

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Reproductive, Maternal and Paediatric](#)
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Select Committee on Reproductive, Maternal and Paediatric Health Services in Tasmania [SEC=UNOFFICIAL]
Date: Monday, 16 September 2024 5:14:54 PM

[REDACTED]

Dear Secretary,

I am writing to the Select Committee on Reproductive, Maternal and Paediatric Health Services in Tasmania, because I need to share my story.

My name is [REDACTED] I live in the greater Hobart area. I have one child, they are three years old. I would like to address the trauma and disrespectful care that I experienced in my pregnancy and labour here in Tasmania.

PREGNANCY

In my pregnancy, I did not have continuity of care. I attempted several times to give the practice my birth preferences and at no time was it 'convenient' for the midwife at hand to receive it. I found this odd and upsetting.

I only received a final appointment with the midwife because I requested it. This appt was when I was exactly 40 weeks. It was in this appointment however that upon entering the room I was told that I had been "booked for an induction" without my prior consent. I asked why and the midwife stated that I would be 40 plus ten days at the time of the induction. I had never met this midwife before. There was no continuity of care here and the induction was booked without my consent or knowledge. The midwife then said she could cancel it but I would then risk 'not being able to come in for an induction if my pregnancy went over'. Note again I was 40 weeks so there was no indication that I would not give birth naturally within the next two weeks etc. I was placed under considerable pressure to have said induction despite there being zero medical reason to have this. The appointment and its events placed me under significant distress and pressure as I did not want an induction. Over the next ten days I had significant mental health issues and as a result I believe I did not go into labour naturally. This I believe was a direct result of the very poor treatment I received in the appointment.

LABOUR

I went in for my induction and I asked to be given cervedil over the balloon as I stated I believed that I was ready to give birth and it would be the best treatment for me and I stated that I wanted to avoid the syntocinon drip. The staff were not very forthcoming with allowing this but I advocated for myself and was given this. I do not know if this affected the care I was given that night (because I asked for something that they did not want me to have?) or not.

I was given cervedil inserted at 12 midnight and I was given two codeine tablets. before I very soon went into active labour. I believed this was obvious but I was not given any interest or care. I laboured by myself for three hours in a shared maternity ward and was

given ice chips by a midwife who was NOT the midwife whose care I was under. She came and checked on me because I sounded like “I was in a lot of pain.” This midwife gave me ice chips and I added my own cordial to it and took sips of this in between contractions which I performed on hands and knees on the bed. My contractions were mere minutes apart. I asked the other midwife for my partner when she came in to check if I was okay and said to me “I don’t know if you are laughing or crying.” I was then left alone again.

The midwife assigned to me came into the room and checked my cervix. She said I was not dilated very much but the baby was ‘surprisingly low.’ A doctor then briefly came to look at my cervix and she performed an exam. She stated I was only 2cm dilated and it was implied that I was not in active labour? I heard her say to the midwife “I gave it a good tug.” I did not consent to this “tug”. I think it was at this point I asked again for my partner and the doctor spoke to me in a nice tone and I said “Oh you are nice.” I said this because she had not spoken to me nicely prior to this interaction.

I had no idea I could have laboured the majority of my labour in a birthing suite. I had no one to identify that I was in active labour and no one to advocate for me. I received such minimal care while in labour over this time period.

In my labour, I was given a shot of morphine and I did not ask for this nor did I give consent prior. The midwife came into the room and told me she was giving me a shot of morphine. The possibility of a shot of morphine was in my birth plan but to this day (despite asking after I gave birth and went back for a post partum interview with the doctor which I requested to make sense of everything that happened at the birth) I do not know if anyone looked at my birth plan. The doctor, at the pp interview, said she did not know and made no attempt to follow this up.

At five am my waters broke and I saw this as a good opportunity to argue my case to the midwives that I was indeed in labour. I pressed the buzzer and when the midwife came in I showed her that my waters had broken. She left and came back in a while later and took out the cervidril. I asked why and she said “because you are in active labour.” She then stated that I could have a birthing suite and my partner could come in (both at 6am) if I PROMISED to take the drip if my contractions stopped. I thought this was tantamount to blackmail. But I agreed because I knew the contractions were not going to stop and I wanted my partner and a birthing suite.

