

**Submission  
No 1128**

## **INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA**

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As a birth professional, I have observed instances of obstetric violence during numerous births. These occurrences encompass a range of concerning behaviors, including lack of coordination, instances of physical impropriety, and instances of bullying. It is lamentable that the practice of true informed consent appears to be lacking within hospitals in New South Wales. I have personally witnessed instances where obstetricians have physically engaged with laboring women through slapping, grabbing, and cutting procedures before obtaining proper consent. All too frequently, obstetricians and medical practitioners employ tactics of intimidation and manipulation to compel women to conform to hospital policies or the personal preferences of medical staff, even when such procedures and management do not align with the best interests of the woman involved. The emotional toll of the resulting trauma and remorse that women and couples endure post-birth is truly heart-wrenching.

In my capacity, I have also observed instances wherein women and couples have been deceived regarding their available birth options. Furthermore, I have witnessed cases where women have been coerced into undergoing unnecessary inductions, leading to surgical interventions that were contrary to their wishes. Shockingly, I have even witnessed instances where women have been physically handled inappropriately during vaginal examinations, and I have observed incidents of racial harassment. The use of improper language in the presence of women and their partners has led to feelings of shame and distress for these couples. Regrettably, I have also encountered instances of negligence from medical providers in the postpartum period, resulting in instances of hemorrhaging and unwell infants.

Addressing these issues would benefit immensely from a broader acceptance of midwifery care and facilitating more accessible and supported home birth options. This approach could potentially alleviate many of the challenges currently faced. The process of recovery and healing for women, couples, and infants following birth-related trauma requires extensive efforts, but the existing care system does not always provide the necessary support.

I earnestly urge us to reconsider the existing medical framework, wherein outdated and inappropriate policies, procedures, and guidelines may not adequately address the true requirements for effective birth support. It is essential to note that the current restrictions and guidelines inadvertently compel some women to seek unassisted births, which come with inherent risks and safety concerns. Let us collectively work towards fostering a more comprehensive and sensitive approach to birth care that prioritizes the well-being of women, couples, and their newborns.