

Submission
No 1364

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

This is addressed to the people with the power to make the change. Birth trauma and obstetric violence are real. The women of New South Wales and Australia have had enough. I am a mother to 3 children. In each labour I experienced some sort of trauma. My first was born in 2016. Labour was going well, but it seemed the baby was not coping so well as her heart rate would drop regularly. At no stage did a midwife or obstetrician come and see me to explain what is happening, the risks, and the possible outcomes moving forward. Instead they chose to have a midwife standing in the birth room far away from me just watching. Upon reaching 10cm I was instructed it was time to push. Every thing seemed fine. Nor was I told otherwise. By the 3rd push the emergency button was pushed, a storm of doctors run in, tell me to stop pushing or my baby will get stuck and die. How did we get to this stage and I was none the wiser. I was being bombarded with anaesthetist papers to sign and I was off for an emergency caesarian under general anaesthetic. I was so frightened. A minute ago I was getting closer to meeting my baby. The oxygen mask was forced onto my face as I screamed with the strong pain of the contractions. The next thing I remember is waking in recovery alone, no baby no partner. Needless to say this experience shocked me to the core. For the next few days in hospital I felt like I was out of my body. At no stage did any doctor or midwife come to see me to explain or debrief what had happened. I went home with my baby but I spent the next year suffering with depression and anxiety. Unable to leave my house for the first couple months except to see the doctor. I felt violated. The physical wound of my birth would heal but the mental scars last until today. In 2018 I welcomed my 2nd child. I went for a VBAC, and was successful. Along the way I made sure to note to midwives at appointments what I would like, a big one was no episiotomy. I made sure this was noted in my file. And yet when it came time to push the nurse says to me 'were just going to do a little cut'.. in my head I was screaming no but the words wouldn't make it to my mouth. Did she not check my file at all. Instead of coaching me through to push my baby out safely and slowly I was forced to push him out in 1 contraction to avoid that 'little cut'. Yes I had 2nd degree tear. But that's what I was okay with, not an episiotomy. And surely the degree of damage could have been reduced had the midwife seen my file and instead used positions favourable for my labour and other coaching methods. I welcomed my 3rd in 2022, I had gestational diabetes for the 2nd time and was constantly bullied into booking in an induction. Even though neither of my babies were ever overdue, my other diabetes baby was my 2nd who came naturally at 38 weeks. Neither did any of my babies come in weighing over 3.6kgs. Nonetheless we did the induction as I was too tired to fight the system. I let the midwives know that I labour well naturally. Dilating 1cm or more per hour. Upon starting the induction drip and it taking effect I felt I was going to die. The contraction was excessively strong. I insisted it be turned off and I asked for the epidural. Eventually the midwife turned off the drip as my uterus was contracting constantly and I was having no break in between. I continued to tell them I feel like I'm going to die. By the time the anaesthetist could make it I was already 7cm, I sat up to hear her go through the risks etc, at this stage alarms went off as baby's heart rate was lost. The emergency buzzer was pressed. Doctors ran in. They couldn't find babies heart rate. At this stage I thought my baby had died. But as I turned to my back I felt her crowning. The force of my uterus contracting was pushing her down. I pushed once and she was forcefully born, again I suffered a 2nd degree tear, this time front to back. I came out of that birth deflated. Even with all my pleading no one in that room listened to me, no one listened to my body.

Please, there needs to be a review on the standard of care labouring women receive, and also in the days after birth. We are not looked after beyond the physical (and barely that most times). Why are we not provided with some sort of debrief after birth. Birth in a hospital

setting can be traumatic and yet the mental wounds are ignored. I know my stories are not the worst. But I don't want my daughters to receive the lack of care I did, they deserve better. All women do.