

Submission
No 1428

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

I am a midwife who has worked in 3x large Sydney metro hospitals.

Birthing units and postnatal wards mostly.

On a daily basis women were left to manage with their babies attempting to breastfeed and fumble their way through learning how to care for and feed their baby without adequate support and education.

There was very few single rooms for support people to stay and so women were left with a normal newborn wanting to be held all night and being told they can't bedshare (because policy is so outdated and does not teach families what safe bedsharing looks like and instead fear mongering means they're told they will kill their baby sleeping them in bed with them).

As a result they had to attempt to manage feeding a baby hourly overnight sometimes, without adequate staffing to support breastfeeding and midwives would offer that women could give formula top ups as a way to attempt to settle babies giving them often an overfull belly of formula - without proper informed consent mind you, from exhausted mothers at 2am with no other option.

The knock on effect of the lack of staff and poor management of breastfeeding meant that women would not be stimulating their breast to make an adequate milk supply and early discharge without proper education for 3 days on a ward meant that families would often leave feeling unprepared.

Unsafe staffing levels and mixes was a daily event with near misses every shift.

But no time to complete an incident report every single shift as we were lucky to get breaks.

Having women left for long periods in labour as you attended another woman made me feel sick to my stomach that I was just unable to provide the care that women and babies deserved.

It's a basic human right.

Also the fact that skin to skin for EVERY baby and mother should be happening regardless of their birth and THIS DOES NOT HAPPEN.

THERE needs to be more midwives and policies need to be updated fast with proper consultation with clinical Midwives and evidence based information.

I burnt out and had to leave for a while .

Working in community was good for a while.

And then just before covid the model of care shifted to exclude home visits for every mother.

The focus was shifted to more vulnerable families.

The model of MESCH is good however not at the detriment of taking away care from all universal families.

The entire MATERNITY and child and family health system in NSW is broken.

What really breaks my heart is some stories like this following one...

I was randomly reunited with a beautiful couple I had cared for 8 years ago.

They unfortunately had their twin girls born at 24 weeks.

I cared for them just before their twins were born and my shift was ending.

They told me they appreciated my care so much, but when I left they said they sadly felt very alone suddenly and as if no one was really listening to them or making them feel safe, or explained things to them.

When they had their twins and were holding them as the girls were taking their first and last breaths the father said a midwife stated that she had to take one of his daughters.

He stated to the midwife that he thought she "was still breathing and moving".

The midwife responded "yes they will do that for a while" and took her from him.

He said 8 years later preparing for birth (as they were finally were expecting their first baby since losing their first 2 children)

I still think of that moment when they took her from me to die.

"I didn't know I could say no"

I should have said no and held her whilst she died.

He stated he forever felt guilty about this.

Hearing their grief 8years later was heartbreaking.

If midwifery continuity of care is not offered to every woman and more midwives are not funded in hospital woman and babies will continue to be placed at risk.

Trauma at birth as 1 in 3 will be reported as much higher in a very short time and I believe the actual numbers are higher than this.

Please stop wasting money on fireworks, highly paid politicians pensions and acknowledge the hard work that caring professionals do.

We are burnt out.

You will have no one left soon to care for the population.

The knock on effect for society if parents continue to start their journey from a trauma base is generations of children not given their basic human rights of secure attachment because their parents were never supported and guided as needed to feel safe and ensure their baby feel safe.