

Submission  
No 1386

## INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

**Name:** Name suppressed

**Date Received:** 11 August 2023

---

Partially  
Confidential

I was supporting my single friend at the birth of her first baby in . We had gone to all the hospital classes and she knew she wanted a natural drug free birth. Her waters broke and there was meconium so she had to go to the labour ward but the midwife was lovely. We did many many many hours of massage on the mats as she wasn't allowed to leave the hospital. She was doing so well and they were getting stronger and when she went to the toilet she started involuntary pushing. The midwife said that was fine and when she came back to the room she began pushing with each contraction. After an hour or so there was a shift change and a new midwife arrived who my friend found gruff and prickly. After another hour she wanted to do a vaginal exam to see how she was progressing and we knew something wasn't right. My friend was only 6cm and had been pushing for hours on a not fully dilated cervix and it was now very swollen. She recommended an epidural so she could rest while the swelling of the cervix went down. When the other option was try not to push or have a caesarean she took the option. We had to wait for the epidural as everyone was in surgery and my friend was already having trouble passing urine and was busting. The midwife had a student midwife come in and put a catheter in and then left the room. The student looked so scared and she tried several times to insert it with my friend screaming. She told us it was her first time and left the room visibly upset. My friend was in so much pain, feeling as if her bladder would explode and she cried and screamed so loud that when I went out to find the midwife, or anyone, there was no one around, attending to an emergency on another room, and I didn't want to go back into the room and tell her no help was coming. Eventually she came back and successfully inserted it first go and she filled more than a bag. She got her epidural then too and we tucked her up for a rest. I was convinced to go down to the cafe for dinner before it closed and when I got back she was surrounded by people and the OB had a portable ultrasound and she had just agreed to a caesarean. She was distraught and so disappointed and it was 9 while before she was taken to theatre but when her baby boy was born all we heard was mumbly and the midwife saying she had never seen anything like it. Because she was pushing so long on an undilated cervix he had a very big conehead, The midwife said in her 30 yrs she had never seen one so big. I have attached photos. He was so swollen, his ears, his eyes, his nose, his lips. He is now autistic...

I know my friend had trouble internally and that she remembers different things than me but I can still hear her screaming in pain with a bursting bladder and no-one around to help her for over 30 mins and the look on her face as I came back in the room and found her surrounded like a frightened koala surrounded by bushfire and her poor little boy's head which all could have been prevented with 1 vaginal exam before she started pushing.

She and I both still shudder when we recall his birth and sometimes I can't look at him without hearing his mum's screams and feeling so helpless and guilty that I couldn't protect her or get her help and he's 10 now