

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Organisation: Hygieia Health Ltd

Date Received: 15 August 2023

Partially
Confidential

Hi there, we are making the below submission on behalf of a midwife named
However please leave her name off the published submission. The below are her own words:

Hi there,

I am emailing to submit an entry into the birth trauma enquiry.

It truly is hard to know where to start. I am a midwife who pours her heart and soul into her work.

I no longer work in birth suite because i got so burnt out, I would have panic attacks before my shifts in the carpark, and broke down a number of times to senior staff and educators, who all felt the same way.

It is so incredibly difficult to stand by and watch women go through the most unthinkable trauma from interventions, and feeling so helpless. No matter how hard we fight, how much we push back, our advocacy is almost always overruled.

I still think about the women who have come to me distraught, because they have been told by obstetricians, that if they don't do [procedure, investigation], their baby will die. Not the odds of injury, not the statistics or risk, just that their baby will die.

Obstetric violence, consent and coercion is so prevalent, yet is such a vast grey area, that no-one really knows how to traverse it, without fear of repercussions, professionally or personally.

I know I still think about the women who have screamed and cried "NO!" over and over when having a forceps delivery, and me just trying to make sure she's heard and seen, but frozen in action against it.

The pure anguish and heart-breaking agony that you feel in your chest when you travel the road of bereavement with a family, say goodbye, and then you're forced into another woman's room and have to put on a brave face because "there's no one else".

Watching a family or a husband or a loved one say goodbye, or have a woman so close to death that you question every decision you've ever made, and question your practice every time you take a step into work.

I miss physiological births. And autonomy. And woman-centred care. And education. I miss being someone who nourishes and cares for families in the biggest transition of their lives. But in this climate, there is not enough hands, hearts or time to give what women need, and the amount of trauma that leaves for women is insurmountable and irreparable.

Forced to work over ratios, without breaks, overtime, underpaid is how we are in a national crisis. And being a midwife isn't sustainable in the birth suite, postnatal or triage setting.

There isn't much hope that comes from being pushed so far to the brink, that you feel like you're losing yourself if you stay in the profession you worked so hard to enter in the first place.

Thanks for your time.

I appreciate everything you are doing to bring awareness to birth trauma in clinicians and for women.

Kind regards,