

Holly Bennett (nee James)

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

To whom it may concern,

Please find attached, a complaint detailing my disappointing and traumatic experience at the Launceston General Hospital (LGH) with the Antenatal Clinic, Birth Suite, and Home Visits during my pregnancy and birth in [REDACTED]. I have also included how this experience has affected me, and still is affecting me since the distressing experience I went through at the hands of numerous LGH staff.

Kind Regards,

Holly Bennett

One of the first visits I had in the antenatal clinic, my concerns with confidentiality started. I was called into a room with one of the midwives, who checked my first name and started talking to me about certain topics of the pregnancy which were not familiar to me as I had only just started visiting the clinic and was not aware of. Upon asking the midwife about the topic she then asked to confirm my full name. At this stage it was found that there were 2 people called Holly in the waiting room and I had just been given information about another patients' pregnancy. When I corrected the midwife and told her my full name, she then said, "oh it's not you I needed then, my patients last name is meant to be \*insert last name here\*" luckily, I was more worried about being in the wrong room and finding out the information I was just given was not mine than paying attention to the individuals last name. It is quite concerning to know that confidentiality doesn't seem to be taken seriously, and if this error had not been picked up, I may have been given information that would have been incorrect for my pregnancy.

Early on in my visits to the clinic, I also expressed some concerns with symptoms I was experiencing during the pregnancy. At the time I was suffering migraines, swelling of hands and feet, dizziness and blurred vision. I explained my concerns regarding my symptoms, as well as family history of birth loss due to preeclampsia to the midwife. After explaining these I was told to get my blood pressure checked daily and note down if it was high, or call if it was over 140/90. Due to this I acquired a blood pressure cuff and was taking my blood pressure a few times a day and tracking these results for the 2 weeks between appointments. On return to the clinic, I gave the midwife a chart of my readings from the past 2 weeks, which I printed off a blood pressure tracker app that I had been using to track the readings. When I gave the midwife the printed chart, I was belittled and made to feel almost stupid, after receiving comments such as "why would you bother bringing that in", and "what's that for?". This was the same midwife who had asked me to monitor my blood pressure the visit before. I left the appointment feeling embarrassed that I had taken the instruction to monitor it too seriously, and worried I was seen as stupid or over reacting, for having concerns about the health of my child and myself, especially with family history of the issue, which should never have been the case.

Towards the end of my pregnancy, I could not get parking anywhere close to the LGH, at the time I was too heavily pregnant and my feet were swelling too much to walk to the hospital from numerous blocks away, so I called and asked to change to a phone consult. When I answered the call, the male on the phone asked if he was speaking with '██████' I let him know he was speaking with Holly James. He then informed me he had called the wrong number and was meant to call me next, but given I was on the phone already he would talk to me first. During this call, he explained to me that my ultrasound showed my child was in the 97<sup>th</sup> percentile, and due to this I would need to be induced early due to risk of injury to myself if I let my pregnancy go to full term. I was advised that the following appointment I had at the hospital, I needed to talk to the midwives about what date I would be induced. Upon finishing this call, I called both my husband and parents and explained how scared I was of what would happen, and went through the stages of grief dealing with the idea I would not naturally be able to go into labour if I wanted to, due to the high risks if I did. I then repacked the hospital bag, throwing all the 0000 clothes we had purchased into a box, thinking my child was going to be too big to ever wear them. Upon my next visit following this phone call, I asked the midwife about what would be happening with the induction and asked when we needed to schedule it for.

The midwife seemed quite shocked when asked this and questioned why I was looking at induction as an option. I explained the previous phone appointment and how scared I was about the risks of naturally birthing a baby in the 97<sup>th</sup> percentile, after I had explained this to the midwife, she explained that my child was not in the 97<sup>th</sup> percentile, and was sitting happily in the 79<sup>th</sup> percentile, meaning there was absolutely no risk of injury associated with his size if I naturally went into labour and gave birth. I then went home and unpacked and repacked the hospital bag yet again, this time with feelings of confusion as I had finally worked through coming to terms with not being able to let my body naturally go into labour and my baby never being able to wear the newborn clothing we were looking forward to dressing him in, now knowing that the information that caused me to feel this way was never correct, and I had been stressed and upset for no reason except for a staff members neglect to check information before giving medical advice. I'm not sure if the patient named [REDACTED] results were where he found this '97<sup>th</sup> percentile' information, or he just rushed through notes. But whatever happened caused a lot of stress and upset for no reason and could have been avoided.

