

From: [REDACTED]
Subject: Re: My Tasmanian birth stories
Date: Tuesday, 1 October 2024 11:13:42 AM

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My Birth Stories

I am not originally from Australia, and I found navigating the healthcare system in Tasmania incredibly challenging. While there were many positives, unfortunately, the negative aspects often left a stronger impression.

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I felt incredibly isolated, confused, and unable to communicate effectively. It was deeply distressing, and I believe that my discomfort and anxiety in labor made everything much harder and possibly the reason why it didn't happen naturally. Me and my husband both felt like I was an inconvenience to everyone at the hospital and it felt like they just were going to do a caesarean to have it over and done with. The whole ordeal wasn't just traumatic for me but also for my husband.

[REDACTED]

Looking back, I believe the presence of a more supportive midwife would have made a huge difference. Sadly, all the midwives who cared for me after the birth were all wonderful, and I felt entirely at ease with them.

[REDACTED]

After everything, I developed post-traumatic anxiety. I was anxious all the time, constantly crying, and plagued by terrible nightmares. The experience consumed me, and I couldn't think about anything else. I felt anger toward myself and the hospital, as I believed the whole ordeal was unnecessary. I was disappointed and ashamed to have needed a caesarean. Coming from a long line of strong farming women with no birth complications so I thought, I couldn't stop thinking, "Why me?" I felt robbed of the choice of when and how to have more children. And I felt robbed of a beautiful welcoming of my baby girl, the first two days I couldn't look after my baby well myself because I was in bed unable to move much, in a lot of pain and I was given pain killers that made me sick so I only vaguely remember it.

After a few months, I realized I needed help. I went to a GP. I explained my situation and he offered me antidepressants straight away and then told me to go online to look for a psychologist. I thought that was absolutely bizarre. I found an amazing GP who helped me find an amazing psychologist who specializes in birth trauma, and she helped me process everything. I even wrote letters to my obstetrician and the hospital.

With my second pregnancy, I decided to wait until my due date. If labor didn't start naturally, I opted for a caesarean as the safest choice. It was hard to decide, as I had seen many different midwives and obstetricians, each offering different opinions.

I discussed with a midwife which day would be best to schedule the caesarean. It was on a Friday but during the next appointment I found

out it hadn't been scheduled and the day was now full. They added me anyway last of the day and said it might still change and it wasn't certain. That gave me a bit of worry as the next scheduled caesareans were on a Tuesday, 4 days later. I was a bit disappointed by that as I had quite early on expressed my wishes. But the obstetrician didn't seem to care whatsoever. It wasn't a major issue, but I wanted to bring it up as it reflected poor management. The situation was unnecessary and could have been easily prevented.

The second caesarean had its complications, which was difficult for me, but overall I was well cared for. I have no complaints, except for the going home part. After my first birth, I stayed in the hospital for 5 days. This time, I only stayed three nights, and they began asking on the second night if I wanted to leave—even though I hadn't walked yet.

On the third night, I discussed with the night nurse whether I should go home. She said it was my decision. So I decided to wait until the morning to decide. I had complications during the caesarean and was still not very mobile. However, the midwife the next morning didn't give me an option—I was told I had to go home. My baby was quite jaundiced and needed a blood test, and we were informed it would take about two hours for the results. We took our time packing, not rushing, but after just half an hour, the results were in, and I suddenly felt pressured to leave.

As we scrambled to get ready, I asked for a wheelchair since the walk to the hospital exit is quite long, especially after a caesarean. The midwife responded rudely, implying I didn't need one. Despite us clearly still packing, she called the warden for the wheelchair. With a toddler, a baby, and me in a wheelchair, we couldn't carry everything, so my husband quickly took our bags to the car. While he was gone, the warden arrived with the wheelchair to take me to the car, but without my husband there, I couldn't manage both the baby and toddler at once. The midwife became visibly frustrated that my husband wasn't present, even though the warden simply left the wheelchair for him to push when he returned. It wasn't a problem, but her anger created unnecessary stress.

I was in tears, feeling pressured to leave because they needed the room. I tearfully told the midwife that I didn't appreciate being rushed out. Taking a baby home should be a joyous and memorable experience, but it was completely ruined by the midwife's attitude. The student midwife observing seemed shocked and ashamed by the situation but the midwife only seemed to care about the room being free.

It was also lunch time and wasn't given anything so by the time I got home I was starving. As a breastfeeding mother, not pleasant.

It was a sad end to an otherwise good experience at the Royal Hobart Hospital. Throughout my stay, the staff seemed overwhelmed, and I often felt like an inconvenience when I needed something. My room was at the end of a long hallway, and I was literally forgotten about more than once. Also my baby's heel prick test was forgotten about. I asked for it only just in time for the deadline. It was missed by multiple midwives. I was very glad I knew how to breastfeed from my first. Otherwise I think it would've been very difficult to receive the help that was needed.

Thank you for reading my story. I sincerely hope something can be done to improve the birthing, pre and postpartum care in Tasmania. I strongly feel too much injustice is done.

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