

Submission
No 1060

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

I would like to submit my story for the enquiry into birth trauma. I had a homebirth with an endorsed private practising midwife in Sydney, NSW. I also needed to have a backup hospital booking. My baby is almost 6 months old.

It started in pregnancy.

- I was pushed into tests and told results that weren't accurate to try to be risked out of care.
- One hospital told me – if you come here you will have a medicalised birth. You will not have the natural birth you are after
- I was told if I was in another suburb I wouldn't have had the diagnosis – that it was an economic diagnosis not a medical one. This led me to feeling hopeless and also that I wasn't being cared for, but rather risked out of care.
- Threatened continuously with big baby – baby will get stuck etc
- Used words like 'you wont even notice me stitching you up if you need it' – e.g. no consent – I will just do it.

Birth

- Did not consent to internal examinations yet private midwife continued to conduct them. I had drawn a hard line numerous times in our meetings that it was a hard line and she agreed to this but when it came to it, she must have thought I wasn't noticing but in the videos it is obvious she is doing them before asking me for consent.
- Did not ask for consent to touch me when checking for tears and even after I kept crying hysterically she kept going. She knew I had previous sexual assault. Her and the second midwife just ignored me and kept going. It felt like I was an object.
- When I said no no no she didn't stop with examinations. This is also evident in my birth videos.
- Coached into pushing and made to be on my back even after I declined this. In the end I was able to say this isn't working and moved into an intuitive position that soon brought baby out. I felt a lot of pressure to hurry up.
- Threatened me with dead baby – not able to make informed consent as I was threatened that if I didn't obey my baby would die.
- Changed her notes around previous sexual assault – crossed it out and then signed it that I had not received this even though I had and she was well aware.
- Birth injury after birth for baby
- Blamed me she couldn't get enough cord blood to test for blood type and antibodies – which later led him to getting sick
- Blamed me for baby getting sick
- Charged for services we didn't receive
- Unable to make informed choices as we were not provided adequate information about things like blood vessel coming out of me and also with blood disease with my baby. If I had known he was high risk with the blood disease I would have been more knowledgeable to seek help but she never told me about this in all the time we had leading up to birth nor after birth.

Post partum

- Kept blaming me for everything
- Did not receive Anti D timely and had to keep requesting it. I finally got it at the end of Day 3 which is borderline.
- Told me I was lucky I didn't get an episiotomy as she said she was so close to doing it.
- Birth injury after birth for baby
- Blamed me she couldn't get enough cord blood
- Blamed me for baby getting sick
- My baby still has sustained brain injury as she waited 4 days until she sent us to hospital to be checked even though she saw him every day. His illness (Kernicterus) is not meant to happen. Even the hospital said she should have picked it up and tested for it earlier and this type of brain injury rarely occurs now as there are practices in place to reduce it. It is highly preventable but once it happens it is permanent. We are having to follow up monthly with physio and chiro to give him the best shot we can. All of this cost is on us. If she had been providing the care we paid thousands for we wouldn't be where we are now. She never said sorry.

All of this has led me to have trauma in relation to being touched and prodded without consent, bringing up my previous sexual assault trauma. It has also led to trauma around having to spend 16 days in hospital when my baby got sick and we were unsure he would make it or if he would have major brain damage. I constantly felt it was my fault as she kept blaming me.

She knowingly changed her notes which are legally binding to suit her agenda and protect herself.

She harmed my baby by not doing her duty of care which was to ensure blood tests were conducted timely and to check the health of my baby each day she visited. My baby now has permanent problems from her lack of care.

Everyday I am unsure if my baby will be able to do simple tasks like walk or when he grows up to develop appropriately. This is an ongoing trauma and every time we go to the hospital I am reminded of it.

Policies should protect mums and babies not just hospitals. Procedures such as baby getting adequately checked should be enforced. In the end we take the lifelong brunt of the actions of midwives and care providers. Physical non-consensual violation would be prosecuted in any other form, why is it not protected in birth? Also, the fact my baby has birth injury from her could also be a legal matter.