On one of my last visits to the clinic, the midwife was going through everything I needed to have done before giving birth, the flu shot was one of the things I had been told I had to have before giving birth. Luckily, my husband remembered me previously having the flu shot at the first appointment we had at the clinic, as I am quite afraid of needles and it was something I had told him I was scared of getting originally. Upon telling the midwife I had already had this, she laughed off the fact they nearly gave me a second shot. It was quite worrying to know that if it had been another patient who was not phased about, or didn't remember certain needles, they may have received a second dose of something, due to a midwife not thoroughly reading notes. Luckily it was not something that could have serious consequences, but it is very worrying to know it could have been a lot worse due to staff neglecting to check patient history.

I also feel like I was not properly prepared for my experience in the birth suite very well. During the group birthing class, I unfortunately was so sick that I was unable to stay in the class. During the class, I spent a majority of the first 30 minutes running to the bathrooms. Due to this, I asked to be excused and do a 1 on 1 class later on to get the information. Once I got the 1 on 1 class, I was presented the first half, or what I assume was roughly half, of the class PowerPoint by a midwife. After this, the midwife said she would just send me the rest to go over by myself at home. I wonder if I had had the option to complete the whole PowerPoint and go over any questions with a midwife in person, whether I would have been more aware and prepared for my options regarding pain medications, which became an issue when I was in labour (I will elaborate on this later in this document).

During what would be my last antenatal appointment, I discussed the idea of being induced a week early as my body was no longer coping well with the pregnancy, I was struggling to walk because of swollen feet, I had nerves pinching in my back, and was not coping overly well. The midwife explained that there was a chance I may not be ready early, but booked an appointment to be assessed for induction on the [REDACTED] but explained there was a high chance that my body would not be ready and I may have to wait longer. On the [REDACTED], I received a call letting me know it was time to come in to be assessed and induced. When assessed, the midwife used terms such as "it should work, but it also may not, but we will try" which in hind sight should have been a sign that

there was a chance my body was not ready, but at the time I was of the impression that they would not have attempted to induce me if they didn't think I was definitely ready. Knowing what I know now, I should have been more cautious when there were no certain terms when the midwife was discussing the probability of the induction being successful, unfortunately I was naive and trusted that my best interests and health were being prioritized by LGH staff.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December, I visited the birth suite for a check-up, as I had noticed reduced movement. During this time, they attempted to use the Wireless Patch System Fetal Monitor (Novii) and found that it was not working, I believe this was in room 4, but it has now been nearly 7 months, so unfortunately, I can't remember the exact room number as it has taken a while to mentally prepare to write this. When I was induced on the morning of the [REDACTED] I was offered the Novii as a CTG option, I accepted this option, but voiced my concerns regarding the Novii in room 4 (again, I believe this is the correct room number, but at the time I was certain on which room had the inoperative Novii as it had only been less than 3 weeks between visits) and asked if a different Novii setup could be used. The midwife ignored my request and let me know she believed there was nothing wrong with the Novii from that room. Numerous attempts were made by the midwife and student to successfully attach the Novii and link it to the system, during this time, there was abrasive skin preparation tape used multiple times to remove layers of skin in an attempt to get the Novii to read correctly. From what my Husband and mother witnessed; they believe this was attempted at least 8 times. This left me with the equivalent of gravel rash on my stomach which was covered with scabs and very irritated after my labour, which took weeks to heal. When one of the midwives noticed this after I was in recovery after birthing my child, she asked for permission to take a photo and talk to others about why it happened, as well as helped moisturise the scabs and explained this was not usual procedure. The next day, a different midwife was assisting with something and noticed the scabs, she then made the remark "oh, you're *that* girl, we had a meeting about you" this comment made me feel quite uncomfortable, as it felt like it was treated more like gossip than a serious issue, and that somehow it was my fault.

