

Submission  
No 1419

## INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

**Name:** Name suppressed

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Partially  
Confidential

My first son was born in 2017 at the [redacted] as we were living there at the time. I went into the birth assuming (as many first time mum's do) that of course I would have a natural delivery and that then my partner and I would know what to do and how to be parents.

I didn't get into the midwifery program and therefore did shared care with the hospital and my GP. Both the midwives and the GP were great, however, knowing what I know now I can confidently say that that type of care is not suitable for women having babies.

I went 10 days "over", and was due to be induced the day I went into labour. My own mum died 10 years ago, so I had the support of my partner and my sister. Neither of whom had been present at a birth previously. As I think is common with first time mum's, my labour was long and not being educated, I trusted the midwives to guide me in what was right for my labour. As such, I opted for the epidural and then was labelled as failure to progress. I was woken up by a doctor I had never met who told me that my baby and I were fine, but that I had been in labour for too long and as such would have a c section. I asked for more time and his reply was that I could have it but nothing would change in my labour in the time they were giving me.

Once my son was born and I was back on the ward, I had no guidance in how to breastfeed, just a nurse I had never met "milking" me for colostrum and forcing my son onto the breast. Once my epidural wore off I was encouraged to have a shower, during which my catheter was removed while I was standing in the bathroom. The nurse simply pulled it out and past me the soap. The next day (my 30th birthday!) I asked when it was likely we would be going home and I was then discharged that day. Once I was home, my feet and legs swelled and we had to make an emergency trip to the 24 hour chemist to buy compression socks and ice packs in the hope the swelling would go down.

During the home visits in the weeks afterwards (I think it took the midwives one week to come and check on my son and I at home), my son lost more than 10% of his birth weight, as I was learning how to breastfeed with no support or guidance, while recovering from major surgery. When the midwife weighed my son and informed me of this, she simply stated: "if I was really worried, I would be sending you to the children's hospital, in fact, I'll just call to make sure you don't need to go". I cannot stress to you enough how scary this is to hear for a first time mum, navigating a birth she didn't know want and navigating motherhood without her own mother. It's stayed with me for 6 years now.

My second son was born in Sydney at [redacted] and I was lucky enough to be under the midwifery group practice, the care that I received during my pregnancy was second to none under this model of care made me feel like a VIP everytime I walked into the hospital. Every woman having a baby should experience this!

I was more educated in my second pregnancy, however, when I was actually in labour at the hospital, my primary midwife wasn't on shift and as such I was with a different member of the group. This midwife was very clearly too busy, and, as my labour didn't progress according to the (long out dated) formula, I felt that I was a too much work for the midwife and was encouraged to get another epidural, despite, once again, no distress from the baby or from me, and being very vocal about not wanting an epidural again because of my experience last time.

Once again, I was labelled as failure to progress and was told that there must be something wrong with my pelvis. I took this label into my post partum period and really struggled with feeling like there was something wrong with my body and that I was indeed a failure.

In my current pregnancy, I have educated myself even further and now really understand that I am not a failure, but that the system failed me because there are not enough midwives to provide the support birthing women need.

While I know this is not the most traumatic of birth stories this is an example of a failure of the system that needs to be shared so the wonderful midwives can continue to do their very important jobs in a supportive system.