

Submission
No 1065

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

I am a mother and a midwife of ten years. I now work as a privately practicing midwife (PPM) as the system is broken.

Since I started my degree 13 years ago, I have seen women and midwives being coerced into doing things they don't want to have done to them or do to the women. I have also seen midwives and doctors not give women and their families true informed consent. I have seen doctors assault women physical, mentally and emotionally and as a junior midwife fear the retribution of speaking up, and made to feel that I also have no voice.

I have heard doctors say to women 'your baby will die if you don't do this', 'she is killing her baby' (going past 42 weeks gestation), 'if you don't get out of the bath so I can examine you, I will turn off the syntocinon', 'I'm just going to give you a little cut', 'I'm going to examine you' (and breaking their waters on purpose). I have heard from a traumatised woman that the doctor stood over her whilst she was on the toilet, holding a consent form for surgery when there is no emergency. There are countless stories and I wish I had written them all down for this very moment.

In private practice I have cared for women who have been told they can't birth in the publicly funded homebirth program and needed to birth in hospital. Women are still not given the right to choose and are left unsupported. I also had a homebirth with a publicly funded homebirth program. I am grateful for this but also why I chose to leave the system. I was not given time to birth my child on my terms. I was told I needed to get on the bed to push her out, I was told I needed to have syntocinon injected in my thigh prophylactically, I was told I need stitches. All of these situations I would have said no to if it was explained to me. The hospital was also calling the midwives saying I needed to be transferred even though I was well and my baby was well. They were coercing the midwives when the midwives are experienced care providers.

It is also hard being a private midwife. The fear of being complained about to the HCCC or AHPRA by hospitals and their staff for caring for women who are too scared to birth in the system. Women should be able to birth wherever they choose and be cared for by an experienced and well trained private midwife without the thought they may need to freebirth to avoid the system.

GPs, registrars, obstetricians, midwives, allied health all need to understand how a privately practicing midwife works and not feel they need to control a woman's birth journey. Currently, a lot of GPs are refusing to give women a referral for homebirth based on their own opinion or that of the medical practice. This is traumatising in itself for the woman.

As a PPM my job is to give the woman and family all the information they need to make an informed decision that is best for them and their baby. I advise them of the local hospital recommendation, the risks and benefits and their alternatives to the recommendation, and give them resources to research on their own. I then let them make the decision. This is when we see women satisfied with their birth because everything has been their decision.

Women choosing homebirth with private midwifery care also should not be penalised for this choice and their care including labour and birth, must be covered by Medicare or at least 80% of it.