As previously mentioned above, I don't believe I was appropriately informed regarding pain relief options. Early in my labour I was offered pain relief, due to not being fully informed of my options, I declined the epidural at this stage, and instead opted for a pethidine injection, further on in the labour I received my second dose of this after the allowed time between injections had passed. Upon requesting another injection later on in the labour, I was informed that I had received the 2 allowed doses of this medication, and this was no longer an option. I pushed on as long as possible until I could no longer stand the pain, and then asked for the epidural, I was inspected and informed that because I was already 8cm dilated I was not able to receive the epidural, but was told "you'll be fine, it won't be long now until you can push". 4 hours after requesting the epidural I again asked what was happening and if I could receive some sort of pain relief and was told I had not progressed any further and was still at 8cm. At this time, I was informed my babies heart rate was now dropping with every contraction, which the doctor explained to us was due to stress. This resulted in the emergency caesarean procedure I underwent. If I had been better informed about my pain relief options and being unable to get an epidural after a certain stage, I would have known I needed to speak up and ask earlier if I did want the epidural, especially given that the time between the balloon insertion and my baby being born via c-section was roughly 40 hours, which meant I could have been more prepared and requested options to make the pain more tolerable for some of this time. This was disappointing knowing I should have been prepared and given more information regarding such an

important part of labour so I could make informed decisions, but instead was left to find out during the labour.

Towards the end of my labour, it was apparent my baby was no longer coping and his heart rate was dropping with each of my contractions. Due to this, the Dr's explained I would need to have an emergency c-section. Due to my previous experience with c-sections after seeing complications one of my friends suffered, I voiced my wishes to not be conscious during this procedure as I had seen the anaesthetic fail in a friend and was scared the same may happen to myself. I was also dealing with emotions of being disappointed in myself and feeling like I had failed by being unable to naturally deliver my child, as there is a lot of societal pressure on naturally delivering, meaning not only did I feel scared, but also quite defeated and upset. After voicing my wishes, Drs kept pushing for me to stay conscious during the procedure, using terms such as "you'll regret it if you don't" and "are you sure you want to make that decision and miss the birth" which then led both of my support people to feel the pressure to side with doctors, meaning they were essentially bullying me into doing it the way they preferred. As much as I am grateful that I got to experience my son's birth, the doctors never should have been trying to coerce me into making a different decision when I had strong feelings regarding the procedure.

On the [REDACTED] the day my son was born, the doctors came in during the day to discuss going home that day. I had only had my child at 4am that morning, and was already being pressured into the idea of leaving to go home. I had concerns about going home so early, as I wanted to make sure my milk had properly come in, and I was comfortable moving around in the hospital, before going home where I would not have midwives and Drs if something wasn't right. It felt like there was almost this pressure to leave from the staff who had this conversation with me regarding leaving. It left me feeling quite unwelcome, which should never have been the case, especially after a traumatic birth which was nearly 40 hours. I should have been supported by the staff to stay as long as I needed and get any help and guidance I needed before being sent home.

On the first day following my c-section, one of the midwives informed me I "had to" get up for a shower as soon as possible, as I needed to get back to "normal". I voiced that I was still in quite a bit of pain due to my c-section being less than 12 hours prior, and was told that it still needed to be done so I was "back to normal". I listened to this advice, which felt more like an instruction, and stood in the shower, while in quite a bit of pain. During this, the midwife helped wash me, and was quite rough in doing so, pressing extremely firmly on my stomach, and rubbing roughly with the wash cloth, which was very uncomfortable given I was already in a large amount of pain and also had the grazing from the abrasive tape. It felt like the midwife was trying to tick a figurative box of 'has been showered' instead of caring about me and my needs and pain at the time. It was almost like I was treated like a task instead of a human with feelings.

Quite early after having my son, I noticed that he wasn't feeding the way breastfeeding had been described to us in the class. He would latch, have maybe a minute or two, at best, of sucking, then fall asleep. It seemed to me that he was not actually properly feeding, but was falling asleep at the breast instead, which we later found was happening due to him having jaundice and being too tired to feed. I asked multiple midwives to watch him feeding, and was told every time that he was latched fine, so

it means he was “obviously just full and content” if he was falling asleep. I felt like that was not the case, and continually asked again and again for help and was told numerous things such as “it’s just cluster feeding” and “you’re a first-time mum, you just aren’t used to it”.

