

Submission to the Senate Inquiry with regards to the role of the government and TGA regarding medical devices, in particular Poly Implant Prothese (PIP) breast implants.

Attn Committee Secretary, Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs.

PO Box 6100

Parliament House

Canberra ACT 2600

community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au

My journey with PIP.

Thank you for allowing the senate inquiry so that we can submit our stories.

I underwent breast implant surgery in 2007 through the _____ in Brisbane.
They employed a surgeon who has now retired.

This whole experience has taken a huge toll on me, my family and friends. At the time I learnt about PIP I had a four month old baby who I had been breastfeeding.

I am saddened by the fact that as recipients of these implants more was not done to ensure that we were notified in a timely manner. I would have been unaware that this was happening if I had not been contacted by a friend. I am aware that they were recalled in April 2010. I am aware it was suggested that surgeons and clinics should contact their patients. They did not.

As a permanent resident of Australia I feel that TGA has failed all patients who have been recipients of these implants. There needs to be some system or register of all recipients of any implants. A national implant register, then there can be no excuses for timely follow up/recalls etc. This whole experience has been a disaster. Had TGA ensured that surgeons and clinics were carrying out their recommendations and notifying patients my story would be different.

In the very least I would have been to my GP and had the necessary checkup back in April 2010. I would have been able to take any necessary action prior to conceiving and since giving birth and breastfeeding

my baby. I hope very much every single day that I am going to be a healthy Mum, a Mum that will be with my family for a long time. We don't know the long term effects that these implants may or may not have on our health. I hope every day that by breastfeeding my daughter unaware for 4 months and three weeks that there will be no side effects to her, or long term health problems. Again I live with the guilt and the unknown. There is no definite proof over the long term effects or not on my daughter. I hope I am worrying for nothing but I just do not know. Had I known earlier then this could have at least been fixed.

Once I received these implants I had a drastic weight gain of over 15kg which took me 14 months to lose it, I am still 8kg heavier than I was prior to having my breast implant and I just can't seem to lose that weight. I regularly feel fatigued, including whilst driving, I find it difficult at some times to remain awake when driving home from work in the afternoon. I have severe hair loss, I have had terribly irritated and itchy scalp, sore aches in my shoulder joints, down my right side and in my thumbs, my wrists are constantly aching, migraines.

I am a woman of 29 yrs old and prior to PIP I never had any of these problems.

Once I learned about PIP and went to the Dr I had to then start having appointments, for scans, with Plastic surgeons. I had to stop breastfeeding my baby. I am at home on maternity leave. This is not what I had planned to be the start of motherhood for me. I only get these few short months to be at home, bond with my baby. Instead I have had my mind overtaken with this whole issue. It consumes you, it doesn't matter that you try to be positive, forget that it is happening; it is still there, a constant worry. It has robbed me of continuing to breastfeed my daughter. It has meant that I had to ask for support from family and friends. Drag my baby to appointments, all an hour from my home. Family members have taken time off work to come so that they can watch my baby while I am in the appointments. Fly out here to assist with the baby whilst I am in surgery having these things removed. Not to mention the financial impact this is having on our family. These appointments all cost money, all of these surgeons charge far beyond the medicare schedule fees and it is just inconsistent. There is no consistency across these costs; we are on our own as to whom we want to have as our surgeon. After the experience of my first operation it's no wonder that I am cautious, scared and untrusting. There is no regulations checking cosmetic surgeons as closely as they should be checked either. Some of them are even performing capsulectomy. Again I am not sure who to believe as it's all just a big confusing mess.

I just wish that the TGA had acted in a timelier manner on this entire matter. I wish that products coming into Australia are more stringently tested before approved for use here. Not just at the beginning that they are regularly tested at random, that the implants are not just tested externally that there are samples of the actual contents, the silicone inside the shell are tested at random.

Please let this entire matter be a lesson that something is learned from. Australia is a developed country and we should be able to trust in our health system and government that any surgery performed here we will be looked after.

My journey has been a long one; I finally will remove my implants on 27th April 2012. I am not replacing as I hope to have more children down the track. I don't want to have the worry that something could go wrong, that once again TGA haven't done their job properly. Or worse something goes wrong and our own government defends their wrongs and does nothing about it. Everybody the world over makes mistakes, but it is how we choose to act to right our wrongs that makes all the difference in the final outcome. I am going to be staying in hospital away from my baby daughter. I have had to wait with these confirmed ruptured implants for 12 weeks while my breast tissue settles after feeding my daughter.

I hope that by sharing my story at this senate enquiry that this becomes a little more personal. This has affected me in so many ways; I just hope that if something like this was to happen in the future that at least there would be action and not just action by timely action.