

Submission
No 1352

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 8 August 2023

Partially
Confidential

I gave birth at [redacted] in October 2019 with the midwives group practice program. It was a fantastic program. However, due to baby being imminent over the October long weekend they advised me to be medically induced as they would have skeleton staff over the long weekend and wanted to ensure the safety of me and my baby. This was following two failed stretch and sweeps.

I was induced at 5pm and no pain relief was provided despite contractions happening every 2 minutes, because I wasn't in the birthing ward yet. They had no beds until 5:30am the next morning, when they came upstairs, broke my waters and took me down to the birthing rooms. Up until that point no one had come to check on me and I was very unsure how to navigate the system.

I was in labour all day, and progressed to being fully dilated after 8 or so hours. However the registrar doctor came in, did one exam and said an emergency caesarean would be required as while myself and baby weren't in distress, the baby's head was too large. I wonder if the midwives had not been so focused on my having a natural birth and had asked for a doctor consult earlier a lengthy and arduous labour and post birth complications could have been avoided. However by this stage the baby was very low, so the incision needed to be made much lower. A registrar did my caesarean and I haemorrhaged during surgery and separated from my baby and husband - a very distressing experience. My husband thought I was dying and no one was giving him information due to being busy and low staffing ratios. This was not a client centred or led experience. I then haemorrhaged again breastfeeding my baby for the first time. No nurse was in the room to guide this experience and as a first time mum I didn't know what to do. I wasn't aware I was bleeding because I wasn't sure what I was meant to be feeling. Luckily my husband was there and able to call for help.

Before I got discharged a few days later I received a letter saying I would not be able to have natural births in the future, at least not for 2 years and that my recovery time would be longer than a typical caesarean due to the complications. But at no point did the doctor see me to explain this or nursing staff. We had to request the doctor come speak to us about what had happened in the birth and why. And I was told that this request was highly unusual and 'not the done thing', which as a health worker baffled me as we should be providing hands on, trauma informed, patient centred care. I wanted to believe in the public health system but felt very let down and disappointed with my care. The midwives had done a scan estimating my baby to be 4.6 kilo and with a large head. I think a caesarean was probably medically indicated far earlier than it was advised and could have prevented many complications that followed, including the emotional distress of feeling like I had failed after progressing to full labour and 10cm dilation. For my next birth I went privately and also saw a clinical psychologist for the birth trauma. I'm lucky to have birthed two beautiful healthy babies and yo be alive to share our story