On the night following the birth of my son, I accidentally dropped the packet of wipes on the floor while trying to change his nappy. Because it had been less than 24 hours since my c-section, I pressed the buzzer to request assistance to get the wipes off the ground as I was still too sore to bend. When the midwife entered the room, I apologised for asking for help with something so small, as I felt embarrassed to be asking for help with something I was fully capable of doing just days before, and explained I needed assistance picking up the wipes. After I had asked, the midwife informed me “your body won’t let you do anything you’re not capable of” and was told I should be able to bend over and pick them up myself. I was quite embarrassed, and ashamed, as I already felt quite silly having to ask for help, but I was now made to do it myself anyway as I shouldn’t have needed help according to the nurse. The morning following this incident, I was in so much pain that I felt like my abdomen was on fire. I could not move at all as the pain was so immense, and was unable to move to pick up or feed my baby. I often wonder if this is normal procedure, or if for some reason, the midwife just chose not to help in this particular circumstance, as most major procedures, patients are told to rest, not bend over and pick things up off the floor 12 hours after.

After the incident with the wipes mentioned above, I woke up in so much pain and was unable to feed my son, as I could not pick him up, or hold him. I pressed the buzzer, and explained to the midwife that I was in extreme pain, and unable to pick up or hold my baby to feed him, and needed help. Instead of helping me hold my baby while he breastfed, they told me the only thing they were able to do if I could not hold him was feed him formula. I agreed that if that was what had to be done, then it needed to happen, as I would rather him fed than starving. In hindsight, I should have been supported in any way possible to breast feed my child, if not by getting help holding him, then by helping me pump to feed him, which ended up being their solution to my feeding issues either way.

During my stay, while having issues with feeding and mobility after above wipe incident, I also had issues with co-sleeping issues. On numerous occasions, I requested help from midwives to move my baby into his own bassinet after he had fallen asleep as I was unable to move. This request was usually met with the phrase “I’ll come back soon and give you a hand” only for the midwife to never return. I voiced my concerns with this, as I was exhausted and accidentally falling asleep while holding him. When I voiced my concerns, I was told by some midwives that “it’s okay because other cultures do it, so it’s not that unsafe” and others lectured me on how unsafe I was being by accidentally falling asleep. This was very upsetting and frustrating, as I knew that I was asking for help to avoid it, and being ignored and forgotten.

Due to the traumatic birth, followed by the above-mentioned issues, my mental health was not great during my stay at the hospital. I found myself becoming stressed and frustrated as I felt like I was not being listened to or taken seriously with my concerns, this led to self-blame over things I had no control over, even though I knew I was doing as much as I could to get the help I needed with feeding and physical movement. Due to this, I found myself crying and quite upset a lot of the time, and when my support people left, I’d find myself counting down the hours until they returned as they were the

