

**Submission  
No 1438**

## **INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA**

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My experience in the nsw public maternity care system was disappointing when it came to the birth of my first child in august 2020. I had an extremely healthy pregnancy, as low risk as they come, and yet as I went post dates I was bullied into an induction of labour, despite there being no indication that it was at all necessary. I didn't want to have an induction, but was told I couldn't possibly wait it out to 42 weeks as 'too many women are booked for their inductions on those dates and we won't be able to look after you too'. This felt like coercion. The Dr overseeing the maternity ward was dismissive of my preferences and basically told me I was selfishly putting my baby at risk.

Thankfully I needed very little intervention to induce effective labour and I birthed my baby without further intervention or pain relief, thanks to my husbands strong advocacy, as the delivery midwife was determined to interfere at every opportunity. As the 2nd stage went to nearly 2hrs she began to threaten me with an episiotomy and forceps etc if I didn't hurry up and push out my baby - despite baby's heart rate remaining steady, and the Reg regularly coming by and saying all was well, she continued to try and interfere. I birthed my baby as I had hoped to, under my own steam and as much at my own pace as I could in the situation.

The real trauma for me came post-birth. My baby was born at the change of shift in the morning, the room was full of people, other midwives were standing by waiting to take over my care, but the delivery midwife I had been at odds with all night wouldn't leave. I wish she had. I stated my preference for a physiological 3rd stage, and expected to be given space to bond with my baby, but the midwife began pressing on my abdomen and pulling on the cord - even after I told her to stop. It was only 15 minutes after I had delivered my baby, it was too soon for my placenta to come away safely, in my mind. She ignored me and my husband, succeeded in removing my placenta at which point I haemorrhaged extensively and began losing consciousness.

The ensuing panic led to a misdiagnosis of partial placental retention and a form and pen was shoved into my hand to give consent for surgical intervention - my husband is a health professional and he was horrified that I was expected to have capacity to consent as I was barely conscious. I did not have capacity at that point. It was deeply frightening to be in such a bad way and separated from my baby and husband as I was whisked down to theatres. Upon examination, the placenta was found to be intact, and by the time I'd reached theatre the bleeding had largely stopped (due to intervention performed by the Reg in delivery) - I was sedated and intubated, and separated from my newborn for nearly 4hrs hours, unnecessarily. All due to the actions of the midwife, acting against my wishes and causing me a life threatening haemorrhage. I was given two packs of blood products while under, and a whole lot of fluid to replace what I lost - estimated 1700mls.

I have a vivid memory of regaining consciousness briefly in the lift going down to theatres and hearing the same Dr who had initially bullied me into an induction telling the nurse beside her that I had created the whole situation by letting my pregnancy go on so long and then wanting an intervention-free birth. She then realised my eyes were open and her voice change to sickly sweet and she patted my hand reassuring me that she was coming with me to theatres. If I could have spoken at that point I would have told her that she was the last person on earth I felt safe with and to take her hands off me. But I lost consciousness again.

Since then, having spoken to numerous other midwives and drs, it has become very clear that my large PPH was most likely caused by the actions of the delivery midwife. Actions she took directly against my spoken wishes. In the days following the maternity ward had a minor

debrief with me and put my haemorrhage down to a long 2nd stage and a 'tired' uterus. I didn't really feel like I could say that I felt it was entirely due to the actions of one of their own staff. I wanted to forget about it, and never even lodged a formal complaint. My husband works at the hospital and I didn't want to make waves. I also heard that this particular midwife had many complaints of various natures against her. So I felt like they should already be well aware of the issues.

As I prepare for the birth of my second baby later this year at the same hospital, where I know the same midwife still works in delivery, I will be requesting that this particular midwife not be involved in my care in any way, as I do not believe she will act in my best interests.

I really truly hope that collecting these stories of women's experiences in the maternity system does lead to an overhaul and system-wide change with better outcomes for all birthing women. Thank you.