

**Submission
No 1084**

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

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I am a midwife and have had 3 babies myself.

When I had my babies I lived in NSW.

I was fortunate to be 'low risk', and have access to a midwife led program which was well focused on keeping things low intervention. Despite these benefits I was regularly pressured into testing I did not want. This included the pressure to have a vaginal swab that I had declined multiple times. No evidence was given for risk vs benefit. Luckily I was negative, but the choice of declining was not presented as a 'safe' option. I also declined a ultrasound scan to which the Dr continued on doing it despite me declining. Throughout my 3 pregnancies I was always low risk and looked after by midwives. This was great but there was always a lack of choice and true informed consent for decisions around birth. I am a midwife so I knew what I wanted but my heart goes out to people who don't get informed consent. My 3 births I wouldn't say were traumatic. But I want the council to know, the pressure from medical professionals and their overwhelming medical approach to birth is a traumatic addition to an otherwise normal pregnant woman. They constantly instil fear and undermine a woman's knowledge and ability. I also believe midwife led models should be supported more and more as women describe higher satisfaction rates and are less bombarded with biased medical advice.

I experience birth trauma most working days in the maternity workforce. I see women not offered choices in regards to mode of birth. I see episiotomies cut without ANY consent. I see doctors and also midwives undermining women's choices and not giving true informed consent. Birth trauma is VERY common. And VERY heartbreaking. It makes me want to leave my job. But I believe the solution is midwife led programs, providing holistic support to women and families and supporting a woman's choice of place for birth. Encouraging home and birth centre births for normal pregnant women.