only people who were listening to me and taking my concerns seriously. I felt like I was almost unsafe while alone with the midwives as nothing I said was treated with any importance, and it was as if they didn't want to help. During my stay, I was evaluated with the Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale (EPDS) and it was suggested to me by doctors and midwives that I should consider taking antidepressants, as I had previously been on antidepressants which I had stopped over 12 months before giving birth. I explained to the Drs and midwives that the cause for me taking antidepressants previously was due to circumstantial reasons which were no longer affecting me, so I did not feel the need to go onto them again. They then questioned my reasons previously, as well as the dose I was previously on etc. I told them my previous dose of 75mg, and explained the previous reasons I had been prescribed them. I explained to the Dr and midwives that I did not feel that I should be back on the antidepressants, as I was emotional because of what I had been through with the birth, as well as not being listened to when I felt like there was something wrong with my baby not feeding properly. The staff continued to try and persuade me into agreeing to be on my previous dose, which I continually declined. On day 3 I was given a tablet with my blood thinning needle at roughly mid-day, I had just jumped out of the shower and was told by my mother that the nurse had come around to give me the injection, and to press the buzzer whenever I was ready. When I pressed the buzzer, the nurse brought in the needle as well as a tablet, I took the tablet without asking questions, as I had been given so many tablets to help with pain etc that I was used to just taking the tablets as they were handed to me. I then took a nap, as my mother had offered to watch my baby so I could rest, as I had not been getting rest during nights. When I awoke from my nap, I felt quite dizzy and disorientated, originally, I was unsure if it was just taking me a little while to wake up, and started getting up to use the bathroom. While trying to walk to the bathroom, I found myself trying to hold on to the walls for support, feeling almost like I'd been spiked. I also noticed when trying to get on and off the toilet, I found myself holding the rails, then gripping the sink while trying to wash my hands. While trying to walk out of the bathroom, I made the comment to my mother that something didn't feel quite right. Upon looking at me, mum mentioned that my pupils were extremely dilated and I did not look normal, she then asked me what medications I had taken, I responded with "I don't think I had anything out of the normal apart from whatever was given to me with that needle". I was too scared to hold my baby, as I felt so weak and disorientated, I was scared I would accidentally drop him, and was not coordinated enough with the side effects to hold myself up, let alone a baby as well. My mother pressed the buzzer and upon the midwife entering, questioned what I had been given, as she thought the symptoms I was showing seemed like the side effects of going onto my old antidepressants. She was then told the nurse had administered antidepressants at the same time I was given the needle. We requested to speak to someone as I was not comfortable being put onto the antidepressants without properly consenting. The nurses called the doctor into the room who started giving us a lecture on the decision of putting me on antidepressants being due to my crying as well as my mental health not being well. I explained that the reason my mental health was not well was because of the birth trauma, and that I felt like something was wrong, and the doctor kept trying to pressure me to stay on the tablets. My mother then tried to speak up for me, as it was obvious I was not being listened to, and the doctor was still trying quite hard to push to keep me on antidepressants as "she's been crying a lot and upset, so it would help stop that", he then tried to bargain for a half dose of 37.5mg if I was not happy on the 75mg dose, which again myself and my mother declined, as I felt unsafe while trying to navigate being a first time mum as well as dealing with the side effects of the tablets. Unfortunately, even with two people advocating that I did not feel

safe nor comfortable on the tablets, it seemed that the doctor was not willing to take no for an answer. Luckily, my husband returned to the hospital during this conversation and noticed that I was scared and did not look like my usual self. He noticed it seemed like I was being pressured into something I was very clearly not consenting to, and spoke up for me, letting the doctor know they would not be giving me anything I was asking not to be given. Finally, the doctor took this seriously and accepted no for an answer. I dealt with quite a lot of emotions after this interaction, as it was essentially the same as being spiked, but instead of somewhere like a bar or nightclub, I was in the hospital, where I was meant to be safe. I felt scared, as I was so disorientated and felt so different from the side effects, I did not want to accidentally drop my baby. I was frustrated, why did it take until a bigger build male came in and said the word no for this doctor to listen, why were my feelings and opinions as the patient who was given the medication not taken as seriously or seen as important? What would have happened if I wasn't lucky enough to have someone like my husband come in and stand up for me? After this encounter, I no longer felt like I was safe in the hospital, especially when visiting times were over, and I was left alone with the same staff who administered medication I was not comfortable receiving.

On day three, I spoke to my mother about what was happening and explained that I felt something was wrong, but was not being taken seriously. Later that day, she changed my son's nappy and noticed urates in the nappy, and the nappy was essentially dry, upon noticing this, she pressed the buzzer for help. She mentioned her concerns to a midwife who told her "Oh, I don't know what that means, I'll have to get someone else", at this stage our concerns were still dismissed. Later that day, my mother asked one of the midwives who we were familiar with through family friends, to watch an entire feed and help, as there was something wrong and I had been dismissed up until that stage. Upon watching my son feed, the midwife noticed he was latching then falling asleep quite quickly due to his jaundice, as he did not have enough energy to stay awake for a feed. Due to it being the third day, and my baby still not receiving proper feeds, I was shown how to pump, and given instructions to pump, then use the pump bottles and a nasogastric tube, which was taped to my finger, to feed my baby, to allow him to get enough milk to "flush out" his jaundice. Once I had been shown how to do this, we were now expected to do this for every feed, which was a two-person job, one to hold the cup and control height for flow, and myself to hold my son and feed him using the tube taped to my little finger.

