

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Reproductive, Maternal and Paediatric](#)
Subject: Select Committee on Reproductive, Maternal and Paediatric health services in Tasmania
Date: Monday, 16 September 2024 11:28:00 PM

[REDACTED]

Dear Secretary,

I'm writing to the committee about my experience of giving birth to my twins at the Royal Hobart Hospital in [REDACTED].

I was extremely fortunate to be given the opportunity to be part of the MGP program due to being pregnant with the type of twins with the lowest risks and had only wonderful interactions with my midwives. They were supportive, kind and experienced and I felt safe in their care despite the complications that being pregnant with twins can bring. We live in Sorell and being seen at our local community health centre by my midwives was amazing. This took so much stress out of getting to appointments. I had one appointment at a doctors clinic at the Wellington Clinics when I was 29 weeks, reception didn't pass on critical information to me about putting my slip in a certain tray so I waited 3 hours to be seen, the waiting room would fill and empty and so on. By this point I was extremely hungry, thirsty and very angry at the situation. This left me feeling very negatively towards the system but made me even more grateful that I was a part of the MGP.

My waters broke at 32+2 weeks and I was admitted to the maternity ward. An ultrasound the same day discovered that my presenting twin was footling breach so I was placed on strict bed rest. We were taken for a tour of the NICU so we knew what to expect when our twins arrived. At 32+4 I went into labour and received extremely good care from the high risk obstetrician, delivering doctor, midwives, student midwife, anaesthetist and theatre team while I laboured, during the caesarean, recovery and my following 3 nights on the ward. All staff I had interactions with on the maternity ward were wonderful. A mistake was made by a midwife on the morning I went into labour as she gave me my daily injection of clexane after I had started having contractions which could have ended in me being put under a general anaesthetic for delivery but the anaesthetist was very thorough and checked my blood before the Caesarean to check it was clotting as it should. Whilst I didn't get to have the vaginal birth I had dreamed of and I didn't get to make decisions around my delivery due to my sons position, my caesarean was a positive, calm experience.

Our twins spent 3 nights in NICU and 31 nights in special care. It was here that I felt more support should have been offered. I accept that some of my experience in NICU/SC was heavily impacted due to the Covid restrictions at the time, we weren't allowed any visitors and due to our financial situation my husband had to work so that he could take time off when the twins were to be discharged. The layout of the new special care meant there was no opportunity to connect and interact with other mums, and with no visitors allowed I was very isolated. My twins were separated into two rooms because of the layout of the new ward which is completely impractical for twin parents. It's very disappointing to see a brand new ward isn't fit for purpose for lots of families who will need it and statistics show that twins are more often than not born prematurely.

I'm hindsight the thing I am most disappointed about in our NICU/SC experience is that I was never offered the opportunity to see a social worker. I got clearance from my GP at 2 weeks postpartum so that I could drive in to be with our twins during the day particularly to pump and establish breastfeeding. Car parking was expensive, eating meals out became

expensive after I was told by a nurse in charge of a shift that I wasn't allowed to bring food in and keep it in the fridges in the boys rooms. Any form of help would have been accepted.

When my boys were 8 months actual/6 months corrected I sought out a referral for the mother and baby unit which was still at St Helen's. My boys were waking 2 hourly and not in sync so I was up every hour every night. I was so sleep deprived and my mental health was suffering. Due to being a public patient I received a call from a psychiatry registrar who deemed I wasn't acute enough to get a room and suggested I stopped breastfeeding so that I could have a break and my husband could help overnight. As a breastfeeding mum I was appalled by his suggestion knowing that a stay in the mother and baby unit would have helped immensely but accepted that without private health insurance I wasn't going to get a bed.

Since being discharged we have had many visits to CHaPS, paediatric outpatient clinics, the ophthalmology clinic, ED and subsequently been admitted to the paediatric ward a handful of times. With the exception of the ophthalmology clinic, I have never questioned the care we have received. Our CHaPS nurses are wonderful and getting to see them locally in Sorell is so convenient for our community. The times we have been admitted to the paed ward the care has been outstanding despite the challenges as we are always needing to be in isolation due to viral induced wheeze. My son reacts badly to the nurses and doctors needing to be fully gowned up but they have always done such a great job managing it and helping us get home as soon as we safely can.

Before I had my twin boys I was a chef and postpartum nourishment is very important to me, I would love to see some changes one day in the food offered on the maternity ward to help nourish and heal a mothers body after what it has gone through.

Kind regards,

Brigid Cowen

