

Submission
No 942

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Ms Amy Tyson

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Partially
Confidential

Subject: Submission on Birth Trauma

AUGUST 7th, 2023

Dear Members of the Committee,

I am writing to share my professional experiences and perspectives on behalf of women who have encountered birth trauma. As a doula who has witnessed and supported women through birth trauma, I hope to shed light on the impact it can have on individuals and families.

I, Amy Tyson of Doula have witnessed women experiencing birth trauma firsthand. I have observed this to be a distressing and disruptive experience for women and their families. I have observed women to develop anxiety, depression, have difficulty bonding with their baby, experience difficulty establishing breastfeeding, experience post-partum haemorrhage, have difficulty transitioning to motherhood, lack confidence in themselves as a mother and develop feelings of worthlessness and withdrawing from their communities due to feelings of shame around traumas suffered in birth. I have also seen foetal distress and maternal increased blood pressure develop as a result of mistreatment.

I have witnessed women in the antenatal, intrapartum and postnatal periods experiencing control, coercion, physical and psychological abuse at the hands of caregivers in a variety of hospital settings. This abuse comes in many forms including scaremongering using risks presented with bias, being made to feel they must follow caregivers instructions, not being given all the information they need to make an informed decision, being threatened with consequences if they do not follow instructions, not being listened to/believed, being held down or forced to undergo procedures and interventions, lack of consent, being yelled at, being told to be quiet, being told that the only thing that matters is a healthy baby, being denied pain relief and being told they are unable to leave.

Having reflected upon my experience, I believe that several factors contribute to the birth trauma that I have witnessed. These factors may include outrageous hospital policies, workplace cultures, and individual attitudes of professionals that fail to centre the woman as the sovereign decision maker in her pregnancy and birth. There also appears to be a distinct lack of training for professionals whereby they can come to understand that they have a responsibility to uphold the healthcare rights charter and that women have a human right to decline recommended maternity care. It is not the job of health professionals to make decisions on behalf of women, it is their responsibility to support the informed decision making of women.

Drawing from my professional experience, 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. I advocate for compulsory training for all health professionals and policy makers so that they can come to understand:

- Bundled maternity funding so that women can freely choose their place of birth, care providers and other supportive professionals and therapies
- Their responsibilities as per the healthcare rights charter
- Women's human rights in childbirth
- How to offer maternity care and counsel women respectfully with all the information needed to make an informed decision

- How to support a woman even when she makes a decision outside recommended care
- What constitutes informed consent
- What constitutes obstetric abuse, obstetric violence and birth rape
- The long-lasting impacts of birth trauma on women, their babies, their families and the wider community

I believe that if professionals are unwilling to partake in training or fail to demonstrate competency in these topics, then they are a danger to women and babies and should not be permitted to practice amongst vulnerable birthing women.

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,

Amy Tyson
Doula