After coming home and feeding my son with the tube, then transitioning to bottle after being told to monitor his intake closely, for the first 10 weeks, it felt like a never-ending cycle of pumping, sterilising, feeding and then contact naps, as my son was now unable to sleep any other way after becoming used to this at the hospital. I felt like I wasn't able to enjoy my son's newborn stage, as it was constantly taken up with the tasks required to pump, which was never something I wanted to have to do at all. I wanted to reach out and ask for help but was struggling to find help, and knew that there was no point asking the hospital for help after being told my son was not something they were interested in helping with. Luckily, I was referred to Walker House by our CHAPS nurse after explaining how I was feeling about missing the enjoyment of the newborn stage due to pumping, and they were wonderful with trying to help teach both myself and my son how to correctly breastfeed. Thankfully, after a month of transitioning, I was finally able to feed my baby the way I wanted. As much as I am glad, I had Walker House to help transition, I feel quite sad that I was never properly supported in feeding my baby correctly, and was instead sent home to buy hundreds of dollars in



pumping equipment, which I also had to learn to use, I never should have needed if I was supported correctly.

On the morning of the 24<sup>th</sup>, I had a chat with one of the midwives regarding my baby's first bath, I was informed it was almost shift change over, but if I asked the next shift of midwives they should be able to assist me. I was more than happy to wait for next shift as the midwife I spoke to had been on all night and definitely deserved to head home on time. I decided to wait until afternoon to bath him after this, as my mother would be coming to visit, and I thought it would be nice for her to be able to take photos of his first bath for us. Around 4pm, I pressed the buzzer and requested help giving him his first bath, the midwife informed me she was going to grab some warm towels and would be straight back. After around 45 minutes, I mentioned to mum that it had been quite a long time to just grab towels, but we agreed it was Christmas eve, so they were probably a little busy but the midwife should be back soon, as it had been quite a while. After waiting an hour and a half, I decided it was time to press the buzzer again, as we had now been waiting a very long time, and were feeling like we had been forgotten. Once the buzzer was pressed, the same midwife from an hour and a half earlier walked in the room and said "what do you need help with?" I reminded her we had been waiting for her to return with warm towels for my sons first bath, which she responded to with the phrase "your mums here, she's obviously bathed babies before, you can ask her to help. The towels are up there" she then gestured to the towels near the bed head that had been there since the last time fresh linen was dropped off to my room. I was shocked, I had been waiting quite a long time, and even been understanding of how busy it may have been, but was then told to ask someone who was at the hospital as a visitor, not a midwife, for help instead. I then requested that the midwife at least get us warm towels if she was not willing to help. At that stage, I decided that if I was going to be told to ask visitors for help instead of receiving help from the staff, that I was not spending my baby's first Christmas in the ward, and would rather be at home after everything that had happened. Upon the midwives return to my room, she noticed a majority of my bags were packed, and my husband had started taking them out to the car. I was questioned on why we were packing my belongings if I was not booked to discharge. I then explained I was no longer comfortable and wanted to go home for Christmas, downplaying the real reason I was leaving, which was feeling unsafe and being made to feel like a burden than anything. The midwife seemed frustrated by this as it was not scheduled earlier, but did end up discharging us at around 7pm. I felt a sense of relief while exiting the hospital, as I knew I was going home, where I was safe, and knew what medication I was being given, and had support and help at all hours, not just visiting hours.

During my time at the LGH, there were also so many other small incidents, that if they were isolated incidents, may not have been notable, but coupled with the everything else that happened during my visit, were signs of a basic lack of professionalism and care. For multiple days, my compression socks were fitted with a loose bit hanging off the end of my toes. I had never had experience with compression socks, so was unaware this was wrong, I just knew it was a bit odd and uncomfortable. Around the end of the second day, one of the younger midwives was in doing a routine check, and stopped and said "I'm so sorry, but I'm distracted by your socks, do you mind if I put them on correctly?" I explained they had been fitted like that by midwives for 2 days, and I did not know that they were wrong, and thanked her a lot, as it felt like she actually saw me as a human, instead of just another number patient. This interaction made me feel human again which was relieving and I'll be

forever grateful for her as she made me feel normal with such a small task. Another incident involved the hearing test nurses, the first time they visited, it was during visiting hours, and one of the nurses was making comments to the other of "well we can't get in there, there's not any space with people here" and other blunt comments, instead of asking us if our visitors could leave for a moment, or move out of the way, she made the comment to me of "well if you have all of these people here, we'll just come back tomorrow" in quite an abrupt tone. Had I have been asked for our visitors to leave or similar, I would've gladly asked them to head out for a moment until the test was done. When the other nurse returned on the following day, myself and my husband mentioned to her about this interaction, explaining if she had politely asked instead of making remarks indirectly, we would have been more than happy to remove visitors. This was met with the response of "yeah, she's just new and didn't know any better" which seemed to be a very easy way of playing off how rudely she treated us for no specific reason.

