

**Submission
No 1011**

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

I had my baby boy at [redacted] in Sydney in 2022 at the age of 21. I hadn't planned to get pregnant, but it happened and my partner and I were nervous but excited for our future ahead. I didn't have a straightforward pregnancy, at our first ultrasound we found out we were expecting twins. Two minutes later the ultrasound technician paused. There was another. We were expecting triplets.

The next weeks were a blur of nausea, vomiting, appointments and madly researching on how the hell we were supposed to raise three babies as young, new parents. I was ultimately booked into the twins clinic at [redacted] and was told to have frequent antenatal appointments with the doctor, as well as growth scans. This calmed some of my anxiety about having triplets but sadly due to COVID measures my partner wasn't able to attend any of these to support me.

From the beginning, I was told that I had a high-risk pregnancy, was told that there was a low chance I'd be able to have three healthy babies due to the unique way the triplets were, and that I should start thinking about a multifetal pregnancy reduction. We were having triamniotic, dichorionic triplets, which meant there were twins sharing one placenta.

At about the 19-week mark, I was told one of the twins were experiencing IGUR and that I'd have to make a decision about the reduction. I was still wrapping my head around being unexpectedly pregnant as a young person, as well as having triplets- let alone thinking about killing the babies in my uterus. The urgency of the situation escalated, my partner was able to come in to hear from the head OB, and we were told to make a decision over the weekend. We were told the best decision for the health of my baby in his own sac with his own placenta and myself (I was still dealing with extreme nausea and feeling faint) would be to reduce to a singleton pregnancy.

So that's what we did.

It was a traumatic experience. I still re-live being in that room with my partner, doctors, and midwives. The procedure was "simple", but I felt pain physically and emotionally. I had to say goodbye to the two babies I never met.

We were able to go home later that day, I felt numb- praying that my son would be okay (there would be a chance of a miscarriage of the whole pregnancy because of the procedure).

The next day I came into a wellbeing scan, my son was healthy- thank goodness. I was to be kept in the high-risk clinic so the doctors could keep an eye on me. I was dealing with grieving for my two lost babies as well as trying to be happy that I was pregnant with my one baby. It was a difficult time.

39 weeks of pregnancy came around and I felt early contractions. I managed well with a borrowed TENS machine, and later gas at the hospital. I was well supported by my midwife on shift and safely birthed my baby boy in the bath. All was well and he was healthy.

I was told by the midwife that I had either a second- or third-degree tear, so the doctor/ anaesthesiologist would come in and check. The doctor said it was a periurethral second degree tear and that I needed stitches. He injected lignocaine prior to stitching and begun stitching. I was managing my pain with gas and reassurance from the midwife.

Then, halfway through, he was called away for a caesarean. He reassured that a colleague would come in and "finish up". The next doctor came in and checked if I could feel anything. I said I did so she applied more lignocaine. Once she started, I felt extreme, sharp pain. I voiced my pain, but she said she'd already given lignocaine and that I shouldn't feel pain. She continued. I was writhing in pain and screaming, she said my name " [redacted] stop. Look at me, you're okay".

I was not okay. I was in a large amount of pain. I looked at my midwife for help and she looked concerned for me but didn't voice those concerns to the doctor stitching me. The doctor continued until she was done.

Once she left the room, the midwife had a personal discussion with the student midwife (who was also present at my birth), which I assume was about the poor behaviour of the doctor.

After, I struggled with breastfeeding (only ended up doing it for 2.5 months). I recovered well physically but was left with emotional scarring from the traumatic experience of the multifetal pregnancy reduction and being stitched up.

I still deal with this trauma to this day. I have been through anti-depressants and am currently managing my mental health with a therapist I trust. I had planned to start studying Midwifery before I was pregnant and continued with this dream despite all of this.

I am in my first year of studying Midwifery. I hold all of what I've been through close to my heart and ensure I'm caring for my women in placement in the best way possible. In the best way I wished to be treated as a pregnant woman. I'm glad there is inquiry to raise awareness about birth trauma, and I hope real change is made from this.