

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Reproductive, Maternal and Paediatric](#)  
**Subject:** Maternity care in Tasmania  
**Date:** Monday, 16 September 2024 10:56:35 AM

---

I would like to submit my birth story, detailing my experience with obstetric violence, bullying and coercion.

My birth began when my waters broke spontaneously at 2am at 40 weeks. I called the maternity unit and was told to come in because there was some blood present.

My OB came in at 8am and said that because my body had not yet gone into labour it would be 'unlikely to do so'. He offered me a C section that day, or to induce labour with a oxytocin drip. Our previous conversation on this topic had been that he would not use a drip for inducing as this birth would be a VBAC, and that slightly increased the risk of uterine rupture. I was confused by this change of heart at the last minute and queried this, but my concerns were brushed off.

My goal was to avoid a C section as my previous caesarean was very hard to recover from, and I have huge anxiety/panic attacks triggered when entering surgical theatres after I underwent major brain surgery during my previous pregnancy.

Up until this time my OB had been supportive of this and said there was 'no reason why I shouldn't have a vaginal birth'.

He maintained that I would be 'risking major infection' if I did not start IV antibiotics immediately as my waters were now ruptured.

I opted to try to go into labour naturally that day, and was prepared to go home and represent later that evening if labour had not started, then look at induction. He agreed on the basis that my next CTG was normal. Until this point everything had been reassuring with my monitoring.

The next CTG was flagged as the baby now had an 'elevated heart rate'. They insisted on putting in a cannula and giving me IV fluids immediately, and said this would stabilise baby's heart rate and they also started the antibiotics that I did not want. Now I could not go home as I was hooked up to a drip.

Over the next 24hrs my labour did not establish which I believe was partially due to my elevated anxiety over being in hospital against my wishes.

The next morning, my OB visited again. He requested to do a vaginal exam, which I agreed to. However, he was extremely rough with this and did not listen when I begged him to 'go slowly'. I cried and clung onto my partner and midwife during this very painful process.

This man has been my gynaecologist for 10 years and has treated me for vulvodynia - he has been very gentle with exams in the past so I know he is capable of this. He then proceeded to tell me that 'if I cannot handle a vaginal exam there's no way I could handle birthing a baby'. He said 'I can almost guarantee you that you have a subclinical level of infection and that you are risking your baby becoming extremely unwell by delaying any longer' despite the fact I had been on 4 hourly IV antibiotics and had no signs of infection. He then said that he had changed his mind, he would not offer me induction that day as 'the risks are now too high and there will not be staff here overnight to get you to theatre immediately, which you will probably need'. He gave me two options - have a C section that afternoon (this discussion was at 7am so the urgency was clearly not there) or discharge myself against medical advice and seek care elsewhere.

I felt bullied, belittled and betrayed by his behaviour. I was backed into a corner to agree to the one outcome I did not wish for - a C section.

I explored the option of transferring to the RHH, however was told this would be an unwise decision due to their ongoing staffing issues and the unlikely possibility that the OB on shift there that day would treat me any differently (a colleague of my OB).

I had my baby via C section at 3.40pm that day, a Friday. I had a massive panic attack on the operating table and disassociated from the entire event. I cannot remember my baby being born. I feel physically sick when I look at photos that were taken for me. This baby was my last baby, and I feel robbed of this experience and like I was an inconvenience for my care provider, when I should have been able to trust him. My bond with my baby was very negatively impacted in those first precious days due to my declining mental health. I could not sleep due to my anxiety and had to be medicated for this.

My baby struggled to breastfeed, and I had to resort to formula top ups (which I did not want to do) as he became dehydrated after my concerns over his feeding were dismissed by several midwives over the weekend. It was discovered by his paediatrician and LC on Monday that he had a severe tongue tie, which was immediately treated. This further eroded my trust in my maternal instincts and my self belief.

Other than this, the care shown to me by the midwifery staff was very empathetic and I felt safe in their care. They told me on multiple occasions to 'advocate for myself' as they had to follow hospital policy and the OB's orders.

My OB later told me that he enjoyed his weekend away. I strongly believe that he managed my birth to fit his social calendar and not what was best for me or my baby.

My partner was a huge advocate for me and also feels like our trust in this OB has been crushed, and we paid lots of money for a service that was not provided.

I am physically still very hampered by my C-section and mentally exhausted from fighting the reawakened anxiety that my treatment during my birth has led to. I feel it will take me a long time to recover from it.

I sincerely hope that by sharing my story, obstetric care in Tasmania can be audited and improved to be woman centred, not policy driven or dictated by OB's with conflicting interests. I hope that OB's who inflict obstetric violence during their practice will be held accountable for this, along with their coercive behaviour and use of language to influence their patients.