An hour later I was wheeled to a birthing suite and almost immediately after setting it up I needed to push. I did not say anything for some time because I was scared they would tell me I was lying (or didn’t believe it myself?) and then told the midwife who I don’t think believed me but asked me to not push until (someone else?) arrived to check. This was excruciating. Absolutely excruciating. If left to my own devices I would have been pushing at this point. I was then checked and told I was fully dilated and I could push if I liked. I pushed my baby out and he was born at 7:20am. I was indeed in active labour and almost ready to give birth by the time my partner arrived. He very nearly missed the delivery and he was not able to be there for me during the labour that I endured ALONE. I feel very sad to this day that he was denied this access and that I was not cared for by anyone other than myself during this period. I was literally ignored despite – my partner telling me upon arrival

that he could hear my screams of labour from the ELEVATOR which is not even in the ward.

To this day I have no idea if I was considered not in labour and the team on the ward believed me to simply be in pain from the cervicidil or if I was simply ignored and knowingly left to labour by myself. Again, I revied one cup of ice chips as my actual personal/emotional care (other than vaginal checks etc) during this time. I still do not know if there was a birthing suite available or if it was an arbitrary (or staffing?) decision to make me wait until 6am. Given I needed to push about twenty minutes after I arrived at the suite, there was every chance that I could have given birth in the shared maternity ward alone and without my partner despite me asking for him throughout the night. I had never met any of these midwives before and despite being in the 'know your midwife' scheme there was zero continuity of care.

I lost nearly 2 litres of blood immediately following the delivery of my beautiful son. Given the immediacy of that situation I appreciate that things had to be done in a hurry BUT I was asked for consent for these things such as drip, suppository/s, pushing my placenta out etc and I have since looked up the protocol and the hospital followed protocol to stop the bleeding. For this I am grateful. However I was not informed what was protocol for that situation and what was not. I did think at the time "this would be an unfortunate time to die" and I do believe I was in shock after this event. I received no aftercare for this particular situation. No one mentioned that this event occurred after they stopped the bleeding and there was no psych etc available to speak it out with me or explore any shock or trauma I suffered. I also had a tiny new baby to take care of and as I laboured over the night I did not sleep at all that night. There was zero psychological aftercare for me at the Royal.

POST-PARTUM

I was ignored/dismissed when the midwife stated that I could go home on the pre-scheduled day (day two or three?) and I said that I was not ready (having lost such a substantial amount of blood I was not feeling myself. This was ignored and I was told to pack up before then being told that the doctor wasn't happy for me to leave. So we had to wait all day before my blood pressure could be taken several more times. This to me showed a lack of communication and continuity between doctors and midwives, not to mention the obvious ignorance of what I, the patient, said, which was "I was not ready to go home."

I did not receive adequate support after my birth, when learning how to breastfeed or when needing help to take care of my baby.

I asked for a pp interview and spoke to the doctor who tugged my cervix open. This did not answer any of the questions I had about the night and I was told mainly – you'd have to ask the midwives on shift – but I was given no way in which to do this. The interview felt performative and perfunctuary and there was an element of wanting to smooth the situation over so that I 'was happy with the answers' – as though there was an unspoken fear that I would make a complaint, despite my desire only to UNDERSTADN what

happened that night as I could not comprehend why I wasn't given a birthing suite early (or given any help or attention!) when it was obvious to me that I was in active labour.

I had post-partum anxiety and depression and had trouble producing milk. The care I received from the child health care nurses was absolutely below par and I stopped taking my baby as I very quickly learnt more than the nurses. They advised me to stop feeding my two week old on demand and limit his feeding (as he may have been snack feeding when he was very obviously and necessarily cluster feeding) and he stopped putting on weight and this contributed to my post-partum A and D considerably. I soon learnt to feed on demand and that cluster feeding is entirely normal but it took me months to stop having to pump and give formula top ups which was a direct result of VERY BAD advice from the nurses. I do not take my son to these as I know he is healthy and thriving and the system there is absurd. I will not take any subsequent children to the CHCN.

SOLUTIONS

The recommendations that I have are:

- Easier and wider access to midwife led continuity of care models
- Access to a known midwife
- Access to publicly funded homebirth, birth centre or a birthing on country program
- Access to unbiased evidence based information
- Legislation on informed consent
- Mandatory trauma-informed training for clinicians
- More funding for post-partum care, such as physio, social worker, lactation support
- Improved support for early pregnancy loss

Kind regards,

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