

Submission
No 1442

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

I am 37 years old, with two girls aged 3 and 6.

My first daughter I had desperately wanted a home birth, it is where I felt safe, supported and comfortable. Unfortunately I could not afford to pay, nor find anybody available, for a home birth due to new regulations placed on midwives in NSW (2017) requiring additional support. So I ended up in the MGP at Hospital.

From the very beginning of pregnancy there is a severe lack of informed consent. 3D scans, glucose tolerance testing, iron transfusions. These are things that you are led to believe are a 'normal' part of pregnancy and preparing for birth. I was never told the risks associated with any of these things, or even that I had a choice in whether or not to do them. It was a battle from the very beginning to have a pregnancy and birth without intervention. Despite my resistance, and what was a very healthy pregnancy, I was scheduled a Cesarean date a week after my due date 'just in case' I hadn't gone into labour naturally. No pressure.

I laboured beautifully at home, calm, in control and progressing. We decided to head to hospital and on arrival was examined to confirm that I was 4 cm and could continue to labour there. The midwives were wonderful, they respected my process and left me to sink into the process. But the constant monitoring and busy hospital wards slowed my progression and I became very aware of time, I was failing to give birth within their allocated time slots. My waters were broken, I was given prostaglandin and so the cascade of intervention continued until I was bullied into an epidural in preparation for a C-section. I did not want a caesarean, I knew the significant health implications this could have for my baby and myself (because of my OWN research not because of any information provided to me about risks and benefits) The midwifery care was handed over to doctors who knew better and had very little regard for my birth plan or my bodily autonomy. I asked if they would do 'seeding', delayed cord clamping and various other things to help counteract the detrimental effects of a cesarean on my baby. They were denied.

I was then left in a ward with my baby by myself, my husband tried to stay but was told he could not and sent on his way. I was left to my own devices with very little care in an understaffed, over packed hospital. How are we still sending partners home post birth?? Having a baby is a partnership and I needed his support more than ever. I was completely traumatised by the whole experience and was left feeling very angry. Ultimately I feel that the cesarean was unnecessary, there was no informed consent throughout any of it. I was also given no breastfeeding support which led to a very painful and traumatic start to my journey.

It's a sadness and anger which will always be with me. I wish that I had more strength and knowledge to advocate for myself in my first birth, as I was able to do with my second birth. While this was a VBAC birth, it was still not the home birth I had so desperately wanted and planned for. I was discouraged, bullied and lied to in an attempt to convince me to have another cesarean. I was forced back into the hospital system in after a series of unsubstantiated 'concerns' meant that my midwife could no longer support me at home. Whilst in labour, I had the obstetrician read me the 'risks' of a VBAC from a script, whilst I was on the floor transitioning with my babies head emerging!?? Let's support women to have the births they want, let's trust that women know what they need to deliver healthy babies and let's get rid of the patriarchal, outdated systems that seem to be governing our bodies. We need true, unbiased, informed consent that empowers women to make the best decisions for themselves and their babies. My body, my baby, my choice.