

Submission  
No 1079

## INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

**Name:** Name suppressed

**Date Received:** 15 August 2023

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Partially  
Confidential

I am a registered midwife working in a tertiary hospital in NSW. Since commencing my career as a midwife I have witnessed birth trauma first hand. As a student midwife and registered midwife I have been treated poorly and with disrespect by other clinicians for supporting a woman making informed choices around her body, baby, pregnancy, labour and birth.

The following are examples of some events I have been witness to:

In a birthing room as a student I watched a doctor cut an episiotomy without consent. While making the cut she stated the scissors were blunt and then made another cut

I have been told my registration is on the line because I didn't coerce a woman out of the bath as per the request of obstetric staff

I have seen a senior midwife complete a vaginal examination on a woman in early labour and then tell her she had done a stretch and sweep. This was done without consent

I have been in a room with doctors saying that a woman's baby could die if she wasn't induced at 41+3 week

I have been in a room where a woman asked for statistics on the safety of breech birth, the doctor replied there was no information available, however a breech birth was a very risky option and not available at the hospital she was birthing at

I have heard a doctor tell a woman that it would be safer to have a repeat CS instead of attempting a VBAC as her baby was big. The woman had a VBAC and a 3.7kg baby

I have heard women be told to be quiet, open their legs, accept a vaginal examination when they have said no

As a student a woman I was caring for was hoping for her 4<sup>th</sup> baby to be born vaginally as her other 3 were. Due to her baby being breech, this option was not available at the hospital she was birthing at. I asked the doctor if we could share information of another hospital offering breech birth, she replied "we are a tertiary hospital and we do not pass women on" The woman while very distressed signed paperwork for a CS. I was too scared as a student to tell her she had options

I have been in the room when a Doctor said "Your 40 so I presume this will be your only baby, therefore the risk associated with having a CS is low"

I have watched many women be coerced into having an induction of labour because their baby is big and then have normal sized babies

I have seen midwives and doctors knocking on birthing room doors to attempt to change a woman's mind, even when she has had an extensive conversation with medical staff prior to being in labour

I have watched midwives and doctors talk about a woman's progress in a negative way, like she isn't even in the room

This is a small list of many experiences I could share where I have felt women have been treated poorly, coerced or threatened.

I feel privileged to be working in a continuity of care model with a team of incredible midwives. We have a united philosophy on how women should be treated during pregnancy birth and the post natal period and this is my driving force to remain in a system. Way to many women and families are walking out of feeling broken, not respected and with significant trauma

It is very challenging going into an environment where you feel judged for supporting women's choices and bearing witness to continual coercion and trauma

The feedback our MGP receive from the women we care caring for speaks volumes. It is clear that it's not the preferred outcome that matters, but the way the woman and families are treated during the process.

We need to stop hiding behind "due diligence" and understand that a woman's emotional wellbeing is as important as every other level of wellbeing.