

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 two children; they are 3 years and 3 months old. I would like to address the trauma that I experienced in my labour and birth here in Tasmania at the Royal Hobart Hospital

PREGNANCY

In the late stage of my pregnancy, I was told I needed to be induced due to preeclampsia – the only symptom being hypertension. I was not told that I had options. I was told that I would be induced the next day and to come in then.

When I checked into the hospital the next day, I did not see a midwife or nurse for some time. After ringing the call bell, I was told by the midwife that no one knew I had arrived. After waiting some more time my induction finally started. I was filled with fear and the pain was unbearable. Fear and pain combined with my husband not being able to stay with me the night left me crying in the hospital bed for half of the night and not being able to sleep, even after being administered temazepam. Fear and pain and half a night sleep is absolutely not conducive to the body going into labour.

I then spent the next three days in hospital, doctors and midwives inserting their hands into my vagina over and over and over again to see if my cervix was dilating, which it was not. My body and my baby were not ready for birth.

LABOUR

My membranes finally ruptured spontaneously when I was not medicated. I informed a midwife that my membranes ruptured and it seemed like there was a rush. The midwife got my things and walked with haste to take me to the delivery ward, at this time I was appointed a new midwife.

I was contracting without any medication when a doctor came into the room to tell me that I was not progressing and that they would have to administer syntocinon, I was not given any options.

In my labour, I wish they listened to me when I stated that I could feel my baby's head coming out, but they did not listen.

I felt scared when I asked my midwife if I was going to die and she did not answer.

I was not given enough information to make any informed decision about my labour or birth

POST-PARTUM

I did not receive adequate support after my birth, when learning how to breastfeed. I have to go onto YouTube to teach myself how to do this.

OTHERS BIRTHS

I have attended and been involved in other women's birth as a doula and have experienced the medical team lying to me over an umbilical cord breaking. When I ask about this, the midwife said that it did not happen. Another client had a post-dural-puncture headache from her epidural, which went on for far too long as medical staff did not believe her when she informed staff of the headache.

I have experienced clients not being assisted into the shower post birth, not having help to get dressed, not being educated as to what went 'wrong' when their birth did not go to plan and not being informed as to what was happening to their baby when baby was taken to the resuscitation table.

I have witnessed the grief of a woman who could not deliver her breech baby vaginally as doctors have lost the skill to do this and instead have painful procedures performed to turn the baby or undergo major abdominal surgery to birth their baby. I have witness countless women advised to birth on their backs when this is outdated and not best practice.

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 that is up to date
- 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,

