

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Reproductive, Maternal and Paediatric](#)
Subject: Submission on Reproductive, Maternal and Paediatric health services in Tasmania
Date: Sunday, 15 September 2024 1:33:27 PM

Dear Secretary

I am writing to the Select Committee about my story of giving birth at the Royal Hobart Hospital in [REDACTED]. Please respect my privacy and keep my personal information confidential.

My aim for my entire pregnancy was to avoid seeing a doctor, and ideally be under the care of midwives for my antenatal, postnatal and delivery. After finding out I was pregnant at 4 weeks gestation, I was referred to the Hobart Hospital by my GP. At 10-12 weeks I was finally contacted by the RHH for my first appointment, and asked which program I wanted as a preference – the answer was the Midwife Group Program. I was then informed that while they can put that as a preference, it probably won't happen. To get into that program I needed to have all my paperwork and first phone appointment with the hospital at 4 weeks gestation (or earlier). I ended up in the KYM program.

I was lucky that I did get to avoid doctors until the night I was admitted to the hospital. My baby was in a breach position, and I was informed I needed a C-section because doctors and midwives in Tasmania weren't trained in delivering breach babies. I knew this already thanks to an article on breach births that had appeared in the Sunday Tasmanian magazine a month or two prior. In my antenatal appointments, I was told my baby was in the head-down position. My scans always showed my baby in breach. My appointments were arranged to have either a scan or antenatal appointment every 2 weeks. I don't believe my baby flipped herself around every 2 weeks to ensure she was head down for my midwife antenatal appointments. She was in breach the whole time, but it wasn't picked up on or treated as such in my appointments, and yes, I always told them she was in breach.

My operation was scheduled for 11 am the next day, I was admitted to the maternity ward – the side of the ward for after you've had your baby. My husband was sent home and told to come back in the morning. This was my first baby, things would take a long, long time, apparently.

Things did not take a long time. I was on my own. I didn't realise it but labour had started to progress, and I was experiencing back labour. I saw a midwife every hour or 2 as they came to check on me. I spent a good 45 minutes in the shower. Then I paced. From the bed, to the bathroom, sat down, stood up, back to the bed. I was experiencing back labour, but I hadn't realised it. I didn't realise what had happened until much later on – days later. At one stage (a few hours in) I asked the midwife if I could have something for the pain, as it was amping up. She said she would bring me back some Panadol. Back to being on my own again. She came back later (I don't know how long) with morphine. I don't recall being given any options of pain medication – just told that she had morphine for me and to recite my name and dob. At around 5am I messaged my husband and told him I needed him to come back. We live an hour away from the hospital. I had spent the night pacing, experiencing lightning strikes of pain starting at my tailbone and radiating out towards my hips. All alone. And because I was on the "after delivery" side of the ward, I didn't have a dedicated midwife to stay with me, as I would have on the "delivery" side of the ward. It was a very isolating and confusing night.

By the time my husband made it, I was lying on my side on the floor almost unable to move, but unable to stay still. I was getting lightning strikes of pain through my hips. They'd been doing internal checks, and I was told after my surgery I had made it to 8cm dilated in an hour.

Within minutes of my husband arriving I was being wheeled down to the operating room. Much earlier than the 11am time they'd originally scheduled me to. After the anaesthesiologist had administered the spine tap, I remember being so cold I couldn't stop shaking. I told my midwife, who said it was normal. Normal to feel like you can't stop shaking and moving your arms and neck? Half way through there was a shift change. I had a new midwife. I told her I was so, so cold. My arms couldn't stop shaking because I was

that cold. She took the time to check my skin, I was in fact cold, and she piled my upper body up with blankets, thank goodness, it helped a little. The first thing I remember thinking when my newborn was placed on my chest was that I was so cold, and shaking so much from the cold, that I was going to drop her.

Later, two midwives were chatting in my room about how fast I progressed, and they both made the comment that I should've just stayed home and had the baby there. Were it an option for me to give birth vaginally, I would've. The comments will stick with me for life.

For the RHH, my story is a "good story." I had a "scheduled" C-Section and everything went according to plan (almost). I presented at the RHH at 10pm on a Monday night, by 8am the next morning I had a baby. The midwives I met, the doctors, everyone was wonderful. But if things could be different – I would ask for the RHH to open up more spaces in their MGP program, train their medical staff in breach vaginal births, and to assign a midwife to labouring women once admitted. Going through your first labour on your own is confusing. I felt very alone, isolated, and like I shouldn't have been where I was – especially for as long as I was. For most of the night, I felt like I was an afterthought.

Lastly, thank you for your time in reading my submission, and all other submissions in an effort to advance maternity care in Tasmania. Sadly; a few months after the birth of our baby we made the hard decision to relocate to the mainland to ensure our baby had better opportunities (medical & educational) in life than we could give her had we stayed in Tasmania.