Since my birth experience, I faced a lot of difficulties settling into home life as a new mum, which could have been avoided if I had been given the appropriate support and treatment by staff during my time as a patient.

Once I had returned home from hospital, I was visited on boxing day, the 26<sup>th</sup> of December [REDACTED] by the midwives for my first home check for me and my son. During this visit the two midwives who visited were absolutely wonderful, checking bub over and also removing the tape from my scar. They then booked a second follow up appointment for the midwife to do one last check over of both bub and myself before discharging me. On the day of the follow up check up from the midwife, on Thursday the 28<sup>th</sup> of December, I received a call from [REDACTED] the midwife letting me know she would be running later than originally planned, I let her know that was absolutely fine as it was a busy time of year and I would see her when she got there. I also had my sons first CHAPS home visit the same day, which originally was not an issue as they were at different times. At 1:24pm I received a text from [REDACTED] letting me know she was on her way, which I responded to, letting her know CHAPS would also be getting to my house at 1:30pm. I then received a call from [REDACTED] saying that if CHAPS were on their way, there was no need for her to visit us, so she would not be coming. If I had been informed that this appointment was also the last check over before I was discharged as a patient, and that it meant if anything came up I would not receive support or help, I would have told her I still required the check-up. This meant later on, I found myself denied any help from the LGH when issues with my scar arose.

I noticed once the tape had been removed from my scar, that it felt like there was a pulling type feeling still present when I was walking, before this I had ruled it down to the way the tape was put on, and ignored this. I dealt with this and did not think to mention it to anyone other than my partner, as I thought it may have just been normal after a c-section. I then noticed after a couple of weeks, that there was an odd smell coming from where my scar was, I also mentioned this to my husband but thought nothing else of it as I was unaware of what was normal for these types of scars. On the day of our first CHAPS appointment outside of our home, as I was getting out of the car, I felt something that felt similar to a pimple popping in the area of my scar, and immediately there was fluid dripping from the area. I asked our CHAPS nurse if she was able to look at it while I was there so I knew if I needed to call the hospital, upon inspecting she noticed there was what looked to be an infection and recommended I call the birth suite to get it checked out. After our appointment I called the number on the orange book, as I was not sure who else to call about the issue, and was informed

that because I had been discharged by the midwives after my home visits, it was not their issue, and I needed to visit a GP and get a referral if I wanted them to look at the scar. This meant I was out of pocket for the cost of a GP visit as well as antibiotics to help with the infection. I felt quite dismissed and was made to feel as if I was expecting something out of the ordinary, after asking for help with an issue which was caused during my time in their care, that had resulted in physical issues which I had to live with. These antibiotics caused my milk supply to drop significantly, which resulted in me feeling quite defeated and upset that I was not able to feed my baby breast milk alone, and needed to use formula top ups.

After going home from hospital to feed my son with tube strapped to my finger, I was never given a long-term plan to get him back to breastfeeding full time. I spent most days having to call and beg family and friends to come over and help hold and look after my son, so that I was able to pump milk for his next feeds. A large portion of his newborn time was spent pumping, sterilising, and trying to fix my supply issues after having the antibiotics for my infection. I feel like I was almost forced to miss his newborn days because I'd been sent out without proper support after the midwives had taken the easy way out of dealing with my sons feeding issues that they'd ignored for most of our time in hospital. Due to not having many close family members and friends, this also meant a lot of our down time was spent trying to arrange who could help and at what times, and essentially scheduling help, which also took up a lot of time I should have been spending enjoying my son's newborn moments, which I feel like I missed due to everything that happened.

