

Submission  
No 1334

## INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

**Name:** Mrs Gabrielle Jones

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Partially  
Confidential

As a woman of 56 years of age, I'm sure my story is not a unique one but rather encapsulates the narrative of many women my age. At 29 I became pregnant with my first baby, a beautiful boy. I was an incredibly fit and healthy and was from a long line of women who had many children. I myself was one of six children. I was surprised and incredibly fearful when nothing went to plan. I developed preeclampsia with substantial oedema and high blood pressure. Early labour followed at 32 weeks, after a car accident and a ride to the hospital in the ambulance. His imminent birth was prevented by steroids and other drugs, and of course the incredible nurses and midwives at hospital. The Careflight helicopter was informed that it was no longer required. Finally, making it to full term I was induced, which despite everything that had preceded and followed, was the most traumatic part of my birth. It was at this point my fear escalated and loss of agency ensured as I felt physically violated and was subsequently chastised by my obstetrician for non compliance. Medical intervention followed a long labour involving an epidural which took 45 minutes to insert due to my excessive oedema. The scarring on my spine is still a significant cause of pain. An emergency caesarean resulted and my son was born healthy and happy with the loudest cry. We still jokingly blame the early steroids for his incredible lung capacity. My beautiful son is now 27 and a musician with a beautiful voice. There is nothing very unusual about my story, except when I reflect now, I wish that I had felt more joy and autonomy in what is the natural process of childbirth. However, I often recall fear and shame in my own ignorance and compliance to those who asserted they knew what was right for me.