

## INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

**Name:** Ms Sophie Hall

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Partially  
Confidential

My name is Sophie Hall, I am a 33 year old mother who lives in NSW. I have already submitted the story of the fragmented and evidence-lacking care I received whilst seeking a termination of pregnancy in late 2020. As disappointing as it was, I whole-heartedly believe that I was able to weather that experience as well as I did as a direct result of the amazing care I received under a privately practicing midwife, in 2019/2020 for my first pregnancy, birth and postpartum.

All the evidence concludes that for low-risk women, continuous midwifery care provides the best outcomes for mother and baby, especially re. Physiological birth and breastfeeding, two things that were very important to me.

The MGP at hospital is notoriously difficult to be accepted in to, with those lucky enough to get a spot ever-fearful that the slightest variation of normal will see them lose their spot, or be risked out of home birth. Women are also forced to consent to non evidence based policy, e.g. universal GBS swabbing and universal testing for gestational diabetes, with the same looming threat of losing their precious only chance at publicly-available continuous midwifery care.

Knowing this, I did not even bother to apply for a place, and instead went straight to private midwifery care, at an out of pocket cost of \$5000 (\$1300 of which was later refunded under medicare, but not until after I was discharged from my midwife's care at 6 weeks postpartum). I was lucky I contacted her at 8 weeks pregnant, as privately practicing midwives often book out quickly, even more so since the pandemic. I was also lucky my baby was due at the right time of year, as many midwives do not book clients over the christmas/new year months - completely understandable, they are as rare as hen's teeth and often stretched very thin - leaving many women unable to access this model of care again by no fault of their own.

Throughout my pregnancy, my midwife cared for me in the comfort of my own home, most of our appointments lasting around one hour. As much as we discussed my pregnancy and care, we also had time to chat, getting to know each other and building trust. For every test or intervention that is 'routine' in pregnancy, I was able to make decisions with informed consent, without any threats or coercion from my care provider. I felt completely safe, and empowered.

On the day of my daughter's birth, I trusted my midwife implicitly, a result of the bond we had been building over the past several months. She expertly sat back for most of my labour, respecting my wishes to be as undisturbed as possible. The most she 'intervened' in my labour was when she encouraged me to change positions as I was pushing, knowing expertly that doing so would result in the birth of my daughter. Following the birth, my midwife was able to administer a local anaesthetic and suture a small tear while my daughter breastfed, again, in the comfort and privacy of my own home.

In the days following the birth, she visited daily, checking on us all not just physically, but also mentally. When I developed a UTI, she was able to do the pathology and prescribe an antibiotic without me having to leave my home. I often shudder to think what that experience would have been like had I not had access to such gold-standard care - a freshly postpartum mother in a lot of pain having to leave the house with a newborn, take whatever appointment she could get with whatever doctor who probably would have wanted to have a look at my sutures, 4 days after a vaginal birth - it would have been humiliating and de-humanising. That one aspect alone of the highly professional care my midwife was able to provide made the cost worth it.

The home birth of my first child was the most empowering experience of my whole life. When I think about my birth, I feel nothing but joy and pride. I will forever be grateful to my midwife for the way she prepared me for that rite of passage, and how she guided me through it. 3.5 years later, I see how the care I received helped me become the intuitive and passionate mother I am.

It is a tragedy that so many other first time mothers are unable to access this type of empowering care. Even when continuous midwifery care and/or home birth is publicly available under hospital MGP's, it is often highly inaccessible for many, due to hospital policies that priorities litigation minimisation over woman-centred care.