

Submission  
No 1086

## INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

**Name:** Name suppressed

**Date Received:** 15 August 2023

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Partially  
Confidential

Subject: Submission on Birth Trauma

AUGUST 15 2023

Dear Members of the Committee,

I am writing to share my personal experiences and perspectives on behalf of women who have encountered birth trauma. As a woman who has personally experienced birth trauma I hope to shed light on the impact it can have on individuals and families.

I have experienced birth trauma firsthand.

The specifics of my own encounter with birth trauma are as follows: For my second pregnancy I wanted to have a planned VBAC but this proved more stressful than I believe it should have been. I came up against doctors and midwives who negatively impacted my belief in myself and decision making. I searched for a doctor who supported a vaginal birth and found one. Then at 35 weeks she changed her mind after I had a scan that said the baby might be on the slightly bigger side. I had no other risk factors. She tried to coerce my husband and I to book in a planned c-section. Her language was demeaning and passive aggressive, saying things like, she doesn't understand western society's obsession with vaginal births and that I have white privilege and if I lived in Africa I would jump at the chance to have a c-section. I was due at Christmas time and she changed her argument and mind on when I should have the planned c-section based on her calendar being full and the holidays. We tried to find another doctor but it was too late and the holidays hindered this. When I went into Labour the midwife who greeted me told me not to eat or drink anything because I was a VBAC attempt and I will most likely need a general anaesthetic in theatre. I believe not having the support of the medical team during the lead up and then in the labour stressed me physically and emotionally and affected my ability to birth, and I ended up having another emergency c-section.

Having reflected upon my experience, I believe that several factors contributed to my birth trauma. These factors may include; not feeling supported in our decision making even though we did thorough research and spoke to many health professionals, the private hospital not having a consistent midwife program so we didn't know the midwives when we went into labour, the health system using fear and scare tactics to coerce us into making a decision we didn't want to make.

Drawing from my personal journey, I would like to propose specific solutions and changes to enhance maternity care in Australia, with the aim of preventing future instances of birth trauma. The following are the changes I advocate for: Education around VBAC statistics including overseas metrics to give confidence to patients and doctors, consistent midwifery whether in the public or private system, health professionals supporting and respecting a woman's decision about her own body. I don't know how it's possible, but I'd like to see doctors not being so scared of risk and medico-legal concerns, as when this is the priority the woman comes in second.

Thank you for considering my submission. I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute my experiences and viewpoints to the committee's ongoing inquiry. If necessary, I am willing to provide additional evidence during a hearing to further support my perspective.

With sincere appreciation,

