and disrespected.

When it came time to leave, I was very fragile and told I would need to go get a covid test on my way home if I wanted any home visits from the hospital midwives. I asked if they could test me on the ward as they had when I arrived, and they refused. I did not feel comfortable driving around and lining up for a covid test so we were left on our own by the hospital. Thankfully my private midwife was happy to do follow up and I felt very supported by her and the hospital staff would call to check in.

One last disrespectful interaction from the hospital was over the phone the midwife told me I must take the bandage off that day or the next or I would risk issues. I told her I did not feel comfortable doing it myself and I would wait for my private midwife to do it the following week and confirmed with my private midwife that that would be fine. The woman on the phone threatened that I needed to do it in the next two days and would call me the next day to check how it went. I then felt uncomfortable to answer any further calls from the hospital for fear of being scolded for not taking it off.

I am now fearful to go anywhere near a hospital for birth and have engaged a homebirth midwife for my upcoming birth. Again, I felt very safe and supported with her.

The hospital system needs to look at how they train their staff to work with women at such a significant and vulnerable time in their lives. They also need to look at how they can provide continuity of care to all women as the MAPS program – same midwife before and after birth but not at your birth is far less than sufficient. I also always felt like having a doula wasn't overly supported or celebrated. Hospitals need to recognise the amazing support that doula's offer and honour Women's choices in opting for specialised support in the birthing space. Doula's can be a real asset to the whole birthing experience and are proven to facilitate better outcomes for birthing people.