

16 September 2024

I gave birth to my daughter in [REDACTED] at the Royal Hobart Hospital. I am writing to lodge a complaint regarding the treatment that my family, the midwives, and I received from the doctors during this time.

***The significant lack of empathy and emotional sensitivity, harsh and unfeeling communication style and lack of professionalism exhibited by the doctors.***

There was a profound disregard for the distress and emotional turmoil experienced by my partner and I regarding the turn the birth had taken and the impact of this. I felt as though our emotional state was completely overlooked. Some specific examples include:

- As I was crying while trying to process the introduction of multiple interventions, the anaesthetist questioned my distress asking “Why are you crying? You have had an epidural, so you shouldn’t be in any pain’. Thankfully, my midwife stepped in and reminded the doctor that I was processing the turn my labour had taken and this was emotionally painful. This question diminished my experience and made me feel both unsafe and misunderstood.
- The first thing the doctor (Dr [REDACTED]) said to me after my child was delivered via the vacuum and an episiotomy was ‘You never would have delivered that baby without me’. As a new mum, who had just endured almost 48 hours of labour, hearing this felt not only cruel but deeply upsetting. In the days that followed, this moment replayed in my mind repeatedly, causing significant emotional distress.
- The doctors used slang when discussing medical procedures. I recall the doctors repeatedly referring to the episiotomy as the ‘epise’. Using such informal terms to describe this significant incision to my body was distressing and disrespectful.
- There was a complete disregard and disrespect for the sanctity of the birthing room and the birth preferences I had provided to the hospital in writing. Once my birth became medicalised doctors entered and exited the room as they pleased.. At one point there were over ten people in the room, and I did not understand why as there were no health-related issues with me or my baby that justified such a large presence. It felt as though everyone considered themselves entitled to be there and to come and go as they pleased. The presence of so many doctors was both confusing and distressing for me, leading me to fear that something was wrong that had not been communicated to me
- The doctor who delivered my child used a very harsh communication style. As my baby was coming down the birth canal and the doctor was using the vacuum, her manner of communication was incredibly harsh and cruel. At one point, she even voiced this herself ‘I know I am being harsh’. Additionally, she threatened me with the possibility of ‘going down the hall for a ceaser’ if I didn’t “work harder” with her

to deliver the baby, despite there being no immediate health concerns with my baby that warranted such urgency.

Examples of unprofessional conduct displayed by the doctors attending my birth included:

- The doctor who delivered my child requested that my sister send her a photo she had taken of my baby being delivered while I was still in urgent need of medical care (e.g., having my blood loss measured which she neglected to do). My sister told her that there would be no way she would send such a photo without my consent.
- While the doctors were seated in between my legs, amid labour they were discussing personal matters and ward gossip loudly without any consideration for the space or me and my partner.
- Doctors and ward staff entered the room without introducing themselves or informing me or my partner of their role in my labour. In the final stages of my birth, I felt invisible and was rarely addressed.
- By the time my daughter was delivered, there was a room full of doctors who each contributed their two cents and had conducted internal checks which I believe were not necessary and negatively impacted my recovery. I felt the doctors were trying to one-up each other at the expense of my well-being and comfort.
- After delivering my baby I experienced a postpartum haemorrhage. The doctor did not measure my blood loss and as shifts changed, I experienced two additional hemorrhages. The new doctors argued about the situation over my bed, with loud and insensitive exchanges about how the previous doctor's failure to measure my blood loss was negligent.

### ***The treatment of the midwife present throughout the delivery***

- As a birthing mother, I formed a strong bond with my midwives and the midwife who was present during my delivery played a crucial role. I was deeply distressed to witness her being spoken to with disrespect by the doctors and at one point physically pushed aside. I had placed a lot of trust in her guidance and support and witnessing this treatment was incredibly upsetting for me. The fact that I recall these events vividly, despite their occurring in the acute part of labour underscores their impact. After the birth, it was clear that she was significantly affected by the way she was treated. The behaviour of the doctors was completely unacceptable.

### ***The impacts of the doctors' treatment on my family***

The treatment my partner and I received from the doctors caused us significant distress during labour and had lasting effects in the days, weeks, and months that followed. It impacted my initial weeks of motherhood and my ability to bond with my daughter. I continue to experience nightmares and flashbacks about the birth. For eight months after

Royal Hobart Hospital complaint

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the birth, I struggled with intimacy due to trauma responses and distressing flashbacks. On the first anniversary of the birth, I endured severe flashbacks, panic attacks, and emotional turmoil.

Since this time, I have incurred significant financial expenses seeking trauma counselling to help me heal from my experience.

I chose to give birth in a hospital with the expectation of feeling safe but instead, I felt incredibly unsafe. Even walking near the Royal Hobart Hospital causes me anxiety.

My partner and I are both Lawyers (I practice in the area of human rights law), and my sister, who was also present at the birth is a clinical psychologist. I mentioned this as all three of us are highly educated individuals who know our rights and are skilled at advocating for ourselves. In spite of this, our experience unfolded as I detail above. It makes me highly concerned for experience and treatment likely received by maternity patients whom do not have the skills and level of education that we have.

I am making this complaint because I want the doctors who attended my birth to understand the impact of their actions. I also hope to prevent other birthing families from undergoing the treatment I experienced.

Regards,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

*16 September 2024*