

Submission  
No 997

## INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

**Name:** Name suppressed

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Partially  
Confidential

I have two children, one born in 2014 and the second in 2016.

My first child was born at a private hospital in Sydney by elective caesarean surgery. Although it wasn't my preferred choice, for the safety of me and my child, we chose to go ahead with the surgery. His birth was great - it was fast, the staff were all lovely, and he was put straight on me as soon as he was born.

Everything was going well until they said that he had to be taken to the neonatal ward and that his dad should go with him. It wasn't explained to me what was wrong, and I was still in surgery as they wheeled him away.

After my surgery I was taken to recovery, and then to my hospital room. I wasn't given any news about my son, none of the staff came to see me to let me know what was going on, and because of the epidural, I couldn't move to attract anyone's attention.

For the entire time he was away from me, not a single person came into the room to check on me or give me an update. When my husband finally brought him into the room, I was told that he was a bit cold and that they had to put him under a heat lamp, but for at least 2 hours I was alone and absolutely terrified that something terrible had happened to him.

I believe that someone should have fully explained to me what was happening – what was wrong with my son, where he was going, and for how long. I should not have been left alone in the room, unable to move, with no information and no one checking me.

When my second pregnancy reached 18 weeks, the ultrasound showed that I had complete placenta praevia. This meant that unless the placenta moved (which it did not) I would need another caesarean. As I had such a long time to get used to the idea this time around, by the time it came for me to have the surgery, I wasn't nervous at all and was actually looking forward to it.

I arrived at the hospital (a different private hospital in Sydney) and everything went smoothly until the surgery started. I had been given an epidural, however when the obstetrician began to cut, I could feel every part of it, the epidural hadn't worked at all.

I was screaming in agony as my obstetrician told me that he had already started, so he needed to keep going, and the anaesthesiologist kept giving me more and more morphine. The morphine took the edge off the pain, but I was still able to feel the entire surgery. The anaesthetist nurse (who was incredible) was holding one of my hands, and my husband the other, and I was screaming the entire time.

Once the surgery was finished, I was wheeled into recovery and the only comment that was made about the whole experience was the midwife saying that after such a horrendous birth, I shouldn't worry if my baby wasn't able to latch right away.

Neither the obstetrician nor the anaesthesiologist ever spoke with me after the birth to explain what had happened or to offer any kind of apology. In fact, the only communication I received was a bill a few weeks later.

I believe that I should have received a great deal of post-birth care to help me deal with the trauma of what had happened. I wasn't offered anything. No counsellor, psychologist, or anyone from the hospital came to see me at all to discuss it and to check that I was ok. It was as if it had never happened, and I was just left to get on with looking after a newborn.

After this birth I suffered from post-natal depression for almost a year. During one of the early-childhood nurse appointments, I completed the test for post-natal depression, which showed that I had it and the nurse booked me in for a follow up appointment to help me with it.

Being depressed, I didn't feel I could leave the house, so I cancelled that appointment. I never went back, and no one ever tried to check in with me to see if I was ok. At the time I didn't realise that I was depressed, it wasn't until the depression lifted and I finally felt human again that I realised how bad it had been.

I believe that it was terrible that the early childhood clinic didn't check to make sure that I was ok. A bad score on that test should raise many flags, however I never heard from them again and I never went back.

Luckily, both me and my son were fine, and the depression never led into anything awful, but it could have very easily gone the other way. Any new mother who cancels their appointment, especially if they have shown to have post-natal depression, should be followed-up with, even if it means the nurse visits the mother in her home, to check in that her and the baby are ok.

I truly hope that because of this inquiry, no mother will have to go through anything like I experienced. I wish I could say that my experience was unique, but most of my friends have similarly traumatic stories.