Once I had been discharged, I received a request for feedback via a link. I ensured I had filled out this feedback form with as much detail as I was mentally able to deal with at that stage, as it was all quite fresh in my memory and I was feeling quite traumatised by the experience. I assumed that this would receive some type of follow up, as I had mentioned how uncomfortable and unhappy I was with the treatment I received. I felt like it had been ignored, and not taken very seriously by whoever dealt with feedback, as that type of experience should not have been ignored. This made me feel that the LGH did not feel the need to reach out and see if I needed any assistance or help after what I had experienced. This seemed like they were okay with the less than acceptable level of treatment I received, as there was no correspondence regarding my experience, my feedback, or my call that I had made about my scar. It made me feel horrific and defeated knowing they were okay with the level of mental and physical scarring I have been left with.

My traumatic birth experience, coupled with the lack of care and help after giving birth, that I experienced at the LGH have had quite a large impact on my life in the past 6 and a half months. My mental health has declined a significant amount due to the experiences I had. I feel like I missed a lot of my son's newborn stage due to having to pump and everything that goes along with pumping as I mentioned above, which is something I will never be able to get back, all due to the neglect from midwives, which was completely avoidable. I often find myself having flashbacks to the traumatic events at the hospital and end up spiralling with 'what if's and wondering if I had had staff who were willing to listen and help, would I never have missed that stage of my son's life, would everything be different, would my relationships with my husband and family not be as strained as they are now? I feel helpless, and find myself thinking my son deserves to have a mother who doesn't struggle the way I do after my experience, and think he'd be better off if I wasn't the way I am, even though I'm aware he is healthy and happy now. I also feel anger towards the fact me and my son should never have experienced this, and if it never happened the way it did things would have been different, I feel

guilty that my sons newborn and infant stage is being consumed by my mental health struggles, and things that are happening as a direct result of the experience, even though I know they are a result of something I had no control over. I no longer feel safe trusting medical staff, as I know my concerns were ignored in the hospital, and I now question if doctors are taking my concerns seriously with other aspects of his health, including allergies etc. which has led to me seeing multiple different doctors for second opinions, as I am scared that the doctor may just be dismissing my concerns like LGH staff did while we were there. I struggle to trust anyone to look after my son, including childcares and also family and close friends this includes my son's father, my husband, because I worry that if the LGH were unable to notice things which should have been noticed, which lead to him starving for multiple days, what happens if they don't notice something, because they don't have the same level of training and experience, and even trained hospital staff couldn't pick up on things. Which has led to a lot of conflict with family as they do not understand how my experience in the birth suite directly causes these thoughts and concerns, they take it very personally that I do not let my child stay with anyone but myself. Due to this I have also been unable to return to work, as I am too scared to leave him with anyone, even though they have training in caring for children or have had their own children, because the hospital staff also had training and did not correctly care for my child. This inability to work also meant I had to sell my cars, to afford to help pay our house payments, as I have no income while I am unable to work. I also now feel terrible about my body image, as I know how disgusting my scar looks due to the poor stitching, which has not only resulted in self-hate, but also impacted my relationship as I no longer want to be seen undressed, by anyone, in case they see my disgusting scar. This has resulted in our relationship being quite strained and uncomfortable as my husband knows why I feel the way I do about my body and scar, but both the physical change as well as the mental change has changed who I am as a person, and I am no longer the same as I was before the trauma.

I believe the LGH staff have caused a large amount of physical, mental and financial trauma due to their lack of care and professionalism during my antenatal, and birth experience. Due to this lack of care, I am now dealing with declined mental health, which has, and still is, effecting all aspects of both my son and I's lives. Short term, it caused health issues for both myself and my son, which were avoidable. It has also caused stress on our family, my employment, our finances, and the relationship between my husband and myself, as well as permanent long term mental trauma. I would like to know why these things happened, why they were never picked up on, how my entire experience essentially fell through the cracks, why it was ignored. I would like to see the medical records from my birth and see how much of this experience was properly documented by staff. I would like to know how LGH plan on helping with the mental, as well as financial stress they have now inflicted on our family, as a direct result of me being unable to work due to the trauma. I would like to know what changes will be put in place to ensure this never happens to another mother again, as I would hate for another woman to go through what I have. Most of all, I would like to see Launceston General Hospital accept accountability for the damages caused as a direct result of my experience in their care, and ensure they take appropriate steps to support myself and my family while I am trying to do what I can to recover physically and mentally.