

Submission
No 1413

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 13 August 2023

Partially
Confidential

I am an experienced midwife making this submission. I have worked in the ACT and in NSW.

I am driven to write this as after 20 years of being a midwife I am still saddened and horrified at the way women experience birth trauma after obstetric violence.

I have many instances of witnessing women have vaginal examinations, without proper consent, during labour; vaginal examinations in OT with NO consent at all, woman sometimes has no idea it has occurred and also vaginal exams where they say STOP, very clearly and it continues. I have seen obstetricians and midwives ridicule women for declining vaginal examinations

I have witnessed women being told (incorrectly) their baby might die if they refuse an intervention such as antibiotics in labour, attempting a VBAC, declining an induction for being "overdue", declining an induction because they are deemed too old, too fat, baby too big, baby too small and the list goes on - no information given, just your baby can die.

I have witnessed doctors touch a woman's body, when she declined as she was a Muslim and it was not appropriate for a man to do - this was when it was not required to be done as I had already done it

I have seen women be ridiculed for choices they make with good information, whilst I have stood at the midwife desk.

I have been threatened myself with reports to the registration board for standing up for a woman's choice, by doctors, by midwives, by nurses and anaesthetists - these choices have been well informed by the woman

I have watched babies having mityvac or kiwi cup births where there were in excess of 6 pulls and when I suggested they stop being ridiculed or ignored

I have seen forcep births by junior registrars done with no adequate senior consultant despite the registrar asking they come in to help

I have seen episiotomies cut even though the woman has said NO clearly

I have seen placentas removed roughly by cord traction, too early by obstetricians and with no care to pain - possibly leading to their postpartum haemorrhage

I have seen uteruses rubbed up after birth so hard, the woman is screaming and there has been NO reason, no extra bleeding

I have seen obstetricians put hands inside uteruses to "check for clots" which was unnecessary and extremely painful, then women have required antibiotics for their actions

I have seen paediatricians tell women that skin to skin is not required after birth and not that useful

I have seen obstetricians refuse to do delayed cord clamping even when it was safe and easy to do so and the woman requested it

As I write this, I feel my tears falling and yet I will continue to support women and speak out

I have no doubt vicarious PTSD which I have a private psychologist for

Thank you for this chance to submit, I am hoping there will be some changes or at least some recognition that birth itself is not inherently traumatic, how we are treating women is !!!