

**Submission
No 1131**

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

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I did not experience birth trauma, quite the opposite. In fact I had no idea what birth trauma really was until recently. I emerged from my birth feeling so powerful, so strong and deeply connected to my body and my baby. I wanted to scream from the rooftops, Birth, Beautiful Birth! I soon realised that type of sentiment didn't always go down well. There were awkward silences. Rolled eyes. Sharing birth stories in peer groups was more about comparing war stories, mine didn't always seem fit in. I began to ask questions, and learn about birth trauma. I wanted to know why was this happening to people, why did I get so lucky?

I would have to give thanks in large part to the New Zealand maternity system where I was fortunate enough to give birth. I'm a NSW Australian born citizen but relocated to NZ before my first baby. We have continuity of care as standard for everyone here, all free. I had a named midwife in a small group practise who took care of me throughout. Without being pressured into anything I was given options. I could choose to birth in hospital, a birth centre or at home. I chose home, at 38weeks, a surprising decision for me but one that really changed my life. And although I don't think homebirth is the answer for everyone, I do wholeheartedly believe in continuity of care!

My mother unexpectedly died at the start of my pregnancy and I battled with a lot of painful grief throughout my pregnancy. To have a supportive care provider that I knew and saw each other week made such a big difference. Her recognition of this major piece missing in what was to be my biggest life event was so greatly needed and appreciated. I could never ever return to Australia and birth under the standard maternity system there after this experience.

I wish for continuity of care for all, or to expand the MGP program in Australia. I don't believe the NZ maternity system is perfect, and there are lessons to be learnt. But I would love to see this type of system rolled out in Australia based on good evidence and the right framework from the very beginning. I am so sorry to all the women who have experienced birth trauma. May we see a stop to this urgently! Thank you for your time.